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Annual report on evaluation
Report of the Director, Evaluation Office

Summary

In accordance with the revised evaluation policy of UNFPA (DP/FPA/2013/5) and relevant Executive Board decisions, the independent Evaluation Office submits its annual report for 2016. The report presents progress made by the evaluation function, specifically in relation to both the transitional biennial budgeted evaluation plan 2014-2015 and the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2016-2019, as well as against key performance indicators.

The report presents the lessons learned from corporate evaluations completed in 2016. It sets out how the Evaluation Office contributes to joint evaluation efforts within the United Nations and to global communities of practice to contribute to strengthening national evaluation capacities.

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to:

- (a) *Take note* of the present report on the evaluation function at UNFPA (DP/FPA/2017/5) and of the significant progress made since the adoption the revised evaluation policy;
- (b) *Welcomes* the Evaluation Office workplan for 2017 (annex I);
- (c) *Reaffirms* the role played by the evaluation function at UNFPA and underscores the importance of high-quality, independent evaluation evidence in the context of the new UNFPA Strategic Plan 2018-2021 and to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- (d) *Request* the Evaluation Office to present a revision of the current quadrennial evaluation plan, focusing on the remaining period (2018-2019), and propose the inclusion of 2020-2021 in the plan, aligning it with the forthcoming UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2018-2021.
- (e) *Request* a report on the state of the evaluation function at UNFPA in 2018.



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Annexes are available on the [UNFPA Executive Board website](#).

I. Introduction

1. This report provides an assessment of the performance of the evaluation function against the revised evaluation policy (DP/FP/2013/5). It highlights the significant progress made in the evolution of the evaluation function as well as specific challenges. The report provides detailed information on performance against key indicators; outlines steps taken to strengthen evaluation capacity; and sets out how UNFPA engages within the United Nations and global evaluation community.

2. The report presents the results of corporate evaluations completed in 2016: thus completing the evaluation cycle initiated by the transitional biennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2014-2015 (DP/FPA/2014/2). It also marks the first year of implementation of the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2016-2019 (DP/FPA/2015/12).

3. Taking into account the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review 2016, the report highlights work to enhance internal as well as partners' evaluation capacity, including progress in development of an evaluation capacity development strategy. It highlights the need to review the human and financial resources dedicated to both corporate and programme-level evaluations to ensure optimal thematic and geographical coverage of the upcoming strategic plan (2018-2021).

II. Performance of the evaluation function

4. The UNFPA evaluation function is assessed against six key dimensions of performance: (a) planning and management; (b) quality; (c) dissemination of results; (d) use and follow-up; (e) human resources; and (f) financial resources. These are aligned with the revised evaluation policy and provide evidence of progress in those areas critical for the production of timely, good-quality evaluations, which can be used with confidence to contribute to accountability, evidence-based decision-making and lesson learning.

A. Planning and management of corporate and programme-level evaluations

Corporate evaluations

5. In 2016, the Evaluation Office worked on eleven corporate evaluations and studies, at different stages of development.¹

6. Two thematic evaluations to assess: (a) UNFPA support to family planning (2008-2013); and (b) UNFPA support to adolescents and youth (2008-2015) were completed. All corporate evaluations foreseen in the transitional biennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2014-2015 (DP/FPA/2014/2) are now finalized.

7. In conformity with the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2016-2019 (DP/FPA/2015/12), eight corporate evaluations and studies were launched in 2016. In addition the Evaluation Office undertook one further evaluation at the request of management: a formative evaluation of UNFPA innovation initiatives.

8. The joint evaluation of the H4+ joint programme supported by Canada and Sweden (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency – Sida) (2011-2016) entered its reporting stage in September 2016 and four country reports (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Zambia, Zimbabwe) were issued. The final evaluation report is expected during the first quarter of 2017.

¹ See Annex I on status of corporate evaluations.

9. The clustered country programme evaluation on UNFPA engagement in highly vulnerable contexts is currently ongoing. Out of the six country programme evaluations, two evaluations have been completed (Bangladesh and Haiti). The four remaining evaluations (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Myanmar and Nepal) have all been launched and are expected to be completed by mid-2017. A meta-analysis drawing on the results of the six country programme evaluations is planned for the second half of 2017.

10. The preparatory phase for the midterm evaluation of the UNFPA Supplies Global Programme (Phase II: 2013-2020) was completed in 2016. However, due to the lack of technically compliant proposals, the procurement phase was extended through January 2017.

11. The preparatory phase for the evaluation of UNFPA support to the prevention and elimination of gender-based violence and harmful practices (2012-2017) was completed in 2016. The inception phase commenced in December.

12. An evaluation of the architecture supporting the operationalization of the strategic plan, 2014-2017 was launched in September 2016.² The inception and data collection phases were respectively completed in October 2016 and January 2017. A first draft of the evaluation report was produced in March 2017. The final report is expected by the end of April 2017.

13. In 2016, the Evaluation Office completed the data collection phase for the formative evaluation of the UNFPA corporate Innovation Initiative.

14. The preparatory phase for a joint UNFPA-UNICEF Evaluability Assessment of the Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage (2016-2019) started in 2016. The purpose of the evaluability assessment is to assess the coherence of the programme design, the adequacy and validity of the indicators, tools and systems for monitoring, and inform the design of the planned joint evaluation in 2019.

15. The Evaluation Office launched a synthesis of country programme evaluations conducted in 2014 and 2015.³ It presents findings and lessons learned by UNFPA mandate areas, as operationalized by the four outcomes of the Strategic Plan 2014-2017, as well as several cross-cutting issues particularly relevant to organizational learning. The main results of the evaluation are presented in section IV.

16. Preparatory work commenced for the evaluation of UNFPA support to sexual and reproductive health services in humanitarian settings. However, progress was limited as staff capacity in the Evaluation Office was focused on the evaluation of the architecture supporting the operationalization of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2014-2017.

17. The Evaluation Office also engaged in a range of inter-agency and system wide evaluations (details are presented in Section V).

18. In 2017, the Evaluation Office will launch two corporate evaluations to be completed in 2018: (a) a joint evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF joint programme on female genital mutilation (2008-2017) and (b) an evaluation of the whole of Syria response by UNFPA.

