

# The Maternal and Newborn Health Thematic Fund

Business Plan Phase III  
(2018-2022)





UNFPA is the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency. Our mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

The MHTF Business Plan for Phase III has been jointly developed by UNFPA Headquarters (Technical Division/Sexual and Reproductive Health Branch) and UNFPA Regional Offices (Arab States - ASRO / Asia & the Pacific - APRO / Eastern & Southern Africa - ESARO / Latin America & the Caribbean - LACRO / West & Central Africa - WCARO).

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# Acronyms

<b>B-EmONC</b>	Basic Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care
<b>DHIS2</b>	District Health Information System
<b>C-EmONC</b>	Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care
<b>EmONC</b>	Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care
<b>GIS</b>	Geographic Information System
<b>H6 (formerly H4+)</b>	Partnership of UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women, World Bank Group, WHO
<b>HMIS</b>	Health Management Information System
<b>HRH</b>	Human Resources for Health
<b>ICM</b>	International Confederation of Midwives
<b>ICPD</b>	International Conference on Population and Development
<b>MPDSR</b>	Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response
<b>MHTF</b>	Maternal and Newborn Health Thematic Fund
<b>MMR</b>	Maternal Mortality Ratio
<b>MNH</b>	Maternal and Newborn Health
<b>QoC</b>	Quality of Care
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
<b>SRMNCAH</b>	Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, Adolescent Health
<b>UNAIDS</b>	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

# 1. Executive Summary

The third phase of UNFPA's Maternal and Newborn Health Thematic Fund (MHTF), from 2018 to 2022, lays out a roadmap for providing maternal and newborn health through a people-centered, human rights-based approach. Fully aligned to UNFPA's Strategic Plan (2018-2021), the MHTF directly contributes to UNFPA's transformative result of "ending preventable maternal deaths." For Phase III, the MHTF has broadened its scope to further contribute to achieve universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, and accelerating progress towards the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action. Its focus on maternal health includes support to newborn health, which is explicitly reflected in Phase III as maternal and newborn health are indivisible.

The MHTF's commitment and vision for Phase III is one where women and girls have equitable and accountable access to quality sexual and reproductive health services. These must allow them to be healthy and thrive, transforming their lives and societies, and driving the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, Phase III aims to contribute to the global target of having fewer than 70 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030 (Goal 3, Target 1). While globally, maternal mortality has dropped by two-thirds in the last 25 years, reaching the global SDG target by 2030 will require substantial additional efforts and funds, both domestic and international, to tackle the persistently high number of 303,000 preventable maternal deaths per year.

This Business Plan builds on evidences and lessons learned from previous phases of the MHTF to support countries to strengthen their health system to improve maternal and newborn health through technical guidance and strategic interventions in the MHTF's four focus areas: midwifery, emergency obstetric and neonatal care, maternal and perinatal death surveillance and response, and obstetric fistula and other obstetric morbidities. The MHTF supports women, newborns, and adolescent girls across their lifespan in 32 countries with high burden of maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity and puts a specific focus on indigenous women, and women and girls who are most disadvantaged, including those in fragile settings, and who are displaced. In Phase III, the four focus areas of MHTF will be further integrated and linked with other sexual and reproductive health programmes, including post-partum and post-abortion family planning, comprehensive sexuality education and prevention and treatment of HIV/STIs. Finally, reproductive health morbidities will be addressed in a more focused manner with access to cervical cancer screening and treatment, and safe abortion (where legal) and post-abortion care strengthened.

The Result and Indicator Framework for Phase III is fully aligned with UNFPA's Strategic Plan and is based on a menu of strategic interventions from which countries can select based on their needs. The strategic interventions of the MHTF complement and reinforce efforts under other funding streams, including other UNFPA's resources, to increase maternal and newborn health and realize sexual and reproductive health and rights for all. MHTF in Phase III will facilitate sustainable change in countries through its catalytic effect and strength in leveraging partnerships

at the global, regional and national levels, including through H6 partnership and technical support in countries.

Strengthening resource mobilization efforts to increase its funding base, and further exploring public and private partnerships and innovations will be a priority. These measures will aim at supporting MHTF interventions to realize more sustainable long-term results in advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls, across the continuum of care, with no women or newborn left behind.

## 2. Introduction

The Maternal and Newborn Health Thematic Fund (MHTF) is UNFPA's flagship programme for improving maternal and newborn health and well-being. Launched in 2008 to boost global funding and attention to maternal health, the MHTF is now entering its third phase, from 2018 to 2022,<sup>1</sup> after having completed Phase I (2008-2013) and Phase II (2014-2017). Its focus on maternal health has included support to newborn health, which is explicitly reflected in the third phase, as maternal and newborn health are indivisible.

Although maternal mortality has fallen by 44 per cent since 1990, and tangible progress has been made over the last decades, globally maternal mortality is still unacceptably high. An estimated 830 women die from pregnancy or childbirth-related complications every day while most of them are preventable.<sup>2</sup> Almost all maternal deaths (99 per cent of global maternal deaths) occur in low- and middle-income countries. In addition, for every woman who dies of pregnancy-related causes, 20 to 30 others experience acute or chronic maternal morbidity, often with permanent sequelae that can affect women's physical, mental and/or sexual and reproductive health.<sup>3</sup>

Every year, 2.6 million babies die before turning one month old, with about 40 per cent dying on the day they are born. Another 2.6 million are stillborn. More than 80 per cent of newborn deaths are the result of premature birth, complications during labour and delivery, and infections such as sepsis, meningitis and pneumonia. Similar causes, particularly complications during labour, account for a large share of stillbirths.<sup>4</sup>

The MHTF is set up to provide catalytic support to improve maternal and newborn health in high-mortality countries. It provides upstream strategic directions, technical assistance and capacity-building for the development, implementation and monitoring of maternal and newborn health interventions aligned with country-owned and driven processes.

With the transition from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to Agenda 2030 and the SDG, and based on experience in implementing Phases I and II, the MHTF has broadened its scope of work in reducing maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity to a more comprehensive approach to women's and adolescent girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The MHTF is a key building block towards the achievement of UNFPA's new Strategic Plan (2018-2021), particularly its transformative result of zero preventable maternal deaths by 2030. It leads

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1. 2018 is a transition year between Phase II and Phase III.

2. L. Alkema, D. Chou, D. Hogan, S. Zhang, A. B. Moller, A. Gemmill, et al., 2016, "Global, regional and national levels and trends in maternal mortality between 1990 and 2015, with scenario-based projections to 2030: a systematic analysis by the UN Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-Agency Group," *The Lancet* 387 (10017): 462-74.

3. T. Firoz, et.al, 2013, "Measuring maternal health: focus on maternal morbidity," *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 2013.

4. UNICEF, 2018, "Every Child Alive – the urgent need to end newborn deaths."

UNFPA's maternal and newborn health agenda, complements and further strengthens maternal and newborn health interventions supported by UNFPA's core and non-core resources, and contributes to leveraging resources from other strategic partners at the country and regional levels. All of its efforts are aimed at accelerating progress on the Programme of Action of the ICPD, and at improving the lives of women, newborns, adolescents and youths.

This Business Plan for Phase III lays out the foundations of the MHTF's support to countries to operationalize the 2030 Agenda, based on the principles of equity in access to sexual and reproductive health and rights information and services, quality of care and human rights-based accountability. The plan specifically describes changes to position the MHTF to better support countries in achieving the global goals of ending preventable maternal and newborn deaths.

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