

GETTING TO ZERO



GOOD PRACTICES ON

Ending preventable maternal deaths

Ending unmet need for family planning

Ending gender-based violence and all harmful practices

VOLUME 2

A SYNTHESIS OF
UNFPA country programme evaluations



Contents

Annex 1: Terms of Reference	3
Annex 2: List of evaluations included in the analysis	8
Annex 3: Phases and steps in the analysis process	10
Annex 4: Coding structure and frequencies	12
Annex 5: Other challenges identified during the synthesis.....	14

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

1. Background

This year marks the 50th anniversary year for UNFPA and the 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo in 1994. As the global custodian for the ICPD, the work of UNFPA is organized **around three interconnected transformative results**: (1) ending maternal mortality, (2) eliminating gender-based violence and harmful practices and (3) ensuring access to family planning.

Despite the considerable progress that UNFPA has made towards these goals, there are still millions of women and girls who cannot realise their sexual and reproductive health and rights. After 50 years of operation, 2019 will be a time for reflection – to take stock of successes and challenges of UNFPA – as well as a reaffirmation of UNFPA commitment to the ICPD agenda. As UNFPA looks back on its achievements and ahead at the work to be done, **evaluative learning will play a key role in supporting the organization’s capacity to achieve its goals.**

In this view, UNFPA country programme evaluations provide a rich body of evaluative evidence to inform and strengthen programming, policies and strategies at the country, regional and global levels. Since 2013, the Evaluation Office has produced several syntheses of evidence from country programme evaluations to surface what works, why and for whom. This year the synthesis aims to be a **strategic source of learning** on family planning, maternal mortality, and gender-based violence and harmful practice, drawing on country programme evaluations conducted from 2012 to 2018. By focusing on the organization’s three transformative results, the synthesis is intended to support efforts towards the accelerated implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and, more broadly, the achievement of the SDGs.

2. Purpose, objectives and scope

The **purpose** of the synthesis is to further support organizational learning and contribute to evidence-based decision-making to accelerate the achievement of results at the country, regional and global levels. The synthesis also aims to contribute, more broadly, to the existing body of knowledge on advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights, including through the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and the SDGs.

More specifically, the key **objectives** of the synthesis are to:

- Surface learning from country programme evaluations on UNFPA strategic outcomes (as embodied in the organization’s three transformative results: ending maternal mortality, eliminating gender-based violence and harmful practices, and ensuring access to family planning)
- Inform the development and implementation of UNFPA strategies, programmes and operational systems, more generally, and UNFPA country programme documents and thematic strategies more specifically
- Provide information on how UNFPA has effectively positioned itself as a key actor in the implementation of the ICPD and the broader 2030 development agenda

- Contribute/input into the ICPD25 and UNFPA@50 process by providing evaluative evidence to inform, support, and complement the key activities, events and documents/briefs commemorating the anniversaries.

The **scope** of the exercise will include UNFPA country programme evaluations completed from 2012 to 2018 to ensure a broad evidence base and more robust analysis. Given the variability in the quality of evaluation reports, the synthesis will include evaluations that have an overall Evaluation Quality Assurance and Assessment (EQAA) rating of “good” or higher.

As described, the **expected users** of the synthesis include UNFPA colleagues, partner countries, civil society and academia **as well as the wider international development community working in similar contexts and intervention areas**. The synthesis brief is also expected to be useful for donors and member states.

3. **Approach and methodology**

The synthesis is expected to include a diverse set of methods to surface lessons learned from the body of country programme evaluations related to the three transformative results of UNFPA Strategic Plan 2018-2021, themes related to the ICPD, and any other cross-cutting issues. The methods will be both qualitative and quantitative in nature, which may include an in-depth systematic review and analysis of evidence captured across UNFPA country programme evaluations and data coding (to be done in English, French and Spanish). While the lessons learned will draw from UNFPA data sources, they will be re-framed so that they are relevant and applicable to the broader development community working in similar contexts and thematic areas.

