

ANNUAL REPORT UNFPA SIERRA LEONE

Delivering transformative results

for women and young people

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About **UNFPA**

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

UNFPA calls for urgent action to achieve universal access to sexual and reproductive health, realize reproductive rights for all, and accelerate the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

In Sierra Leone, UNFPA works to reduce preventable maternal deaths, end the unmet need for family planning and eliminate gender-based violence and other harmful practices, with a focus on strengthening data systems; empowering women, adolescents and youth and advancing the commitment to leave no one behind in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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Acknowledgements

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Message from the Representative

technical assistance and

based violence and harmful practices.

and Development (ICPD) agenda, with

further bolstered through the allocation country's 2023 national budget.

have helped to avert 210,000 unintended

and strengthen the quality of services in

800 vulnerable girls back into school needs of young people.

In November 2022, UNFPA embarked examined progress on UNFPA's three the lives of women and young people in Sierra Leone.

Leone

without the generosity of our donors, ICPD Programme of Action. We

Nadia Rasheed

Representative, UNFPA Sierra

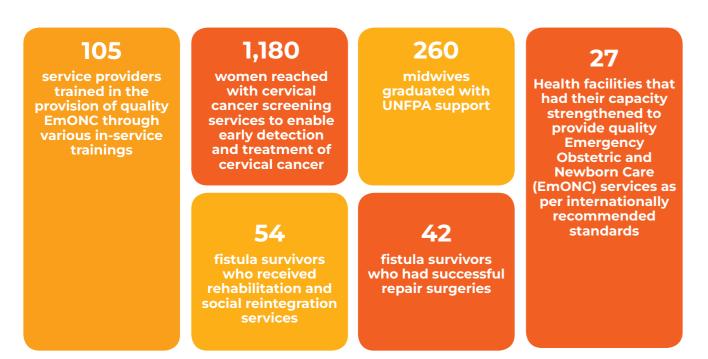
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Chapter 1: Progress across UNFPA's three transformative results

In 2022, UNFPA and partners made strong gains in advancing the organization's three transformative goals in Sierra Leone as summarized below.



1. Reducing preventable maternal deaths



2. Reducing unmet need for family		
550,000	210,000	
women who used modern methods of contraception	unintended pregnancies averted	un cor
55%	99 %	
of women estimated to have their demand for family planning met with a modern method of contraception	service delivery points (SDPs) offering at least three modern contraceptive methods	Silea

3. Reducing gender-based violence and harmful practices

7,971	1,904
marginalized girls reached by life skills programmes that build their health, social and economic assets	victims/survivors of GBV provided with a comprehensive package of services
8	7
communities reporti harmful practices su violence	ich as gender-based

/ planning

76,000

nsafe abortions averted due to modern ntraceptive use

1,700

maternal deaths averted due to modern contraceptive use

90%

DPs offering at ast five modern contraceptive methods

1,800

dignity/hygiene kits distributed to vulnerable women and girls

225

traditional/religious leaders engaged in the fight against child marriage

28

community-based organizations whose capacities were built to promote demand for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and family planning services, and response services for victims of GBV in their communities

Chapter 2: Strategic focus areas

In alignment with UNFPA's Strategic Plan (2022–2025), UNFPA Sierra Leone's priorities in 2022 were structured around four programme outputs:

- 1. Policy and accountability
- 2. Quality of care and services
- 3. Gender and social norms
- 4. Adolescents and youth

1. Policy and accountability

In 2022, UNFPA sustained its support for the creation of an enabling policy, legislative and fiscal environment for the realization of universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of women and adolescent girls and accelerated progress towards the attainment of UNFPA's three transformative results.

Commitment of domestic resources for reproductive health commodities

Noting the importance of sustainable financing for reproductive health and family planning programmes, the Government of Sierra Leone for the first time created a progressively increasing multi-year budget line for the procurement of reproductive health commodities in the national budget for 2023 to 2025. This commitment was further formalized through a Compact Agreement signed between the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, the Ministry of

Finance and UNFPA. The Agreement reaffirms the Government's commitment to improving access to reproductive health and family planning services.

Partnering to meet FP2030 commitments

In order to increase access to rights-based and voluntary family planning, UNFPA partnered with FP2030 – a global partnership platform to help countries meet family planning commitments - to support the Government of Sierra Leone in developing its FP2030 commitments.







Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health Strategy

UNFPA, in collaboration with WHO, UNICEF and other stakeholders, provided technical support to the Ministry of Health and Sanitation for the revision of the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) Strategy. UNFPA facilitated the integration and strengthening of SRH components in the strategy, including those related to family planning, EmONC, obstetric fistula, response to GBV and cervical cancer screening and treatment.

Creating a GBV information management system

As part of a broader systems strengthening approach to addressing GBV in the country, UNFPA partnered with UNICEF to support the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs in establishing a GBV information management system (GBVIMS+) to improve availability of reliable data to inform responses to GBV. In order to strengthen GBV case management, a pool of national trainers was trained in survivor-centred GBV case management. The trainers represented numerous organizations working on GBV responses across the country.

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National Health Supply Chain Strategy (2023-2027)

An integrated National Health Supply Chain Strategy was endorsed by the Ministry of Health and Sanitation. The Strategy, which was supported by UNFPA in consultation with key stakeholders, provides a coordinated, harmonized framework to guide the efforts of all stakeholders committed to ensuring the availability of essential health commodities, including reproductive health commodities. To facilitate implementation of the strategy, UNFPA also supported the development of a business case for streamlined supply chain governance that clarifies roles and responsibilities among supply chain actors and defines coordination mechanisms at the national and district levels.

Disability inclusion

UNFPA partnered with UNDP, UNICEF and the Government of Sierra Leone to launch an initiative aimed at advancing disability inclusion in 2022, with support from the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. As part of the initiative, UNFPA conducted trainings on advocacy, gender mainstreaming and monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for organizations of persons living with disabilities.

UNFPA also supported establishment of a multi-stakeholder coordination committee to strengthen coordination on disability inclusion at national and subnational levels, in partnership with the Ministry of Social Welfare and the National Commission for Persons with Disability. In partnership with Statistics Sierra Leone, UNFPA supported the establishment of a Digital Dashboard on Disability to be integrated into the SDGs Platform as a mechanism to track evidence on disability issues, government and development agencies spending and national interventions in addressing disability.



In order to increase the utilization of SRH services and accelerate progress towards the three transformative results. UNFPA prioritized support to improving the quality of care and services.

Training of midwives, SACHOs and other health care providers

With support from the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, through the Saving Lives in Sierra Leone Programme, UNFPA supported the Ministry of Health and Sanitation in training 260 midwives in 2022, bringing the total number of midwives who graduated with support from UNFPA since 2010 to 1,579. Additionally, six Surgical Assistant Community Health Officers (SACHOs) graduated in 2022 while 165 health care providers benefitted from capacitybuilding training in SRHR. This included training 40 health workers in the provision of DMPA SC, 20 in providing postpartum family planning, 10 in mentorships in SRH and cervical cancer, 41 in helping babies and mothers survive, and 54 in quality improvement methodologies.

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"I was trained with the support of UNFPA through the Saving Lives Programme. I have been working as a midwife in the Small Baby Unit at the Regional Hospital in Makeni for close to six years. With the support of UNFPA and the Saving Lives Programme of the UK, through the trainings and techniques we learnt, we [midwives] continue to ensure safe motherhood and contribute in reducing maternal mortality. I am grateful for such support."

Kadiatu Barrie, Midwife, Paediatric & Neonatal Nurse, Makeni Regional Hospital



Availability of family planning commodities

In 2022, UNFPA supplied modern contraceptives and life-saving maternal health medicines worth US\$3.5 million to Sierra Leone. More than 99 percent of service delivery points (SDPs) – hospitals and peripheral health units covering all districts – were offering at least three modern contraceptive methods, and more than 90 per cent of the SDPs were offering at least five methods. The contraceptive supplies distributed are estimated to offer protection to more than 1,042,000 couples for a one-year period. UNFPA also supported the strengthening of supply chains and improved availability of supplies at the last mile.

One Stop Centres for GBV services

UNFPA partnered with the Government and Rainbo Initiative to support seven One Stop Centres in providing access to survivor-centred, quality essential services, with 2,169 GBV survivors receiving a range of GBV response services including medical and legal services. UNFPA also supported operation of a toll-free helpline for individuals to report GBV, in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs. The helpline also facilitates the referral of victims and survivors of GBV to critical support services.



