



INFORMATION NOTE

UNFPA

Executive Board annual session 2024

Implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of General Assembly resolution 75/233 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system and General Assembly resolution 76/4 on the review of the functioning of the reinvigorated resident coordinator system, including its funding arrangement

I. Introduction

This information note provides an update on UNFPA support to the implementation of the repositioning of the United Nations development system (UNDS), within the context of the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR), the review of the functioning of the resident coordinator system, and UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board decision 2023/6 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system. This information note covers the period of April 2023 to April 2024, and complements previous information notes presented to the Executive Board.

Pursuant to decision 2023/6 of the Executive Board, this information note contains an annex reporting on the complete United Nations development system reform checklist, which was transmitted to the Executive Board by the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), pursuant to General Assembly resolution 76/4.

II. Update on UNFPA implementation of United Nations development system reform

Six years into the implementation of the United Nations development system reform, under the overall framework of its strategic plan, 2022-2025, UNFPA continues to support the full implementation and consolidation of the reform agenda, and to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Decade of Action. As acknowledged in the [Formative evaluation on UNFPA engagement in the United Nations development system reform](#), presented to the Executive Board in 2023, the Fund has made important contributions to the design and implementation of the repositioned UNDS, and intends to continue its active engagement as the reform agenda enters into its next phase.

At the global level, UNFPA continued to play an active role in inter-agency mechanisms, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), to maximize system-wide efficiencies and to ensure effective programming for results by United Nations country teams. UNFPA was the co-chair of the UNSDG Business Innovation Group until November 2023 and will again co-lead the group from June 2024, continuing therefore to play a key role in driving the efficiency agenda within the UN system, particularly as the system rolled-out the first common back office in Kenya. In 2023, UNFPA continued to actively engage in all five Regional Collaborative Platforms – including issue-based coalitions on gender equality, human rights, youth and data, as well as in peer support groups – to drive joint actions towards the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and the SDGs.

UNDS reform engagement strategy

The formative evaluation of UNFPA engagement in United Nations development system reform recommended that UNFPA provide stronger strategic direction for its workforce within the framework of its strategic plan for its engagement with the United Nations development system reform. In direct response, UNFPA included inter-agency collaboration among its organizational culture principles, conducted a series of internal discussions in 2023, including “Change Dialogues” on UNDS reform for all staff and a strategic global learning initiative, to develop a dedicated UNDS reform strategy 2024-25, titled “*Leveraging the reformed UN development system for the achievement of the ICPD Programme of Action and the SDGs.*”

The strategy, grounded in the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, serves as an overarching framework to guide the Fund’s inter-agency work within the UNDS and sets out UNFPA priorities for its engagement in inter-agency coordination and coherence efforts, within the context of the repositioned UNDS. Within the context of ICPD30 and the Secretary-General’s *Our Common Agenda* report, it explores how UNFPA can accelerate the unfinished business of the ICPD Programme of Action and the SDGs, while also preparing for future challenges, within UN inter-agency spaces. To this end, the strategy also draws on the Secretary-General’s vision for a UN 2.0 quintet of change and key transitions to support SDG implementation, in line with the Global Sustainable Development Report, and looks toward the outcomes of the review and appraisal of the ICPD Programme of Action on its 30-year anniversary and the Summit of the Future. UNFPA plans to update and finalize the strategy following the imperatives and guidance received from the 2024 QCPR.

Resident coordinator system

UNFPA continues to be an active supporter and beneficiary of the repositioning of the United Nations development system, with a reinvigorated resident coordinator system and new generation of United Nations country teams (UNCT) at its core. As acknowledged by the above mentioned [Formative evaluation](#) and evidenced by internal surveys to UNFPA country and regional offices, when UNFPA is effectively engaged in United Nations development system reform processes, particularly at the country level, the Fund benefits from greater support from the resident coordinator system, the broader UNCT, as well as the Government across the range of UNFPA mandate areas. The reformed United Nations development system and the reinvigorated resident coordinator function have provided an enabling environment for UNFPA to position its strategic priorities, engage on normative issues and leverage joint programming for results, and are helping strengthen UNFPA strategic positioning, especially as a key partner in the areas of gender, youth and data.

