



**UNFPA Submission to 2025 HLPF Thematic Review of Progress**

**2025 HLPF [Website here](#)**

Theme: “**Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind**”

SDGs under review: **Goal 3 (health and wellbeing), 5 (gender equality), 8 (decent work), 14 (life under water), 17 (data and partnerships).**

UNFPA is requested by the President of ECOSOC (Permanent Representative of Canada) to provide substantive inputs to the review of the 2025 HLPF theme and the SDGs undergoing in-depth review (as noted above), from its vantage point, and to reflect on relevant follow up to the Political Declaration of the SDG Summit, as well as to provide inputs to the Outcome of the HLPF- the Ministerial Declaration.

The inputs below are in response to the **five guiding questions** provided in the ECOSOC President’s letter.

**Guiding Questions from DESA**

1. Your **assessment** of the impacts of the multiple and interconnected crises on the implementation of SDGs 3, 5, 8, 14 and 17
2. **Three key areas** where sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for achieving the SDGs and leaving no one behind are being effectively delivered, especially related to the cluster of SDGs under review in 2025, also bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the Goals and targets.
3. Three examples of measures to accelerate progress towards SDGs through well-coordinated actions in key transitions to bring progress to scale (food security, energy access and affordability, digital connectivity, education, jobs and social protection, climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution), building on interlinkages between SDGs to ensure cohesive **progress**.
4. Follow-up actions and measures being undertaken by your intergovernmental body or forum to support implementation of the 2023 SDG Summit Political Declaration and the outcomes of the 2024 Summit of the Future, to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

5. Recommendations and key messages to be considered for inclusion in the Ministerial Declaration of the 2025 HLPF.

## UNFPA Responses

**Question (1)** Impacts of the multiple and interconnected crises on the implementation of SDGs 3, 5, 8, 14 and 17.

### SDG3 – Health and Well-being

- **The world is off-track to achieving universal health coverage.** Catastrophic out-of-pocket expenditures for health have increased, impacting spending on food, education and housing. Inequalities in service coverage within and between countries persist, leaving the poorest and most marginalized lacking access to essential health services, including reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health.
- **Women and newborns continue to die in unacceptably large numbers from preventable or treatable causes.** Maternal deaths are concentrated in the world's least developed regions and conflict-affected countries, further exacerbated by climate change and the global economic downturn highlighting the severe and persistent disparities in maternal health. Insufficient legal and policy frameworks and financial commitments, inadequate access to services and poor quality of care, disenfranchised women and communities, and weak health data systems hamper progress.
- **The critical shortage of skilled health personnel,** and inadequate training and supervision systems impact access to quality health services, including sexual and reproductive health services. Estimates indicate a shortfall of at least 900,000 midwives worldwide.
- **Women's decision-making power in relation to their sexual and reproductive health, free from coercion and violence remains low,** limiting progress towards universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, impacting their health, education, income and safety, and implications for their families, communities and nations.
- **Health crises and humanitarian emergencies disrupt critical health services, including maternal, newborn and child health services, and disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, especially women and girls.** The climate crisis, increasing number of disasters and protracted conflict situations, and global economic downturn are exacerbating inequalities and deepening vulnerabilities.

### SDG 5 – Gender Equality

- **Pushback against gender equality and attempts to roll back sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights contradict long-standing global agreements and evidence of what works to realize the health and well-being of at least half the world's population.** Gender discrimination sustains unjust laws and social norms, obstructing the ability of women and girls to claim their sexual and reproductive health and rights and live free from violence and harm. In conflict and climate disasters, women and girls face higher rates of unintended pregnancy and maternal mortality, and are more vulnerable to gender-based violence, forced and early marriage.
- **Negative social norms continue to limit access to SRHR services,** particularly for the most marginalized, and **perpetuate all forms of violence against young women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence, and harmful practices,** including female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage.
- **An estimated, nearly 1 in 3, women and girls continue to experience intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence or both at least once in their lifetime.** Women and girls living through humanitarian crises face heightened gender-based violence (GBV) risks, including sexual violence in addition to challenges in accessing life-saving services. Increasingly, digital spaces are being used to perpetrate GBV, making women and girls unsafe in their homes, workspaces and schools. GBV limits women's participation in economic, social and political life and increases health inequalities.
- **In 2025 alone, nearly 4.4 million girls are projected to be at risk of female genital mutilation (FGM),** which can result in complications from detrimental physical and psychological as well as social and economic impacts lasting throughout childhood, reproductive years, and old age. A violation of human rights, FGM put women's and girls' health at risk, worsens childbirth outcomes, and cause long-term harm.

## **SDG 8 – Decent Work and Employment**

- Every day, more than 16 billion hours are devoted to unpaid domestic and care work around the world. As populations age, this will rise as many older persons rely on care support by other household members. **The burden of unpaid care work will disproportionately fall on women, who are often the primary caregivers.**
- **Women and young people experience higher unemployment rates,** which will likely be further worsened by a global economic downturn, impeding achievement of full and productive employment and decent work.
- **People who lack formal training, including out-of-school young people, are at higher risk of unemployment and under-employment** and without access to specific programmes and training opportunities, fall into a cycle of poverty.
- **Lack of investments in human capital, particularly women and young people, impacts their education and employment opportunities,** limits their individual earnings, and negatively affects national economic growth.