"Helping a woman to deliver safely gives me satisfaction" - Midwife Francess Johnny

"I often get a sense of satisfaction going home after work reflecting on the safe deliveries I perform, saving the lives of both the mother and baby," remarks Francess Johnny, a midwife at the Bo Government Hospital and the midwife in charge of the hospital's labour ward.

Although Sierra Leone faces one of the highest maternal mortality rates globally, at 717 per 100,000 live births, the country is accelerating efforts towards the SDG target of reducing maternal mortality to less than 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030. One of the critical investments required to achieve this goal is meeting the internationally recommended standard of four midwives for every 10,000 women.

The Saving Lives in Sierra Leone Programme funded by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, through UNFPA, supports the Ministry of Health and Sanitation in training midwives in all the three midwifery schools.

UNFPA further supported the Bo Government Hospital to improve the quality of EmONC services to reduce maternal and newborn mortality. These measures included the extension and refurbishment of the labour ward and the establishment of a dedicated maternal High Dependency Unit to address obstetric emergencies. Francess Johnny explains that with UNFPA's support to the hospital and the training of midwives, the number of safe deliveries has increased, contributing to fewer maternal deaths in the country.

"Despite the challenges, we are here to serve our communities and to ensure the lives of mothers and their babies are safe. Our focus is to contribute to reducing maternal mortality by conducting safe deliveries and we are proud of this work," Johnny says.

She commends the Government of Sierra Leone and partners, including UNFPA, for supporting the training of midwives. "In the past, we used to have over 1,000 deaths for every 100,000 live births. Today, this has reduced to 717 but we know the Government wants this number to come down to less than 300 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2025. We are committed towards this ambition," Johnny says.

She adds: "As a midwife, helping a woman deliver safely gives me satisfaction. I always go home and reflect on my work and I feel proud of my contribution. I am grateful that the Government and development partners like UNFPA are supporting the training of midwives. This said, I personally will appeal for continued support."

Voices from the field

Cervical cancer screenings and repair of obstetric fistula

In 2022, 1,180 women were reached with cervical cancer screening services that enabled early detection and treatment of cervical cancer in supported health facilities, through financial support from the Government of the People's Republic of China and in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Sanitation and the Planned Parenthood Association of Sierra Leone. With financial support from the Government of Iceland and in collaboration with Aberdeen Women's Centre, 104 women and girls were screened for obstetric



fistula and 42 who were found to have the condition underwent successful repair surgery. Fifty-four women and girls received rehabilitation, social reintegration services and psychosocial counselling at Haikal Foundation in Bo District. They also had their capacities in various livelihood skills improved and were provided with seed money to initiate income generating activities.

3. Gender and social norms

UNFPA supports the strengthening of mechanisms and capacities to address discriminatory gender and social norms to advance gender equality.



Male advocacy peer education

UNFPA supported the operation of a Male Advocacy Peer Educator (MAPE) model. to promote ending child marriage in collaboration with Fambul Initiative Network for Equality Sierra Leone. The model establishes a network of respected men in communities to advocate for the ending of harmful practices. In 2022, 44 MAPEs across three districts facilitated community dialogues on child marriage, teenage pregnancy, GBV and other harmful practices, and promoted positive masculinity to meaningfully engage men in advancing gender equality and women's rights. A total of 5,500

students and community members, including 2,980 females and 2,520 males, were reached through the MAPE model to create awareness about the negative effects of child marriage and other harmful practices.

Accelerating progress towards ending child marriage

Nearly 8,000 adolescent girls were reached with life skills interventions through safe spaces supported by UNFPA in collaboration with Restless Development and Women in Crisis Movement. The safe spaces provide an opportunity for girls to meet in a safe and protected environment to empower them to negotiate and challenge harmful practices. Through the safe spaces, girls are provided with regular sessions on life skills, referrals to services as appropriate and counselling by mentors. Twenty-nine new safe spaces were established in 2022, bringing the total number established with UNFPA support to 96 in five districts. Through a life skills intervention, marginalized and underserved adolescent girls in hardto-reach areas were reached with initiatives to raise awareness about their rights and responsibilities, and build their knowledge, skills and capacities to make informed decisions about their lives. A total of 1,155 girls, including 50 girls with disabilities, were provided with educational packages consisting of scholastic materials, school bags, books and uniforms to help them enrol and remain in school. In addition, 1,800 girls were provided with hygiene and sanitary packs to help them remain in school.



