Evaluation Branch – DOS: EQA for Cameroon Country Programme Evaluation (2008-2011)

External Reviewer: Konstantin Atanesyan, Senior Evaluation Officer, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD

OVERALL QUALITY OF REPORT: Good

Overall Assessment: This is a good report that is clearly a result of strong effort on the part of the evaluation team. It covers the full scope of UNFPA program in Cameroon and contains all elements necessary for a good practice evaluation report. The authors operated in an imperfect environment of scarce and unreliable data, poor M&E framework and unclear objectives set at the beginning. There were very few baselines and targets established, hence making the evaluation of actual effects and at times even outputs a difficult task. Yet the team was able to partly overcome these limitations through extensive use of triangulation techniques and qualitative analysis. The findings are logically related to conclusions and the conclusions are referenced to a long list of recommendations.

The final version of the report was a significant improvement over the initial draft, following the recommendations of external peer review. It is shorter and more reader-friendly. The conclusions and recommendations chapters are now more focused with fewer generic statements and inconclusive assessment summaries. The report still could have had fewer recommendations. A few recommendations could have been better grounded in the reality and avoided taking a similar direction that the overall evaluation rightfully criticized (prepare more reports and strategies). Previously abundant repetition and excess of information had been dealt with to a large extent. Data presentation of data relies on both text and graphics – another visible improvement. Executive summary is relatively concise and covers main points of the report.

Quality Assessment criteria	Assessment Levels			
	Very Good	**Good**	**Poor**	**Unsatisfactory**
1. Structure and Clarity of Reporting *To ensure report is user-friendly, comprehensive, logically structured and drafted in accordance with international standards.* Checklist of minimum content and sequence required for structure: i) Acronyms; ii) Exec Summary; iii) Introduction;	**Poor.** This is an informative and data-rich report. The final version addressed to a large extent many issues that adversely affected the quality of the first draft. This report is visibly shorter and better organized. It does contain a plethora of information on current programs and outputs, which at times could be overwhelming for the reader. The report makes a much better use of graphs and tables. At the same time, more			

iv) Methodology including Approach and Limitations; v) Context; vi) Findings/Analysis; vii) Conclusions; viii) Recommendations; ix) Transferable Lessons Learned (where applicable) • Minimum requirements for Annexes: ToRs; Bibliography List of interviewees; Methodological instruments used.	could have been done in the same direction – especially in terms of substituting text with graphs and tables instead of adding new ones. The report could have sharpened its focus in terms of identifying upfront its main audience. Perhaps it is in a way the unavoidable feature of a report that is very rich in information, yet it would have been helpful to have this pinpointed upfront, while maintaining adequate consistency throughout the report. The evaluative part of the report is at times repetitive and covers same evaluation criteria for each area of engagement without a conclusive statement about the level of achievement. It is understood that the authors aimed for this report to serve a dual purpose of a country evaluation and a "good practice" guide, which, in the opinion of this review, reinforces the above point. Each section concludes with a potentially useful box of summary of findings. However, these summaries could have been strengthened even further by being presented in a more "conclusive" form, while avoiding at times mutually exclusive statements of achievement or non-achievement. Also, in terms of organizing the report, it could have been useful to merge the evaluative parts on relevance and efficiency for all there areas of engagement, while keeping the assessment of effectiveness separate. That would have made the report less repetitive and easier to read.

2. Executive Summary *To provide an overview of the evaluation, written as a stand-alone section and presenting main results of the evaluation.* Structure (paragraph equates to half page max): • i) Purpose, including intended audience(s); ii) Objectives and Brief description of intervention (1 para); iii) Methodology (1 para); iv) Main Conclusions (1 para); v) Recommendations (1	**Good.** The executive summary is a well-done, relatively concise and independent self-standing document. It is well structured and summarizes the report in reader-friendly manner, emphasizing the main findings, conclusions and recommendations.