For the purpose of this exercise, lessons learned will be adapted from the OECD-DAC definition: “generalizations [on what is working, for whom and why] based on evaluation findings...that abstract from the specific circumstances to broader situations”. In the context of country programme evaluations, therefore, this definition **excludes simple statements on**, for instance, the type of activities conducted or number of stakeholders reached. Instead, the synthesis will aim to identify **common experiences that discuss why a particular programmatic approach was successful or how a certain contextual issue constrained impact**.

Frequently, lessons highlight strengths or weaknesses in the preparation, conceptualization/design or implementation of programmes that affect performance/outcome and impact. For each of the three transformative results, the synthesis will surface (subject to the constraints of the data presented in the country programme evaluations) the following:

1. A key learning (i.e. the lesson learned)
2. An example of what works, for whom and why (supported by evidence)
3. An example of an area that needs to be strengthened (supported by evidence)

Since the synthesis will be an iterative process, there will be a degree of subjectivity in the analysis. However, as stated, this exercise will seek to ensure that terms are clearly defined and that there is a consistent and standardized approach to the data collection and analysis. The methodology must also ensure that the lessons surfaced are not at such a level of generalization as to become top-line abstractions, diminishing the utility of the lesson for the organization; a deeper dive is sought. Limitations will also be detailed and mitigating measures offered.

Drawing from the Terms of Reference and the experience from the previous synthesis exercises, a comprehensive approach and methodology will be developed by the consultant team.

4. Key deliverables

(i) **Country programme evaluations synthesis brief:** The first key deliverable includes a user-friendly brief, written in a jargon-free, engaging style for a broad audience, keeping in mind the final packaged product (see below).

The brief will be packaged as a series of three trifold brochures. Each brochure will include lessons learned about one of the three transformative results.

In addition, a summary of the synthesis should be provided, highlighting key features of the country programme evaluations synthesis. The consultant, in consultation with the co-managers, should also provide five key messages from the country programme evaluations synthesis, to support the development of infographics and social media messages.

(ii) **Country programme evaluation synthesis report:** Using the brief as a base, a more detailed report will be developed, in line with previously produced country programme evaluations synthesis reports by Evaluation Office.

All deliverables should be written in English, in line with [UN editing guidelines](#).

Once on board, the consultant and co-managers will discuss the specific design and layout of the products with the communications and knowledge management specialist to ensure that the brief and report (in style/format) is conceptualized, from the onset, to lend itself to the final packaged products envisioned.

5. Timeframe / Deliverables

The expected deliverables are as follows:

Completion Date	Deliverable	Additional Notes
April 2019	Methodological Note	The note should include the Excel spreadsheet (or equivalent data collection tool) organising the coded data from the country programme evaluations and illustrating/capturing the process of arriving at the lessons learned.
End April/Early May 2019	Completed excel spreadsheet (or equivalent data collection tool) of the coded data	

May 2019	Preliminary lessons learned and supporting evidence	This should be made available as soon as possible to be used as evidence in papers/thematic briefs that are being developed by programme/technical division for various events held during the anniversary year (including the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the Nairobi Summit, as well as the Commission on Population and Development, which will take place the first week of April 2019).
June 2019	User-friendly trifold brochure with inserts detailing the lessons learned	The consultant should present the lessons learned and supporting evidence in a structure that lends itself to a trifold brochure with inserts (refer to section on “Key Deliverables”).
Sept 2019	Report on lessons learned	This will be a comprehensive report on the lessons learned going more in-depth than the brochure. The consultant will discuss and agree to a structure of the report with the country programme evaluations synthesis managers.

4. Management and governance of the exercise

The responsibility for the management of the synthesis exercise will rest with the UNFPA Evaluation Office.

The Evaluation Office is expected to:

- Lead the hiring of the external consultant, reviewing proposals and approving the selection of the consultant
- Convene reference group meetings
- Supervise and guide the consultant team throughout the exercise
- Review, provide substantive comments and approve all deliverables.