19. In preparation for the former, the Evaluation Offices at UNFPA and UNICEF will jointly conduct a scoping exercise in 2017.

20. The whole of Syria evaluation will be conducted in view of the increased focus and funding for sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence interventions in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.

² The initial scope of the evaluation was limited to UNFPA global and regional interventions (DP/FPA/2015/12). Following discussions with management, it appeared that the assessment of these interventions could not be done in isolation from the other elements underpinning the operationalization of the strategic plan. Therefore, the scope of the evaluation was extended. The proposed change in scope was presented at an informal consultation with the Executive Board in June 2016 and the new evaluation was included in a revised Evaluation Office workplan, which was presented to the Executive Board at the first regular session in January 2017.

³ The Evaluation Office conducts a synthesis of good-quality country programme evaluations on a biennial basis. As such, this synthesis proceeds the 2014 synthesis of 2010-2013 country programme evaluations. See <http://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/lessons-learned-unfpa-country-programme-evaluations>

21. Finally, the independent UNEG peer review of the UNFPA evaluation function, initially foreseen in 2017, will take place in 2018. This will provide an important opportunity to assess the performance of the evaluation function against the revised evaluation policy, particularly in light of good practices in the United Nations system.

Programme-level evaluations

22. The quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan 2016-2019 (DP/FPA/2015/12) sets out commitments for the conduct of country programme evaluations commissioned and managed by UNFPA country offices, with guidance and support from regional offices and the Evaluation Office.

23. In 2016, 22 country programme evaluations were planned. Of these, nine were cancelled (Bolivia, Central African Republic, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Malaysia, Nicaragua, Sri Lanka and Pacific Island countries) and one was postponed (Philippines). The reasons include: extension of the country programme cycle, political and civil unrest, budgetary constraints and country offices opting for a self-assessment or review in lieu of a country programme evaluation. In a 'Delivering as One context', Cape Verde conducted a common country programme evaluation (with UNICEF and UNDP). Four country programme evaluations (India, Lesotho, Moldova and Ukraine) were added at the request of the country offices and one country programme evaluation (Burundi), planned for 2015, actually took place in 2016. By December 2016, six reports were completed. The remainder will be completed in the first half of 2017.

24. The Evaluation Office approved all terms of reference and pre-qualified all evaluation teams for the 17 decentralized country programme evaluations conducted in 2016.

25. It is anticipated that 10 country programme evaluations will be conducted in 2017. There are some changes as compared to the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan for 2016-2019. This reflects decisions to include Philippines (postponed from 2016) and to cancel two evaluations (Cameroon and Nigeria) initially planned for 2017.

26. The revised evaluation policy envisages that country programme evaluations are conducted at least once in two programme cycles.⁴ It should be noted that country programme evaluations continue to be the predominant evaluation modality for UNFPA country offices. Evaluations of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and 'Delivering as One' commissioned and managed by United Nations country teams are also important and 39 percent of country offices report engagement in UNDAF or 'Delivering as One' evaluations in the period May 2014 to May 2016.⁵ Looking ahead to 2017, ongoing or recently completed country programme evaluations will inform the development of 20 (out of 31) country programme documents to be submitted to the Executive Board in 2017.

27. A number of regional programme-level evaluations were planned for 2016 and 2017; however, most of these have been cancelled due to budgetary constraints.⁶ Only the Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office undertook a final evaluation of its regional programme. Additionally, this region conducted a synthesis study of findings from seven country programme evaluations (2013-2015), in order to extract lessons learned for the

⁴ Rather than the previous practice of once in every programme cycle. See DP/FPA/2013/5, paragraph 13(a).

⁵ Source: Evaluation Office Survey, May 2016.

⁶ Planned for 2016, the regional evaluation of partnerships for maternal health and reduction of maternal mortality (East and Southern Africa), the thematic evaluation of the gender component of regional and country programmes (EECA), and the evaluation of the humanitarian response in the west and central Africa region (West and Central Africa) were cancelled. In the Latin America and the Caribbean region, a midterm review of the regional programme was undertaken in 2016 instead of the midterm evaluation initially planned. In 2017, the final evaluation of the West and Central Africa Regional Programme Action Plan, the evaluation of UNFPA Reproductive Health Commodity Security Programme in the Latin America and Caribbean region, and the thematic evaluation on youth, and the evaluation of the Y-PEER alumni programme in the Arab states region were cancelled due to resource constraints.

region. The report also provides insights on the quality and use of country programme evaluations.

28. Growing reliance on earmarked funding, and increased use of joint programme modalities, require UNFPA to diversify the range of programme-level evaluations in order to meet accountability and learning needs. As indicated in the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan 2016-2019, evaluations for multi-year programmes with a value greater than \$5 million should be prioritized for evaluation.

29. Information collected by the Evaluation Office indicates that, in 2016, eight such programmes were approved across UNFPA, and seven have specific evaluation commitments. In view of the technical demands of these evaluations it is intended that the Evaluation Office and/or regional offices will provide additional support to country offices undertaking these programme-level evaluations.

Implementation of the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2016-2019

30. In 2016, a total of nine corporate evaluations and studies began and are currently underway, with work planned throughout 2017. Additionally, two corporate evaluations will be launched in 2017. Of the programme-level evaluations set out for 2016-2017, six country programme evaluations have been completed and 11 are underway. A regional programme evaluation in Eastern Europe and Central Asia region was also completed. Ten country programme evaluations will be launched in 2017.⁷

31. The Executive Board may recall that the quadrennial evaluation plan was conceived as a flexible framework to guide the commissioning and management of UNFPA evaluations and the Evaluation Office will review the plan in 2017 to ensure optimal alignment with the next UNFPA Strategic Plan and the QCPR. The Evaluation Office will consult with management and the Executive Board, with a view to presenting a revised quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan for approval by the Executive Board in January 2018.

B. Quality of evaluation reports

32. Since 2010, the Evaluation Office has performed *ex post* quality assessment⁸ of final programme evaluation reports. The objective is to indicate the degree of confidence that can be placed in the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and to monitor progress towards the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

33. Thirteen country programme evaluations conducted in 2015 were submitted for quality assessment. The vast majority were rated as 'good' and can therefore be used with confidence to inform programming and organizational lesson learning. Only one report was rated as 'poor' and no reports were rated as 'unsatisfactory'.

