

INFORMATION NOTE

UNFPA

Executive Board annual session 2025

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

I. Introduction

1. This information note provides an update on UNFPA support to the implementation of the repositioning of the United Nations development system (UNDS), within the context of the 2020 quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, and UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board decision 2024/8 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system. This information note covers the period of April 2024 to April 2025 and complements the previous information notes presented to the Executive Board.
2. Pursuant to decision 2023/6 of the Executive Board, this information note contains an annex reporting on the complete UNDS reform checklist, which was transmitted to the Executive Board by the Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), pursuant to General Assembly resolution 76/4.
3. Against the backdrop of the 80th anniversary of the United Nations, this note reflects the UNFPA contribution to a more coherent, agile and future-ready United Nations development system that accelerates progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, leverages innovation and data, and aims to eliminate inefficiencies and reduce competition, in response to today's evolving development landscape.

II. Accelerating results through a future-fit United Nations development system

1. Together with the Political Declaration of the SDG Summit (2023) and the Pact for the Future (2024), the new QCPR, adopted in December 2024, provides a forward-looking framework to reinvigorate multilateralism and refocus delivery on those left furthest behind.
2. With just five years left to realize the 2030 Agenda, UNFPA recognizes the urgency of this moment and reaffirms its unwavering commitment to collective action. As the custodian agency of the United Nations for the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action and a dual-mandate agency for development and humanitarian work, UNFPA sees a coherent, agile, and accountable United Nations development system as essential to accelerating progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly for realizing the rights and choices of all people. UNFPA continues to champion integrated, cross-sectoral approaches, ensuring that the ICPD Programme of Action is implemented in full and that no one is left behind.

3. For the first time, the 2024 QCPR includes dedicated language on the ICPD Programme of Action and demographic trends – recognizing their foundational role in sustainable development. This milestone presents a unique opportunity for the United Nations development system to elevate demographic foresight, humanitarian-development-peace collaboration, gender equality, and rights-based approaches through operational and normative leadership, especially in the face of intersecting global challenges.

4. UNFPA is aligning its upcoming strategic plan (for 2026-2029) with QCPR priorities to ensure system-wide coherence and transformative results, scale up joint programming, and leverage strategic partnerships, including with other United Nations entities. Building on its leadership in UNDS reform, UNFPA continues to focus on achieving efficiencies, impact, and innovation – future-proofing delivery in an increasingly complex and uncertain global environment.

III. Accelerating UNDS reform as a platform for future-focused action

1. UNFPA remains fully committed to shaping a more agile and efficient United Nations, building on years of sustained engagement in the repositioning of the UN development system. Guided by the [*Formative evaluation on UNFPA engagement in United Nations development system*](#), and informed by the evolving global context, UNFPA has placed efficiency, innovation and inclusion at the heart of its work.

2. Amidst a challenging funding landscape, and in support of a more efficient and impactful UN development system, UNFPA resumed its role as co-chair of the UNSDG Business Innovation Group in June 2024 – after previously serving in this capacity until November 2023 – playing a central role in advancing operational transformation and driving system-wide efficiencies. This includes supporting the rollout of the UN system’s first common back office in Kenya and promoting scalable, collaborative solutions that reduce fragmentation and maximize value for money across the system. As one of the UN system’s most engaged service recipients, UNFPA outsources four of the five global priority shared services and is eagerly awaiting the creation of additional services to create additional efficiencies. This helps UNFPA focus on what it does it best programmatically.

3. As part of its commitment to a future-fit UN system, UNFPA has proactively undertaken a headquarters optimization process designed to boost organizational effectiveness and reinforce support to country and regional offices. A key element of this transformation is the relocation of the new Programme Division and Independent Evaluation Office to Nairobi – a move that has been driven by efforts to ensure more coherent and better support to programme countries but also generates long-term savings and allows closer collaboration with other Nairobi-based entities.