The progress of the synthesis exercise will also be followed closely by a **Reference Group** consisting of stakeholders, selected purposively, at various levels of the organization. The reference group will be composed of a sample (illustrative, not representative) of 8–10 colleagues well-positioned to provide advice and guidance on the approach to the synthesis to ensure its friendliness and usability for programming purposes.

The Evaluation Office team leading the synthesis will engage the ISG at several stages of the synthesis process, either via sharing updates or by requesting input on specific deliverables.

The main responsibilities of the reference group are to:

- Contribute to the scoping of the synthesis exercise
- Provide comments and substantive feedback from a technical expert perspective on the deliverables
- Participate in meetings with the consultant team as required
- Play a key role in learning and knowledge sharing from the synthesis results, contributing to disseminating the results of the lessons learned brief/report.

In addition to the formally constituted reference group, the co-managers will liaise with the internal UNFPA task team to prepare events/inputs into the ICPD25 and UNFPA@50 anniversary year. Maintaining dialogue with colleagues and programme partners in this space will help to ensure the relevance/utility of the exercise to the work needed for the various events/products feeding into the anniversary year.

5. Consultant expertise and skills

The synthesis will be carried out by a highly qualified external consultant with extensive knowledge and experience in the evaluation of development programming, particularly within the UN system.

S/he must have a strong thematic background in UNFPA mandate areas and an understanding of UNFPA policies and programming.

S/he must have proven skills in evaluation methodology and analysis, including quantitative and qualitative techniques, and in conducting meta-syntheses. Experience using innovative qualitative coding software and data visualization tools will be an asset.

The consultant must hold a master's-level degree or equivalent in social sciences (doctoral preferred) and must have demonstrated experience in drafting reports for the UN in English.

The external consultant will be expected to carry out all the work and produce all deliverables as listed in these Terms of Reference, and in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System, as well as UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation. S/he should not have been involved in the design, implementation or monitoring of UNFPA country programmes during the period under review, nor have other conflicts of interest or bias on the subject.

6. Quality assurance

All evaluative exercises in the UN system are subject to UNEG norms and standards, as referred to in the UNFPA Evaluation Policy 2019. Quality assurance will be provided by the UNFPA Evaluation Office; deliverables that do not meet quality standards will not be accepted.

7. Cost of the synthesis exercise

The budget for the synthesis study is US\$ 40,000.

It is expected that the exercise will take 50–60 working days (spread out over a 7-month period).

Annex 2: List of evaluations included in the analysis

Region	Country	Year of Evaluation	Evaluation Quality Assessment Rating
Asia and the Pacific	Bangladesh	2015	Good
	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	2014	Good
	India	2017	Very Good
	Myanmar	2017	Very Good
	Nepal	2017	Very Good
	Pakistan	2017	Good
	Vietnam	2015	Good
Arab States	Djibouti	2017	Good
	Egypt	2017	Good
	Lebanon	2014	Very Good
	Somalia	2015	Good
	Sudan	2015	Good
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Albania	2015	Good
	Armenia	2014	Good
	Azerbaijan	2014	Good
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	2013	Good
	Kyrgyzstan	2016	Good
	Moldova	2016	Good
	Tajikistan	2014	Good
	Turkmenistan	2014	Good
	Ukraine	2017	Good
	Uzbekistan	2014	Good
East and Southern Africa	Angola	2014	Good
	Botswana	2015	Good
	Burundi	2016	Good
	Comoros	2018	Good
	Democratic Republic of the Congo	2017	Good
	Kenya	2017	Very Good
	Malawi	2018	Very Good
	South Africa	2012	Good
	Swaziland	2014	Good
	Zimbabwe	2014	Good
Latin America and the Caribbean	Colombia	2013	Good
	Costa Rica	2016	Good
	Cuba	2018	Very Good
	Dominican Republic	2016	Good
	Ecuador	2013	Good