34. Table 1 provides a summary of the quality of country programme evaluation reports from 2010 to 2015 (presented by year of evaluation). There has been a marked improvement in quality since 2012, reflecting the impact of the range of efforts by UNFPA to improve evaluation quality and capacity. In light of this improvement, the Evaluation Office and the Executive Director have introduced certificates to acknowledge the progress in quality by country offices in 2014 and 2015.

⁷ See annexes I and II for further details.

⁸ Quality assurance for all programme-level evaluations is undertaken by the evaluation managers in commissioning offices. In the case of country programme evaluations, quality assurance is performed with the support of regional office monitoring and evaluation advisers.

Table 1
Quality of country programme evaluation reports (2010-2015)

Year	Evaluation quality assessment rating								Total
	Very Good	%	Good	%	Poor	%	Unsatisfactory	%	
2010	0	0%	2	9%	16	70%	5	22%	23
2011	0	0%	3	12%	19	73%	4	15%	26
2012	0	0%	3	20%	10	67%	2	13%	15
2013	1	8%	5	42%	6	50%	0	0%	12
2014	1	6%	12	71%	4	24%	0	0%	17
2015	0	0%	12	92%	1	8%	0	0%	13
Quality trend (2014-2015)	↓		↑		↓		↔		

Source: UNFPA Evaluation Office

35. Since 2015, the Evaluation Office has commissioned an independent assessment of the compliance of the UNFPA evaluation function against the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN SWAP) Evaluation Performance Indicator. The analysis completed in 2016 of evaluation reports that were quality assessed in 2015 found that all reports met requirements.

36. In 2016, the Evaluation Office enhanced its evaluation quality assurance and assessment system. Closely aligned with the revised evaluation policy and the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan (2016-2019), the revised system covers both programme-level and corporate evaluations. The aim is to ensure that all evaluations at UNFPA respond to the organization's needs, and meet United Nations Norms and Standards for Evaluation to produce quality evidence that can be effectively used to inform programming and contribute to lesson learning.

37. The system has two components: (a) quality assurance, during the evaluation process, to promote quality from the terms of reference through to the draft final evaluation report; (b) quality assessment, after an evaluation is completed, with an external assessor determining the quality and potential use of the final report.

38. The quality assessment system was rolled out in 2016. The assessment criteria and scoring grid has been revised to reflect the wider range of evaluations, and fully integrates the UN SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator. All corporate and programme-level evaluation reports issued in 2016 will be assessed against the new system.

39. Improvements to the quality assurance system will be introduced in 2017. These include the appointment of an independent expert quality assurance panel and updated templates and checklists for the quality assurance of terms of references and inception/design reports. The aim is to ensure a common understanding and consistency in the approach to quality assurance across UNFPA evaluation staff and external experts.⁹

⁹ <http://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/evaluation-quality-assurance-and-assessment>

40. The Evaluation Office has continued to work to address the limited availability of skilled evaluators to respond to the highly specialized mandate of UNFPA. The publication of an annual evaluation procurement plan provides advance market notice with the aim of attracting more and better qualified individuals and consulting firms. The UNFPA consultancy roster was extended and the Evaluation Office set up an internal panel to vet evaluation consultants and developed guidelines for UNFPA staff to readily identify suitable consultants. However, access to qualified evaluators remains a challenge.

C. Dissemination of evaluation results

41. Effective communication on the results of UNFPA evaluations as well as other evaluation activities is crucial to ensure transparency and accountability and to promote effective learning and use.

42. The Evaluation Office presents the results of all corporate evaluations to the UNFPA Executive Board and to the Executive Committee and provides bi-annual updates on progress with a view to feeding evaluation results into decision-making and to improve evaluation planning, learning and use across the organization. The Evaluation Office also provides regular updates to the Audit Advisory Committee.

43. The Evaluation Office continues to issue a bi-annual newsletter (*Impact*) addressed to all UNFPA staff and its key stakeholders. In 2016, a comprehensive Evaluation Office communication and knowledge management strategy (2016-2019) was developed. The strategy is a key instrument for the operationalization of the evaluation policy in relation to external and internal knowledge sharing to support the implementation of the evaluation plan for UNFPA.

44. To enhance the utility of corporate evaluations, the Evaluation Office develops dissemination plans for each evaluation to promote knowledge sharing. In 2016, the Evaluation Office introduced user friendly evaluation briefs to complement evaluation reports. The briefs are designed to communicate evaluation results to a wider non-technical audience.

45. In 2016, some members of the Executive Board indicated that the reports presented for corporate evaluations were too long and complex. While the Evaluation Office maintains that full technical reports are necessary in light of the scope and complexity of most corporate evaluations, from 2017, the Evaluation Office will ensure that corporate evaluation reports are systematically accompanied by an evaluation brief and/or an executive summary, as appropriate, for consideration by the Executive Board.

D. Evaluation use and follow-up

46. The evaluation policy requires UNFPA to ensure the timely preparation and follow-up of management responses to corporate and programme-level evaluations, with view to improving programme performance, effectiveness and efficiency.

47. The Management Response Tracking System is used by UNFPA Programme Division to monitor evaluation use and follow-up for both corporate and programme-level evaluations. In 2016, the 'percentage of accepted programme evaluation recommendations for which the actions due in the year have been completed' has continued to improve, reaching 78.54 per cent, compared to 77.96 per cent in 2015 and 76.49 per cent in 2014.¹⁰ Four out of six regions have improved implementation rates, with headquarters reaching 90 per cent of implementation.

48. In 2016, as per the recommendations of the good practices review, the Programme Division launched a new Management Response Tracking System. The new system will improve follow-up on recommendations, enable automated notifications, help generate

¹⁰ Based on self-reported data; see Annex V.

periodic status reports, and bring about greater clarity in roles and responsibilities, to improve the quality and the timelines of responses and greater use of evaluations. It will also enable the Programme Division to institutionalize a semi-annual report to UNFPA Executive Committee on progress in the implementation of recommendations. Evaluation follow-up will further be enhanced by the development of guidance on the use of the new system and training for users across units in 2017-2018.

