



5 June 2014

UNFPA management response

Report of the Director, Evaluation Office
(DP/FPA/2014/7)

Annual report on evaluation

**Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS
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Introduction

1. UNFPA management welcomes the new Director of the Evaluation Office and notes with appreciation the annual report on evaluation (DP/FPA/2014/7). Management commends the continuing improvement of the evaluation function in UNFPA, beginning with the Executive Board's approval of the Evaluation Policy in 2009 (DP/FPA/2009/4), which has since been refined, following approval of the revised Evaluation Policy (DP/FPA/2013/5) in September 2013.
2. Management agrees with the report's assessment that, during 2012-2013, the evaluation function in UNFPA has improved since 2009, when evaluations started to be guided by Evaluation Policy. Management also agrees that the recent revision of the policy, which clarified roles and led to the establishment of a separate Evaluation Office with dedicated human and financial resources, has strengthened the evaluation function in UNFPA. The integrated results and resource framework of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2014-2017, has budgeted \$9.1 million for the Evaluation Office.
3. Management notes that the significant improvements in the organization's focus on results and evidence since 2010 have helped to foster a supporting environment, creating a platform on which the more recent changes in the fund's approach to evaluation can build. A number of measures have helped to improve the coverage, quality and use of the evaluation in UNFPA: (a) designating professional staff at the country level as focal points for monitoring and evaluation (currently in 62 per cent of country offices); (b) establishing evaluation guidelines and tools, such as the *Handbook on How to Design and Conduct a Country Programme Evaluation at UNFPA* and the *Management Response Tracking System*; and (c) building capacity for staff in evaluation.

The evaluation function at UNFPA: human and financial resources

4. Management agrees, however, that further work is needed to consolidate a culture of organizational learning, based on the generation and use of evidence, including from evaluations, in order to better inform strategic, programmatic and operational decision-making. The quality of country programme evaluations must improve, and staff capacity in evaluation must increase to further professionalize the evaluation function in UNFPA.
5. Management notes the report's comments on staffing capacity at country level, and agrees to address these concerns as a part of the human resource strategy it has put in place, in line with the new strategic plan. Under this strategy, country office staffing will be aligned with the new organization business model and strategic direction, which includes a commitment to strengthening monitoring and evaluation.
6. Budgets for decentralized evaluation will continue to be included in the respective programmes, in line with the evaluation guidelines and monitoring. The planning, monitoring, and reporting system on results, which is expected to be rolled out by 2015,

will establish regular oversight for evaluation activities so that they are well planned and implemented.

Building evaluation capacity in UNFPA

7. Management welcomes the capacity building activities undertaken by the Evaluation Office. In this regard, management notes that staff capacity in evaluation depends on staff being able to plan, monitor and report results. Together with the Evaluation Office, the Programme Division will focus on strengthening this critical capacity in order to improve the overall quality of evaluations, particularly country programme evaluations.

UNFPA corporate evaluations in 2012-2013

8. Management commends the Evaluation Office for the corporate evaluations conducted during 2012-2013. Management reaffirms that these thematic, joint and country evaluations have helped inform and improve programmes. In particular, its recommendation for improving the work planning cycle informed the decision to allow for flexible 'annual' work plans lasting longer than a year.

9. The recommendation on stronger formalization of partnership strategies, as suggested in the thematic evaluation of UNFPA support to maternal health, 2000-2011, was incorporated into the strategic plan, 2014-2017. This is reflected in particular in the outputs on the integration of reproductive health services (output 1) and strengthening of national capacity for use of data and evidence to monitor and evaluate national policies and programmes (output 15); it is worth noting that under organizational effectiveness and efficiency, 'partnership' is specifically mentioned in output 3.

10. Details of the follow-up to the recommendations of the corporate evaluation are captured in the management response tracking system, which showed that in 86 per cent of evaluation follow-up actions due in 2013 had been implemented. Management looks forward to the corporate evaluations planned for the biennium 2014-2015.

UNFPA country programme evaluations

11. As noted above, management is aware of the need to further improve country programme evaluations, and agrees that the allocation of adequate resources and availability of dedicated staff and local evaluators with the appropriate skills are essential for improvement in the quality of country programme evaluation. However, management believes that improvement in country programme results planning, monitoring, and reporting is a priority – and a necessary precondition for improving in country programme evaluations.

12. A number of recommendations – on implementing family planning within an integrated reproductive health service framework, as suggested in the evaluation of the sixth programme of cooperation between UNFPA and Madagascar; and building better capacity for and analysis of programme data to inform programming, as suggested in the

UNFPA country programme evaluations – were all incorporated into the new strategic plan, along with output 15 of the plan committing UNFPA to building national capacity in evaluation.

Evaluation use and learning

13. Management is aware that more work is needed to make better use of evaluation for learning about and improving programming. The current mechanisms of tracking management responses to evaluation recommendations, along with the added assurance, through the Programme Review Committee, that the recommendations of evaluations are used in the formulation of new country programmes, are necessary to strengthen the use of evaluations, but they are not sufficient.

14. More effort is needed to promote behaviours that foster a culture of evidence-based management. UNFPA will revise its knowledge management strategy to specifically address these dimensions. In this regard, management welcomes the contribution of the Evaluation Office in synthesizing and sharing evaluation results, and looks forward to the synthesis of the evaluations conducted during 2012-2013.

Conclusion

15. Management welcomes the report and commends the Evaluation Office for its efforts. UNFPA management is committed to further improving the organization's approach to evaluation and to supporting the Evaluation Office as it carries out its crucial responsibilities. Management is further confident that the findings from joint evaluations, such as the recently completed Joint Evaluation on Joint Programmes on Gender Equality in the United Nations System, will not only advance the work of UNFPA on gender but also in the area of evaluation.
