

# Pre-positioning life-saving supplies to improve disaster preparedness



In emergencies, an essential component of an effective humanitarian response is ensuring the availability of supplies that meet needs associated with sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence. UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, strategically pre-positions such supplies in disaster-prone countries and regional hubs in the Asia-Pacific region. This has helped UNFPA respond faster, better and more efficiently to humanitarian crises across the region.

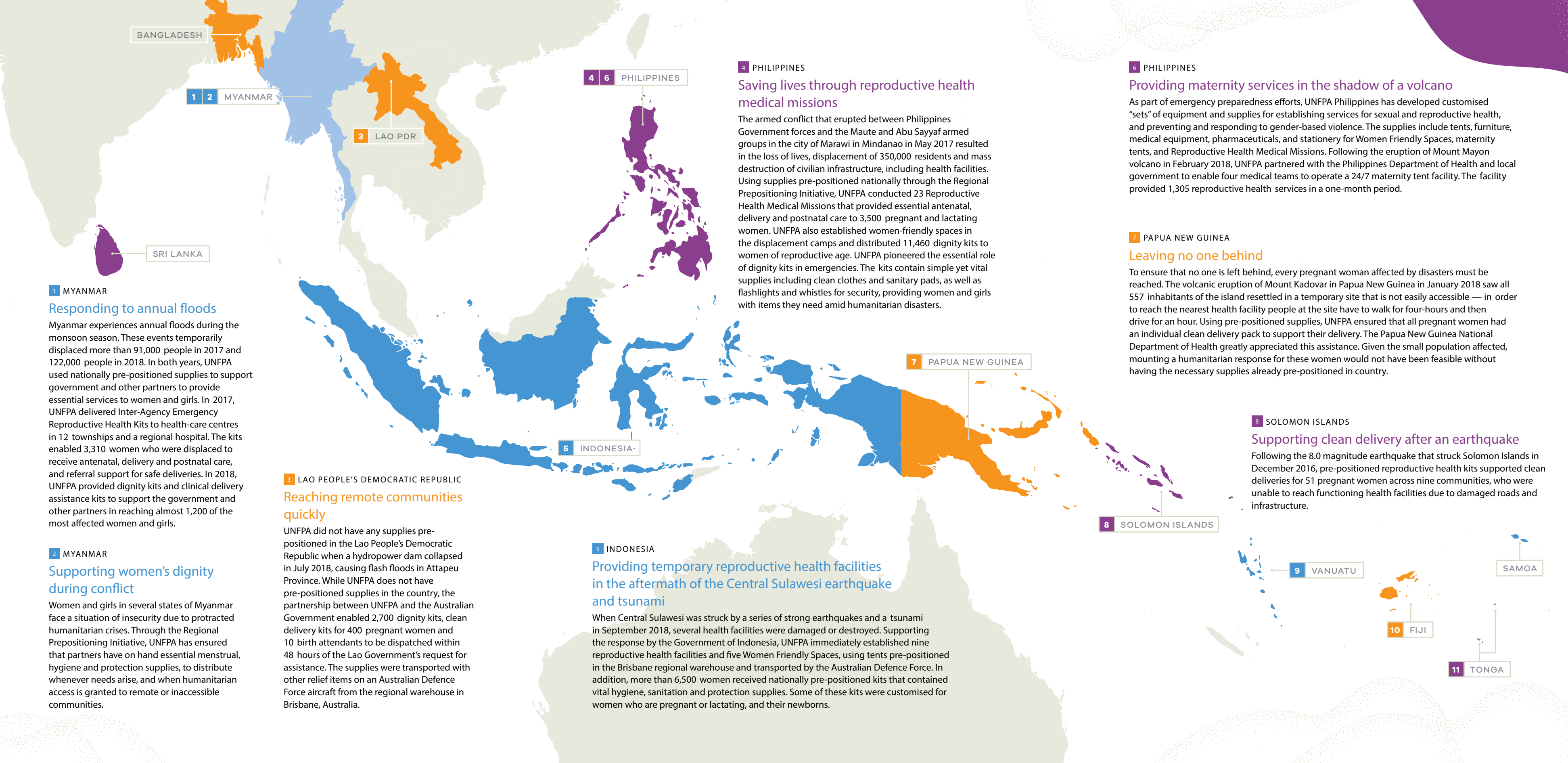
## Overview

UNFPA aims to ensure that, during emergencies, the specific needs of women and girls in the Asia-Pacific region are met by governments, United Nations agencies and key stakeholders. One of the ways it seeks to improve this is through a regional initiative that supports the timely distribution of essential supplies by trained partners.