49. In 2016, the Evaluation Office participated in interdivisional activities led by the Programme Division for the midterm review of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2014-2017 and the development of the next strategic plan. In addition to technical advice, the Evaluation Office ensured that lessons learned from UNFPA evaluations were fed into these processes.

E. Financial resources

50. In 2015, the Executive Board approved the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan for 2016-2019 to ensure that the level of resources for evaluation is commensurate with the evaluation coverage of the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2014-2017. The plan provided a clear framework to guide diversification of funding sources for the evaluation function. Table 2 provides information on financial trends since 2014, and highlights increasingly diversified funding sources specifically for corporate evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office.

51. In 2016, the budget allocated to the UNFPA evaluation function (not including decentralized staffing costs), was \$4,913,209, representing a significant increase of 36 per cent from 2015 (\$3,613,636).

52. In 2016, the total budget of the Evaluation Office was \$3,715,856. Funding comprised: (a) Institutional Budget \$2,382,361; (b) regular resources \$192,607; and (c) other resources \$1,140,888. Some 44.1 per cent of the total budget was allocated to operational costs (including evaluations). Although this is an improvement, as compared to 2015 (42.3 per cent) and 2014 (32.6 per cent), this is not yet optimal in terms of operational efficiency.

53. The total budget for programme-level evaluations was \$1,197,353. The median expenditure on country programme evaluations was \$77,600, surpassing the recommended \$70,000.¹¹ Though this represents improvement on aggregate in ensuring that country programme evaluations are adequately resourced,¹² significant disparities across regions exist.¹³

54. In addition, an estimated \$2.03 million of a total of \$9.80 million allocated for monitoring and evaluation work in country and regional offices was reported to be spent on evaluation.¹⁴

55. The estimated overall budget for the UNFPA evaluation function in 2016 was \$6,945,780, representing an increase from 2015 (\$5,513,636). This represents 0.75 per cent of UNFPA expenditure in 2016, an increase from 0.56 per cent in 2015. Though an improvement, this remains well below the budget norm of up to 3 per cent of the total programme budget for the evaluation function, as established by the revised evaluation policy.¹⁵

¹¹ DP/FPA/2013/5 at paragraph 36. See also DP/FPA/2015/12 at paragraph 57.

¹² Median budget in 2015 was \$65,684 and \$63,000 in 2014.

¹³ See Annex II, table B.

¹⁴ For consistency, the Evaluation Office has followed the same methodology as for the 2015 report. In December 2016, it launched a survey to determine the time devoted to evaluation activities in 2016. The survey was sent to the 6 regional monitoring and evaluation advisers and all the monitoring and evaluation staff in subregional offices and country offices. The budget is based on this self-reported time allotment and an estimation of the salary of each of the surveyed staff.

¹⁵ DP/FPA/2013/5; see paragraph 32.

56. For 2017, the estimated overall budget for the Evaluation Office increased slightly from 2016 due to an infusion of programme funds (other resources). However, the budget for decentralized evaluations decreased on the whole from 2016 to 2017.

57. For 2017, the Evaluation Office institutional budget is \$2,559,944 while other budget resources comprise \$586,837 for evaluations of global (including joint) programmes, and regular resources of \$210,691 for other programme evaluations. The total budget is \$3,357,472, of which 47.2 per cent is allocated to operational costs (including evaluations), representing a slight improvement. The budget for programme-level evaluations in 2017 is \$905,000.

58. In July 2016, The Evaluation Office and the Programme Division launched a specific tag for evaluation-related activities as part of the UNFPA Global Programming System.¹⁶ This will allow UNFPA to accurately capture and report on programme resources specifically allocated to evaluation work, including in decentralized units.

Table 2
Financial trends for evaluation in UNFPA (2013-2015)

		Budget allocation in millions of \$				
		2014	2015	2016	2017	
Evaluation Office	Staffing costs	IB	1.60	1.52	1.60	1.68
		OR			0.48	0.10
	Operational costs (incl. evaluations)	IB	0.78	0.89	0.78	0.88
		RR			0.19	0.21
		OR		0.22	0.66	0.49
Total Evaluation Office		2.38	2.63	3.71	3.36	
Decentralized	Operational costs (incl. evaluations)	1.31 ⁽¹⁾	0.99 ⁽²⁾	1.20 ⁽³⁾	0.91 ⁽⁴⁾	
	Total Decentralized	1.31	0.99	1.20	0.91	
Total budget (not including decentralized staffing cost)		3.69	3.61	4.91	4.27	
Decentralized	Staffing costs		1.90 ⁽⁵⁾	2.03 ⁽⁵⁾		
Total budget including decentralized staffing cost		3.69	5.51	6.95		
Total UNFPA expenditure		995.60	981.30	922.50 ⁽⁶⁾		
Evaluation budget as share of UNFPA expenditure		0.37%	0.56%	0.75%		

(1) In 2014, corresponding to the reported budgets for 17 programme evaluations commissioned in 2014.

(2) In 2015, corresponding to the reported budgets for 14 programme evaluations commissioned in 2015.

(3) In 2016, corresponding to the reported budgets for 17 programme evaluations commissioned in 2016.

(4) In 2017, corresponding to the reported budgets for 11 programme evaluations planned in 2017.

(5) Based upon estimations of adjusted gross salaries (including post-adjustment and common staff costs) of monitoring and evaluation staff reflecting the time (self-reported) dedicated to evaluation activities (Evaluation Office survey, 2015 and 2016).

(6) Provisional figure as of 31 March 2017.

Source: UNFPA Evaluation Office, UNFPA Annual Reports

¹⁶ Launched in November 2014, the Global Programming System aims to provide a more transparent and effective planning and reporting of programme funds.

59. An effective evaluation function requires secure and adequate investments in financial and human resources.

60. It is important to note that, in spite of a resourcing environment marked by continued volatility in 2016, UNFPA management maintained the budget of the Evaluation Office. The approval of the Integrated midterm review and progress report on implementation of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2014-2017 (DP/FPA/2016/2) should enable the Evaluation Office to slightly adjust staffing and fund the improvements to the evaluation quality assurance and assessment system in 2017, pending confirmation of budget availability.

