

5 BEST PRACTICES IN ACCELERATING ACCESS TO SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

IN CAMEROON



UNFPA's interventions in Cameroon in the course of its 8th Cooperation Program (2022-2026) are targeted toward achieving the Three Transformative Results, which are :



Ending unmet need for Family Planning (FP)



Ending preventable Maternal Death



Ending Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and harmful practices

However, the current Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) indicators still stand very far from this objective.



15.4%

of women use modern contraception



Cameroon records a maternal mortality ratio of

406

per 100.000 live births



32%

of women aged from 15 to 49 are survivors of gender-based violence perpetrated by their intimate partners



1.3%

HIV prevalence among young people aged 15 to 24



0.3%

of women who give birth are affected by obstetric fistula



36%

of girls affected by child marriages



The unmet need for family planning are :

23%
married women

47%
young people



69%

of women who give birth are assisted by qualified health personnel

This situation can be associated with limited access to SRH information and services. Achieving the Three Transformative Results by 2030 requires appropriate approaches and tools. UNFPA Cameroon has tested five successful strategies that need to be scaled up in order to accelerate its progress towards the SDG targets.

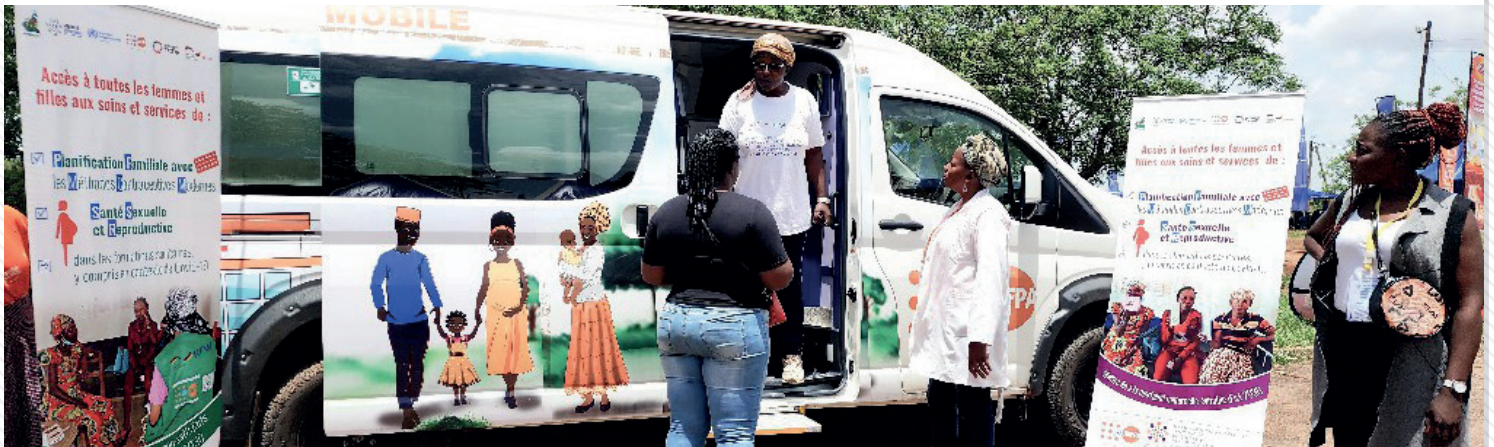
These strategies are the following: **Mobile Clinics, Micro-Takaful, Tricycle ambulance, Alert GBV and Baby-Box.**

Best practice 1



MOBILE CLINICS

A strategic asset to SRH community service delivery



A mobile clinic is a customized motor vehicle equipped with a stretcher and other basic materials and commodities that travels to communities to provide healthcare. It provides a wide variety of health services such as:

- Community-based distribution of contraceptives
- Distribution of lifesaving Reproductive Health (RH) and GBV protection services
- Free HIV and Cancer (breast and cervical) screening in emergency and crisis context
- Community mobilization and outreach campaigns
- Age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health information for adolescents and youths
- Psycho-social support and mental health services

On the sidelines of the University Games held from April 29th to May 6th, 2023, UNFPA and its partners deployed a mobile clinic at the University of Ngaoundere (commonly called the Dang Campus).

