



**UN MPTF for Catalytic Finance in Sanitation, Hygiene and Wastewater
2025 Annual Report
REPORTING PERIOD: 1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2025**

| UN MPTF FOR CATALYTIC FINANCE IN SANITATION, HYGIENE AND WASTEWATER | |
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| SCOPE | Global and inter-regional scope |
| PRIORITY AREA/ STRATEGIC RESULTS | <i>Support to SDG 6.2 by 2030: Universal access to safely managed sanitation, hygiene, and MHH, while reducing untreated wastewater in low- and middle-income countries</i> |
| PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● UNFPA● UNCDF● CEWAS |
| IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● National Standard Bodies● UNFPA Country Offices● CSOs |
| PROGRAMME DURATION | 110 months Start 1.10.2024 / End 31.12.2029 |
| BUDGET | US\$ 2,950,000 |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Catalytic Finance in Sanitation, Hygiene and Wastewater (MPTF) successfully focused its 2025 efforts on accelerating market-based solutions and creating an enabling environment to advance SDG 6.2: universal access to safely managed sanitation, hygiene, and Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH). This MPTF is administered by the United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund office (MPTFO).

During the reporting period of January 1 to December 31, 2025, the MPTF significantly expanded its portfolio, approving three key projects totaling \$2,950,000: Menstrual Health & Hygiene: Unlocking Women's Power (UNFPA, approved April 2025), Building Pipeline and Catalysing Investment (UNCDF, approved December 2025), and SanUp: A Catalytic repayable finance fund for Sanitation SMEs in East Africa (CEWAS, approved December 2025).

The UNFPA project, the only initiative under implementation for the majority of the year (June-December 2025), generated critical early achievements in regulatory and fiscal reform across six East and Southern African countries. These achievements reflect a strategic transition from initial engagement to the establishment of institutional systems. By leveraging existing national coordination platforms and promoting South-South learning, the MPTF is building a robust and scalable model for sustained regulatory and market transformation in the region.

I. Purpose

The UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Catalytic Finance in Sanitation, Hygiene, and Wastewater aims to create an enabling environment where investments in sanitation, wastewater management, hygiene, and menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) are better incentivized and thrive. By engaging public and private sectors, MPTF stakeholders foster sustainable and interconnected services that benefit communities in need while creating economic opportunities, promoting inclusiveness, and building circular, self-sustaining sanitation economies and menstrual health markets.

The focus on accelerating financing and market-based solutions for SDG 6.2 provides a platform to drive catalytic finance for growing the sanitation economy, including wastewater treatment and resource recovery, as well as the menstrual health market. Partners leverage their capabilities to attract diverse implementing organizations and mobilize funds towards these goals.

The initiative integrates gender and climate-sensitive factors into decision-making. This includes promoting women's leadership and employment, ensuring equitable access, and supporting activities that combat pollution, conserve biodiversity, and mitigate climate change. Circular economy solutions—such as upcycled sanitation products and biodegradable materials—are prioritized to reduce resource depletion and environmental impact.

The MPTF efforts will establish sanitation, wastewater, and MHH as national priorities that are supported by market-based solutions. Improved regulation, robust business models, and collaborative partnerships will catalyze investments and enhance ecosystem support. Over time, scalable and resilient solutions will emerge, boosting confidence amongst investors and stakeholders. Public-private partnerships will expand, fostering long-term sustainability aligned with ESG principles.

Ultimately, the work of Fund partners will contribute to achieving SDG 6.2 while supporting related SDGs: Zero Hunger (SDG 2), Quality Education (SDG 4), Gender Equality (SDG 5), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10), Climate Action (SDG 13), and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17).

II. Results

i) Narrative reporting on results:

From January to December 2025, the MPTF approved three project proposals

- *Menstrual Health & Hygiene: Unlocking Women's Power: A joint initiative for East and Southern Africa*, UNFPA (approved 29 April 2025)
- *Building Pipeline and Catalysing Investment*, UNCDF (PPG approved 7 October 2025 and full proposal 19 December 2025)
- *SanUp: A Catalytic repayable finance fund for Sanitation SMEs in East Africa*, CEWAS - 19 December 2025

There is a pipeline of projects under development, expected to be approved in Q1/Q2 of 2026.

As such, only the UNFPA project was under implementation for most of the year, as the others were only approved at year end.