61. Unfortunately, continued pressure on regional and country offices budgets has led to a reduction in planned number of programme-level evaluations in 2016 and 2017. This is a matter for concern and it is necessary for UNFPA to monitor this trend and consider how best to protect or augment budgets for programme-level evaluations in order to maintain coverage and quality.

62. Looking ahead: the integrated budget process for 2018-2021 should include a review of the budget for the evaluation function to ensure that resources are commensurate with the agreed level of evaluation coverage to meet accountability and learning needs for the new strategic plan, and in light of the QCPR.

F. Human resources

63. The staff ratio, in terms of percentage of professional monitoring and evaluation staff to overall staff slightly increased, at 3.0 per cent in 2016, compared to 2.8 per cent in 2015.¹⁷

64. In 2016, half of UNFPA country offices were staffed with a dedicated monitoring and evaluation officer. A survey of monitoring and evaluation staff completed in 2016 provided valuable information on their profile both at regional and country levels. It highlighted some of the challenges related to staffing, structure, roles and responsibilities, which will inform the development of the evaluation capacity development strategy.

65. Since 2013, staffing in regional offices was marked by a relatively high turnover; however, all posts are now filled. The positions of regional monitoring and evaluation advisers are crucial for providing support to results-based management and the production and utilization of evaluation evidence at country and regional levels.

66. The gender composition of monitoring and evaluation staff indicates that officer positions are mainly occupied by men (63 per cent), with a trend towards an improved gender balance since 2015 (75 per cent). Meanwhile, women represent the majority of focal points at 57 per cent. All six regional office monitoring and evaluation advisers are men. In the Evaluation Office, 75 per cent of professional posts are held by women, including the Director.¹⁸

67. As of December 2016, the Evaluation Office had seven approved posts: one at general service level and six at professional level. All posts were encumbered. A secondment and a junior professional officer (JPO) provided two additional posts focused on evaluation capacity development. In 2015, a temporary position was created to support knowledge management and communication activities and while funds to create a fixed-term appointment were approved by the Executive Board in June 2016,¹⁹ this is still pending decision by UNFPA management.

68. In addition, the Evaluation Office employs a number of research analysts on individual contracts to support specific evaluations. These positions are funded by the institutional

¹⁷ See Annex VI for further details.

¹⁸ These posts do not include: one temporary staff (male), two international consultants (female) and interns.

¹⁹ Integrated midterm review and progress report on implementation of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2014-2017 (DP/FPA/2016/2)

budget and other resources. In 2016, the Evaluation Office also offered a number of internships to post graduate students wishing to gain skills in evaluation.

69. The increase in the number of evaluations envisaged in the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2016-2019 represents a significant improvement in productivity by the Evaluation Office, compared to 2014-2015. This has been made possible by the use of research analysts on individual consultant contracts. It should be noted that this modality presents significant challenges in ensuring consistency of support to corporate evaluations, and it would be optimal in future to create fixed-term appointments to meet these needs.

70. As of March 2017, with the interruption of consultant contracts, the overall capacity in the Evaluation Office is not adequate to deliver on the 2017 workplan commitments. There is a need to review staffing and structure in the latter half of 2017 in light of the new strategic plan and integrated budget for 2018-2021.

