

# Delivering for Women and Young People

in Eastern Europe  
and Central Asia





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

# UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, expands the possibilities for women and young people to lead healthy and productive lives.

UNFPA is the lead United Nations agency for delivering a world where:

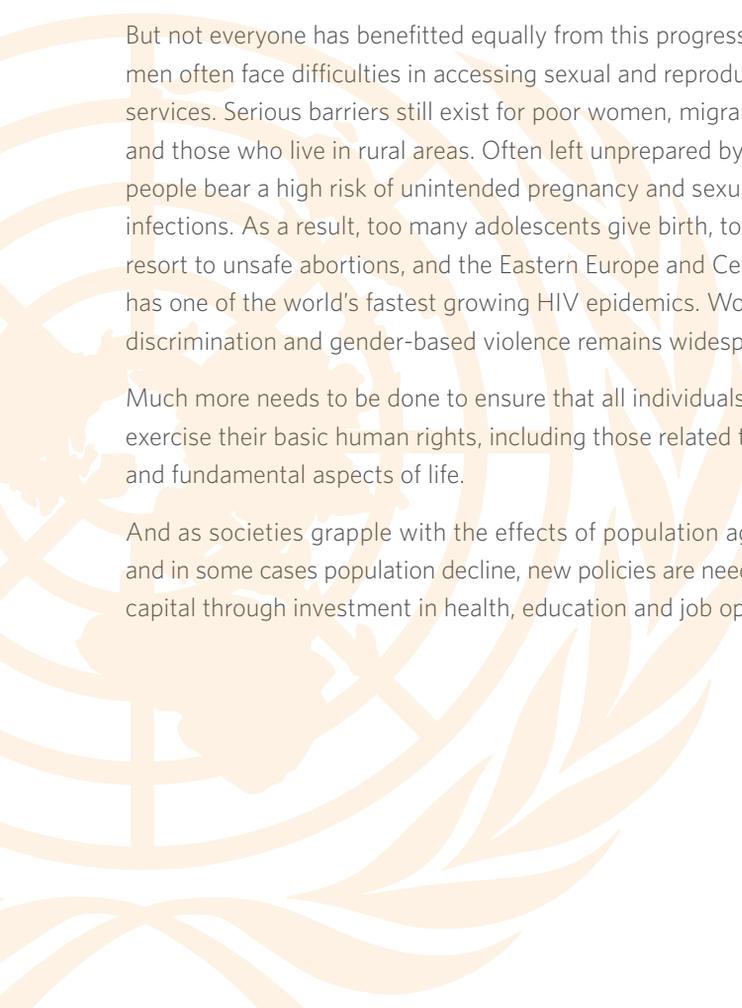
- every pregnancy is wanted
- every childbirth is safe
- every young person's potential is fulfilled

We are making real progress. Since UNFPA started working in Eastern Europe and Central Asia in the early 1990s, the number – and rate – of women dying from pregnancy or childbirth has nearly halved. Women are better able to plan when to have children – and how many. Young people are more connected and empowered than ever before.

But not everyone has benefitted equally from this progress. Young women and men often face difficulties in accessing sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. Serious barriers still exist for poor women, migrants, ethnic minorities and those who live in rural areas. Often left unprepared by school, young people bear a high risk of unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. As a result, too many adolescents give birth, too many women resort to unsafe abortions, and the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region has one of the world's fastest growing HIV epidemics. Women face persistent discrimination and gender-based violence remains widespread.

Much more needs to be done to ensure that all individuals in the region can exercise their basic human rights, including those related to the most intimate and fundamental aspects of life.

And as societies grapple with the effects of population ageing, migration, and in some cases population decline, new policies are needed to build human capital through investment in health, education and job opportunities.





## A world where every pregnancy is wanted

Few things have a greater impact on a woman's life than the number and spacing of her children. That's why international agreements have affirmed repeatedly that individuals have the right to freely decide when (or if) to start a family and how many children to bear.

Yet many women still lack access to the quality services and supplies needed to manage their fertility. Fewer than 50 per cent of women in Eastern Europe and Central Asia use modern methods; in some countries, even fewer than 20 per cent. The main reasons: poor counseling, high costs, and lack of choice and unreliable supply of contraceptives.

Getting more women to use modern contraceptives saves lives and allows people to fulfill their potential. It helps bring down the number of unwanted pregnancies. It would reduce the region's high abortion rates (there are an estimated 360,000 unsafe abortions annually in Eastern Europe alone). And it would slow down the rapid growth of the HIV epidemic (affecting 1.4 million people in the region, an increase of over 50 per cent since 2001).

