

Organizational unit: Iran Country Office **Year of report:** 2021

Title of evaluation report: EVALUATION OF THE 6th UNFPA IRAN COUNTRY PROGRAMME 2017-2021

Overall quality of report: Good **Date of assessment:** 15 December 2021

Overall comments: This was an ambitious and complex evaluation to implement, particularly given the need for it to be carried out remotely due to pandemic restrictions and also for the level of stakeholder involvement. The evaluators provided a solid basis for the assessment through the careful analysis and refining of the programme logic, and by clearly linking the sampling strategy to the stakeholder mapping exercise. A diverse range of stakeholders participated as informants - though not vulnerable populations due to travel limitations. Detailed findings are provided that carefully examine CP achievements and challenges. Although triangulated sources are clearly shown in most cases, this level of evidence could have been more consistently provided. Conclusions provide a good overview of the evaluation results and lead to detailed recommendations that appear useful input for the development of the next CP. The treatment of gender is at a general level, although broader issues of vulnerability are well covered, and there is an attempt to look at the extent that people with disabilities are reached. It is understood that there were constraints in conducting an in-depth assessment of human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion.

In respect to the structure and clarity of the report, the Executive Summary is well crafted but pieces of the Findings and Conclusions could have been more crisply presented to reduce some duplication and text heavy sections, as well as the overall lengthiness of the document. Accessibility could have been further improved by clearer distinctions between sub sections and by final editing.

Assessment Levels

Very Good	strong, above average, best practice	Good	satisfactory, respectable	Fair	with some weaknesses, still acceptable	Unsatisfactory	weak, does not meet minimal quality standards
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Quality Assessment Criteria *Insert assessment level followed by main comments. (use 'shading' function to give cells corresponding colour)*

1. Structure and Clarity of Reporting	Yes No Partial	Assessment Level:	Good
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To ensure the report is comprehensive and user-friendly

1. Is the report structured in a logical way? Is the report easy to read and understand (i.e. written in an accessible language appropriate for the intended audience) with minimal grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors? Is there a clear distinction made between analysis/findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned (where applicable)?	Partial	The usual structure of UNFPA evaluation reports is followed. The distinctions between sections are made but would be more apparent if more spacing was used, particularly for the start of Chapter 3, and if a larger or different coloured font was used for sub-section headings. The writing is clear although there are a number of editing errors throughout the document. Portions of the findings are text heavy and detailed, would be more accessible if streamlined. Finally, it would be helpful if the annexes were combined in one document instead of being presented in separate files.
2. Is the report of a reasonable length? (maximum pages for the main report, excluding annexes: 60 for institutional evaluations; 70 for CPEs; 80 for thematic evaluations)	No	The report, including the Executive Summary, is 78 pages. It is not as concise as the standard that has been set, particularly as a font size of just 10 was used.
3. Do the annexes contain – at a minimum – the ToRs; a bibliography; a list of interviewees; the evaluation matrix; methodological and data collection tools used (e.g. interview guides; focus group notes, outline of surveys)?	Yes	The annexes contain those that are required plus five additional ones that provide further information on the CP.

Executive summary

4. Is an executive summary written as a stand-alone section, presenting the i) Purpose; ii) Objectives, scope and brief description of interventions; iii) intended audience; iv) Methodology; v) Main results; vi) Conclusions and Recommendations?	Yes	The Executive Summary effectively serves as a stand-alone section, providing a solid overview of all required components.
5. Is the executive summary reasonably concise (e.g. with a maximum length of 5 pages)?	Yes	It is just over 4.5 pages in length.

2. Design and Methodology	Yes No Partial	Assessment Level:	Very good
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To ensure that the evaluation is put within its context

1. Is the development and institutional context of the evaluation clearly described and constraints explained?	Yes	Chapters 2 and 3 provide a general overview of the country context and a more in-depth look at the UNFPA programme.
2. Does the evaluation report discuss and assess the intervention logic and/or theory of change?	Yes	The evaluators note using a theory-based approach which included analyzing and unpacking the ToC and intervention logic. In Chapter 3, there is a very good discussion and graphic of the analysis process and of how UNFPA could 'harness the demographic dividend' to support adolescent girls. The reconstructed intervention logic is then presented for the SRH and Population Dynamics programmes. These link activities through to UNFPA Strategic Plan and the UNDAF outcomes areas, although could be more explicit in articulating the outcome and strategic objective results.