Figure 1
Monitoring and evaluation staff in 2016: personnel categories

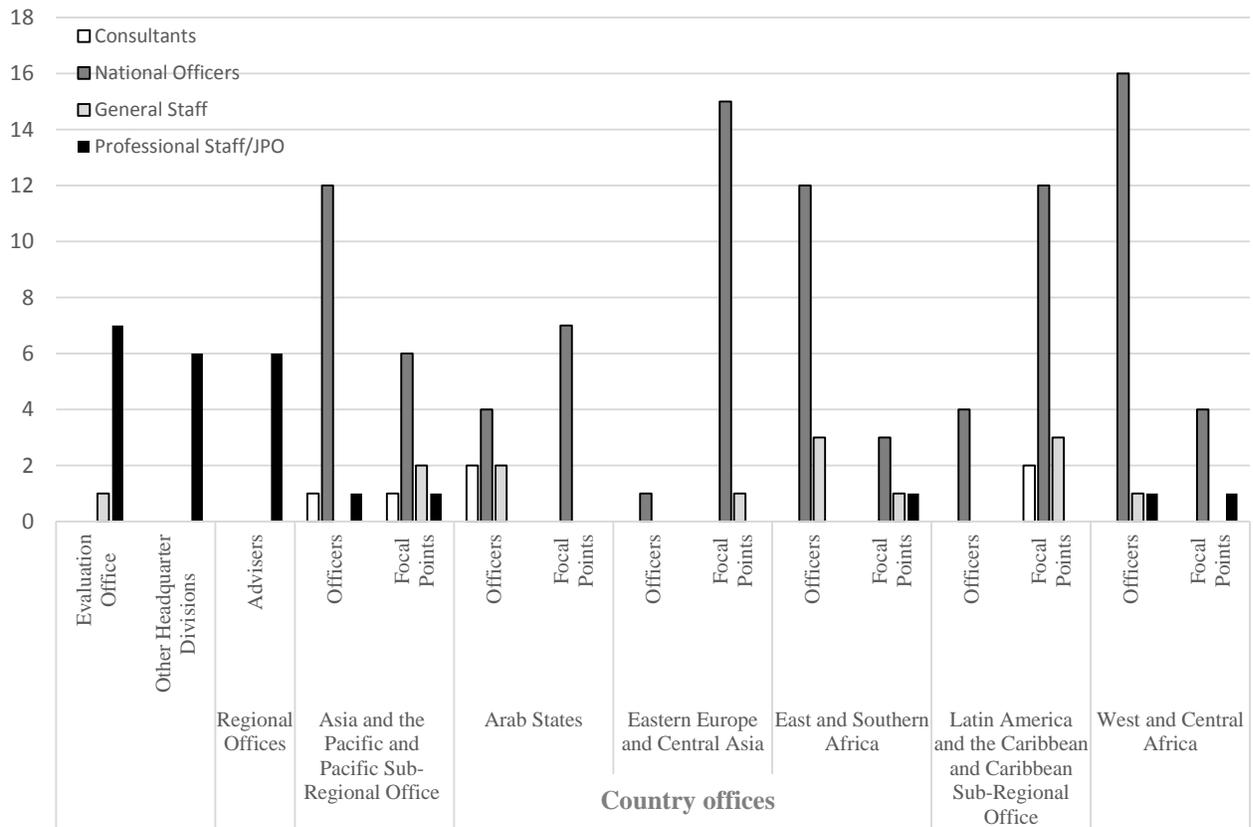
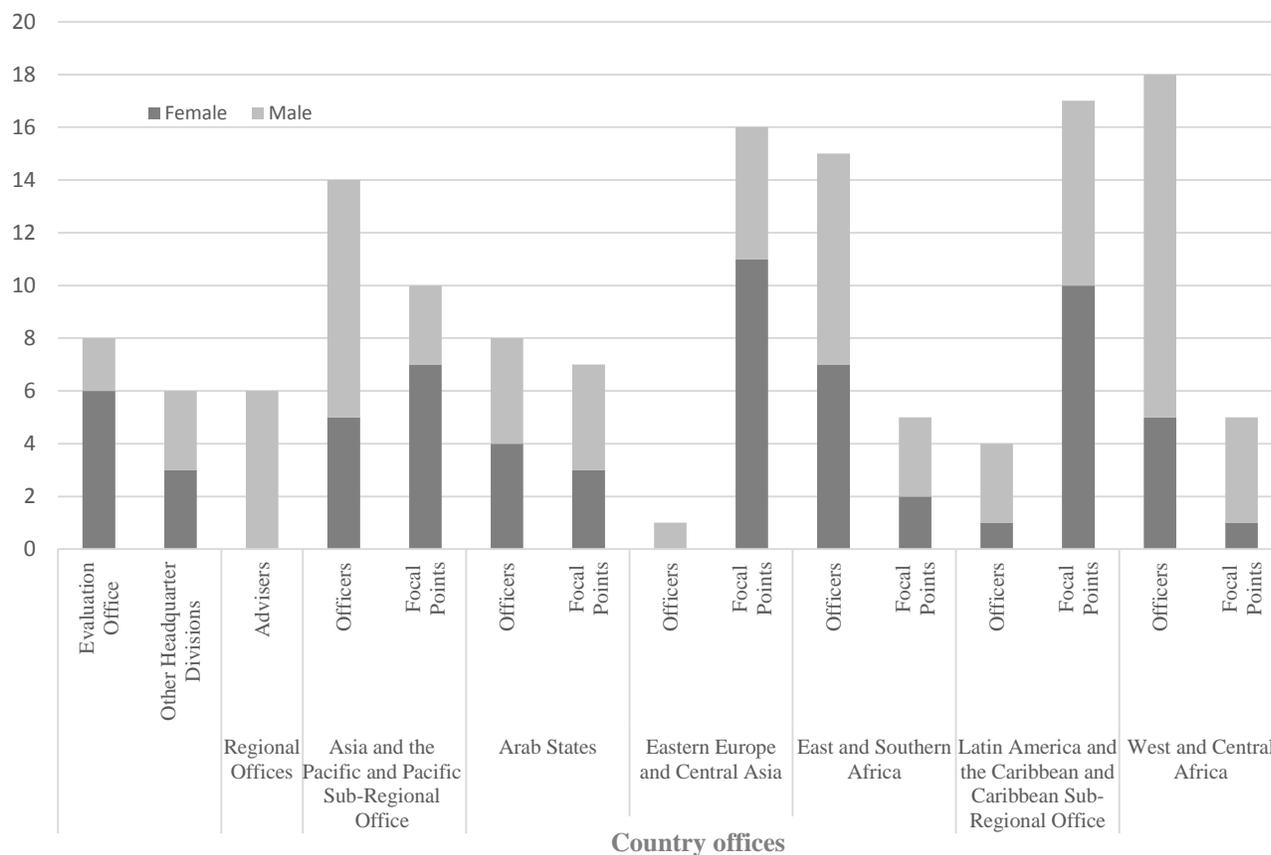


Figure 2
Monitoring and evaluation staff in 2016: gender distribution



III. Strengthening evaluation capacity

71. In 2016, UNFPA undertook a range of activities to strengthen the capacity and professionalization of the evaluation function.

72. In April 2016, the Evaluation Office, in collaboration with the West and Central Africa Regional Office, conducted a four-day evaluation training workshop in Yaoundé (Cameroon) for 19 francophone countries across Africa. This is the sixth workshop on conducting country programme evaluations. In total, 36 participants, including some government partners, attended the workshop. In responding to the post-course survey, 86 per cent of respondents reported that the training modules were very useful.

73. Since 2010, the International Programme for Development Evaluation Training (IPDET) in Ottawa (Canada), has provided an important forum for capacity development of UNFPA staff and partners. In 2016, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation provided support for six UNFPA country office staff to participate in the training.

74. Other initiatives have contributed to strengthening the evaluation capacity in 2016. The Evaluation Office produces a quarterly professional development calendar to enable staff to easily identify and access learning and development opportunities, including online courses and webinars as well as evaluation conferences, workshops and training programmes.

75. Regional offices have organized a series of capacity development workshops: (a) strengthening capacity for 20 monitoring and evaluation staff (Arab States Regional Office); (b) assessing the readiness of a programme for evaluation (Asia and Pacific Regional Office). UNFPA regional offices also provided technical assistance to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation capacity of government partners (Djibouti, Dominican Republic and Panama).

76. In 2016, the Evaluation Office initiated the elaboration of an evaluation capacity development strategy for UNFPA. The Evaluation Office conducted a diagnostic survey targeting all monitoring and evaluation staff, follow-up interviews to allow for in-depth reflections on needs, dialogue across departments and regional and country offices, and mapping of available tools and best practices in evaluation capacity development. The Evaluation Office organized a global annual retreat, where regional monitoring and evaluation advisors, division for human resources and programme division provided input on capacity issues of concern to the strategy. A reference group for the strategy was set up to encourage interdepartmental collaboration and external perspectives. The Evaluation Office will proceed to finalize the strategy and commence implementation in the first half of 2017.

