

Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Annual Session, 23-27 June 2014, Geneva

Item 11: UNFPA Annual Report on Evaluation

Check against delivery

Statement by Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Thank you for giving me the floor, Mr. President.

I am making this statement on behalf of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and my own country Ireland.

We wish to thank the Director of the Evaluation Office for the annual report and for her comments today. We also wish to express our gratitude to the Director for Oversight Services for her contribution and commitment during the period under her supervision.

We agree with the statement in the Report that last year marked a “turning point” for the evaluation function, particularly the revised evaluation policy leading to the strengthening of the evaluation capacity throughout the organisation.

We attach a great deal of importance to the successful implementation of the revised Evaluation Policy and look forward to close cooperation with the new Independent Evaluation Office and UNFPA senior management to ensure its implementation. We note with satisfaction the growing collaboration between Programme Division and the Evaluation Office.

We find useful and realistic the refreshingly frank account of the level of progress, as well as the challenges and prospects contained in the report. It is a promising basis on which to consider the period of transition.

Mr. President, we would like to add some comments on three important issues:

Independence

We are happy to note from the Report that the evaluation function is now independent from other management functions with clearly defined roles and responsibilities between the Office and other units at headquarters. We wish to emphasize the importance of structural independence and the value of transparently communicating this to all stakeholders.

Adequate and timely funding are both necessary to underpin such independence. We are glad to note that the transitional biennium budgeted evaluation plan for 2014-15 shows an increased investment in evaluation and greater transparency in relation to planning. We look forward to a systematic report on the implementation of the plan in future annual reports.

We would also welcome greater contextualisation of the information presented – for example what percentage of programme funds are allocated to evaluation?

In due course, we would welcome an external assessment of the Office to maintain and foster high standards and quality. One option would be for UNFPA to consider an Independent Oversight/Review Group following the example of UNDP.

Quality

The low quality of decentralized evaluations mentioned in the report continues to be a cause for concern. We fully support the Office's plan to address the quality of decentralized evaluations as a priority.

We also welcome UNFPA's proposal to implement quality assurance mechanisms at regional and country level and encourage UNFPA to benchmark its evaluation function against other organisations and external standards.

In due course we encourage UNFPA to consider conducting a meta-analysis of global thematic evaluations in order to assess their quality according to the five evaluation criteria (effectiveness, efficiency, impact, relevance and sustainability).

Building Capacity

The priority attached to building capacity at country level is welcome given the level of concern expressed in the report.

We recognise the challenge of recruiting and professionalising a dedicated evaluation service and fully encourage the development of incentives integrated into performance management to prioritise this issue.

It is important that the need for evaluation is built into programme planning from the beginning, including making provision for it in the budget. Currently half of programmes have no evaluation budget at the beginning of the programme cycle. This integration will require action from the programme managers as well as the evaluation office.

We are of the view that more attention must be given to the "M" in "M and E", through increasing monitoring capacity in order to establish robust baselines and targets to feed into the evaluation processes.

We encourage an increase in the level of training and the continuation of such measures such as the improvement of manuals which took place in the last two years.

UNFPA's partnership approach with national partners is very positive. We recognise that limited resources are available at the moment, but since we consider that the organisation has a lot to offer, we would encourage further involvement and coordination on partnership for increased national capacity with other UN entities such as UNICEF, UNDP and UN Women. UNFPA should work to strengthen understanding and accountability for such partnerships.

Regarding cooperation with other UN agencies, it would be interesting to hear how UNFPA assesses the process of joint evaluations, including challenges and proposals for improvements? In this regard we emphasize the need to discuss management responses of joint evaluations in all the Executive Boards of Funds and Programmes involved in joint evaluations.

We welcome the new format of Country Programme Documents and in particular the requirement to include a specific evaluation plan for each Country Programme Document.

We welcome the fact that in addition to the Country Programme Evaluations themselves, other evaluations and evaluative activities have also informed the Country Programme Documents. However we note considerable variability across Country Programmes in terms of whether evaluative activities are included or not. Considering the broader objective of strengthening the evaluation function we would see merit in a more conceptualised approach to this in the future.

We would also be interested to better understand the role of the Independent Evaluation Office, if any, in country level evaluations.

In addition to the country level, we also see a very important role for regional advisers and regional offices with regard to result based management, reporting and evaluation. We look forward to learning about the findings of the recent review of the business model at regional level and in particular we look forward to seeing how monitoring and evaluation support will relate to the evolving role of the regional offices.

Conclusion

Mr. President,

We are pleased to see that change to the Evaluation function is on the right track. It is very important that progress is closely followed and challenges are continuously identified and addressed including as a priority those which we have referred to above.

The need for change has been acknowledged. The commitment to improved result based management and the culture of monitoring and evaluation is evident, and provides a solid basis for the next steps.

In conclusion, as UNFPA implements the new Strategic Plan, we see the Evaluation function playing an increasingly important role in demonstrating accountability and in disseminating lessons which can contribute to better results for all stakeholders.

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