



(DP/FPA/2025/CRP.5)

UNFPA MANAGEMENT COMMENTARIES
to
Annual report on the evaluation function, 2024
Report of the Director, Independent Evaluation Office
(DP/FPA/2025/5)

Agenda item 16: UNFPA – Evaluation

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Management commentary to the annual report on the evaluation function, 2024

I. Introduction

1. UNFPA management is pleased to present its commentary on the annual report of the Director of the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) on the evaluation function for 2024 (DP/FPA/2025/5).

2. In this paper, management responds to the independent evaluation function's progress in the six key areas presented in the report, namely: (a) role of evaluation; (b) performance of the evaluation function; (c) centralized evaluations; (d) use of evaluations to foster change; (e) decentralized evaluation system; and (f) enhancing coherence in the United Nations system evaluation functions.

II. Role of evaluation

3. Evaluation is a priority at UNFPA as it plays an essential role in providing decision-makers with evidence and lessons learned critical to the organization's quest to accelerate progress on the three UNFPA transformative results: ending unmet need for family planning; ending preventable maternal deaths; and ending gender-based violence and harmful practices, including child marriage and female genital mutilation.

4. UNFPA management acknowledges the strong partnership with the IEO in making the evaluation function at UNFPA strategic and forward looking and, in this context, commends the IEO for, among other approaches, strengthening evaluation capacities, introducing responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) in its work, collaboration with relevant United Nations offices - the United Nations Sustainable Development Group's system-wide evaluation office (SWEQ), the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), the Global SDG Synthesis Coalition, and the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHE) - and continued advocacy for the engagement of youth in evaluations.

III. Performance of the evaluation function

5. Management commends the IEO for maintaining overall progress in key evaluation performance indicators, despite many challenges.

6. Specifically, management is pleased to note that all new country programme documents submitted to the Executive Board for approval were informed by evaluative evidence for the sixth year in a row [use of evaluation in programme development (KPI 9)]; that all planned country programme evaluations (CPEs) were implemented [evaluation implementation rate (KPI 4)] for the third year in the row; and that the rate of *evaluation reports posted on evaluation database* (KPI 6) remains at 100 per cent for the tenth year in a row.

7. Management is also pleased to note that the *implementation of management responses* (KPI 8) reached 98 per cent – the highest rate in ten years and eight percentage points above the target. At the same time, management recognizes that the implementation of centralized evaluation actions – a small subset of management responses to evaluations – requires close attention, having slipped, mostly due to the complexity of the evaluations, three percentage points below the target, thus reversing a positive three-year trend of

surpassing annual targets in that subset. To rectify that, the Programme Division will work closely with the Oversight Compliance and Monitoring Committee (OCMC) to ensure that the actions in question are implemented and reported on without further delay.

8. Furthermore, management notes that *all programme-level evaluations were rated 'good' or 'very good'* (KPI 5) and that the *evaluation coverage* (KPI 3) remained strong, exceeding the 90 per cent target.

9. With regard to *management response submission* (KPI 7), management notes that the decline to 88.9 per cent after maintaining a rate of 100 per cent for nine years in a row, was due to one late submission by one office due to a procedural issue, which has now been clarified.

10. As evidence of management's ongoing and robust commitment to the evaluation function, evaluation spending has remained robust at 0.79 per cent of total programme expenditure – as per the figures calculated by IEO and reflected in its report – reaching the highest absolute level the organization has ever spent [*financial resources invested in the evaluation function* (KPI 1)]. Likewise, management reiterates its commitment to making a sustained investment in *human resources for monitoring and evaluation* (KPI 2).

11. Management encourages the IEO to sustain its efforts to protect the gains in the implementation, coverage and quality of evaluations observed in recent years. Management, for its part, remains fully committed to continuing to allocate adequate resources that enable these successes.

IV. Centralized evaluations

12. Regarding *centralized evaluations*, management is pleased to note that IEO is continuing to make sure that they remain relevant to changing needs and priorities of UNFPA, often adopting innovative approaches to accomplish that.

13. Management further notes that all centralized evaluations planned for 2024 were either completed or on track, and that 58.8 per cent of those evaluations were joint or system-wide evaluations [*engagement in centralized system-wide and joint evaluations*] (KPI 10)], thus exceeding the target of 50 per cent.

V. Use of evaluations to foster change

14. As expected, centralized evaluations continued to enhance UNFPA policies, strategies, and programmes. For example:

- (a) *Independent evaluation of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025*. This evaluation not only informed the delivery of the remainder of the Strategic Plan, 2022-2025 but it is also influencing the ongoing design of the strategic plan for 2026-2029;
- (b) *Evaluation of UNFPA support to population dynamics and data*. This evaluation influenced the decision to reintroduce a population dynamics and demographic change outcome in the next strategic plan, create a dedicated data and analytics branch, and provide training for UNFPA staff, national statistical offices, and disaster management authorities;

- (c) *Evaluation of UNFPA support to adolescents and youth.* This evaluation uncovered a need to improve youth engagement in evaluation processes and prompted the development of guidance for effective youth engagement by IEO, in consultation with young people, and the EvalYouth Global Network.

VI. Decentralized evaluation system

15. Management also acknowledges the value derived from *decentralized evaluations* in generating the evidence needed to develop and implement new country programmes and the role they play in optimizing, streamlining, and scaling up impactful interventions.

16. To this end, management acknowledges the efforts by IEO, the Division of Human Resources and the Programme Division to strengthen job descriptions and reporting lines of monitoring and evaluation personnel in regional and country offices, develop new guidance and systems to help integrate project-level evaluations into quality assurance and assessment system, and strengthen quality of humanitarian evaluations.

VII. Enhancing coherence in the United Nations system evaluation functions

17. Management reiterates its strong commitment to fostering coherence and synergies among the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations development system, including in evaluation. In this regard, management recognizes the strong contribution of the IEO to the work of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) network, the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) Steering Group and the UNAIDS co-sponsor evaluation group.

18. Management is also pleased to note that IEO co-led or participated in the management group of seven joint and inter-agency evaluative exercises, thus encouraging learning from the best practices of other United Nations system entities.

19. Finally, management reaffirms its commitment to strengthening national evaluation capacities, together with major stakeholders, including United Nations entities. To that end, management commends IEO for being a valued member of global evaluation coalitions, such as the EvalPartners Executive Committee; the EvalGender+ Management Group; the Global Evaluation Initiative Implementation Committee; and the Global Evaluation Forum organizing committee.

20. Management also recognizes IEO for its efforts to enhance meaningful participation of youth in evaluation and the demand for and use of country-led evaluation by national policymakers.

VIII. Conclusion

21. UNFPA Management welcomes the continued progress in strengthening the independent evaluation function and reaffirms its commitment to greater accountability, transparency, evidence-based decision-making and organizational learning. Management takes note of the IEO programme of work and budget for 2025 and affirms its commitment to continuing to work with the Office to carry out its vital role in supporting organizational results.