IV. Lessons learned from corporate evaluations and studies in 2016

A. UNFPA support to family planning, 2008-2013

77. The evaluation aims to assess how the framework of the Strategic Plan 2008-2013 has guided the programming and implementation of family planning interventions, and to facilitate learning and capture good practices from UNFPA experience in family planning. It covers all countries where UNFPA works in family planning, with a focus on 69 priority countries with low rates of contraception use and high unmet need.

78. The evaluation concludes that UNFPA has made significant progress since 2008 to reinvigorate its commitment while contributing to raising the profile of family planning and securing its place as a priority within the ICPD programme of action. Well placed among development partners and successful at linking global initiatives and national policies, UNFPA has contributed to increased government leadership and ownership. The evaluation notes progress on the supply-side work performed by UNFPA, including support to strengthen management of contraceptive supply chains.

79. The evaluation reveals the important leadership of UNFPA as advocate for a human rights-based approach to programming in family planning at the global level. Effective broker between Governments and development partners, UNFPA country offices have a strong grasp of the country context and are attuned to needs and priorities of government partners but, at times, struggle to ensure sufficient space for the role non-governmental and civil society organizations can play in family planning. UNFPA has also been effective in promoting and supporting the integration of family planning with HIV and AIDS prevention and treatment and in humanitarian responses, but had mixed success in other sexual and reproductive health services, such as maternal health.

80. Looking ahead, the evaluation highlights opportunities to build on the successes achieved and recommends that UNFPA optimizes its comparative advantages; namely, its close technical and strategic relations with Governments and its central role in coordinating and programming links to a wide array of stakeholders. To further the integration of family planning with other sexual and reproductive health services, UNFPA should adjust its organizational structures to place family planning more firmly within a sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights context. The report calls for a clarification of roles and responsibilities of different branches in the Technical Division, other divisions and offices (especially regional offices) for technical and programme oversight of family planning to reinforce cohesion in approach and support to country offices. The evaluation prompts

UNFPA to strengthen the capacity of country offices to document results as well as elaborate a pro-active organization-wide learning agenda to contribute to the evidence base on family planning interventions. It also recommends that UNFPA continue to take a strong stance and leadership in promoting a human rights-based approach to family planning and that operational guidance promotes a common understanding of actions for implementation of this approach by country offices and partners. Finally, the evaluation encourages UNFPA to adopt modes of engagement in family planning where it has both a strong comparative advantage and adequate resources to follow through; in practice this would mean a greater focus on policy advocacy and brokering.

B. Evaluation support to adolescents and youth, 2008-2015

81. The evaluation aims to assess the performance of UNFPA in its support to adolescents and youth and to facilitate learning, capture good practices and generate knowledge from UNFPA experience across a range of programmatic interventions. The evaluation addresses the country, regional and global levels and covers all countries of UNFPA support to adolescents and youth.

82. The evaluation concludes that UNFPA has significantly increased its priority and programmatic focus in terms of support to adolescents and youth during the evaluation period. UNFPA is a recognized leader in the area of adolescents and youth sexual and reproductive health and is well-positioned to lead on a broader development agenda in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. UNFPA has been at the forefront of supporting the availability and use of sexual and reproductive health services, and education and information for adolescents and youth. UNFPA has made important contributions to increasing the availability and use of youth-friendly health services and sexual and reproductive health education and information, for in-school and out-of-school youth.

83. UNFPA contribution has proven essential to advancing the respect, protection and fulfilment of the human rights of adolescents and youth, specifically those of adolescent girls. The evaluation shows that UNFPA is widely recognized for its support for youth leadership and participation at all levels. UNFPA is a respected partner in the production and availability of adolescents and youth-related data and has a clear comparative advantage in this area, although data collection and analysis on younger adolescents (10 to 14 year old) remains a challenge.

84. The evaluation recommends that UNFPA continues to provide strong leadership on adolescents and youth issues within the framework of Agenda 2030 and delivers multisectoral, holistic support, ensuring the centrality of the needs of adolescent girls in particular. The evaluation suggests that UNFPA consolidates and builds on strong progress in programming to ensure a coherent and synergistic approach that incorporates all UNFPA targeted and mainstreamed adolescents and youth programming within an overarching theory of change. The report calls for UNFPA to improve efforts to target the most vulnerable and marginalized among adolescents and youth by strengthening the analysis and use of data and consistent use of a human rights-based approach. The evaluation prompts UNFPA to continue to improve the quality and sustainability of sexual and reproductive health services, and education and information for adolescents and youth, enhancing linkages across interventions in these areas. To strengthen engagement of adolescents and youth at all levels of programming, the evaluation suggests promotion of a systematic, transparent, constituency-based youth representation, participation and leadership. Finally, the evaluation encourages UNFPA to strengthen research, monitoring, reporting and evaluation to generate evidence for organizational learning, programming and accountability and to review resource allocation for adolescents and youth, ensuring that staff have the necessary skills set.

C. Lessons learned from country programme evaluations, 2014-2015

85. The synthesis of lessons learned brings together evidence from 26 UNFPA country programme evaluations conducted from 2014-2015 and quality assessed as ‘good’ or higher in order to identify lessons learned, surface challenges and highlight good practices. Lessons were structured around UNFPA outcome areas in order to facilitate use for programming. In addition to outcome areas, the synthesis captures lessons in other areas of work seen as particularly important for organizational learning, strategic development, and alignment to UNFPA strategic plans and the ICPD, including lessons on UNFPA engagement in humanitarian settings and targeting those in marginalized and vulnerable situations.