### **This is what we do:**

Train health workers to deliver quality family planning services

Support youth-friendly reproductive health care

Assist with the prevention of cervical cancer and infertility

Strengthen health sector responses to gender-based violence

Promote new approaches that ensure those in need have access to contraceptives

Strengthen procurement capacities for reproductive health supplies

Supply contraceptives in humanitarian emergency situations

*In Central Asia in 2012, UNFPA helped procure contraceptives worth 863,144 couple-years of protection.*



# every childbirth is safe

We know how to save almost all women who die giving life. The first step is to ensure they can plan their pregnancies and space their births. Skilled birth attendance at delivery, with backup emergency obstetric care and essential supplies in place, is also critical. Perhaps the most challenging aspect of reducing maternal death and disability is finding ways to reach all women, even those in the poorest, most remote areas, and those belonging to marginalized groups such as national minorities, migrants and women with disabilities.

This involves bolstering health systems. Most countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia already have well-established systems with at least basic infrastructure and skilled professionals. But more needs to be done to ensure that SRH services meet quality standards and are equally accessible to everyone. The goal is for women to receive a continuum of preventive and curative services, according to their needs over time and across different levels of health systems. This approach saves money and saves lives.

## **This is what we do:**

Work with ministries and service providers to ensure quality SRH services

Train midwives and health workers

Ensure reliable supplies of essential medicines and equipment

Strengthen emergency obstetric care

Supply clean birthing kits following disasters

Support integration of reproductive health packages in national disaster preparedness plans

*The region has achieved almost universal access to antenatal care, and skilled personnel attend 95 per cent of births. Over the past decade, maternal mortality fell from 64 to 34 per 100,000 live births.*



## and every young person's potential is fulfilled

People under 25 constitute 22 per cent of the region's population - and that figure rises to around 30 per cent in Central Asia. Their reproductive choices will shape future demographic trends.

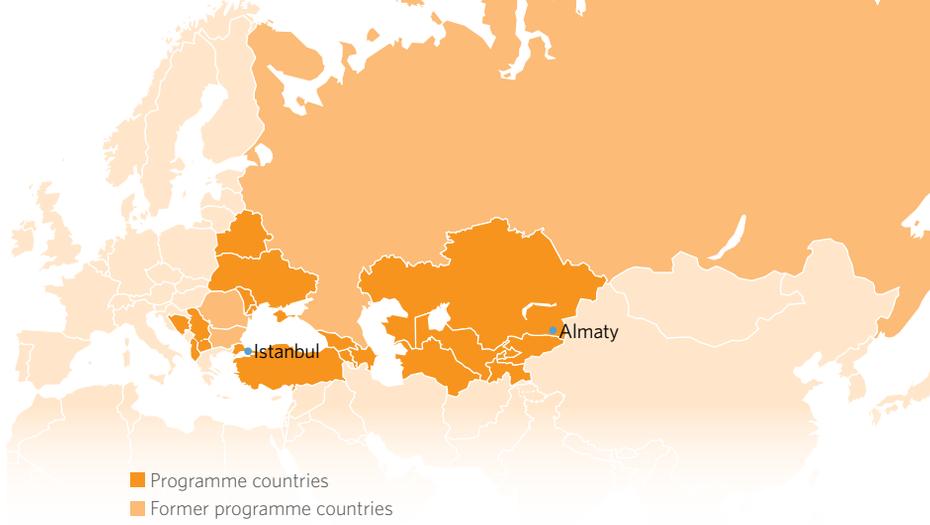
UNFPA advocates for the rights of young people, including the right to accurate information and services related to sexuality and reproductive health. Empowered with knowledge and skills to protect themselves and make informed decisions, they can realize their full potential and contribute to economic and social transformation. Young people that belong to disadvantaged groups, including migrants, rural youth and young unmarried women, need particular attention.

Investing in young people is one of the smartest investments a country can make. As next generation parents, teachers and leaders, they can help break the cycle of poverty, strengthen the social fabric and create a sustainable future.

### **This is what we do:**

- Promote young people's human rights
- Prevent sexually transmitted infections, including HIV
- Engage young people in decisions that affect them
- Support age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education
- Combat harmful practices such as early marriage, pre-natal sex selection and gender-based violence
- Encourage leadership

*The region's adolescent pregnancy rate has been in decline and now stands at 32 per 1,000 women aged 15-19. However, it remains much higher in some countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as among Roma populations.*



- Programme countries
- Former programme countries

In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, UNFPA has a Regional Office in Istanbul and a Subregional Office in Almaty, as well as offices in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), Kyrgyzstan, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. *The boundaries shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.*

## How we work

UNFPA is on the ground improving lives in about 150 countries worldwide and nearly 20 countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

The Fund is a catalyst for progress. Working with governments, and through partnerships with other United Nations agencies, civil society, parliamentarians, and the private sector, we make a real difference in the lives of millions of people, especially those most vulnerable.

Our Regional Office in Istanbul and the Subregional Office in Almaty provide strategic support and technical expertise to the country offices that work on the front lines of development. We deliver policy advice, guidance, training and support to empower our partners and colleagues in the field.

UNFPA anticipates and responds to tomorrow's challenges today. We help countries use population data to better understand and address the region's demographic changes.

And we help ensure that the reproductive health and rights of women and young people, and achieving gender equality, remain at the very centre of development.

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