For the period June-December 2025, UNFPA has reported high-level achievements including:

- 4/6 countries achieved active participation or progress toward participation in ISO TC 338
- All 6 countries engaged National Standards Bodies and established coordination pathways
- 100+ stakeholders engaged regionally, including government, private sector, and CSOs (e.g., Kenya TC69 expanded to 53 members; Ethiopia convened 30+ stakeholders)
- Multiple countries contributing to global standards processes, including 2 formal technical submissions from Kenya
- 3 countries advancing fiscal reform pathways (Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia)
- Regional advocacy momentum initiated, including 140+ stakeholders convened in Kenya and national forums in Mozambique

Progress across the six target countries reflects a structured but differentiated trajectory, with countries advancing at varying levels of maturity based on existing institutional capacity, stakeholder coordination, and market readiness. The programme has adopted a phased approach to implementation:

- Advanced (Early Movers): Kenya, Nigeria
- Building Foundations: Ethiopia, Uganda
- Early Stage: Mozambique, Zimbabwe

The results presented below reflect a transition from initial engagement to the establishment of systems and platforms that will drive sustained regulatory and market transformation.

Under **Outcome 1**, the program successfully created an enabling environment for aligning with ISO standards. Key achievements include four of the six countries (Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Uganda) reaching active participating status in **ISO TC 338**, allowing them to vote on global technical benchmarks. National Menstrual Health Market Stakeholder Groups were established to ensure standards reflect local needs, with Kenya notably submitting two sets of formal technical reviews to reflect African market realities.

Under **Outcome 2**, the initiative focused on reducing the tax burden across the value chain to improve product affordability. Notable progress was made in **Output 2.1** and **Output 2.2** through the drafting of regulatory reform proposals. In Kenya, a comprehensive incentive package for the 2026/2027 financial

year was drafted in collaboration with the Kenya Association of Manufacturers to reduce taxes on raw materials. Meanwhile, Uganda and Ethiopia have utilized evidence-based mapping to identify value chain bottlenecks, such as high input costs for electricity and packaging, to inform future government submissions

Challenges and lessons learned

Implementation during the reporting period provided important insights into the complexity of multi-sectoral market transformation. While several structural and operational challenges were encountered, these were actively managed through adaptive approaches, strengthened coordination mechanisms, and continuous learning across countries.

- **Fragmented Regulatory & Coordination Landscapes:** The activities are split across multiple platforms and ministries (e.g., Health vs. Education), leading to a lack of a unified voice when lobbying for tax and levy reductions. In Ethiopia, implementation delays were specifically noted due to limited alignment between these existing coordination platforms. The team in respective countries had to navigate the space and map key stakeholders and bring them to the same table to agree on the respective procedures to engage respective wider market stakeholder groups in the ISO TC 388. **Lesson learned:** Early investment in multi-ministry coordination and the use of existing national platforms is critical to accelerate alignment and avoid duplication of efforts.
- **Stakeholder Divergence & Conflicting Interests:** While the main intention of the project is to bring stakeholders with different interests to the same room and create dialogue, it was challenging to manage the conflicting interests of national standard bodies, local manufacturers, and importers. For example, securing concurrence on specific elements of the standards proved difficult. These divergences to some extent delayed the consensus needed to fully engage in ISO TC 388. **Lesson learned:** Structured stakeholder mapping and phased engagement approaches are essential to manage competing interests and build consensus over time.
- **Weak Institutional Capacity:** The project implementation faced capacity issues, particularly the ability of local institutions to rigorously review and provide technical inputs on complex documents sent by ISO TC 388. In such cases, the presence of diverse stakeholders with different technical backgrounds benefited the process by addressing different elements of the documents.
- **Operational & Scheduling Bottlenecks:** Some milestones lagged because the project had to establish rapport with fragmented entities whose busy schedules made it difficult to align a common timeframe for joint meetings. In Uganda, bringing leads from the Ministry of Education and Sports and the National Bureau of Standards together required separate bilateral meetings before a joint session could be scheduled. To mitigate this in Kenya, biweekly check-ins and smaller steering committees were instituted.
- **External Disruptions:** Progress was further stalled by external factors. In Mozambique, floods created a national emergency that led to low stakeholder participation in the first quarter. Additionally, political timings such as national election primaries in Uganda shifted parliamentary focus and availability of key personnel.

Emerging Best Practices

- Leveraging existing national coordination platforms (e.g., technical working groups (TWGs), multi-actor platforms (MAPs)) rather than creating parallel structures
- Anchoring technical work within National Standards Bodies to ensure institutional ownership

- Combining standards development with fiscal reform advocacy to address both supply and affordability simultaneously
- Promoting South-South learning and peer exchange to accelerate progress across countries
- Integrating activities into ongoing national programmes to ensure continuity and sustainability

Qualitative assessment

Based on the progress and some observations during the reporting period, we can make the following qualitative assessment.