Since 2015, the UNFPA Asia-Pacific Regional Office has managed a flagship Regional Pre-positioning Initiative, supported by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Between May 2017-2019, over US\$ 1 million of crucial supplies for sexual and reproductive health, and gender-based violence directly reached almost 84,000 people affected by 28 emergencies across 10 countries.

As of 2019, the Regional Prepositioning Initiative focuses on 11 priority countries: Bangladesh, Fiji, Indonesia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Tonga and Vanuatu. However, supplies are used across the Asia-Pacific region wherever they are needed most. Supplies are also pre-positioned in regional hubs in Brisbane, Australia, and Suva, Fiji.

 When Tropical Cyclone Gita devastated 'Eua Island, Tonga, destroying 25-year-old Pipiena Tuivai's home, a UNFPA dignity kit provided essential sanitation, hygiene and protection supplies for her and her children. ©Tomoko Kurokawa/UNFPA PSRO



**1 MYANMAR**

**Responding to annual floods**

Myanmar experiences annual floods during the monsoon season. These events temporarily displaced more than 91,000 people in 2017 and 122,000 people in 2018. In both years, UNFPA used nationally pre-positioned supplies to support government and other partners to provide essential services to women and girls. In 2017, UNFPA delivered Inter-Agency Emergency Reproductive Health Kits to health-care centres in 12 townships and a regional hospital. The kits enabled 3,310 women who were displaced to receive antenatal, delivery and postnatal care, and referral support for safe deliveries. In 2018, UNFPA provided dignity kits and clinical delivery assistance kits to support the government and other partners in reaching almost 1,200 of the most affected women and girls.

**2 MYANMAR**

**Supporting women's dignity during conflict**

Women and girls in several states of Myanmar face a situation of insecurity due to protracted humanitarian crises. Through the Regional Prepositioning Initiative, UNFPA has ensured that partners have on hand essential menstrual, hygiene and protection supplies, to distribute whenever needs arise, and when humanitarian access is granted to remote or inaccessible communities.

**3 LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC**

**Reaching remote communities quickly**

UNFPA did not have any supplies pre-positioned in the Lao People's Democratic Republic when a hydropower dam collapsed in July 2018, causing flash floods in Attapeu Province. While UNFPA does not have pre-positioned supplies in the country, the partnership between UNFPA and the Australian Government enabled 2,700 dignity kits, clean delivery kits for 400 pregnant women and 10 birth attendants to be dispatched within 48 hours of the Lao Government's request for assistance. The supplies were transported with other relief items on an Australian Defence Force aircraft from the regional warehouse in Brisbane, Australia.

**5 INDONESIA**

**Providing temporary reproductive health facilities in the aftermath of the Central Sulawesi earthquake and tsunami**

When Central Sulawesi was struck by a series of strong earthquakes and a tsunami in September 2018, several health facilities were damaged or destroyed. Supporting the response by the Government of Indonesia, UNFPA immediately established nine reproductive health facilities and five Women Friendly Spaces, using tents pre-positioned in the Brisbane regional warehouse and transported by the Australian Defence Force. In addition, more than 6,500 women received nationally pre-positioned kits that contained vital hygiene, sanitation and protection supplies. Some of these kits were customised for women who are pregnant or lactating, and their newborns.