	Ecuador	2018	Good
	El Salvador	2014	Good
	Haiti	2015	Good
	Honduras	2015	Good
	Mexico	2013	Good
	Paraguay	2013	Good
	Peru	2015	Good
	Uruguay	2014	Good
	Venezuela	2013	Good
West and Central Africa	Burkina Faso	2014	Good
	Cameroon	2012	Good
	Chad	2015	Good
	Guinea	2017	Good
	Liberia	2017	Good
	Mali	2018	Very Good
	Niger	2018	Good
	Nigeria	2012	Good
	Senegal	2015	Good
	Togo	2012	Good
	Togo	2017	Good

Annex 3: Phases and steps in the analysis process

The synthesis had four primary phases between April and September 2019.

A. INCEPTION PHASE

Steps	Tasks	Period
1	Data compilation of documents, reports and other documents for initial desk review	April 2019
2	Development of initial methodological approach and development of methodology note	
3	Form and train ImpactMapper team of consultants	
4	Define tag structure (tag groups and tags) informed by the methodological note and desk review	
5	Reduce redundant and similar categories in the tag structure	
6	Test tags in pilot for five country programme evaluations reports and initial peer review	

B. CODING PHASE

Steps	Tasks	Period
1	Read the 57 reports and code them according to the tag structure	April–May 2019
2	First round of analysis and peer review process	
3	Weekly meetings to validate and discuss the use of tags	
4	Analysis, generate, write-up and formatting of lessons learned brief (synthesis report), including case studies	May 2019
5	Review by the Evaluation Office and Reference Group	
6	Comments addressed and final version of the synthesis report	

C. DATA CLEANING PHASE

Steps	Tasks	Period
1	Refine the tagbook, adding new tags, organising the tags by the theory of change and merging similar tags	June–July 2019
2	Multiple meetings and peer reviews to align around new tag structure	
3	Weekly meetings	

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

Steps	Tasks	Period
1	Analysis of codes and frequencies and text	July– August 2019
2	First draft of the meta-analysis report	
3	Review by the Evaluation Office and the Reference Group	
4	Comments addressed and final version of the report	September 2019

Annex 4: Coding structure and frequencies

The Coding Approach

The synthesis surfaced lessons learned across the three transformative results, looking both at the results themselves (i.e. real-life changes, not expected changes) and the trends in programme design and implementation that influenced outcome achievement. The synthesis aimed to capture the different factors that contributed to programmatic effectiveness as well as those factors that limited or constrained impact (including contextual or institutional), and discuss how these could be strengthened.

Towards this end, the findings and conclusions in country programme evaluation reports were coded. Deductive codes were selected based on key dimensions of UNFPA work that were determined to be particularly important for organizational learning. These included:

- UNFPA engagement in **humanitarian settings and highly vulnerable contexts**.
- UNFPA engagement with **vulnerable and marginalized groups**, within the frame of the Sustainable Development Goals and “leaving no one behind.”
- UNFPA business model, as originally operationalized in the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2014-2017 and adapted in the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan.
- The extent to which UNFPA programming incorporates a **human rights-based approach**, and any instances of **gender-transformative** programming.
- UNFPA **added value** as an organization.
- **Innovation** in UNFPA design, planning and implementation of programming is highlighted through brief country examples.

The exercise deductively coded for the “ICPD Accelerators”, as well. These were identified by the ICPD25 Task Team and are defined as cross-cutting issues that galvanise action within the areas that UNFPA works. They include women’s empowerment and gender equality; youth leadership; political and community leadership for accelerating the promise; innovation and data; and partnerships.

To take a deeper dive into particular lessons learned, the synthesis includes country examples that further capture insights on programmatic bottlenecks and challenges, as well as programmatic successes in different countries/contexts to more fully understand what worked or did not work and why. It also includes those that could be scaled up or replicated in future programming based on their alignment with identified factors of success.

Steps in the coding process

Step 1: The team – consisting of four ImpactMapper researchers – defined clear research goals.

