



Statement by Joel Rehnstrom
Director ad interim, Independent Evaluation Office
United Nations Population Fund
on
Item on evaluation
Independent evaluation of the capacity of UNFPA in humanitarian action
2019–2025

UNFPA/UNDP/UNOPS Executive Board
First Regular Session 2026

Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Executive Board,

It is my pleasure to present the results of the independent evaluation of **UNFPA's capacity in humanitarian action**, covering the period 2019 to 2025. This period was defined by an unprecedented rise in complex crises, yet UNFPA has shown resilience and growth in its response.

Allow me to highlight six key messages:

First, UNFPA humanitarian work is now recognized as a core and essential part of its mission. UNFPA has made significant strides in professionalizing this function with dedicated policies and guidance.

However, the absence of a standalone global humanitarian strategy poses coordination challenges. This gap can lead to inconsistent prioritization and advocacy for sexual and reproductive health and rights and addressing gender-based violence as life-saving interventions.

Second, UNFPA's interventions have achieved considerable progress in delivering high-quality sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence services. The organization has successfully institutionalized high-quality, evidence-based service models. Yet, given the scale of the humanitarian needs globally, the services provided or supported by UNFPA clearly only represent a fraction of what is required.

Third, UNFPA stands as a globally recognized leader in population data. This unique foundational expertise provides a distinct comparative advantage, significantly enhancing the evidence base for the entire humanitarian system. While internal data cohesion can be further strengthened to improve real-time decision-making, UNFPA data contributions have already driven policy advancements and innovations.

Fourth, operational efficiency has improved, notably through the creation of the Humanitarian Response Division. These advancements have enhanced UNFPA's ability to respond.

However, heavy reliance on short-term, earmarked funding for both programming and staff creates instability. Frequent "double-hatting" of personnel and over-reliance on short-term deployment mechanisms continue to hinder long-term implementation capacity.

Fifth, UNFPA demonstrates strong internal coherence regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender-based violence as well as improved external complementarity through partnerships and leadership in the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.

Overall coherence is hampered by the weak integration of youth and population data programming, which remains largely separate from core humanitarian structures. This fragmentation prevents the organization from fully leveraging its comprehensive expertise for more integrated responses.

Sixth, the integration of the humanitarian-development-peace continuum is increasing, and clear from UNFPA's corporate strategic plans to concrete country-level operations. UNFPA is effectively building resilience among affected communities through the strategic use of innovative and forward-looking strategies.

However, the reliance on short-term, project-based funding cycles can undermine the ability of local partners to build long-term capacity and financial resilience.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

To address the identified gaps, the evaluation proposes practical recommendations that elevate accountability standards. By enhancing technical guidance and learning frameworks, UNFPA is better equipped to deliver effective humanitarian action.

I am confident that this evaluation can inform the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2026–2029 and solidify UNFPA's commitment to addressing the needs of women, girls, and youth in humanitarian contexts.

This concludes my statement, Mr. President. I thank the Executive Board for its continued support and welcome any questions or comments.
