



UNFPA - because everyone counts

Statement by Marco Segone

Director, Evaluation Office

United Nations Population Fund

on

Item on evaluation

Evaluation of the UNFPA support to gender equality and women's empowerment in
development and humanitarian settings (2012 – 2020)

UNFPA/UNDP/UNOPS Executive Board

Annual Session 2021

June 2021

Mr. President,

Distinguished Members of the Executive Board,

It is my pleasure to present the main results and recommendations of the first-ever thematic evaluation of the UNFPA support to gender equality and women's empowerment across development, humanitarian and peace contexts. The evaluation encompassed three main components: 1) the extent to which UNFPA systems and processes are fit for purpose to advance gender equality and women's empowerment; 2) the extent to which UNFPA has mainstreamed gender equality across all programming areas of the strategic plan; and, 3) the contributions of UNFPA programmatic work under the dedicated gender equality outcome of the Strategic Plan.

The evaluation triangulated evidence from a multitude of sources, including 641 key informants, a broad-based document and database review, 591 UNFPA staff surveyed, meta-review of 70 country programme evaluations and 14 corporate evaluations, and 15 case studies at country and regional level. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic that began in the middle of the evaluation, the methodology was adapted in real-time.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

Please allow me to present the key highlights of the evaluation.

First, since 2012, UNFPA has made important contributions to gender equality at global, regional and national levels in both development and humanitarian settings. This includes support to policy development, legislative reform and national frameworks that align with the ICPD agenda. UNFPA has also increasingly gained a foothold in gender-based violence response and prevention. Further, significant gains have been made to the benefit of women and girls' lives and to their sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, notably in averting maternal deaths, preventing unintended pregnancies, and providing access to a range of essential services in sexual and reproductive health. Furthermore, UNFPA work on harmful practices has brought needed attention to the complexity and multi-faceted aspects of addressing practices such as child marriage, female genital mutilation and gender-biased sex selection. Much progress has been made to establish a firm foundation upon which to build further. Now is the time to reflect on what the good models are and to develop a robust research agenda.

Second, UNFPA is recognized as a front-runner in gender-based violence response and prevention. Through a gender-transformative approach, UNFPA has led capacity development, service provision and systems strengthening. However, there is need for UNFPA to better leverage its data expertise in violence against women to consolidate its leadership in this thematic area.

Third, institutional policies, systems and processes in UNFPA reflect a commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. UNFPA's gender architecture provides a foundation for gender work. However, it is stretched in its capacity to support a more gender-transformative approach to different areas of the UNFPA mandate.

Forth, UNFPA mandate enhances its capabilities to address gender equality and women's empowerment by integrating it within the interventions on sexual reproductive health and reproductive rights, gender-based violence and harmful practices, and youth participation. However, there is need for UNFPA to consistently draw these linkages by systematically enhancing the interrelationships between separate areas of its mandate.

Fifth, UNFPA has made notable progress on institutional gender mainstreaming. The UNSWAP has been a key lever in that process, bringing more focused discussion in the organization to areas such as gender parity and financial benchmarking.

Sixth, while UNFPA has established partnerships to advance the gender-related aspects of its mandate, there is need to strengthen partnerships strategies beyond its engagement with implementing partners. This includes additional attention to awareness raising and social norm change, advocacy and policy dialogue, and creating alliances and networks to inform laws and policies.

Last but not least, the COVID-19 pandemic has posed new challenges and exacerbated existing gender inequalities and the vulnerabilities of women and girls. As part of the global response, UNFPA has worked to mitigate the disruption of essential services in gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. However, the adverse effects could not be completely avoided. This underscores the importance of building resilience, breaking down silos and embracing interagency collaboration to ensure sustained solutions to addressing gender inequality and intersectional inequities in access to quality services.

Mr President, Distinguished Delegates,

Please allow me to turn to the six recommendations based on the evidence collected.

First, UNFPA should develop a more integrated and coherent approach that joins up the different areas of its mandate. This includes broadening the conceptual framework on gender equality and women's empowerment, focusing on social norm change work and gender-transformative approaches.

Second, UNFPA should scale up its role as a convenor on gender-based violence and prioritize investment in staffing to amplify its leadership and positioning in gender-based violence response and prevention which will enable UNFPA to help drive a change process.

Third, UNFPA should strengthen capacities internally through capacity development on gender-transformative approaches and intersectionality, and use of data to inform targeting as part of the broader Leave No One Behind strategy.

Forth, UNFPA should continue engaging Member States and donors in the discussion on the importance of adequate levels of predictable funding that can be utilized in a more flexible manner by country offices, with the aim of supporting longer-term programming capabilities on gender equality and mainstreaming.

Fifth, UNFPA should consider which partners can complement UNFPA expertise and resources within an ecosystem approach that is essential to resolving the more complex and deeply rooted drivers of inequalities to achieve sustainable change in gender equality.

And lastly, UNFPA should continue to build organizational strategic thinking on resilience from an intersectional gender perspective, drawing on lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr President, Distinguished Delegates,

In the context of an ever-increasing need for cooperation and collaboration across countries in order to better respond to the today's complex global challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, it is of the utmost importance that UNFPA leverage and strengthen gender equality and women's empowerment as a key programmatic approach in not only achieving its mandates, but also those of the broader development frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda.

It is my hope that lessons learned from this evaluation will support UNFPA to accelerate progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment, including in addressing the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls.

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.