Step 2: The team established the code list and structure based on research goals, integrating the team’s and UNFPA team’s knowledge, as well as the knowledge and insights of the UNFPA managers of the synthesis exercise.

Step 3: The team collectively coded one report together to align their perspectives on the coding structure and refine the code list. This also ensured intra-reviewer consistency in applying codes, both deductive and inductive, to the text in the country programme evaluations.

Step 4: The team read the country programme evaluations and coded them using the coding list. Inevitably, the coding, to an extent, reflects the perspectives and experiences of the researchers, who make educated decisions about what is more and less important in the data collected.

Step 5: A peer review process and quality assurance mechanisms were established, where one team member reviewed a sample of all team members' coding and ensured alignment. This ensured coherence across the multiple researchers coding the data and contributed to refining key codes, creating greater consistency.

The following link presents the coding structure used in the synthesis. Each table in the spreadsheet presents the data by total frequency count and percentage of country programme evaluation report and country office where the tag was made.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/11ZLCeVbzz0lZma73YlpUy_2jURbMXCrr/view

Annex 5: Other challenges identified during the synthesis

Limitations regarding the country programme evaluation reports:

1. Nuances in the different country programme evaluations' purposes and designs of the different country offices are not captured, treating all findings similarly.
2. The scope of the synthesis was limited to country programme evaluation reports that had been rated as "Good" or "Very Good" by the EQAA system of the Evaluation Office. Therefore, 57 reports of 59 countries were analysed, leaving the findings of 22 (28 per cent) country offices out of the scope, due to the quality of the report being "Fair/Poor" or "Satisfactory".
3. A major challenge found, and a finding of the synthesis as well, is that country programme evaluations organized around evaluation criteria (usually relevance, efficacy, efficiency, sometimes impact, and sustainability) are focused on accountability. The questions these reports seek to answer are not so much focused on learning, or at least they are not formulated primarily for learning about what has worked or not within interventions. Therefore, the synthesis was trying to answer questions that were not fully addressed in the country programme evaluations.
4. The country programme evaluations vary greatly from one country to another due to the different histories, cultures and contexts of each country. While they all address very similar issues related to UNFPA mandate, they are not systematically addressed (e.g. when discussing maternal mortality, not all reports clearly captured baseline data) so progress tracking was challenging and ineffectual. Given this need for consistency in addressing common issues, consolidation of data was challenging. The need to collect data (baselines and monitoring data) in a clear systematic way also points to a thus-far missed opportunity for global learning.
5. Another challenge is that the "Lessons Learned" sections in the country programme evaluations are often not present and/or usually weakly formulated. In general, this is an element that needs refining within the evaluation community writ large.
6. Country programme evaluation report language was often more technical and complicated than it needed to be.
7. Finally, regarding the Strategic Plan, the new focus on the three transformative results facilitates UNFPA country offices to focus their efforts in these three clear areas. However, the fact that the country programme evaluations and the Strategic Plan do not articulate unique and distinctive theories of change to identify different results chains makes it challenging to find causal links between inputs and outcomes. For example, many lessons learned around the former strategic area of population and development are diluted among the three transformative results, losing some focus in this cross-cutting but critical issues.

Limitations regarding the methodology used:

1. Frequencies of tags were used as proxy of relevance across country offices: the more common a tag, the more relevant the issue was assumed to be.

Limitations regarding the coding structure:

1. The absence of an organizational high-level theory of change presented a challenge to identifying and understanding interrelationships between the transformative results and the coding structure. Therefore, potential frameworks were assumed based on common knowledge in the field.

UNFPA Evaluation Office

Capturing lessons to support programming and decision-making
To ensure rights and choices for all



United Nations Population Fund Evaluation Office

605 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10158 USA

✉ evaluation.office@unfpa.org

🌐 www.unfpa.org/evaluation

🐦 [@unfpa_eval](https://twitter.com/unfpa_eval)

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