To ensure a rigorous design and methodology

3. Is the evaluation framework clearly described in the text and in the evaluation matrix? Does the evaluation matrix establish the evaluation questions, assumptions, indicators, data sources and methods for data collection?	Yes	A solid evaluation matrix is provided in Annex 4 and is referenced in the body of the report. It contains all required components including assumptions and indicators.
4. Are the tools for data collection described and their choice justified?	Yes	Tools are adequately described and justified. The evaluators note the heavy reliance on qualitative data since only a limited amount of quantitative data was available.

5. Is there a comprehensive stakeholder map? Is the stakeholder consultation process clearly described (in particular, does it include the consultation of key stakeholders on draft recommendations)?	Yes	A stakeholder map by programme area is included as Annex D and is described as part of the discussion on the sampling framework. There is a general description of the consultation process with the ERG which is adequate given constraints encountered.
<i>Remember: Please address all three aspects of this sub-criteria in the comment: 1) is a</i>		
6. Are the methods for analysis clearly described for all types of data?	Yes	As was requested in the ToR, several types of analysis (descriptive, content, comparative, quantitative and contribution analysis) were all listed as being used and their application is briefly described. MAXQDA software is noted as being used for coding and analysis of interview data.
7. Are methodological limitations acknowledged and their effect on the evaluation described? Does the report discuss what was done to minimize such issues?	Yes	The limitations posed by the pandemic, restricted access to some key sources of information (including direct beneficiaries), and a partial ToC are discussed, as are reasonable mitigation strategies for each.
8. Is the sampling strategy described?	Yes	The sampling framework is clearly laid out in table 1.2 and is further explained in the text. There is a thorough explanation of the constraints in achieving a representative sample and of how this was addressed.
9. Does the methodology enable the collection and analysis of disaggregated data?	Yes	It appears this was done to the extent feasible. Although data collection tools do not have places to indicate male vs female stakeholders, evaluation participants are disaggregated by stakeholder type and gender in table 1.2, and gender disaggregated data is shown in Context and, to a lesser extent, in Findings.
10. Is the design and methodology appropriate for assessing the cross-cutting issues (equity and vulnerability, disability inclusion, gender equality and human rights)?	Yes	There is clear attention to the assessment of cross-cutting themes as evidenced by the evaluation questions and range of stakeholders consulted, although it is recognized that there were constraining factors to exploring all issues. Vulnerable groups are noted as including those with disabilities.
3. Reliability of Data		
	Yes No Partial	Assessment Level: Very good
<i>To ensure quality of data and robust data collection processes</i>		
1. Did the evaluation triangulate data collected as appropriate?	Yes	The triangulation process is carefully described and is evident in the citing of multiple sources in the Findings.
2. Did the evaluation clearly identify and make use of reliable qualitative and quantitative data sources?	Yes	Both types of data are used although there is heavier reliance on quantitative data (with the stakeholder map being useful in showing the sources). There is a subsection, "Authenticity and trustworthiness of data and findings", in which evaluators describe steps to help ensure validity and reliability.
3. Is there evidence that data has been collected with a sensitivity to issues of discrimination and other ethical considerations?	Yes	There is a brief explanation of compliance with ethical requirements that addresses confidentiality and voluntary participation. UNEG Ethical Guidelines are noted as being followed (para 11).
4. Analysis and Findings		
	Yes No Partial	Assessment Level: Good
<i>To ensure sound analysis and credible findings</i>		
1. Are the findings substantiated by evidence?	Yes	Document and qualitative sources are cited extensively, and in many cases footnotes show more than one source.
2. Is the basis for interpretations carefully described?	Partial	There is a detailed explanation of most findings. The section on Relevance is particularly well done. However in some cases the basis is less clear - such as the discussion on challenges for mainstreaming women's empowerment on p 56 which, as written, appears subjective. There are also instances where the evaluators go beyond findings by introducing recommendations (such as in the discussion on sustainability on p 63-64).
3. Is the analysis presented against the evaluation questions?	Yes	This is done, with the corresponding evaluation questions and a succinct summary of findings clearly highlighted in text boxes.
4. Are the cause and effect links between an intervention and its end results explained and any unintended outcomes highlighted?	Partial	The preamble to the discussion on Effectiveness notes the challenges in measuring achievements of planned results because of lack of data for CP indicators. However, throughout this section the evaluators explore additional ways in which UNFPA has contributed to higher-level results such as improved access to SRH-care for vulnerable populations. Unintended results are only mentioned in terms of noting UNFPA's participation on a task force to review unintended impact of sanctions on UNCT operations, but not in terms of what the evaluation itself found. As the exploration of unintended results is part of the specific objectives of the evaluation - and it appears there were a number of successes that were not part of the CP plans - these could have been better highlighted.
5. Does the analysis show different outcomes for different target groups, as relevant?	Yes	The analysis extends to different target groups, particularly where these have been a government priority, including the elderly, out-of-school adolescents, Afghan refugees, pregnant women, and those at risk of HIV, etc.
6. Is the analysis presented against contextual factors?	Yes	Supportive and hindering factors are cited throughout. These are sometimes given extra prominence such as the key findings on the challenges faced by the CO in emergency response efforts (p 61).