4. To continue its good practice to assess the reform implementation and adapt proactively, UNFPA conducted its fourth internal survey in early 2025. With a strong 76 per cent response rate from 88 country offices and participation from all regional offices, the survey provided valuable insight into how reform is influencing programming, operations and inter-agency collaboration on the ground.

5. The findings reaffirm the relevance of the repositioned UNDS to the UNFPA mandate. At the same time, they underscore the challenges to system-wide coherence and delivery at country level – including uneven leadership approaches and high transaction costs. These insights will inform the revision of the reform engagement strategy of UNFPA, anchoring it more firmly in future-oriented, field-responsive priorities aligned with the QCPR.

Unlocking potential through the resident coordinator system

6. UNFPA remains a staunch supporter of the empowered and independent resident coordinator (RC) system as a cornerstone of coherent country-level action. The Fund welcomes the General Assembly decision to ensure sustainable financing through assessed contributions, which reinforces the system's long-term viability and collective accountability.

7. As one of the agencies most compliant with UNDS reform imperatives, UNFPA serves as a key enabler of the RC system effectiveness, providing timely financial contribution, technical leadership, promoting policy coherence, and advancing data-driven and rights-based development planning. As an entity with extensive operational presence, UNFPA supports and shares the coordination and planning burden with the RC system through: (a) chairing or co-chairing results groups and issue-based coalitions; (b) active participation in joint programmes; (c) assuming the role of Acting RC in the absence of the Resident Coordinator; and (d) engagement in the design and implementation of business operations strategies.

8. [United Nations and inter-organizational transfers](#) are the top source of revenue for UNFPA, meaning that contributions from within the UN system itself represent the highest contributions to the Fund. This is significant, as it underscores the importance of UN-to-UN partnerships in supporting UNFPA work.

9. The investments in the RC system continue to bear fruit. The 2025 internal survey confirms that the RC system has strengthened inter-agency collaboration and strategic alignment: 84 per cent of UNFPA country offices reported an increased RC support for the Fund's normative mandate, and 79 per cent acknowledged improved coordination within United Nations country teams (UNCTs) – the highest level reported since 2019.

10. The strategic priorities of UNFPA, particularly in gender equality, youth and population data, have gained greater traction through joint efforts with RCs. Between 2021 and 2025, country offices reported measurable gains linked to the RC system, including improved UNCT coordination (from 63 per cent to 79 per cent); clearer divisions of labour (50 per cent to 63 per cent); enhanced collective results (51 per cent to 61 per cent); and stronger support for the normative mandate of UNFPA (66 per cent to 84 per cent).

11. However, realizing the full potential of the RC system requires consistency in leadership quality and fairness in inter-agency collaboration. Survey responses highlighted various challenges, including perceived favouritism toward larger agencies, uneven access to high-level government counterparts, and constraints in joint resource mobilization. To address these, UNFPA country offices are calling for a strengthened RC leadership development, more equitable access to pooled resources, and strategic reviews of UNCT configurations, to better align with national priorities.

12. In addition, duplicative reporting and fragmented data systems continue to burden country teams and result in significant transaction costs.

Common business operations: driving efficiency through scaled collaboration

13. UNFPA continues to lead on operational transformation through its co-chairmanship of the UNSDG Business Innovation Group since June 2024. In 2024 alone, UNFPA generated \$14.7 million in operational efficiencies – \$7.6 million from internal initiatives; \$1.8 million through bilateral collaborations; and \$5.3 million via business operations strategies. In 2025, 81 per cent of country offices reported achieving measurable gains from shared services, such as procurement and logistics, up from 77 per cent in 2021.

14. As one of the UN system's most engaged service recipients, UNFPA outsources four of the five global priority shared services and participates in 126 business operations strategy frameworks globally. UNFPA also demonstrates a strong commitment to common premises, with 79 per cent of

its offices co-located – placing the Fund among the most dedicated entities to inter-agency operational integration. UNFPA is working through the inter-agency Task Team on Common Premises to identify and scale additional high-potential locations.