- **Investments in social protection mechanisms are critical to ensuring that no one is left behind**, with a focus on those who are marginalized and vulnerable.

### **SDG 14 – Life Under Water**

- **Low-lying coastal communities, already grappling with rising sea levels, experience further vulnerabilities when climate related disasters hit**, jeopardizing livelihoods and disrupting essential health and protection services. Women and girls are often disproportionately impacted – displaced from their communities and safe spaces and unable to access sexual and reproductive health services or protection from gender-based violence.
- Plastic pollution is a major cause of global warming. **If left unchecked, the ocean will contain more plastic by the year 2050 than fish by mass**. When microplastics degrade in the ocean, they enter marine food webs and have a direct negative impact on ecosystem health and human well-being.

### **SDG 17 - Partnerships for the goals, Disaggregated Data**

- **With a financing gap of up to 4 trillion dollars, the urgency of financing for development has never been greater**. It is crucial to secure predictable, sustainable, and sufficient development finance from all sources to support low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).
- **Investments in sexual and reproductive health and rights are accelerators of human progress delivering strong returns to economies and societies through lasting benefits for individuals and families**. UNFPA estimates that every additional dollar invested in family planning and maternal health would yield US\$8.40 in benefits by 2050. Yet the financing gap for ending preventable maternal deaths, unmet need for family planning and gender-based violence and harmful practices is 222 billion dollars.
- **Protecting social sector spending, especially on health, is key to economic growth**. Many countries face high debt burdens that outstrip spending on education and health. Debt forgiveness and restructuring, along with strengthening public financial management and efficiency, will be critical to ensuring that countries can maintain essential services.
- **Significant gaps persist in the availability, quality, accessibility and use of disaggregated data**, as well as the timely availability of data to inform decision-making, especially in low- and middle-income countries, including to inform response to humanitarian emergencies. Underfunded public data systems hamper the ability to track SDG progress. To harness the transformative power of data, there must be a significant increase in investments, both nationally and globally, including **in population and housing censuses** which provide data that are critical for good governance, policy formulation, development planning, and crisis prevention, mitigation and response. **Gaps in gender data, including in relation to SDG5**, are of particular concern to accelerating action for the achievement of gender equality.

- **Multi-stakeholder partnerships are more important than ever** to face the challenges presented by multiple and overlapping crises. The efforts of governments, civil society, and the private sector at all levels are necessary to advance gender equality and SRHR, and accelerate achievement of sustainable development.

The multiple and interconnected crises do threaten implementation of SDGs 3, 5, 8, 15, and 17 and the achievement of the ICPD agenda. Responding to these crises requires an integrated approach, placing people at the centre, with a focus on those most left behind.

**Question (2) Three key areas** where sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for achieving the SDGs and leaving no one behind are being effectively delivered, especially related to the cluster of SDGs under review in 2025, also bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the Goals and targets.

- **Strengthening health systems to eliminate preventable maternal deaths by improving quality of services**, including: (1) addressing the critical shortage of **trained midwives** and health workers; (2) ensuring availability of access to **life-saving commodities**; and (3) addressing the **social determinants** that prevent women from accessing services.
- **Investments in human capital, especially women's and girls' education, health services, including SRH/RR services, decent work, and strong social protection systems** advance gender equality, break the cycle of poverty and promote inclusive development
- **Drawing on population data to understand demographic dynamics to inform rights-based and future-oriented national development strategies and policies**, addressing the interlinkages between population issues and development.

**Question (3)** Three examples of measures to accelerate progress towards SDGs through well-coordinated actions in key transitions to bring progress to scale (food security, energy access and affordability, digital connectivity, education, jobs and social protection, climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution), building on interlinkages between SDGs to ensure cohesive progress.

These include:

- **Investing in UHC that integrates comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) through strengthened and resilient primary healthcare systems**, for inclusive, equitable and cost-effective, data-driven solutions to meet the needs of women, including those most left behind, in all contexts.
- **A robust health workforce is essential for resilient health systems.** Shortages and unequal distribution of health workers worsen health outcomes and deepen inequalities. Midwifery is a proven, cost-effective model for health care delivery. Evidence from 88 countries shows that achieving universal coverage of midwife-delivered interventions could avert 67 per cent of maternal deaths, 64 per cent of newborn deaths and 65 per cent of stillbirths, saving 4.3 million lives per year by 2035.