(1) Integration with Existing Regulatory Frameworks

Leveraging Established Committees: The project, through the targeted countries, mapped and prioritized high-impact platforms and co-opted existing government taskforces to champion menstrual health as part of a broader economic or health agenda. Rather than creating new parallel structures, the project motivated integration into existing National Mirror Committees and establishing rapport with national standards bodies. This ensured the incorporation of long-term institutional memory and avoided the tendency of repetitive consultation among experts and duplication of efforts.

(2) Strategic Multi-Sectoral Composition

Establishing and/or strengthening inclusive technical committees that are not limited to government officials was the principle of the project. The project created a favorable environment to create a platform for a diverse mix of local manufacturers, importers, researchers, and civil society advocates to ensure standards are both high-quality and commercially viable. Mapping and engaging existing NGO and private sector consortia allows the project to build on years of localized data and community trust rather than starting from scratch.

(3) Regional Peer Mentorship & Knowledge Exchange

By facilitating structured online peer-to-peer learning sessions in coordination with national standards agencies and the SHF, the project enabled countries in the preliminary stages of policy formulation to draw upon established regulatory models. This collaborative knowledge transfer, as seen in the case of Mozambique and Zimbabwe, proved vital in accelerating the creation of their own national MH platforms to engage in the ISO TC 388.

(4) Evidence-Based Advocacy for Fiscal Reform

Collaborating closely with National Associations of Manufacturers helps create technically sound, data-backed proposals for National Treasuries to justify the reduction of taxes and levies on essential health goods. Translating complex technical standards and certification processes into user friendly materials empowers stakeholders to demand quality and helps justify the need for regulatory oversight to policymakers.

(5) Active Global Influence geared by the global south

The initiative successfully facilitated meaningful engagement for low and middle-income countries from the global South, allowing them to actively influence and define this critical process. A key achievement was supporting the advancement of *membership status* from "Observer" to "Participating" within ISO committees. This elevation ensures that national interests are formally represented and provides these nations with a decisive vote in the establishment of global quality benchmarks. Furthermore, the project opened doors for local NGOs, private sector entities, and manufacturers to participate in national platforms typically managed by national standards bodies behind closed doors. This inclusivity ensures that the perspectives and needs of end-users, specifically women and girls directly shape the global standardization landscape.

ii) Indicator Based Performance Assessment:

| UNFPA Project | <u>Achieved Indicator Targets</u> | <u>Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any)</u> | <u>Source of Verification</u> |
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| <p>Outcome 1: Enabling environment created for the adoption of or alignment with ISO standards for menstrual products at the country level.</p> <p>Indicator: Number of countries likely to adopt the ISO menstrual product standard within 18 months of its publication.</p> <p>Baseline:</p> <p>Planned Target: 6</p> | <p>All six participating countries have initiated dialogues with their respective national standards bodies to position UNFPA and its partners for effective implementation. These preliminary conversations have established a constructive environment for project commencement.</p> | | <p>Minutes of regional meetings with focus countries</p> |
| <p>Output 1.1 Participation of the National Standards Bodies in the Target countries in the global standards development process for menstrual products through ISO TC 338</p> <p>Indicator 1.1.1 Number of target countries engaged as participating (P-) members in ISO TC 338</p> <p>Baseline:</p> <p>Planned Target: 6</p> | <p>Currently, four countries are participating actively in the ISO TC 388 process as Participating members.</p> | <p>While Mozambique has initiated talks with INNOQ to enroll as a Participating member, Zimbabwe is currently transitioning from Observing to Participating status.</p> | |
| <p>Output 1.2 National market stakeholders actively contribute to the ISO menstrual product standards development process through a National MH Markets Stakeholder Group</p> <p>Indicator 1.2.1. Number of national MH Market Stakeholder Group convenings held per project country per year</p> <p>Baseline:</p> <p>Planned Target:</p> | <p>Across the six participating countries, comprehensive informal assessments of local contexts were conducted, existing Menstrual Health (MH) platforms were identified and mapped, and official consultations regarding the ISO TC 388 standards were commenced.</p> | | |
| <p>Output 1.3 Give a voice to MH market stakeholders to advocate for the importance of adopting ISO standards at country level</p> <p>Indicator 1.3.1. Number of advocacy campaigns organised per project target country</p> <p>Baseline:</p> <p>Planned Target: 6</p> | <p>Significant strides were made through intensive advocacy in Ethiopia and Kenya, successfully amplifying the voices of diverse stakeholders regarding the ISO TC 388 process. During the reporting period, similar advocacy efforts, though on a smaller scale, were extended to broader menstrual health (MH) stakeholder groups in Mozambique, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Uganda.</p> | <p>Kenya's significant progress was driven by its well-integrated menstrual health (MH) networks; the joint management of national-level platforms proved essential to reaching these top-tier results. On the other hand, other target countries required additional time to identify and coordinate</p> | |

