



# South-South Cooperation as a Mode of Engagement

## Innovative Programme Solutions



# South-South Cooperation as a Mode of Engagement: Innovative Programme Solutions

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**South-South Cooperation  
as a Mode of Engagement**  
**Innovative Programme Solutions**



# Foreword

This publication, along with an earlier volume in 2018, showcases inspiring stories of commitment and excellence in South-South cooperation. We hope the promising partnerships highlighted offer insights and lessons that encourage further fruitful cooperation among countries of the Global South.

The 18 cases documented in the pages that follow focus on population and housing census; sexual and reproductive health, including maternal health, family planning and midwifery services; gender-based violence prevention and response, and issues related to youth and ageing. The publication also includes brief highlights of UNFPA's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Just over 75 years since the founding of the United Nations, the world is facing a time of great disruption, compounded by an unprecedented global health crisis with severe economic and social impacts. The COVID-19 pandemic is a stark reminder of the need for cooperation across borders, sectors and generations. Now more than ever, the world needs to come together. This spirit of shared responsibility will also determine whether we achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in the midst of new challenges to populations, communities and families.

In 2019, the Second High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation marked the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action on Technical Cooperation Among Developing Countries. Discussion focused on the opportunity South-South cooperation presents to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the globally agreed blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet. South-South and triangular cooperation is also crucial for realizing the goals of the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), which guides UNFPA's work.

As a United Nations agency working in more than 150 locations, with a global network of country and regional offices, UNFPA is well positioned to locate where the best technical knowledge exists and to support the sharing of that knowledge, ideas, and solutions.

As we look to accelerate progress towards the 2030 and ICPD agendas, we need to work together to build on development successes from the South and to share them widely through strengthened cooperation. It is our hope that this publication illustrates why that is so important.

**Dr. Natalia Kanem**

Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations  
Executive Director, UNFPA



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*UNFPA Executive Director, Dr. Natalia Kanem, during the SSC agreement signing with the FIOCRUZ President, Dr. Nísia Trindade Lima. July, 2019*



FIJI: SAMOA

# Maternal Health Services in the Midst of a Measles Outbreak

*Retired Fijian  
midwives deployed  
to support  
maternal health  
services during the  
measles epidemic.  
Samoa, February,  
2020*

**This collaboration was undertaken between December 2018 and February 2020 as a response to the maternal health needs during the measles outbreak in Samoa. The key partners in this collaboration were the Samoa Ministry of Health and Medical Services and the Fiji Ministry of Health and Medical Services, the Ministries of Health of Samoa and Fiji, and the UNFPA Pacific Sub-Regional Office (PSRO).**

## CONTEXT

The Samoa 2019 Measles outbreak was a national emergency which placed a very high demand on Samoan health workers who had to work round the clock on the response. Based on similar successful experiences with midwives in Tonga and Vanuatu during two cyclones that hit the Pacific between 2014 – 2017, the Government of Samoa mobilized and flew in retired midwives from Fiji to assist during this measles outbreak. As the local nurses and midwives were already overwhelmed during this outbreak, the situation created a gap in maternal health and family planning services in major facilities. To ensure continuity and quality of service, the Fiji midwives were mobilized to augment MH services through the Emergency Medical Team platform. This was coordinated by WHO Samoa following negotiations with the Fiji Government through the facilitation of UNFPA.

## PROGRAMME APPROACH

As part of this effort, the UNFPA PSRO deployed ten retired highly qualified and currently licensed midwives, from across Fiji to stay in Samoa for ten weeks between December 2019 – February 2020. Their mission was to support the maternity and labor wards of the nation's hospitals as local midwives had been deployed to other areas to support the measles response nationwide. Based on the previous Tonga and Vanuatu experience, midwives with adequate skills and experience in maternal and child health and family planning were identified. All the selected recently retired midwives were licensed and had the required competencies.

This deployment was supported by the Ministry of Health Fiji in collaboration with the Nursing Council of Fiji with financial support from UNFPA. Samoa



made the request to UNFPA and the Fiji government's Ministry of Health and Medical Services as part of the response to the call for emergency medical teams.

In the past, UNFPA has supported the deployment of the midwives for Tropical Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu in early 2015, TC Winston I Fiji I 2016 and Cyclone Gita in Tonga in mid-2018. Through a partnership with the Fiji Ministry of Health and Medical Services, facilitated by the Fiji Chief Nurse, UNFPA has facilitated support during the emergency situation in these three countries to provide antenatal care, delivery services, postnatal care, comprehensive and basic emergency obstetrics and new born care, and family planning services. The approach was highly commended as an effective South-South cooperation during times of emergencies as it mitigates risk situations where health workers are overworked/overstretched to ensure continued services and effective health outcomes.

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**“It was God’s calling for us to serve the people of Samoa during the measles crisis. The ten weeks have been very challenging but we are happy that our mission was accomplished and has been successful,” said Ms. Uluimalolo (one of the retired nurses)**

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The deployment of 10 midwives to Samoa at the critical phase of the measles epidemic aimed to ensure continued access for pregnant women to emergency obstetric and newborn care services in selected health facilities. In addition, their deployment helped ensure the stabilization of essential RH services in the Samoa health facilities a time when government resources were diverted to the measles vaccination. UNFPA support at this time was critical as essential RH services had been compromised by inadequate workforce to manage pregnancy related complications. Logistically, UNFPA covered the costs of internal and international travel of the midwives as well as in-country costs through their daily subsistence allowance.

Specifically, the deployment of these retired nurses directly enabled 144 women to deliver safely via normal



*A Fijian midwife counseling a pregnant woman on FP and SRH. Leulumoega District Hospital. Samoa. February, 2020*

deliveries; assisted 16 Caesarean sections; conducted 534 antenatal visits, 8, postnatal visits, 535 immunized patients; and 276 family planning clients. As part of their contribution to health emergencies during humanitarian situations such as this, this approach is considered economical since they are not hired as consultants but rather as volunteers.

UNFPA also helped Samoa in finalizing the necessary terms of reference to ensure a clear scope of responsibilities for the midwives, and facilitated the logistical requirements for the mission. Coordination with WHO in Samoa was done by UNFPA in parallel, as part of the overall response coordination by the technical teams requested by the government.

The ratio of health workers to the size of the population in general is already relatively low in small economies such as in the Pacific Island Countries. This initiative helped to ensure that the ratio is augmented, and that pregnant women continue to receive safe and high-quality maternal health services during an emergency situation.

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