



*UNFPA - because everyone counts*

Statement by Marco Segone  
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on

Item on Evaluation

The Evaluation of UNFPA support to the  
prevention of, response to and elimination of  
gender based violence and harmful practices  
(2012-2017)

UNFPA/ UNDP/UNOPS Executive  
Board  
First Regular Session 2019

23 January 2019

**Mr. President,  
Distinguished Members of the Executive Board,**

As the first global thematic evaluation on gender based violence at UNFPA, it is my pleasure to present to you the results of the evaluation of UNFPA support to the prevention of, response to and elimination of gender based violence and harmful practices.

Covering the period 2012-2017, the evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of UNFPA support to the prevention of, response to and elimination of gender based violence and harmful practices. Three harmful practices were included in the evaluation's scope: child marriage, female genital mutilation, and son preference. The evaluation considered support across the development-humanitarian-peace nexus at global, regional and country levels.

The evaluation is intended to contribute to accountability for past performance, support evidence-based decision-making, and inform the development and implementation of UNFPA plans, policies and programmes, including UNFPA's current Strategic Plan 2018–2021. The evaluation is also intended to inform UNFPA's strategic positioning within a rapidly evolving development context and proliferating humanitarian crises.

**Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,**

Please allow me to present the seven conclusions of the evaluation.

*First*, the evaluation found that UNFPA made unique and valuable contributions to the international system's response to gender-based violence at all levels (global, regional and country) across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, including through support to inter-governmental normative frameworks.

UNFPA made direct contributions to national capacity development and to institutions across the health sector as well as national gender equality mechanisms. While UNFPA's contribution was primarily in the area of *response* via the health-sector and in the development of and support to multi-sectoral referral pathways, UNFPA frequently linked to the justice, security and economic livelihoods sectors as well as to the education, youth and planning sectors. Emerging evidence of contributions to prevention and examples of gender-transformative programming were also documented.

*Second*, UNFPA support to the global joint programmes on harmful practices and essential services was found to demonstrate UNFPA's collaborative advantage in addressing gender and social norms, and comparative advantage in opening space for civil society to work on neglected issues.

However, while emblematic of the collaborative strengths of UNFPA, the joint programmes also surfaced specific strategic challenges, including (1) concern that the prioritisation and visibility of harmful practices as standalone issues in strategic plans reflect donor funding priorities, rather than an intentional, evidence-based decision by UNFPA; (2) the joint programmes' theories of change becoming the overall corporate approach to each harmful practice 'by default'; (3) the exclusion of countries not involved in a joint programme from the knowledge economy and resource mobilization opportunities generated by the joint programme; and (4) centring social norm change in the process of eliminating harmful practices rather than fully acknowledging the underlying structural drivers.

Despite these challenges, the evaluation collected substantial evidence to indicate that UNFPA (in partnership with UNICEF and within the global joint programmes) is making significant contributions to efforts to shift social and gendered norms at the local level.

*Third*, in a relatively short period of time, UNFPA has made important progress in being prepared to respond across the humanitarian-development-peace

nexus, including through the establishment of humanitarian systems, human capital and leadership. Since 2016, UNFPA has been the lead agency of the gender based violence Area of Responsibility (AoR).

Despite these notable achievements, important areas for growth remain, including the need to consolidate and align an expanding set of humanitarian guidelines; the need to address emergency funding with a lower ceiling, an inability to roll-over, and a shorter timeframe than other agencies; and insufficient core funds – despite funds committed by UNFPA - for coordination of the GBV Area of Responsibility .

*Fourth*, the evaluation found various understandings of the boundaries of UNFPA’s GBV work at play within UNFPA. While this plurality allows UNFPA to adapt programming to different contexts and work with those in marginalized situations, a pattern of unintended effects were found from the absence of a shared agency-wide understanding, including muddled efforts at coordination with other UN entities and partners and a risk of dilution or confusion of UNFPA positions in negotiations.

*Fifth*, while working through inclusive partnerships is the dominant characteristic of UNFPA’s approach to programming on GBV and harmful practices, the highest level of results were found to be achieved when this approach was combined with a sequenced focus on a specific “domain of change”, ground- presence and joint programmes.