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| | | with appropriate MH platforms capable of supporting project goals. This delay was largely due to the logistical challenge of aligning platform members' schedules to conduct urgent and critical discussions regarding ISO TC 388. | |
| <p>Outcome 2: Create an enabling environment for the reduction in the tax burden on menstrual products across the value chain, leading to a reduced (future) retail price and an improved investment case.</p> <p>Indicator: Number of proposals likely to be adopted by national governments within 24 months after the project end date</p> <p>Baseline:</p> <p>Planned Target: 6</p> | Supportive environment was created in three countries in the reporting period and the rapport was established with regulatory bodies and other stakeholders to check and align efforts with existing initiatives. | | |
| <p>Output 2.1 The submission of a proposal for a regulatory reform of taxes, levies, duties and fees on menstrual products across the value chain by the National MH Markets Stakeholder Group to the national government.</p> <p>Indicator 2.1. Number of proposals for regulatory reform submitted by the National MH Markets Stakeholder Group to the government per project target country</p> <p>Baseline:</p> <p>Planned Target:</p> | Kenya has made strides, as The Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA) and the Kenya Young Parliamentarians Association (KYPA) have been strategically engaged in the presentation of the proposed tax reforms for consideration in FY 2026-27. This led to securing their support and establishing a reliable pathway to achieve meaningful change in the taxes on menstrual products for local manufacture. Efforts are ongoing to support lobbying activities with other key stakeholders, including the majority leader at the Kenya National Assembly and The National Assembly Budget and Appropriations Committee to promote these tax incentives. | Preparatory work is under way in the other countries | |
| <p>Output 2.2 Submit a proposal for streamlining public processes and requirements for importation, exportation, and local manufacture of menstrual products by the National MH Markets Stakeholder Group to the government</p> <p>Indicator 2.2. Number of proposals for streamlining public processes submitted by the National MH Markets Stakeholder Group to the government per project target country</p> <p>Baseline:</p> <p>Planned Target:</p> | | | |

iii) A Specific Story (Optional)

Kenya Championing their involvement in ISO TC 388

In 2025, the UNFPA Kenya Country Office (KCO) and the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) established a strategic partnership to transform the menstrual health market by aligning local manufacturing with international quality standards. Through the KEBS TC 69 technical committee, Kenya transitioned from a passive observer to an active architect of global policy, submitting two sets of technical reviews to the ISO TC 338 preparatory drafts. This process was bolstered by a landmark Menstrual Hygiene Symposium in November 2025, which drew over 140 participants and successfully integrated four leading NGOs, including the Health NGOs Network (HENNET) and White Ribbon Alliance, as formal liaisons to the ISO process. By expanding the committee to 53 diverse stakeholders, UNFPA ensured that the resulting standards reflect the practical needs of both large-scale manufacturers and grassroots civil society.

Simultaneously, the partnership tried to address the economic barriers to product accessibility by drafting a comprehensive roadmap for fiscal and regulatory reform. Collaborating with the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM) and informed by a specialized study from Mann Global Health, stakeholders identified critical "hidden costs," such as inconsistent VAT applications and high electricity tariffs, that inflate retail prices. These findings are being channeled into a formal proposal for the 2026/2027 financial year, aimed at reducing the tax burden across the value chain. By bridging the gap between high-quality technical specifications and affordable pricing models, Kenya is creating a sustainable enabling environment that ensures menstrual products are not only safe and standardised but also economically reachable for all.

Lessons Learned

Looking ahead to early 2026, the focus shifts to high-level political advocacy and the formal submission of these regulatory proposals to the Government of Kenya. With the KEBS TC 69 scheduled to review updated ISO Committee-stage drafts in February and a high-level forum planned for Menstrual Hygiene Day on May 28, the initiative is poised to lock in long-term policy gains. These efforts represent a holistic model for the region, proving that internal market strength is built through the twin pillars of rigorous quality assurance and deliberate fiscal relief.