15. UNFPA is actively consolidating operations through the expansion of common business operations in high-volume programme countries, such as Brazil, Kenya, Tanzania and Vietnam, and supporting second-phase rollouts in Bangladesh, Colombia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Thailand and Zimbabwe.

16. Despite this momentum, the 2025 internal survey revealed that the uptake of shared services remains uneven. To fully unlock the promise of common business operations, the system must first be more ambitious in the expansion of global shared services for non-location dependent services and then address persistent bottlenecks in the uptake of location dependent services – requiring stronger engagement from larger agencies, harmonized digital platforms and more robust workforce planning.

17. UNFPA is committed to helping shape a next-generation delivery model that reduces fragmentation, streamlines service provision and delivers better results – faster and at lower cost – across the United Nations development system.

Funding and financing: securing sustainable resources for collective impact

18. In an era of increasing fiscal volatility and constrained aid budgets, UNFPA remains firmly committed to expanding access to diversified and sustainable financing, especially at the country level. Strengthening pooled funding access – such as through the Peacebuilding Fund, SDG Fund, and Multi-Partner Trust Fund – remains a priority to advance integrated SDG delivery and enhance collective results. While the proportion of country offices accessing pooled funds slightly declined, from 61 per cent in 2021 to 57 per cent in 2025, UNFPA is intensifying efforts to reverse this trend through targeted support, strategic positioning and closer alignment with resident coordinator-led resource mobilization strategies.

19. Conversely, engagement in national financing for development rose significantly – from 60 per cent in 2021 to 69 per cent in 2025 – driven by deeper investment in domestic resource mobilization, South-South cooperation and private sector engagement. However, the uptake of more complex instruments – such as integrated national financing frameworks and partnerships with international financial institutions – remains limited, particularly in contexts with weaker institutional capacities. Country offices continue to call for enhanced technical support, stronger inter-agency collaboration and strategic advocacy to unlock the potential of these mechanisms and ensure no country is left behind.

20. At the global level, UNFPA has actively shaped the new Funding Compact 2.0, and continues to support country and regional offices in aligning donor engagement strategies with Funding Compact priorities. Structured funding dialogues remain the primary mechanism for monitoring progress. Despite ongoing commitment, the core-to-non-core funding ratio fell to 23 per cent in 2024 – below the Funding Compact benchmark of 30 per cent – highlighting the need for a renewed emphasis on flexible, predictable and catalytic funding.

21. Meanwhile, joint programming under the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) continues to strengthen United Nations system coherence and advance the three UNFPA transformative results. Participation in joint programmes increased from 56 per cent in 2021 to 61 per cent in 2025. Notably, in 2024, UNFPA received \$197 million through UN system funding – its largest source of non-core resources – underscoring its value as a collaborative partner and its strong commitment to joint results and system-wide impact.

Regional review

22. As co-chair of key issue-based coalitions on gender equality, youth, human rights and data, UNFPA continues to bring thought leadership and operational expertise to advance rights-based, transformative outcomes across the SDGs. The 2025 internal survey confirms growing institutional confidence in these platforms: all UNFPA regional offices affirmed that regional collaborative platforms have effectively integrated ICPD priorities into regional policy dialogue and UNSDCF processes. Country offices further reported strong support for the inter-agency peer support groups guiding the quality assurance of common country analyses and UNSDCFs, reflecting strengthened trust in regional mechanisms and their value in supporting national planning.

23. Regional collaborative platforms and issue-based coalitions are increasingly recognized as key drivers of coordination, policy coherence and programmatic alignment, particularly in SDG monitoring, youth engagement and gender equality. UNFPA leadership has been particularly visible through initiatives, such as the Africa-UN Data Strategy and youth-focused regional partnerships, which have improved regional-level data ecosystems and cross-border collaboration.

24. Regional reform progress, however, remains uneven, with limited statistical consolidation, insufficient pooled resources and inconsistent engagement from other UN entities constraining the full potential of these platforms. Unlocking their powerful potential will require more predictable financing, stronger participation by all agencies, and a sustained commitment to regional solutions that better link normative leadership with operational delivery.