*Sixth*, the evaluation found that UNFPA’s most significant contributions have often begun with years of quiet, behind-the-scenes work to build trust with and support national institutions and civil society. This work is disproportionately funded by core resources, a scenario increasingly unfeasible for country offices given the funding environment and shifting funding priorities. While these challenges are not unique to UNFPA, they affect the capacity of the organization to work with the furthest-behind groups.

*Finally*, the evaluation found that UNFPA's work on GBV and harmful practices is sustainable in certain ways and less so in others. UNFPA's work frequently transforms the knowledge, discourse and thinking of partners in sustainable ways. Support to policy change, life-skills education, and national prevalence data have, for example, influenced the decision-making framework of individuals and institutions, a key dimension of sustainability. However, UNFPA has been less successful in another dimension of sustainability, such as ensuring activities are maintained once programme funds have ended.

**Mr. President,  
Members of the Executive Board**

Please allow me now to turn to the evaluation's recommendations.

**At the corporate level, the evaluation has made four recommendations.**

*First*, UNFPA senior management is encouraged to reiterate the corporate priority placed on maintaining senior gender and GBV expertise.

*Second*, building on existing UN joint initiatives, and the opportunity of the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan's common chapter, UNFPA is recommended to issue clear guidance on the gender based violence portfolio of work. This guidance - which should clarify the target and scope of UNFPA support - can be used to facilitate formally structured mechanisms for joined-up working on GBV.

*Third*, UNFPA is recommended to systematically organize the production and exchange of outcome-level learning from UNFPA programmatic implementation. Opportunities for knowledge exchange about what works and, importantly, what does not work in programming on gender based violence and harmful practices should be created, recognising this as valuable learning and a contribution to the public good.

*Finally*, UNFPA is recommended to continue engaging Member States and donors in the discussion on the importance of core funding, the need for quality non-core funding through thematic instruments, and adequate levels of predictable funding, that can be flexibly utilized by field offices to support adaptive longer-term programming capabilities.

**Three recommendations were made for work in development contexts.**

*First*, while recognizing the importance of interconnected UNFPA programming on GBV and harmful practices, UNFPA offices with limited resources are encouraged to focus their main efforts on the areas in which UNFPA has the greatest impact, with the aim of avoiding ‘spreading too thin’.

*Second*, UNFPA should further invest in *prevention* interventions, progressively rebalancing the GBV and harmful practices portfolio towards more and better work on prevention.

*Third*, UNFPA is recommended to further support recognition of sub-national inequality within the application of the UNFPA ‘quadrant classifications’ by encouraging country offices to apply UNFPA modes of intervention flexibly.

**Finally, the evaluation offered four recommendations for humanitarian contexts.**

*First*, the evaluation recommends that UNFPA fully commit to the implementation of the agreed Inter-Agency Standing Committee principal of “Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up Activation” , by ensuring that senior-level humanitarian GBV coordinators are present in active humanitarian emergencies.

*Second*, UNFPA should ensure that staff profiles and procurement policies, approaches and processes are well aligned. Both staff profiles and procurement

policies and practices should respond appropriately to the requirements of sudden onset humanitarian emergencies.

*Third*, UNFPA is encouraged to strengthen the humanitarian component of its work, in particular its leadership of the GBV Area of Responsibility. UNFPA should further adapt the lessons and tools from other cluster lead agencies, and thereby mainstream the organizational practice of cluster coordination as an interagency function.

*Finally*, UNFPA should strengthen the funding mechanisms across development and humanitarian settings. As a means to strengthen partnerships, accelerate the implementation of the continuum approach, and scale-up innovation across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, UNFPA is recommended to create a global continuum fund window within existing UNFPA funding mechanisms

**Mr. President,  
Distinguished Delegates,**

Widely recognized as an international public health crisis, gender-based violence (GBV) is a gross violation of human rights resulting in multiple physical, sexual and psychological consequences that affect the long term well-being of individuals and communities. Women and girls also continue to suffer from harmful practices, including child marriage, female genital mutilation, and son preference.

UNFPA has a long history of responding to GBV and harmful practices, tracing back to the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994. Through this evaluation, management has demonstrated a commitment to learning, and an interest in surfacing what works (and what does not work) in support to GBV and harmful practices, with a view to strengthening programming for results.

This concludes my presentation, Mr President. I thank you and the Executive Board for its continued support and guidance and I am at your disposal for any questions or clarifications.

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