**4 PHILIPPINES**

**Saving lives through reproductive health medical missions**

The armed conflict that erupted between Philippines Government forces and the Maute and Abu Sayyaf armed groups in the city of Marawi in Mindanao in May 2017 resulted in the loss of lives, displacement of 350,000 residents and mass destruction of civilian infrastructure, including health facilities. Using supplies pre-positioned nationally through the Regional Prepositioning Initiative, UNFPA conducted 23 Reproductive Health Medical Missions that provided essential antenatal, delivery and postnatal care to 3,500 pregnant and lactating women. UNFPA also established women-friendly spaces in the displacement camps and distributed 11,460 dignity kits to women of reproductive age. UNFPA pioneered the essential role of dignity kits in emergencies. The kits contain simple yet vital supplies including clean clothes and sanitary pads, as well as flashlights and whistles for security, providing women and girls with items they need amid humanitarian disasters.

**6 PHILIPPINES**

**Providing maternity services in the shadow of a volcano**

As part of emergency preparedness efforts, UNFPA Philippines has developed customised "sets" of equipment and supplies for sexual and reproductive health, and preventing and responding to gender-based violence. The supplies include tents, furniture, medical equipment, pharmaceuticals, and stationery for Women Friendly Spaces, maternity tents, and Reproductive Health Medical Missions. Following the eruption of Mount Mayon volcano in February 2018, UNFPA partnered with the Philippines Department of Health and local government to enable four medical teams to operate a 24/7 maternity tent facility. The facility provided 1,305 reproductive health services in a one-month period.

**7 PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

**Leaving no one behind**

To ensure that no one is left behind, every pregnant woman affected by disasters must be reached. The volcanic eruption of Mount Kadovar in Papua New Guinea in January 2018 saw all 557 inhabitants of the island resettled in a temporary site that is not easily accessible — in order to reach the nearest health facility people at the site have to walk for four-hours and then drive for an hour. Using pre-positioned supplies, UNFPA ensured that all pregnant women had an individual clean delivery pack to support their delivery. The Papua New Guinea National Department of Health greatly appreciated this assistance. Given the small population affected, mounting a humanitarian response for these women would not have been feasible without having the necessary supplies already pre-positioned in country.

**8 SOLOMON ISLANDS**

**Supporting clean delivery after an earthquake**

Following the 8.0 magnitude earthquake that struck Solomon Islands in December 2016, pre-positioned reproductive health kits supported clean deliveries for 51 pregnant women across nine communities, who were unable to reach functioning health facilities due to damaged roads and infrastructure.

Pre-positioning has been a game changer for UNFPA's humanitarian work in the Asia-Pacific region

**9 VANUATU**

**Helping women affected by the eruption of Mount Ambae**

The eruption of Mount Ambae volcano in Vanuatu in September 2017 followed by protracted volcanic and seismic activity throughout 2018 led to the evacuation of the entire population of Ambae Island to other provinces. Using pre-positioned dignity kits that contain items customised for the Pacific context, UNFPA ensured that 1,000 displaced women had access to hygiene, sanitation and protection items.

**10 FIJI**

**Relief for women facing multiple cyclones**

In the first four months of 2018, back to back Tropical Cyclones Josie and Keni hit Fiji. UNFPA provided 200 women and girls, including women and girls with disabilities, with dignity kits to meet their immediate hygiene and sanitation needs. These kits are customised for the Pacific context and include a lavalava, underwear, sandals and other vital supplies.

**11 TONGA**

**Resupplying hospitals hit by tropical cyclones**

Tropical Cyclone Gita, which hit Tonga in February 2018, was the worst disaster the country had faced in 60 years. Less than two months later, the small Pacific island nation bore the brunt of another major cyclone, Tropical Cyclone Keni, which damaged the 'Eua hospital. Through the Regional Prepositioning Initiative, UNFPA provided life-saving sexual and reproductive health supplies from regional hubs in Brisbane and Suva. These supplies were used to restock the Central Medical Warehouse, and support the hospitals and outreach efforts of the Tongan Ministry of Health. UNFPA provided a range of emergency reproductive health kits, including kits for clinical delivery assistance, rape treatment, treatment of sexually transmissible infections, and vacuum extraction. The kits were used in health facilities across the country, directly benefiting 2,500 people.




## Humanitarian context and challenges

The Asia-Pacific region is the most disaster-prone region in the world. Nearly 45 percent of the world's natural disasters occur in the region, and 95 percent of all people affected by a disaster in 2016 live in Asia-Pacific. Mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change are huge challenges facing all countries in the region, especially Pacific Island nations. The region is also home to a number of protracted crises and long-running conflicts resulting in large refugee and displaced populations.