The Dang Campus has a student body predominantly made up of adolescents and youths who are sexually active for the most with low access to information on sexual and reproductive health, contraception and other forms of protection against sexual health risks. This competition was an opportunity for UNFPA and its partners to strengthen awareness, give young people and adolescents access to information on sexual and reproductive health, including family planning ; on Gender-Based Violence, prevention of teenage pregnancies, unintended pregnancies, as well as STI/HIV prevention. Thus, for seven days, a mobile team supported by UNFPA was on an advanced strategy to offer integrated sexual and reproductive health services to young people and members of the local community. To achieve that, the mobile clinic was stationed at the heart of the Games Village.



3,000

young people received services on RH/FP/GBV/MHM/ STI/HIV



64,800

male condoms were distributed



7,200

female condoms were distributed

It is worth noting that in 2022, UNFPA had deployed 5 mobile clinics to offer free Family Planning services in hard to-reach communities of the East, Adamawa and the flood-affected communities in the Far North Region of Cameroon.

Best practice 2



TRICYCLE AMBULANCE

Improved referral to ensure safe-birth in hard-to-reach communities



A tricycle ambulance is a type of emergency response vehicle to transport patients from hard-to-reach areas to the closest health facility. From 2018 to 2022, UNFPA implemented the Maternal, Infant and Newborn Health Support Project funded by the Government of Cameroon and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) in the Far North, North, Adamawa and East Regions. The aim of this project was to strengthen the health system to deliver quality and integrated health services to reduce maternal and newborn mortality. One important component of this project was establishing innovative and community-driven referral and counter-referral systems to enable women and girls to access services. Among other things, the project provided 165 tricycle ambulances to 106 local community health facilities. Wogomdou, a hard-to-reach village in the Adamawa Region received 2 for its 4,000 inhabitants.



Hassana Yawa

Tricycle ambulance rider, Wogomdou community.

The tricycle ambulance rider has in two years saved over 25 lives in Wogomdou community - Galim -Tignere Subdivision, Faro and Deo Division, Adamawa Region – by rushing them to hospital. He knows neither rest hours nor rest days. Every time is work time. When duty calls, Hassana Yawa is always ready. As one of the four volunteer riders for the two community-managed tricycle ambulances, the 46-year old part time commercial motorbike rider has since 2018 helped in saving the lives of about 25 fellow Wogomdou dwellers, mostly

women in complicated labor. Yawa has always rushed them for referral to the Wogomdou Integrated Health Centre or to the Galim-Tignere Subdivisional Medical Centre, 22 km away, both highly equipped and their staffs trained by UNFPA.

“In the past, patients in critical conditions were transported to hospital on locally-made stretchers; with some losing their lives on the way. But since UNFPA donated the tricycle ambulances in 2018, we have not experienced any such problems as everyone is transported safely and comfortably to hospital. Tricycle ambulances are equipped with beds for patients and seats for caregivers”, said Hassana. *“When roads become impassable for the ambulance to get to some homes, I use my motorbike to transport patients to where the tricycle is parked. Before, our people spent as much as 5,000 FCFA to refer patients on commercial motorbikes to Galim-Tignere. Today, they transport them for free. I volunteer my services because I want to see lives saved”,* he stressed with pride. Hassana explained that the system is sustainable because each household pays an annual contribution of 2,400 F CFA. The money is used for fueling and maintenance. With about 500 households with nearly 4,000 inhabitants, Wogomdou has registered no maternal death throughout the years 2019- 2021.



165

tricycle ambulances provided



106

community-driven health facilities



Wogomdou applied free transportation of pregnant women



Households contribute for a yearly 2,500 XAF for maintenance

Best practice 3



MICRO-TAKAFUL

A blend of health coverage, social protection and economic empowerment for GBV and obstetric fistula survivors



Micro-Takaful is a social protection mechanism put in place in Cameroon. It protects the most vulnerable pregnant women against the financial risks associated with pregnancy and supports the socio-economic reintegration of Obstetric Fistula (OF) and GBV survivors.

Based on Islamic solidarity, MicroTakaful is powered by a subsidy to buy vouchers for health care services for the targeted pregnant women, as well as individual contributions of women running income-generating activities. Micro-Takaful ensures those contributions do not exceed 10% of the project cost.

