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UNFPA MANAGEMENT COMMENTARIES
to
Annual report on the evaluation function, 2025
Report of the Director, Independent Evaluation Office
(DP/FPA/2026/5)

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Management commentary to the annual report on the evaluation function, 2025

I. Introduction

1. UNFPA management welcomes the annual report of the Director of the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) on the evaluation function for 2025 (DP/FPA/2026/5) and is pleased to present its commentary. UNFPA management continues to value the critical role played by the independent evaluation function in supporting organizational learning and informing evidence-based decision-making at all levels of the organization.

2. In this commentary, management responds to the independent evaluation function's progress in the six key areas presented in the report, namely: (a) role of evaluation; (b) performance of the evaluation function; (c) centralized evaluations; (d) use of evaluations to foster change; (e) decentralized evaluation system; and (f) enhancing coherence in the United Nations system evaluation functions.

II. Role of evaluation

3. Management welcomes the report's emphasis on the central role of independent evaluation in strengthening accountability, advancing organizational learning and supporting organizational adaptation in a rapidly evolving context. As UNFPA navigates the UN80 initiative and begins implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2026-2029, evaluation remains critical to ensuring that the organization is responsive, effective and focused on results.

4. Management recognizes the contribution of evaluation to informing strategic choices, strengthening programme design and implementation, and supporting adaptive management in both development and humanitarian settings. Management also welcomes the report's emphasis on innovation, including more agile evaluation models, concise reporting, and the responsible use of artificial intelligence to improve the accessibility and timeliness of evaluative evidence, while preserving methodological rigor, ethical safeguards and human oversight.

5. Management further welcomes the emphasis placed on youth-responsive evaluation and the meaningful engagement of young and emerging evaluators. These efforts are aligned with the broader UNFPA commitment to youth leadership and intergenerational partnership and contribute to building more inclusive and future-oriented evaluation systems.

III. Performance of the evaluation function

6. Management is pleased to note the strong performance achieved across most key performance indicators in 2025, several of which exceeded corporate targets. This reflects the organization's sustained commitment to a robust evaluation culture, even in a highly constrained environment marked by organizational transition, increasing humanitarian needs and budgetary pressures.

7. In particular, management welcomes the consistently high levels of evaluation coverage, implementation, transparency, the use of evaluation recommendations in programme design and follow-up on evaluation recommendations through management

responses. The restoration of the management response submission rate to 100 per cent, together with the continued high implementation rate of management actions, demonstrates that evaluation is not only generating evidence, but also informing decision-making and organizational improvement.

8. Management is further promoting the use of evaluation across UNFPA offices beyond compliance, positioning it as a valuable learning exercise. Management continues to track the use of evaluation findings and lessons in the development of country programmes through programme quality reviews and promotes the use of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Evaluation Assistant developed by the Independent Evaluation Office to support learning.

9. Management notes that total expenditure on the evaluation function reached \$10.73 million in 2025, representing 0.85 per cent of total programme expenditures. While this reflects continued institutional commitment, it remains below the target range of 1.0 per cent to 1.6 per cent established in the 2024 evaluation policy.

10. Management encourages the IEO to preserve the gains achieved in recent years in the implementation, coverage and quality of evaluations. For its part, management remains fully committed to continuing to support the evaluation function and to sustaining these achievements.

11. Management also recognizes the urgency of filling all P5 regional planning, monitoring and evaluation adviser posts. The recruitment of the monitoring and evaluation adviser for East and Southern Africa is currently ongoing. While a previous recruitment attempt did not result in the selection of a suitable candidate, the region is committed to filling the position in due course.

IV. Centralized evaluations

12. Management welcomes the continued delivery of centralized evaluations in accordance with the approved multi-year costed evaluation plan. The report demonstrates that centralized evaluations continued to provide valuable evidence across the UNFPA strategic priorities and to support accountability and learning at the institutional level.

13. Management further welcomes the increased strategic emphasis placed on humanitarian evaluation, including the independent evaluation of the UNFPA humanitarian response in Sudan. This is particularly important in light of the growing scale and complexity of humanitarian crises and the centrality of humanitarian action to the UNFPA mandate in many contexts. Management recognizes the value of such evaluations in strengthening preparedness, operational agility and accountability to affected populations.

14. Management also welcomes the progress made under the “Evaluation Forward” initiative. Efforts to improve timeliness, relevance and cost-effectiveness through more agile evaluation models, concise reporting and the responsible use of artificial intelligence are timely and aligned with broader organizational efforts to work more efficiently and effectively while preserving quality and independence. Management notes in particular the potential of the AI Evaluation Assistant to improve access to evaluative evidence across the organization and support more systematic evidence-informed programming.

15. Management also notes that the lack of disaggregated, baseline, and outcome-level data limits the ability to robustly assess contributions to higher-level results in some contexts. To address this, greater emphasis will be placed on ensuring that outcome-level and disaggregated data are available when programmes are submitted for review. Management will also prioritize a shift towards outcome-level results by providing the necessary guidance and support, and by strengthening and adjusting internal monitoring systems.

V. Use of evaluations to foster change

16. Management appreciates the continued contribution of the evaluation function to organizational learning and programme improvement. The report provides useful examples of how both centralized and decentralized evaluations have informed strategic choices, programme design, operational adjustments and resource mobilization.

17. Management welcomes the finding that all new country programme documents submitted in 2025 were informed by evaluative evidence and reaffirms its commitment to further embedding the use of evaluation across planning, implementation and adaptive management processes.

18. Management also notes the variation in the implementation rates of management responses across regions. Management remains committed to strengthening follow-up and accountability to ensure that the remaining actions are fully implemented in 2026

VI. Decentralized evaluation system

19. Management recognizes the important progress made in strengthening the decentralized evaluation system and welcomes the continued high levels of evaluation coverage and implementation at regional and country levels.

20. Management reaffirms its commitment to strengthening capacity development and addressing data limitations through improved planning and monitoring efforts, alongside the IEO's planned capacity development initiatives, including innovative approaches to strengthen community engagement in humanitarian evaluations.

VII. Enhancing coherence in the United Nations system evaluation functions

21. Management values the important role played by the IEO in advancing coherence across United Nations system evaluation functions, including through joint, inter-agency and system-wide evaluations, engagement with the United Nations Evaluation Group and the United Nations System-Wide Evaluation Office, and contributions to humanitarian and SDG-related evaluation synthesis work.

22. These efforts strengthen collective accountability, reduce duplication and help position UNFPA as a constructive and forward-looking actor within the multilateral evaluation community. Management also welcomes the contribution of the IEO to youth-responsive national evaluation capacity development and to broader partnerships that support the future-readiness, inclusiveness and influence of evaluation within and beyond the United Nations system.

VIII. Conclusion

23. UNFPA management commends the IEO for its sustained efforts to strengthen the evaluation function and deliver high-quality, relevant evaluative evidence, and reaffirms its commitment to an independent, credible and influential evaluation function that drives learning, accountability and results across the organization.

24. Management takes note of the report's conclusions, including the proposed IEO programme of work and budget for 2026, and affirms its commitment to continued close collaboration with the Office in support of its vital role in the effective implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2026-2029, and contribution to the post-2030 agenda.