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Voices from the field

"Escaping child marriage inspired me to advocate for girls" - Marie Tholley



My mother became a housewife as a teenager but that is not something I should go through. We cannot follow the path our parents have gone through," says 20-year-old Marie Tholley, volunteering with Restless

Growing up, Marie wanted to become a lawyer, an idea inspired by her involvement in school debates. However, in 2012, when she turned 10, her dream of being educated almost got shattered when her father a girl child gets, she would end up as a housewife," she recalls.

arrangement is formalized by his handing over a sum of money to her parents. "The man had been

Knowing that she was about to be married at age 10, Marie, with the help of her paternal aunt, escaped decision."My aunty, who had knowledge of my father's plan, once attempted to take me away from my

In 2022, Marie gained admission to the University of Makeni to pursue a Diploma in Development Studies, something that she says gives her hope for a better future. Marie says she remains motivated to never give up on her hopes and plans for her future. "Escaping child marriage inspired me a lot. It helped me empower young girls and advocate for their education."

Today, Marie is proud of the impact she and other volunteers are making on the lives of young girls in Koinadugu district through her work with Restless Development, supported by the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint

4. Adolescents and youth

the empowerment of young people to realize their right to make informed choices about their lives.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education

In order to ensure that young people are equipped with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values they need to make informed choices, UNFPA supported the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education in integrating comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) into the education curriculum. CSE aims to reduce adolescent pregnancy, child marriage and GBV. Teaching materials were developed and a training of trainers on CSE was conducted for 16 School Quality Assurance Officers and Supervisors. Pilot schools were identified in two target districts, Koinadugu and Pujehun. The 14 trainers also conducted teacher training for 53 teachers in Koinadugu district.

"I became pregnant when I was in Junior Secondary School leve 3 and this affected mv



chances

of continuing with my education. Fortunately for me. with UNFPA's and Irish Aid support, I am happily back in school, pursuing my education. I look forward to becoming a nurse."

Marian Kaili. a beneficiary of the radical inclusion policy in Moyamba district

To advance the ICPD Programme of Action and the three transformative results, UNFPA supported



Reintegration of adolescent girls into formal education

UNFPA supported the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education in reintegrating 800 adolescent girls, who had dropped out of school due to child marriage or pregnancy, back in school. The girls were selected in collaboration with community leaders and community centre coordinators, with support from the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education. The selected girls came from 12 communities in four districts (Kambia, Koinadugu, Moyamba and Pujehun) with high rates of adolescent pregnancy and child marriage. The girls included teenage mothers, pregnant at the time of identification, persons with disabilities and girls from underserved communities. All 800 girls completed the school year.

Empowering youth at risk

In partnership with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Ministry of Agriculture, UNFPA, FAO and UNDP implemented an integrated project titled 'Empowering Youth at Risk as Resources for Sustaining Peace and Community Resilience' in Tonkolili and Kenema Districts with support from the UN Peace-Building Fund.

The joint initiative is helping to transform the lives of at-risk youth by empowering them to become decision-makers and creating opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. UNFPA supported the provision of information on GBV, family planning and SRHR targeting women and girls. With support from UNFPA and Fambul Initiative Network for Equality Sierra Leone, 18 husband schools were formed to engage men as partners and advocates for gender equality. The husband schools provide a platform for engaging men to break down harmful gender stereotypes and to encourage them to actively promote gender equality and women's empowerment.





Youth at risk as resources for sustaining peace and community resilience

The dream of 25-year-old Fanta Kabba of becoming educated was cut short when her mother, the only source of support, became blind. "My father could not give all of us the attention and care I needed in the home because he had many wives."

Forced to stay with her mother in Largoh, Nongowa chiefdom, in Kenema district, getting the required funds to pursue her education was a major challenge for Fanta. "In Largoh, I was staying with a friend who was a commercial sex worker. It was a lucrative trade for her, bringing her enough money; and given my economic difficulties, I eventually joined her," Fanta narrated.

To help empower youth at risk like Fanta to become resources for sustained peace, community resilience and social cohesion, FAO, UNDP and UNFPA are jointly partnering with the Ministry of Youth Affairs in implementing a Peacebuilding Fund Youth at Risk project in Tonkolili and Kenema districts, targeting 418 youth beneficiaries (46 per cent of them women).