System-wide reporting: strengthening accountability and driving results

25. UNFPA remains a strong contributor to system-wide accountability and transparency, actively engaging in reporting mechanisms that demonstrate the UN development system's collective impact on the Sustainable Development Goals. In alignment with the QCPR call for a more unified and results-oriented UN development system, UNFPA has significantly strengthened its institutional commitment to systematic reporting and data-driven performance.

26. The 2025 internal survey shows a marked improvement in participation: 92 per cent of UNFPA country offices contributed to UNCT results reports and 96 per cent to UN Info – reflecting a substantial increase in compliance, coordination and reporting quality, compared to previous years. These figures signal that earlier operational and technical bottlenecks have been effectively addressed and that UNFPA has embedded a stronger culture of accountability and shared results across its global operations.

27. As the United Nations system continues to evolve toward more integrated planning and delivery, UNFPA will remain at the forefront of efforts to ensure that data, evidence and results are consistently leveraged to inform action, enhance transparency and build trust with Member States, partners and the communities it serves.

Humanitarian-development-peace continuum: integrating solutions for sustainable impact

28. Amidst protracted crises, climate fragility and deepening inequalities, UNFPA remains firmly committed to advancing collaboration across humanitarian-development-peace areas of work. As the lead UN agency for coordination of gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health in humanitarian contexts, UNFPA continues to drive integrated, rights-based responses that bridge short-term relief with long-term resilience. This work to provide life-saving support to women and girls remains more vital than ever in the face of humanitarian funding cuts and a larger humanitarian reset underway.

29. According to the 2025 internal UNFPA survey, the proportion of country offices reporting progress in humanitarian-development-peace integration rose modestly, from 57 per cent in 2021 to 59 per cent in 2025. While this reflects incremental gains, it also underscores the urgent need for deeper structural change. Persistent barriers – such as siloed programming, fragmented planning and limited financing – continue to undermine cohesive action.

30. At the same time, promising models are emerging. In countries like Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan, joint planning with governments and inter-agency partners has enabled more coherent and context-responsive humanitarian-development-peace integration. In non-crisis settings, UNFPA continues to advance preparedness and resilience-building, helping countries anticipate shocks and protect development gains.

31. Moving forward, strengthened collaboration with RCs and key partners will be essential to strengthen the humanitarian-development-peace collaboration at scale. Operating across development and humanitarian domains, UNFPA is uniquely positioned to leverage its field presence, technical expertise and normative leadership to break down silos, align planning and financing, and ensure that crisis-affected communities – especially women and girls – receive sustained, life-saving support.

IV. Conclusion

1. As the United Nations approaches its 80th anniversary, the need for a more coherent, cost-effective and responsive multilateral system is clear. The 2024 QCPR provides a renewed mandate and call to strengthen joint action, accelerate delivery and ensure that the UN system remains capable, adaptable and inclusive in the face of rising global complexity.

2. In this evolving landscape, collaborative delivery models are no longer optional – they are essential. UNFPA has demonstrated its commitment to expanding joint programming and integrated approaches that demonstrate collective value, pooled resources and shared results. At the same time, as planning and programming must account for growing volatility and risk, UNFPA is leveraging strategic foresight and scenario planning to stay adaptive and responsive to demographic shifts, conflict, climate change and digital transformations, all based on strong data and statistics.

3. Looking ahead, the next UNFPA strategic plan (for 2026-2029) will deepen alignment with UNDS reform and QCPR priorities – drawing on institutional strengths, lessons from the 2025 internal survey, and continued support for the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF) review, as well as the unique comparative advantage of UNFPA within the United Nations system when it comes to advancing rights and choices, gender equality, demographic foresight, data and statistics, and resilience-building, all essential to future-proofing the work of the United Nations.

4. UNFPA stands ready to work with all partners – Member States, UN entities, civil society and communities – to deliver rights-based, people-centred and sustainable results that leave no one behind and chart a bold path toward the future.

ANNEX

UNFPA Checklist 2025 Annual Session of the Executive Board