For example, in Equatorial Guinea, the Resident Coordinator has fully supported UNFPA in integrating normative issues, including human rights and gender equality, in both the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) evaluation and the new Common Country Analysis (CCA). In Mauritius and the Seychelles, the Fund has successfully leveraged its collaboration with the Resident Coordinator Office to advance normative areas of work around women and girl’s rights and choices, including in the context of human rights monitoring mechanisms. In this context, the UNFPA UNDS reform strategy includes a focus on strengthening the Funds’ strategic engagement with the resident coordinators and the UN country teams at country level, as well as on enhancing UNFPA engagement in joint programming and joint programmes.

United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks

In the area of country-level programming, UNFPA has continued to support and leverage inter-agency coordination and coherence for the achievement of development results. The design and implementation of United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks (UNSDCFs) has provided UNFPA with the opportunity to expand its partnerships with other United Nations entities to deliver effective results. UNFPA internal policies require that all UNFPA country programme documents and activities derive from and are aligned with nationally agreed and owned Cooperation Frameworks. Resident Coordinators sign off on the derivation and alignment of UNFPA country

programme documents with the Cooperation Framework before UNFPA country programmes are submitted for the approval of the Executive Board. The Fund's ongoing revamping exercise of the country programme internal quality assurance process is further expected to strengthen the alignment and derivation of UNFPA country programmes with the Cooperation Frameworks.

Joint programming through the Cooperation Frameworks has led to increased coherence to support the achievement of the three transformative results, and in turn, the Cooperation Frameworks have led to increased engagement by UNFPA in joint programmes. UNFPA remains among the United Nations entities participating in the largest number of UN joint programmes and in 2023, UNFPA received a total of \$233 million from the UN-to-UN transfers, which represents the largest source of non-core funding to UNFPA – a reflection of UNFPA commitment to delivering joint results.

In addition, UNFPA continued to ensure that its programming instruments were up to date and in line with the ongoing United Nations development system reform processes. In this regard, the Fund strengthened and expanded capacity-building activities to ensure support to country offices for stronger programmatic engagement and support to UNSDCF processes and UN country team collaboration, including through active participation in the regional peer support groups. These activities facilitated and developed UNFPA staff capacity to engage in UNSDCF processes as well as knowledge-sharing, peer-to-peer learning and in-depth knowledge of the most recent United Nations reform programming-related issues.

In collaboration with the United Nations Development Coordination Office (DCO), through the Programme Development and Results Working Group, which recently held a global retreat in Istanbul, UNFPA is working to apply integrated approaches to SDG achievement within the common country analyses (CCAs) and Cooperative Frameworks, drawing on the UNSDG key transitions,¹ and is collaborating with the Joint SDG Fund in the roll-out and implementation of its new strategic approach that aims to catalyse and accelerate integrated SDG approaches through targeted joint initiatives.

Common business operations

As co-chair of the UNSDG Business Innovation Group, together with UNICEF until November 2023, UNFPA continued to play a key role in driving the efficiency agenda within the United Nations system, from business operations strategies (BOS) to common premises, global shared services and common back offices (CBOs). In 2023, UNFPA realized operational efficiencies of \$8.4 million (comprising \$7.7 million from UNFPA-specific initiatives and \$0.7 million from bilateral initiatives with partner United Nations organizations). The efficiencies realized for UNFPA in 2023 for BOS totalled \$5.8 million, bringing the overall operational efficiencies realized in 2023 to \$14.2 million.

As one of the larger service recipient entities, UNFPA outsources considerable service provision to other United Nations organizations (e.g. UN FLEET, HR Services, UN Web Buy Plus). UNFPA is currently outsourcing four of the five priority global shared services. This collaboration is also reflected in the fact that UNFPA participates in 127 business operations strategies globally and is currently co-chairing the BOS Task Team under the Business Innovation Group. In 2023, the UNFPA share of common premises stood at 79 per cent, placing UNFPA among the United Nations entities showing the most commitment for such inter-agency solutions. Through the inter-agency Task Team on Common Premises, efforts are currently underway to identify the locations with the highest potential for creating additional common premises.