The project supports beneficiaries in securing sustainable livelihoods, and increasing access to GBV prevention and protection services, including counselling. It also provides increased avenues for their voices to be heard and for them to participate in decision-making spaces.

To reduce GBV, UNFPA works with Fambul Initiative Network for Equality Sierra Leone as an Implementing Partner in Kenema to increase awareness among both key stakeholders and youth themselves who are at risk, about women's and girls' rights, with the increased involvement of men.

"Through the Youth at Risk Project, I was trained on how to become self-reliant and productive. I was also trained on gender-based violence and sexual reproductive health and rights issues," explained Fanta Kabba, a beneficiary of the project.

"The support largely helped in transforming my life. It capacitated me to a point that I am now engaged in self-reliant activities like agriculture, and most importantly, it has helped in reuniting me with my family. I have been accepted by family members as I am no longer into commercial sex activities. I remain grateful to the UN bodies for their support. They have helped in changing my life."

Voices from the field



Reaching adolescents girls through SRH hubs

UNFPA supported the operation of four adolescent-friendly SRH hubs in hard-toreach areas in Koinadugu district in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, the National Secretariat for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy and other partners. The hubs are aimed at providing adolescent girls with SRH information and services in a manner that is accessible and acceptable to young people.

To enhance referral pathways to link adolescents to additional services, the hubs are strategically located in underserved areas in close proximity to safe spaces supported by the Global Programme to End Child Marriage. In 2022, the SRH hubs reached 3,727 adolescents with information, counselling, family planning and other services. Of these, 2,671 adolescents were reached through direct referrals from safe spaces and 1,056 were reached through joint community outreach, radio discussions and jingles carried out by SRH hub staff, safe space mentors and volunteers raising awareness of SRH issues, and the services offered in the hubs.



It took a little over two years after she sat for the West African Senior School Certificate Examination child to her parents, had dreamed of becoming a nurse. During her first attempt at the WASSCE, she earned six credits including in chemistry, physics and mathematics.

discuss my education. Luckily, back in Freetown, I met someone who proposed to marry me. That was how I chose to get married because I could not further my education," said Sarah.

the baby out. I became helpless, leading to complications as I could not walk," she said about her

Sarah was referred to the Princess Christian Maternity hospital (PCMH), where a caesarean developed serious complications weeks later, and returned home with a fistula.

"At first, I didn't go [to AWC] because I was frustrated, and I almost gave up. I was taken to the

In Sarah's case, however, her husband gave her the support she needed. When she finally chose and undergo the surgery through UNFPA funding.

I have regained my dignity as a woman, I still have the dream of being a nurse. I am hopeful of becoming one, one day."

Voices from the field

Overcoming fistula: the story of Sarah Bangura

Chapter 3: UNFPA partners

UNFPA works closely with partners from the Government of Sierra Leone, donor governments, the UN, multilateral organizations, civil society and community based organizations in advancing the organization's three transformative results.

UNFPA extends its appreciation to the following development partners who made the achievement of the 2022 results possible through their generous financial contributions to the 7th Country Programme.



Donor partner	Areas of collaboration
China	Improving the quality of maternal health and establishing a model programme for cervical cancer screening and treatment.
Iceland	Addressing obstetric fistula and expanding access to quality integrated SRH services including EmONC, life skills through safe spaces for adolescent girls, addressing GBV and harmful cultural practices.
Ireland	Supporting CSE and reintegration of girls into schools, and health and protection services for adolescents.
Italy	Ensuring continuity of EmONC at PCMH during the COVID-19 pandemic and after.
Japan	Building resilience for the continuity of essential SRH services during the COVID-19 pandemic and after.
United Kingdom	Providing human resources for health with a focus on midwifery education and the surgical training programme.

UNFPA is also grateful to the following implementing partners:

Government

- Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs

- and Child Marriage
- Statistics Sierra Leone

NGO

- Aberdeen Women's Centre
- CapaCare
- Haikal Foundation
- Restless Development
- Women in Crisis Movement Sierra Leone





Government of Iceland Ministry for Foreign Affairs





From the People of Japan







UNFPA: Delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is **safe** and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

