



25 April 2016

UNFPA Management Report

Report of the Director, Evaluation Office 2015

(DP/FPA/2016/5)

Agenda Item 12: Evaluation

Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS
Annual session 2016
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Overall management response

1. Management welcomes the UNFPA annual report on evaluation (DP/FPA/2016/5), and commends the Evaluation Office for strengthening the evaluation function, in line with the goals of the revised Evaluation Policy (DP/FPA/2013/5). The report provides information about the progress achieved in strengthening evaluation function, lessons learned from the 2015 corporate evaluations and the recommendations to address challenges towards further strengthening of UNFPA evaluation capacity and culture.
2. Management acknowledges the leadership role of the Evaluation Office and its continuous efforts towards improving evaluation planning and management, increasing quality of evaluations, and enhancing monitoring and evaluation capacity. Management is satisfied with the increased production of corporate-levels evaluations and reviews, and acknowledges their contribution to increased availability of evidence and lessons learned to inform decision-making; strengthened accountability at UNFPA; and addressed demand of Member States for stronger evaluation function.

Corporate and programme-led evaluations

3. Management agrees with the conclusions of the 2015 Annual Report on the performance of the evaluation function against the transitional budgeted biennial evaluation plan 2014-2015 focusing on key performance dimensions. In regards to the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan for 2016-2019, Management encourages the Evaluation Office to establish a strategy and resources framework to monitor the progress towards operationalization of the revised evaluation policy and the contribution of the evaluation plan to organizational effectiveness in 2016; and to ensure the credibility and accountability of the evaluation function, its responsiveness to the evolving context, and its further alignment with the priorities of the next UNFPA strategic plan (for 2018-2021).
4. Management notes a consistent increase in corporate-level evaluation engagements since 2014, which remained one of the most important evaluation efforts of the organization requiring effectively coordinated follow-up and use. Towards this result, the Programme Division works on strengthening partnerships with the Evaluation Office, Monitoring and Evaluation Regional Advisors and other headquarter-based units to ensure close collaboration, better complementarity and shared accountability over implementation of evaluation recommendations. Clear guidance on the overall coordination of the implementation of management actions in response to the recommendations emerging from corporate, thematic and joint evaluations will be developed in 2016.
5. Management welcomes the findings of the completed corporate evaluations and studies in 2015, which highlighted the positive role of UNFPA in strengthening national capacities for the production and availability of census data; and the effective strategic positioning of

UNFPA as a population census-supporting agency worldwide. Management agrees that greater efforts should be made to better support the dissemination and use of census data in policy dialogue and formulation; quality assurance mechanisms, needed for effective census governance; and development of guidance for the support to 2020 census round. Management welcomes the recognition that UNFPA was relevant and effective in its contributions to national development outcomes in Bangladesh, and other programme countries that were assessed in the synthesis study of lessons learned from country programme evaluations completed in 2010-2013.

6. UNFPA notes the highlighted challenges related to efficiency and sustainability of the coordination and cooperation of its programme inventions. Management will provide a detailed presentation of follow-up actions and mitigation measures to ensure that the evaluation findings are fully taken into account in future global, regional and country programme planning and reporting. The management response to the thematic evaluation of UNFPA support to Population and Housing Census Data in 2005-2014 will be presented at the upcoming annual session of the Executive Board. Management takes note of the other corporate evaluations to be completed in 2016, and looks forward to learn from their outcomes.

Quality of evaluation reports

7. Management is pleased to note a significant improvement in the quality of evaluations reported for 2013-2014, which is resulted from more focused and systematic approach of the Evaluation Office towards stronger quality assurance and organizational capacity development. Management acknowledges the continuing systemic challenges, and agrees that decentralized evaluation capacities at country level need further enhancing.
8. Management welcomes reported measures and initiatives undertaken to address the limited availability of skilled evaluators at the country level and the challenges of evaluation planning and quality of reports. Management remains committed and will continue to demonstrate a consistent demand for better use of evaluations. UNFPA will take actions to further strengthen the quality of evaluations by encouraging better follow up and support by regional offices towards closer adherence by country offices to evaluation plans, improved evaluation management, increasing the number of evaluation reports submitted for quality assessment, and leveraging accumulated experience in conducting evaluations.
9. Management commends the compliance of the evaluation function with the United Nations System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) Evaluation Performance Indicator, and will continue its support to further improvements to be introduced by the Evaluation Office to the current quality assurance system to strengthen its use for improving organizational performance.

Dissemination of evaluation results

10. Management welcomes the 2015 initiatives of the Evaluation Office to disseminate evaluation findings for institutional strengthening. Recognizing that evaluation results are an important source of knowledge for the organization to inform programming and organizational learning, Management is keen to learn to what extent the reported evaluation dissemination activities have contributed to improved quality of programming. Stressing the importance of disseminating and institutionalizing evaluation lessons, it is expected that the Evaluation Office, through its knowledge and communication strategy and relevant activities, will contribute to the corporate knowledge management strategy and knowledge sharing culture. The Programme Division, as a custodian of the corporate knowledge management strategy and guidance, takes action to ensure that the evaluation sharing activities are taken into account in the implementation of corporate knowledge management strategy and disseminating activities to maximize their impact.