7. Does the analysis elaborate on cross-cutting issues such as equity and vulnerability, disability inclusion, gender equality and human rights?	Yes	Issues of vulnerability are discussed. It is understood that there were constraints to more fully exploring the other cross-cutting issues.
5. Conclusions		
	Yes No Partial	Assessment Level: Good
<i>To assess the validity of conclusions</i>		
1. Do the conclusions flow clearly from the findings?	Yes	The conclusions clearly emerge from the findings. The number of the relevant evaluation question, as well as criteria and recommendation are also provided.
2. Do the conclusions go beyond the findings and provide a thorough understanding of the underlying issues of the programme/initiative/system being evaluated and reflect as appropriate cross-cutting issues such as equality and vulnerability, disability inclusion, gender equality and human rights?	Partial	Overall, the 12 main conclusions are clearly presented and are forward looking. However, this section is 4.5 pages and could be more concise. Several of the conclusion include findings-level details such as the examples and explanation of contributing factors in Conclusion 3
3. Do the conclusions appear to convey the evaluators' unbiased judgement?	Yes	There is no evidence of bias.
6. Recommendations		
	Yes No Partial	Assessment Level: Very good
<i>To ensure the usefulness and clarity of recommendations</i>		
1. Do recommendations flow logically from conclusions?	Yes	The flow is logical and the relevant conclusions are identified by number.
2. Are the recommendations targeted at the intended users and action-oriented (with information on their human, financial and technical implications)?	Yes	The 'target level' is specified. Operational implications are actually detailed sub-recommendations that provide useful action steps for achieving the main recommendations. Resource implications are covered under Recommendation 2 and 3
3. Do recommendations appear balanced and impartial and address, as relevant, key cross cutting issues such as equity and vulnerability, disability-inclusion, gender equality and human rights?	Yes	The recommendations appear impartial and balanced in terms of the range of issues covered and their focus on further strengthen and positioning the CP. Cross-cutting themes including PWD are addressed.
4. Are the recommendations prioritized?	Yes	Priority levels of High or Very High are assigned to each recommendation, and they are categorized by Strategic and Programmatic recommendations.
7. Gender		
	0 1 2 3 (**)	Assessment Level: Good
<i>To assess the integration of Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (GEEW) (*)</i>		
1. Is GEEW integrated in the evaluation scope of analysis and indicators designed in a way that ensures GEEW-related data to be collected?	2	<p>a. Does the evaluation include an objective specific to assessment of human rights and gender equality considerations or was it mainstreamed in other objectives? (Score: 0-3) GEEW is explored under the lens of 'women's empowerment'. The latter is noted as a cross-cutting issue in the scope of the assessment, although not as a specific objective. = 2</p> <p>b. Was a standalone criterion on gender and/or human rights included in the evaluation framework or mainstreamed into other evaluation criteria? (Score: 0-3) There is an attempt made to mainstream WE and Leave No One Behind into the evaluation process = 3</p> <p>c. Is there a dedicated evaluation question or sub-question regarding how GEEW was integrated into the subject of the evaluation? (Score: 0-3) EQ6 specifically addresses women's empowerment in programme design and implementation. Two other questions under Relevance also address GEEW issues. = 3</p> <p>d. Does the evaluation assess whether sufficient information was collected during the implementation period on specific result indicators to measure progress on human rights and gender equality results?(Score: 0-3) The gaps in existing data is noted as a limitation. The evaluation goes on to look at the adequacy of monitoring systems overall but not explicitly on HRGE. = 2</p>