86. Lessons learned highlight the collaborative nature of UNFPA work and the organization’s important contributions to sexual and reproductive health, adolescents and youth, gender equality and population and development. Under the sexual and reproductive health outcome area, the synthesis found that interventions that target groups with influence on women’s sexual and reproductive health decisions (such as husbands, parents and community and religious leaders) helped improve women’s access to family planning and sexual and reproductive health services. Ongoing advocacy and sensitization efforts were found to be critical for the sustainability of sexual and reproductive health services. Emerging lessons in the area of adolescents and youth underscored that identifying creative entry points to target adolescents and youth – connecting sexual and reproductive education with vocational training and engaging youth as partners in project implementation – improved programming effectiveness. The synthesis also found that participatory approaches to planning and implementation that incorporate the views of women’s rights organizations and women’s movements, led to greater relevance of gender-equality programming. Working together with grassroots and community groups, including via community dialogues, proved especially effective in promoting gender equality. Finally, within population and development programming, systematically assessing potential political and ethical dimensions of data collection and dissemination are important to ensure the ability of UNFPA to efficiently and effectively support the production and use of data.

87. Looking ahead, important lessons on the business model of the current Strategic Plan (2014-2017) emerged, including challenges faced by country offices (often middle-income countries) required to shift modes of engagement. Additionally, working with and targeting those in marginalized and vulnerable situations and consistently utilizing a human rights-based approach to development were found to be important for accelerated implementation of the ICPD and fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals’ imperative to “leave no one behind”.

V. Evaluation partnerships

A. Joint evaluations and system wide evaluations

88. The quadrennial evaluation plan includes a number of priorities for joint and system-wide evaluations.

89. The joint evaluation of the H4+ joint programme supported by Canada and Sweden (Sida) (2011-2016) is managed jointly by the Evaluation Division at Global Affairs Canada and the evaluation offices at UNICEF and UNFPA. The evaluation has been supporting the H6 Partnership to reflect on the changing health architecture in the Agenda 2030 context.

90. The evaluation offices at UNFPA and UNICEF combined efforts during the preparatory phase for the Evaluability Assessment of the Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage (2016-2019).

91. In 2016, the Evaluation Office continued to take part in the work of the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) Steering Group. Two inter-agency evaluations (South

Sudan and Central African Republic) were finalized in 2016; dissemination activities are ongoing.²⁰ The Evaluation Office is a member of the management group of a scoping exercise for an inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the humanitarian response to the crisis in Iraq. Planned to start in September, the exercise was postponed due to the ongoing conflict situation in the last quarter of 2016. As part of the Syria Coordinated Accountability and Lessons Learning (CALL) initiative, an evaluation synthesis and gap analysis was finalized in June 2016.²¹

92. The Evaluation Office actively participated in two independent system-wide evaluations, led by the Joint Inspection Unit in 2016: (a) the evaluation of the contribution of the United Nations development system to strengthening national capacities for statistical analysis and data collection; (b) the meta-evaluation and synthesis of United Nations Development Assistance Framework evaluations during 2009-2014. Both evaluations were part of a pilot to develop and test independent system-wide evaluations in the United Nations system.

B. United Nations Evaluation Group

93. In 2016, the Director of the Evaluation Office became a member of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Executive Group. The Evaluation Office has taken a lead in the professionalization of evaluation and a revised UNEG Evaluation Competency Framework and a concept paper on the professionalization of evaluation in the United Nations system were adopted by UNEG in 2016. The competency framework was presented at a monitoring and evaluation training programme at the United Nations System Staff College in November 2016. The UNEG working group on professionalization launched six pilot projects to implement the Evaluation Competency Framework (including two implemented by UNFPA).

94. The Evaluation Office was active in the UNEG decentralized evaluation function working group, promoting lesson learning across organizations and launching a study of the decentralized evaluation functions of UNEG members. The Evaluation Office also contributed to UNEG working groups on the use of evaluations; gender and human rights; and the humanitarian evaluation interest group.

C. Engagement with global communities of practice on evaluation

95. The Evaluation Office has been working to strengthen its engagement in global communities of practice in evaluation, with a view to improving its own practice in key areas. In 2016, the Evaluation Office attended several evaluation conferences and participated in a number of reference and expert advisory groups, primarily for evaluations in the area of gender, sexual and reproductive health, adolescent and girls and use of data.

96. In 2016, the Evaluation Office engaged in discussions on professionalization of evaluation and presented the results of the evaluation of UNFPA support to population and housing census data to inform decision-making and policy formulation (2005-2014) at the European Evaluation Society Biennial Conference (Maastricht). At the Asian Evaluation Week hosted by the Chinese Government, the Evaluation Office led a panel session on “How census data informs policy formulation”, with the active participation of government representatives from Bangladesh, Indonesia and Myanmar.

97. The Evaluation Office is a member of Evalpartners, and took part in the organization of the “No one left behind: evaluating the sustainable development goals with an equity-focused and gender-responsive lens” high-level and technical events in New York. Specifically, the Evaluation Office with contributions from Technical Division, the World

²⁰ Both evaluation reports are available at: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/evaluations/reportsdocuments>

²¹ <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/evaluations/content/syria-call>

Bank and United Nations Statistics Division led the workshop on the relevance of “new metrics” for the evaluation of sustainable development goals.

VI. Consolidating progress

98. The present report shows significant progress in moving towards a more mature evaluation function at UNFPA, including: overall strengthening of financial resources and staffing structure, extension of evaluation coverage, improved quality of evaluation reports, broader dissemination of evaluation results, increased use of evaluative evidence to inform programming, and stronger engagement of the Evaluation Office with United Nations and global partners.

99. However, in a fast changing environment, it will be necessary to consolidate and build upon the progress achieved since 2013.²² The adoption of a new strategic plan for 2018-2021 offers an opportunity to review the quadrennial budget evaluation plan (2016-2019) in light of the implementation of UNFPA strategic plan in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the QCPR.

100. Concurrently, and as part of the new integrated budget, a review of resources allocated to the evaluation function, for both corporate and programme level evaluations, will be required to ensure that progress is maintained, and is not adversely affected by the current volatility of the resourcing environment.

101. Particular attention should be paid to the staffing and financial resources necessary for the Evaluation Office to ensure an optimal evaluation coverage through corporate evaluations and to support an increasingly diverse mix of programme-level evaluations.

102. The review should also address the financing of the evaluation capacity development strategy to better equip regional and country office to respond to evolving needs and to design and implement programme-level evaluations with the active and full participation of national partners.

²² Annex X provides detailed information on the status of recommendations formulated in the 2014 Annual report on Evaluation (DP/FPA/2015/6)