Follow-up on evaluation recommendations and management responses

11. In June 2015, the Executive Board adopted decision 2015/11 on the Annual Report on Evaluation (DP/FPA/2015/6 and annexes), urging UNFPA to “to take action to further strengthen the evaluation function at UNFPA by implementing the recommendations presented in table 3 of the evaluation report”, stressing, among alia, the importance of disseminating and institutionalizing evaluation lessons. Given that Management Response Tracking System (MRTS) is a key instrument that UNFPA uses to determine the extent to which evaluation results are effectively utilized to support organizational decision-making, Management has undertaken several steps to address the challenge of MRTS functionalities. In 2015, the Programme Division conducted a review of good practices in the UN system organizations, the results of which informed a proposed list of functionality modifications that could improve the use of MRTS. It was expected that MRTS improvement project would commence in December 2015, but this deadline was pushed forward because of resource constraints faced in 2015.

12. Despite the limitation of the systems support, Management continued to strengthen its follow up on implementation of evaluation recommendations to inform and improve programme delivery. Towards this result, Programme Division has taken actions on a number of fronts: systematic quality assurance of management responses, guidance provided to implementing units to ensure regular reporting in MRTS, monitoring and attention to verification of implementation of agreed actions; and continuous collaboration with regional monitoring and evaluation advisers on implementation challenges. This resulted in increase in implementation rate of accepted programme evaluation recommendations to 77.96 per cent in 2015, compared to 76.49 per cent in 2014 and 60.96 per cent in 2013.

13. To ensure consistency of senior management engagement, the Programme Division works on establishing routine reporting to the Executive Committee and the Audit Advisory Committee on the results of the analysis of the evaluation management response.

Evaluation Partnership

14. Management notes with satisfaction that the Evaluation Office identified new priorities for joint evaluations and works closely with key partners. Such collaborative engagements are important instruments for assessing the effectiveness of joint approaches to achieving results, and should be continued to foster coherence and synergies among the agencies, Funds and Programmes of the United Nations development system.
15. Management strongly supports Evaluation Office efforts to integrate good practices and experiences generated by the United Nations system-wide evaluation activities into the institutional strengthening. Management looks forward to learn about lessons learned and progress achieved in making joint programmes coherent, efficient, relevant and sustainable in national contexts.

Progress on the 2014 recommendations

16. Overall, there has been significant progress made towards a more mature evaluation function at UNFPA, including overall strengthening of human and financial resources. Over the past recent years, there has been a consistent increase in both the number of country offices with at least one monitoring and evaluation specialist and the number of staff dedicated to monitoring and evaluation at the country office level. Recognizing considerable variations across regions and continuing challenges in terms of monitoring and evaluation capacity of staff in order to be able to respond flexibly to evaluation needs, Management will closely monitor the situation in 2016 and constantly engage the Evaluation Office in the discussion of needed measures.
17. As mentioned in the 2015 annual report on evaluation, a wide scope of capacity building initiatives was undertaken to strengthen monitoring and evaluation expertise of both, country programme staff and national partners in 2015. Given that capacity development is a long-term investment, requiring consistent strategic approach based on systematic needs assessment, Management encourages the Evaluation Office to lead the development of a comprehensive capacity development strategy, which is informed by a review of monitoring and evaluation capacity needs at all levels of the organization; is based on lessons learned from past experience and good practice in the United Nations system, and is formulated in consultation with critical functions in headquarters and regional offices. It is envisaged that this strategy will provide an opportunity to address challenges; and will set the results framework to assess the effectiveness of capacity development efforts of the Evaluation Office in further strengthening of evaluation culture at UNFPA.

18. Management is pleased to note an improved quality of monitoring and reporting on the organizational financial investment in evaluation, specifically on tracking the actual expenditures on evaluation, particularly decentralized evaluations, which is key to allowing UNFPA to adjust to evolving country needs in evaluation planning, management, funding and use. Management agrees with the importance of continuous financial investments in evaluation and is pleased to report a positive overall trend in the budget allocated for evaluation in 2016 (\$3,559,261) in comparison to 2015 (\$2,626,359). Following the initial resource reductions brought by the significant reduction of the 2016 regular resources, management has prioritized the resource allocation to the Evaluation Office and restated the originally planned 2016 allocations. In addition, recognizing the need for sustained funding of the evaluation function, and to further strengthen the evaluation capacity, the midterm review of the integrated budget (DP/FPA/2016/3) proposes an increase for the Evaluation Office budget effective 2017.

19. Reaffirming the organizational objective for evaluation going forward, UNFPA management remains committed to further strengthening of the country office evaluation capacity and further professional development of evaluation function through training, strengthening human resources, and financial support, subject to availability of funds.