UNFPA has been also fully engaged in consolidation of services through the roll-out of common back offices led by the United Nations Development Coordination Office (DCO) of the prioritized six CBOs for 2023 in high-volume locations (Kenya, Tanzania, Brazil, Vietnam, Jordan, Senegal). The recent launch of the first United Nations Common Back Office in Kenya and related benefits were

¹ The United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) identified key areas of support for countries to progress on sustainable transitions in interconnected areas in which scaled-up investments can have catalytic and multiplier effects across the SDGs. These areas include: (1) food systems transformation; (2) energy transitions and access; (3) digital connectivity; (4) education and skills gaps; (5) decent jobs and social protection including healthcare; and (6) triple planetary crisis: climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

considerations informing, among other factors, the selection of Nairobi for the UNFPA headquarters optimization process. UNFPA was one of the first and most forward-looking organizations in the adoption of mutual recognition principles to generate additional efficiencies by allowing entities to use or rely on another entity's policies, procedures, system contracts and related operational mechanisms for the implementation of activities, without further evaluation checks or approvals.

Other initiatives to join forces with other UN agencies were the launch of the Quantum Enterprise Resource Planning System consortium and the UN Partner Portal.

Funding and financing

UNFPA is adhering to and has integrated all principles and parameters of the United Nations Funding Compact, including through the regular structured funding dialogues with Member States, and is reaching almost all targets, albeit there was a decline in the core to non-core ratio of funding provided by Member States, from 30% in 2022 to 27% in 2023, below the Funding Compact 30% threshold. UNFPA continued to regularly engage with other United Nations development system entities, in particular, UNDP, UNICEF and UN-Women around common funding trends, including progress in implementation of Funding Compact commitments. Throughout 2023, UNFPA actively engaged with DCO and other UN entities in developing a new draft “Funding Compact 2.0” for adoption by Member States in 2024.

In 2023, UNFPA continued to work with governments, financial institutions, and private-sector partners to develop analytical tools and set up blended finance mechanisms to increase investments towards sustainable development, with a strong focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights. Through increased country support, the roll-out of the UNFPA Innovative Financing Insights paper, and the Strategic Investment Facility (SIF), UNFPA saw a growing number of country offices engaging in developing blended financing mechanisms to harness and leverage resources for sexual and reproductive health and rights.

III. Contributing to joint SDG implementation, follow-up and review

Through its strategic plan, 2022-2025, UNFPA continues to contribute to and support system-wide approaches for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Strengthening organization-wide ownership of the reforms and linking UNFPA areas of work with the broader sustainable development pillars in the 2030 Agenda remain key challenges and priorities, and are articulated in the draft corporate UNDS reform strategy. As UNFPA and the rest of the United Nations system are pivoting from processes to results, the Fund seeks to provide thought leadership, implementation guidance, and support the effective positioning of UNFPA issues within relevant inter-agency mechanisms and frameworks, such as on the UNSDG-agreed key transitions for SDG acceleration and the Secretary-General’s vision for a [UN 2.0](#).

Within the context of the 2023 SDG Summit, UNFPA assumed co-leadership in two high-impact initiatives, which aim to facilitate a strengthened offer from the United Nations development system in partnership with governments and an array of key stakeholders on the crucial dimensions of SDG acceleration. Together with partner UN agencies, UNFPA is scaling up the Spotlight Initiative through the High-impact Initiative on Gender-based Violence (GBV), helping governments develop emergency response plans to GBV, including by facilitating capacity-building through the development of a global knowledge platform with technical resources, guidance documents and mechanisms for knowledge exchange on comprehensive GBV prevention and response plans. Through its co-leadership on the High-impact Initiative on the Power of Data, UNFPA is bringing its unique expertise to help unlock the data dividend for the SDGs, by focusing on the strengthening of national data capacities, promotion of data interoperability and mobilization of political leadership and funding for data.