The UNFPA Asia-Pacific Regional Office works with UNFPA Country Offices in the region to assist governments and civil society partners to reduce disaster risk, and prepare for and respond to emergencies. This is in line with the unique mandate of UNFPA to address sexual and reproductive health, and prevent and respond to gender-based violence during humanitarian crises.

## Building capacity

In order to ensure the effective management and use of sexual and reproductive health supplies in emergencies, the Regional Prepositioning Initiative also supports capacity building initiatives across the priority countries. Between 2015 and 2018, 200 people from UNFPA, governments and partner organisations across eight countries completed humanitarian logistics training, and more than 60 people attended workshops on humanitarian preparedness and gender-based violence in emergencies.

 Papua New Guinea Family Health Association deliver UNFPA's Reproductive Health kits to remote communities around Lake Kutubu, during the Papua New Guinea earthquake response. ©Robyn Drysdale/IPPF Humanitarian

## Pre-positioning has improved the speed, quality and efficiency of humanitarian responses

Pre-positioning has provided new opportunities for UNFPA to advocate for measures to address sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence during humanitarian responses. It has also helped to build trust with governments and other partners. These outcomes assist UNFPA's work in relation to the humanitarian, development and peace-building nexus.

### Pre-positioning allows UNFPA to respond faster

Nationally pre-positioned supplies are readily available to implementing partners in an emergency, whereas those procured in the aftermath of a response often take weeks to arrive.

Even in countries where UNFPA is currently not pre-positioning supplies nationally, the close partnership between UNFPA and the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has enabled supplies from the regional supplies warehouse in Australia to be on the ground within 48 hours of a government's request for assistance.

### Pre-positioning as part of preparedness efforts improves the quality of a response

Pre-positioning supplies enables customisation for the country context before an emergency. For example, dignity kits can include culturally appropriate clothing in suitable sizes.

Many of the priority countries face regular emergencies, and UNFPA has received feedback from affected communities on what they need most during disasters. These lessons on supplies can be built into the preparedness phase of the disaster cycle, to improve the quality of supplies available in the acute phase of a response.

### Pre-positioning reduces transport costs

Transporting supplies by sea freight as a preparedness activity is significantly cheaper than air freighting supplies in the acute phase of a response. For example, during the flood response in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, transport of dignity kits from the supplier to the end beneficiary cost \$1.50 per kit. In contrast, the cost of air freighting dignity kits during the acute phase of the response was quoted at more than \$12 per kit. It also reduces carbon emissions.

### National pre-positioning allows a response in crises that UNFPA would not otherwise be able to engage in

Governments across the Asia-Pacific region have invested significantly in humanitarian preparedness, but do not always have the capacity to fully respond to sexual and reproductive health needs. National pre-positioning of supplies can provide an entry point for UNFPA to support in this area, even when there is no formal request for international assistance.

Having supplies available in a country means that UNFPA can support small-scale responses for which a response might not have been feasible without pre-positioned supplies.

In areas where access to affected communities is compromised because of conflict, it is vital to have supplies pre-positioned that can be immediately used whenever temporary access is granted to humanitarian actors.

### Pre-positioning strengthens partnerships

Pre-positioning has enhanced governments' views of UNFPA as an essential humanitarian partner in the Asia-Pacific region.


Having supplies immediately available has given UNFPA a seat at the table when developing response plans. This enables UNFPA to advocate for the needs of women and girls beyond the provision of supplies.

The benefits of trust with governments, humanitarian actors and partners enable UNFPA to achieve greater results across the humanitarian, development and peace-building nexus in the Asia-Pacific region.

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 UNFPA's emergency supplies are pre-positioned in a warehouse in Brisbane, Australia ready to be dispatched wherever they are needed in the region. ©Branwen Millar/UNFPA APRO

 A professional counsellor from Women In Need provides psychosocial support to women and girls affected by disasters in the UNFPA supported Women Friendly Space in Ratnapura, Sri Lanka. ©Christian Hutter/UNFPA Sri Lanka