- **Prioritizing women’s and girls’ empowerment**, including by addressing harmful social and gender norms as necessary for achieving peace and sustainable development. This includes efforts to ensure that women and girls are able to make decisions about their health, including SRH, and to access equal education and employment opportunities. It also calls for efforts to address the imbalance in unpaid care work performed by women and girls.
- **Strengthening demographic resilience** by systematically factoring in the economic, financial and social implications of demographic megatrends into planning processes to inform social protection systems (for pension, health, care, ageing) and ensure linkages to social policies (health, education, skills development), and ensuring that people are at the center of efforts to achieve sustainable development.
- **A multisectoral response to address intellectual property right issues, procurement and supply chains is required to promote access to affordable, quality-assured medicines**, noting that even relatively inexpensive medicines can lead to financial strain, particularly for individuals with chronic diseases.

**Question (4) Follow-up actions and measures being undertaken by your intergovernmental body or forum to support implementation of the 2023 SDG Summit Political Declaration and the outcomes of the 2024 Summit of the Future, to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

- Through **Every Woman Every Newborn Everywhere**, UNFPA partners with WHO and UNICEF to co-chair this data-driven approach to urgently accelerate the progress towards ending preventable maternal deaths, which has been impacted by the polycrisis, across the humanitarian, development continuum.
- **Preventing and responding to gender-based violence**, to ensure women and girls everywhere can live a life of dignity and security, free from violence. This includes participating in the **Spotlight Initiative**, together with UN and civil society partners. Through the **Making All Spaces Safe: Global programme to address technology facilitated GBV**, UNFPA works to integrate targeted activities into existing gender-based violence programming and promotes laws, policies and safety-by-design standards in technology development.
- The High Impact Initiative on the **Power of Data**, co-led by UNFPA and other agencies, launched in September 2023, seeks to strengthen data systems to revolutionize decision-making through availability and use of disaggregated data.
- **The Equity 2030 Alliance**, a multi-stakeholder alliance launched by UNFPA, works to achieve an inclusive, sustainable and gender equitable future, by accelerating actions to normalize gender equity in science and technology and introducing data-driven arguments and strategies.

## Question (5) Recommendations and key messages for inclusion into the Ministerial Declaration of the 2025 HLPF:

### Preamble

- **Strengthened multilateralism and stronger cooperation to achieve shared global goals are required in the face of unprecedented challenges.**
- **Inclusive sustainable development is not possible without prioritizing gender equality** and women's and girls' empowerment and rights, and ensuring that the benefits of progress reach all, including those most left behind.
- **Demographic shifts are shaping our present and future.** We must rethink how we talk about population change and ensure policymakers centre rights, choices, dignity and equality in their plans.
- **Investments in human capital, including health, gender equality and education, are powerful contributors to inclusive, rights-based and sustainable development.**

### SDG3

- **Promoting UHC is the best way to ensure people have access to quality health services without experiencing financial hardship.** UHC remains achievable, even in low-income settings, with substantial benefits for population health, human capital, and economic development.
- **Strengthening primary health care (PHC) is essential to achieve UHC** by ensuring accessible, affordable, and quality essential services for all. Investing in resilient, rights-based PHC systems enhances health outcomes, reduces disparities and builds healthier and more resilient societies.
- **Addressing maternal mortality is a critical priority.** Strategic investment in maternal health, particularly through trained and equipped midwives in both stable and humanitarian contexts, is critical for reducing maternal and newborn mortality, as well as addressing maternal morbidities.
- **Health crises and humanitarian emergencies disproportionately affect vulnerable populations,** especially women and girls. **Ensuring continuity of care,** including sexual and reproductive health services and protection from gender-based violence, is crucial. Strengthening health systems' resilience and integrating emergency response plans are key to mitigating these risks.

### SDG5

- **Gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls drives development and advances social change.** As women and girls thrive, so do their families, communities and the world.

- **Women and girls must be at the centre of solutions to both new and entrenched global challenges, towards a more prosperous and peaceful future for all.**
- **Ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights benefits the whole of society, empowers women and girls and** is fundamental to achieving gender equality, economic growth, and sustainable development. However, many individuals - especially women and girls - continue to encounter systemic barriers that hinder their access to essential, and sometimes lifesaving, health services, perpetuating health inequalities.
- **Gender-based violence**, including intimate partner violence and technology-facilitated GBV, and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child early and forced marriage, jeopardize women's and girls' health and are a violation of their human rights.

## SDG17

- **Accurate, timely and disaggregated data are vital for informed policymaking, resource allocation and humanitarian response coordination**, and contribute to reducing inequalities that endanger the health and lives especially of women and girls. Population data is necessary for understanding the changing characteristics and needs of different population groups and ensuring no one is left behind.
- **Increased investments are required to benefit from the data revolution.** Priority should be given to strategic support for data and statistical capacity-building and for designing safe, ethical data-collection protocols that yield comprehensive individuals of people and societies.
- **Gender equality must be at the heart of financial resource allocation, policymaking, and institutional reforms** to create sustainable economic and social systems that empower women and girls as key contributors to, and beneficiaries of, sustainable development.
- **Protecting social sector spending, especially on health, is key to economic growth.** Many countries face high debt burdens that outstrip spending on education and health. Debt forgiveness and restructuring, along with strengthening public financial management and efficiency, will be critical to ensuring that countries can maintain essential services.