UNFPA also continued to support the deliberations of Member States ahead of and during the High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development, including through substantive and technical inputs to the report on the annual theme of the High-level Political Forum. The Fund also continued to leverage

its support to countries undertaking voluntary national reviews through enhanced coordination with the Resident Coordinators and UNCT members for more comprehensive and intersectional support to governments.

IV. Enhancing UNFPA skills and capacities for 21st-century solutions

UNFPA remains a strong supporter of the Secretary-General’s vision for a UN 2.0, grounded in its “quintet of change,”² and continues to support organizational ownership of this forward looking agenda, including through internal change dialogues with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, and showcasing of UNFPA initiatives during the recent UN 2.0 week, to raise awareness and establish a strategic direction for the organization. Elements of the quintet of change will have a unique footprint in each United Nations entity, tailored to its mandate and context. For UNFPA, work is already underway to enhance the Fund’s data, analysis, innovation and strategic foresight – and the stronger focus in the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025 on social norms change responds to the need for more analysis on behavioural science.

UNFPA leadership and comparative advantage on data is evidenced, inter alia, through our co-leadership in the High-impact Initiative on the Power of Data, the UNFPA centre of excellence on civil registration and vital statistics, and the Population Data Portal – the UNFPA flagship product for use by governments, the United Nations system and the wider public, to disseminate and visualize geo-located and disaggregated population, health, gender and development data, tracking inter alia indicators for the SDGs, the ICPD and the three transformative results. The importance of strengthening UNFPA capacity on data and analytics also informed the decision to establish a new dedicated Data and Analytics Branch, as part of the UNFPA headquarters optimization process. Strategic foresight is another element UNFPA employs to develop proactive and innovative solutions to development problems. With the Strategic Plan “four scenarios for its transformative results,” UNFPA adopted a structured future-informed approach into its strategic planning, responding to the world’s current turbulent, uncertain and ambiguous conditions. UNFPA is looking forward to promoting the benefits of this approach for inter-agency learning within the United Nations system, and to learning jointly with others.

UNFPA transformation towards UN 2.0 is also underpinned by strategic partnerships, innovation and digitalization. Since 2021, UNFPA has been leading the investment and partnership platform “Equalizer Accelerator Fund” to support innovations for women and girls, bringing together investments, expertise and technology – focusing on innovations by women, for women, and with women.

While UNFPA has made significant progress in many areas of the quintet of change, sustained efforts are underway to train and upskill current staff and to make sure the progress trickles down to all levels of the organization and across all functions. UNFPA also commits to learn from the most effective approaches from fellow United Nations entities and partners so that they are reflected in the development of the next UNFPA strategic plan (for 2026-2029).

² The [UN 2.0](#) “Quintet of Change” refers to a combination of cutting-edge skills and forward-thinking culture in the areas of innovation, data, digital, strategic foresight, and behavioural science.

V. Conclusion

With multiple complex challenges facing the international community, it is important for the system to work collectively. As the midterm review of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025 emphasizes, the Fund will seek to continue leveraging the collective United Nations system and the UN inter-agency space more effectively for the accelerated achievement of the three transformative results and the SDGs during the Decade of Action. Within this context, UNFPA remains committed to follow-up on all recommendations from the Formative Evaluation, and will continue to support the work of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, including the revision of the common country analyses, the Cooperation Frameworks, and the Management and Accountability Framework. The UN 2.0 vision will serve as an important evolving roadmap to guide UNFPA towards enhanced capabilities to provide comprehensive solutions for the complex challenges of the 21st century.

The 2024 Summit of the Future presents a pivotal opportunity to reaffirm the need for a renewed, effective and inclusive multilateral system, with a strong United Nations system fit for purpose at its core. It is critical that the Summit and the upcoming negotiations on the 2024 QCPR build on the outcomes of the 2023 SDG Summit and the review of the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action upon its thirty-year anniversary (ICPD30), to reinforce the need for accelerated efforts to achieve sustainable development, gender equality and human rights for all and prosperity for future generations.

ANNEX

Checklist 2024 Annual Session of the UNFPA Executive Board