Operational as a component of the Maternal, Infant, and Newborn Support Project, implemented by UNFPA under the IsDB funding since 2020, Micro-Takaful covered 11 health districts in the Far North, North, and Adamawa Regions. It involved 47 women-led associations and enabled 5,098 pregnant women to buy subsidized vouchers to give birth in health facilities. Moreover, 300 women were supported to start income-generating activities, pulling them out of poverty by giving them security and hope of becoming financially self-sustaining.



11

health districts covered



47

women-led associations involved



5,098

pregnant women benefited from health checks



300

GBV and OF survivors supported to begin income generating activities

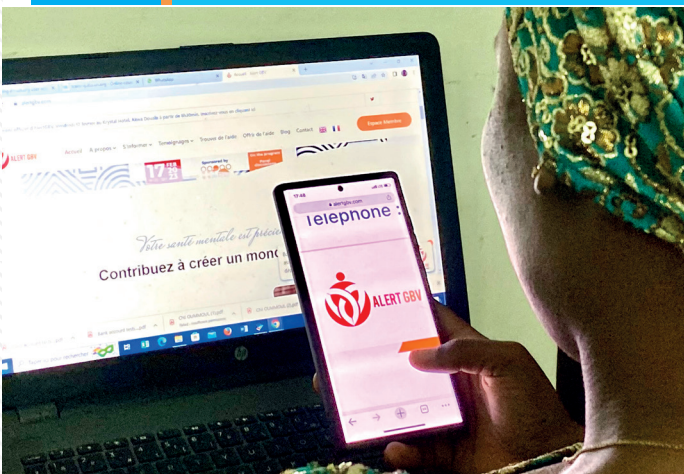
Best practice 4



ALERT GBV
INFORM. REPORT. SUPPORT

ALERT GBV

Using Digitalization to fight GBV



Innovation means creating and scaling up solutions with potential to transform the lives of women, youths and adolescents. UNFPA recognizes innovation and digitalization as accelerators to help achieve the Three Transformative Results by 2030. Innovation and technology have the potential to open new doors for the global empowerment of women, girls and other marginalized groups.

The "Alert GBV" online platform, is a website with a free downloadable mobile application, for the timely access and referral of survivors to GBV related services. The platform is aimed at giving survivors an opportunity to speak out anonymously, a space to raise awareness and inform on GBV and other harmful practices and depression including child marriage as well as a bridge to build an online community of support. The platform integrates automated messaging (chatbot) using personalized and adapted language to encourage survivors to express themselves and become aware of GBV as well as refer them to available services. As at now, 220 persons have used the chatbot with 60 of them opening up on their situation and seeking help. Further, 75 entities have registered on the platform



220

people used the chatbot. 60 of them could speak about their situation and seek help



75

entities registered to be part of our partner network and be considered support entities for survivors of GBV

Best practice 5



BABY-BOX

A price winning strategy helping local communities to abandon home births

The Baby-Box Strategy is a mechanism designed to motivate pregnant women to go to health facilities during pregnancy, especially those in communities where they usually give birth at home. The use of health facilities sharply declined during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2022). It is in this context that the Ministry of Public Health, the IsDB and UNFPA developed the Baby-Box Strategy.

A “Baby-Box” is a kit made up of diapers, baby clothes, soap, a piece of cloth for the mother, a singlet suit for the father, and other small hygiene items. It is given to mothers right after delivery as an incentive for accepting to give birth in a healthcare facility with the assistance of skilled health personnel despite the common practice of giving birth at home.

In the Mindif Health District, it was observed that skilled birth attendance increased by 9 times from 5 to 45 births per month. Overall since 2020, UNFPA and its partners have distributed 2,261 Baby-Boxes in their areas of intervention in the Far North, North, Adamawa and East Regions of Cameroon. Pregnant women and their partners who benefited from these kits attended antenatal visits and postnatal mother and newborn care. They also benefited from postpartum Family Planning counseling and services.

This achievement got the Baby-Box Strategy to win a global UNFPA Award in Innovation, in the Impact Drivers Category. UNFPA Cameroon and its partners are determined to scale up the implementation of this good practice during the 8th Cooperation Program (2022-2026) as a strategic option to accelerate the fight against preventable maternal death.



2,261

Baby-Boxes distributed since 2020



Baby-Boxes increased skilled birth attendance in the Mindif Health District from

05

▶ 45

births per month

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◆ UNFPA staff deployed at Ministry of Health

◆ Obstetric Fistula Care Center

◆ Midwives vocational school

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