2. Is a gender-responsive methodology used, including gender-responsive methods and tools, and data analysis techniques?

a. Does the evaluation specify how gender issues are addressed in the methodology, including: how data collection and analysis methods integrate gender considerations and ensure data collected is disaggregated by sex? (Score: 0-3) The evaluators note that women's empowerment and LNOB were integrated into the evaluation methodology. Accordingly, relevant questions were included and evaluation participants were disaggregated by stakeholder group and gender. The majority of respondents were female. Further information on ensuring gender responsiveness would have been useful. = 2

b. Does the evaluation methodology employ a mixed-methods approach, appropriate to evaluating GEEW considerations (collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data, and ensuring the appropriate sample size)? (Score: 0-3) Mixed methods are used although there was heavy reliance on qualitative data; primary data was not quantified. = 2

c. Are a diverse range of data sources and processes employed (i.e. triangulation, validation) to guarantee inclusion, accuracy and credibility? (Score: 0-3) Validation is discussed. There is excellent use of triangulation in several sections but it could have been more applied more consistently. = 3

d. Do the evaluation methods and sampling frame address the diversity of stakeholders affected by the intervention, particularly the most vulnerable, where appropriate? (Score: 0-3) To the extent feasible, data sources are diverse and include organizations serving rightsholders. Study limitations included the inability to directly involve vulnerable populations = 2

e. Were ethical standards considered throughout the evaluation and were all stakeholder groups treated with integrity and respect for confidentiality? (Score: 0-3) Ethical considerations are briefly addressed and it is noted that UNEG ethical standards are followed, although further details could have been provided. = 2

3. Do the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations reflect a gender analysis?

a. Does the evaluation have a background section that includes an intersectional analysis of the specific social groups affected by the issue or spell out the relevant normative instruments or policies related to human rights and gender equality? (Score: 0-3) Issues such as literacy, education and employment rates of women are addressed in Background as are progress towards ICPD benchmarks and national frameworks. However, a deeper look at GEEW issues was not provided. = 2

b. Do the findings include data analysis that explicitly and transparently triangulates the voices of different social role groups, and/or disaggregates quantitative data, where applicable? (Score: 0-3) This is done to some degree, for example through the presentation of quotes from different stakeholder groups. = 2

c. Are unanticipated effects of the intervention on human rights and gender equality described? (Score: 0-3) The evaluation does not explicitly address unintended effects, although some of the findings did cover these, both positive and negative. = 1

d. Does the evaluation report provide specific recommendations addressing GEEW issues, and priorities for action to improve GEEW or the intervention or future initiatives in this area? (Score: 0-3) There are several recommendations about further responding to the needs of vulnerable groups and furthering women's empowerment. = 3

(*) This assessment criteria is fully based on the UN-SWAP Scoring Tool. Each sub-criteria shall be equally weighted.
 (**) Scoring uses a four point scale (0-3).

Overall Evaluation Quality Assessment

Quality assessment criteria (scoring points*)	Assessment Levels (**)			
	Very good	Good	Fair	Unsatisfactory
1. Structure and clarity of reporting, including executive summary (7)		7		
2. Design and methodology (13)	13			
3. Reliability of data (11)	11			
4. Analysis and findings (40)		40		
5. Conclusions (11)		11		
6. Recommendations (11)	11			
7. Integration of gender (7)		7		
Total scoring points	35	65		

Overall assessment level of evaluation report **Very good**

The evaluation integrates adequately cross cutting issues of gender equality, human rights and disability inclusion, even though is not included as part of the evaluation objective.

Consideration of significant constraints (e.g. COVID-19 or civil unrest)

The quality of this evaluation report has been hampered by exceptionally difficult circumstances: Yes No

If yes, please explain: