



DP/FPA/2023/CRP.5

UNFPA MANAGEMENT COMMENTARIES

to

Annual report on the evaluation function, 2022

Report of the Director, Evaluation Office

(DP/FPA/2023/5)

Agenda item 13: UNFPA – Evaluation

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Management commentaries to the annual report on the evaluation function, 2022

I. Introduction

1. UNFPA management is pleased to present its commentaries on the annual report of the Director of the Evaluation Office (EO) on the evaluation function for 2022 (DP/FPA/2023/5).
2. Evaluation continues to be a priority at UNFPA because the lessons learned from evaluations are critical to the organization's quest to accelerate progress on the three UNFPA transformative results ("the three zeros"): zero unmet need for family planning; zero preventable maternal deaths; and zero gender-based violence and other harmful practices against women and girls, including child marriage and female genital mutilation, all to be achieved by 2030.
3. In this paper, management responds to the evaluation function's progress in the four key areas presented in the report, namely: (a) evaluation as an accelerator to the delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025; (b) performance of the evaluation function; (c) enhancing coherence in the United Nations system evaluation functions; and (d) multi-stakeholder partnerships for national evaluation capacity development.

II. Evaluation as an accelerator to the delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025

4. UNFPA management commends the EO for its continuous efforts to make the evaluation function fit to deliver adaptive, high-quality and relevant programme-level evaluations, with the ultimate goal to support implementation of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, and the delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
5. Management especially appreciates the EO plan to revise the Evaluation Policy and make other adjustments, in line with the peer review of the evaluation function, conducted by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and expected to be finalized by mid-2023.

III. Performance of the evaluation function

6. Management commends the EO for its agility and adaptiveness, which enabled it to maintain a good, overall progress in key evaluation performance indicators, despite a rapidly shifting and challenging context, including numerous humanitarian crises and the continuing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.
7. Specifically, management is pleased to note that all new country programme documents submitted to the Executive Board for approval were informed by evaluative evidence [*use of evaluation in programme development* (KPI 9)]; that the *management response submission* (KPI 7) remains at 100 per cent; and that, for the first time, the *evaluation implementation rate* (KPI 4) reached 100 per cent, exceeding the target of 90 per cent.

8. Management is also pleased to note that the *implementation of management responses* (KPI 8) remained at 95 per cent – five percentage points above the target. The implementation of centralized evaluation actions – a subset of management responses to evaluations that for many years lagged behind – reached 96 per cent in 2022, the highest annual implementation recorded to date. In this regard, management commends the Policy and Strategy Division for customizing its support to the implementing units, which ultimately helped lift the implementation and reporting rates.
9. Management also notes that the *quality of evaluations (percentage of programme-level evaluations rated ‘good’ or ‘very good’)* (KPI 5) and the *evaluation coverage* (KPI 3), while slightly lower than in the past several years, are both still strong, at 96 per cent and 95 per cent, respectively, and well above the targets.
10. With regard to *centralized evaluations*, management appreciates that the EO is continuing to make sure that they remain relevant to changing needs and priorities of UNFPA, and that 61 per cent of the centralized evaluations conducted in 2022 were joint or system-wide evaluations (*engagement in centralized system-wide and joint evaluations*) (KPI 10).
11. As anticipated, centralized evaluations continued to enhance UNFPA policies, strategies and programmes. For example:
 - (a) *Evaluation of UNFPA support to the HIV response (2016-2019)* guided the development of the strategy “*Safe and Satisfying: A UNFPA strategy to improve sexual health by integrating HIV/STI prevention in programming and services 2022-2025*” and has helped to focus the HIV and AIDS related work of UNFPA staff worldwide, including in forging partnerships and supporting networks;
 - (b) *Joint evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation: Accelerating change phase III (2018-2021)* guided the development of next phase (IV) (2022-2030) of the Joint Programme and led to strengthening the use of human rights mechanisms to advance stakeholder accountability for eliminating female genital mutilation.
12. Management acknowledges the value derived from *decentralized evaluations* in generating the evidence needed to develop and implement new country programmes. By introducing, in 2022, strategic dialogues at the start of every country programming process, the organization also learned that decentralized evaluations tended not to assess the long-term programming impact of UNFPA investments over the years. Management, at different levels, is committed to working with the EO to improve further the quality of decentralized evaluations to ensure the timely delivery of high-quality findings that can inform impactful future programming.
13. With regard to *financial resources invested in the evaluation function* (KPI 1) and *human resources for monitoring and evaluation* (KPI 2), management is committed to continuing to make sustained investments in the evaluation function overall – evidenced by the fact that the UNFPA investment in evaluation, in absolute terms, nearly tripled between 2014 and 2022 – and to ensuring that adequate funds continue to be ringfenced exclusively for country programme evaluations in the resource allocation system.

14. Furthermore, UNFPA management updated the Resource Management Policy in recognition of the fact that, as independent oversight pillars accountable directly to the Executive Board, the Office of Audit and Investigation Services (OAIS), the Ethics Office and the Evaluation Office (EO) require additional independence in their resource management. The policy includes a provision that, following the approval of the Integrated Budget by the Executive Board, the allocations for these offices cannot be reduced. It further provides the independent offices the freedom to redeploy budget allocations within budget years. The policy also enables the independent offices to bring forward savings realized from the previous year of a current Integrated Budget quadrennium into subsequent years, as long as this is within the total budget allotment for the four-year period of the approved Integrated Budget (subject to availability of funds overall and approval by the Resource Management Committee).

IV. Enhancing coherence in the United Nations system evaluation functions

15. Management reiterates its strong commitment to fostering coherence and synergies among the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations development system, including in the area of evaluation. To that end, management recognizes the strong contribution of the EO to the work of UNEG and its active collaboration with other agencies through joint and system-wide evaluations.
16. Management is also pleased to note that 61 per cent (11 out of 16) of centralized evaluations were either joint or system-wide evaluations. This allows for significant cost savings and learning from the best practices of other United Nations system entities.

V. Multi-stakeholder partnerships for national evaluation capacity development

17. Management reiterates its commitment to strengthening national evaluation capacities, together with major stakeholders, including United Nations entities.
18. To that end, management commends the EO for being an active member of global evaluation coalitions; continuing to co-lead the Eval4Action campaign; supporting strategic initiatives and events to help strengthen national evaluation systems; nurturing multi-stakeholder partnerships to enhance meaningful participation of youth in evaluation; and enhancing the demand for and use of country-led evaluation by national policymakers.

VI. Conclusion

19. Management welcomes the continued progress in strengthening the UNFPA evaluation function and reaffirms its commitment to greater accountability, transparency, evidence-based decision-making and organizational learning. Management takes note of the Evaluation Office's programme of work and budget for 2023 and affirms its commitment to continuing to work with the Evaluation Office to carry out its important role in supporting organizational results.
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