para). Maximum length 3-4 page	
3. Design and Methodology *To provide a clear explanation of the following elements/tools* Minimum content and sequence: • Explanation of methodological choice, including constraints and limitations; • Techniques and Tools for data collection provided in a detailed manner; • Triangulation systematically applied throughout the evaluation; • Details of participatory stakeholders' consultation process are provided; • Whenever relevant, specific attention to cross-cutting issues (vulnerable groups, youth, gender equality) in the design of the evaluation.	**Good.** The report goes in great lengths to explain its methodological underpinnings. As a "good practice" guide, this report contains a detailed methodological chapter that would be useful for future similar evaluations. Yet, it could also guide future evaluations to pursue the same route – something that it might further elaborate and provide guidance on. For future reports, it is would be advisable to move the methodological explanation to the Annexes. Some evaluation questions are still generic and allow for deviation in the answers. Some of them can be referred to the evaluation in general.
4. Reliability of Data *To clarify data collection processes and data quality* • Sources of qualitative and quantitative data have been identified; • Credibility of primary (e.g. interviews and focus groups) and secondary (e.g. reports) data established and limitations made explicit.	**Good.** This was clearly one of the main obstacles of the report, for which the authors cannot be blamed. The available data were not consistent and the poor state of the M&E system did not help in this regard. Some of the data used in the report were not properly referenced, or the sources used were not the most relevant ones (issues that were addressed at a later stage). At the same time, it needs to be acknowledged that the evaluation team clearly operated in a difficult environment in terms of data availability and reliability and had to adjust its methodology to the extent possible to accommodate these deficiencies. This was done through extensive use of triangulation, focus groups, etc. for which the team needs to be commended.
5. Findings and Analysis *To ensure sound analysis and credible findings* <u>Findings</u> • Findings stem from rigorous data analysis;	**Good.** The report contains extensive amount of information pertaining to UNFPA work and accomplishments in Cameroon and tries to logically relate it to conclusions through mainly qualitative analysis. While generally credible, it could have been less descriptive.

• Findings are substantiated by evidence; • Findings are presented in a clear manner. <u>Analysis</u> • Interpretations are based on carefully described assumptions; • Contextual factors are identified; • Cause and effect links between an intervention and its end results (including unintended results) are explained.	Assessment often does not go the extra mile to conclude its analysis, stopping at descriptions of achievement of certain outputs (e.g. strategies, papers), and often does not discuss the actual impact. A lot of space is taken by very detailed descriptions of UNFPA programs in Cameroon, which overloads the reader with information and distracts from the evaluative analysis. Given the relatively small size of the organization's portfolio compared to the country size, the magnitude of issues and presence of many other much larger donors, the report should have been more careful in drawing attribution lines, perhaps at times resorting to the concept of "plausible contribution" rather than "direct attribution". The short summaries in the main text of the report could have been more reflective of the gist of the findings, this reinforcing them. The analysis should try to avoid using ambiguous wording like "mixed results" which are understood to carry negative pretext, yet fail to deliver the precise message about achievement or non-achievement. The reader gets the impression that the evaluation somewhat shies away from negative assessments, trying to use euphemisms, whereas the positive achievements are well-articulated and expressed (e.g. a very clear and well written section 5.3. and respective summary).
6. Conclusions *To assess the validity of conclusions* • Conclusions are based on credible findings; • Conclusions are organized in priority order; • Conclusions must convey evaluators' unbiased judgment of the intervention.	**Good.** The main Conclusions chapter is well written and very informative. It is logically closely associated with preceding and following chapters - findings analysis and recommendations. At the same time, the Conclusions are too many, and report could have better distinguished between the core and non-core ones. There is also certain degree of repetition.
7. Recommendations *To assess the usefulness and clarity of recommendations* • Recommendations flow logically from conclusions; • Recommendations must be strategic, targeted and operationally-feasible; • Recommendations must take into account stakeholders' consultations whilst remaining impartial;	**Good.** Recommendations are logically flowing from conclusions and are for the most part properly cross-referenced. At the same time, the somewhat long list of recommendations could be distracting attention from the main ones. This is more of a presentation than a substance issue, that could be easily fixed by proper formatting and light editing. Some recommendations are too generic or difficult to implement, given the earlier

• Recommendations should be presented in priority order	described country background. It would have been beneficial to have them organized in a more operational manner, consistent with budgetary limitations of UNFPA in the country.
8. Meeting Needs *To ensure that Evaluation Report responds to requirements (scope & evaluation questions/issues/DAC criteria) stated in the ToR (ToR must be annexed to the report).* *In the event that the ToR do not conform with commonly agreed quality standards, assess if evaluators have highlighted the deficiencies with the ToR.*	**Good.** The report responds to the requirements stated in the TOR . The TOR conform to the commonly agreed quality standards.

Quality assessment criteria (and Multiplying factor *)	Assessment Levels (*)			
	Unsatisfactory	**Poor**	**Good**	**Very good**
5. Findings and analysis (50)			50	
6. Conclusions (12)			12	
7. Recommendations (12)			12	
8. Meeting needs (12)			12	
3. Design and methodology (5)			5	
4. Reliability of data (5)			5	
1. Structure and clarity of reporting (2)		2		
2. Executive summary (2)			2	
TOTAL		2	98	

(*) Insert the multiplying factor associated with the criteria in the corresponding column e.g. - if "Finding and Analysis" has been assessed as "good", please enter the number 50 into the "Good" column. The Assessment level scoring the higher number of points will determine the overall quality of the Report