

Organizational unit: UNFPA Evaluation Office

Year of report: 2020

Title of evaluation report: Formative evaluation of the UNFPA approach to South-South and triangular cooperation

Overall quality of report: **Very Good**

Date of assessment: 7 December 2020

Overall comments: This is a complex evaluation of a major theme, UNFPA approach to south-south cooperation. It is a formative evaluation, as such, it focuses more on process and thematic issues, with the aim to learn what is working and what should be strengthened during the early implementation of this mode of engagement, rather than on different levels of results. It was executed with attention to the norms and procedures of good evaluations set out by UNFPA and included a very complex process of acquiring data. Although the programme did not have a formal theory of change (and creating one was one of the recommendations), the evaluators created a realistic one for the purposes of the evaluation. A strength of the report is its clarity and flow of presentation from the start through its findings, conclusions and recommendations. It addresses each of the five specific objectives, including providing examples of initiatives and innovative approaches that have been undertaken in various regions, and provides lessons learned as well as good practices to help make it a "utilization-focused" evaluation. The context for the evaluation is well portrayed; the methods are a mixed methods approach developed within a sound evaluation framework. The findings are based on evidence garnered from all regions and are based on a purposeful sampling that is responsive to the evaluation matrix and addresses each of the three areas of inquiry: Principles-focused, Mandate-focused, and Modality-focused. The findings reflect a reasonable analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the SCC and includes, albeit limited, gender-based analysis. The conclusions logically build on and flow from the findings and the recommendations are logical extensions of those conclusions. Overall, the evaluation responds to the purpose for which it was intended, namely to "take stock of initial progress, lessons learned and enabling factors, report challenges facing the UNFPA, provide evaluative input" for strategic directions, strategy and implementation. There are few suggestions for improvement and the evaluation merits its Very Good rating.

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

Quality Assessment Criteria	<i>Insert <u>assessment level</u> followed by main <u>comments</u> . (use 'shading' function to give cells corresponding colour)</i>	
I. Structure and Clarity of Reporting	Yes No Partial	Assessment Level: Good
<i>To ensure the report is comprehensive and user-friendly</i>		
1. 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?	Yes	The report is very easy to read and understand.
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)	Yes	The report (72 pages) is within the page limits (80) for thematic evaluation.
3. Is the report structured in a logical way? Is there a clear distinction made between analysis/findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned (where applicable)?	Yes	The report structure is very logical and well organized. All sections of the report are clearly described and differentiated.
4. Do the annexes contain – at a minimum – the ToRs; a bibliography; a list of interviewees; the evaluation matrix; methodological tools used (e.g. interview guides; focus group notes, outline of surveys) as well as information on the stakeholder consultation process?	Yes	The annexes contain the required material.
<i>Executive summary</i>		
5. Is an executive summary included in the report, written as a stand-alone section and presenting the main results of the evaluation?	Yes	The executive summary is complete.
6. Is there a clear structure of the executive summary, (i.e. i) Purpose; ii) Objectives and brief description of intervention; iii) Methodology; iv) Main conclusions; v) Recommendations)?	Yes	The executive summary is clearly structured and includes all the respective elements.
7. Is the executive summary reasonably concise (e.g. with a maximum length of 5 pages)?	Partial	The length is seven pages, but in part it was because each of four recommendations was given a page. They could have been brought closer together to achieve the five-page maximum.

2. Design and Methodology	Yes No Partial	Assessment Level:	Very good
<i>To ensure that the evaluation is put within its context</i>			
1. Does the evaluation describe the target audience for the evaluation?	Yes	The target audience, primarily at UNFPA headquarters, is carefully defined.	
2. Is the development and institutional context of the evaluation clearly described and constraints explained?	Yes	There is an extensive description of how South-South has evolved and been applied in UNFPA.	
3. Does the evaluation report describe the reconstruction of the intervention logic and/or theory of change, and assess the adequacy of these?	Yes	While the evaluators note, as a limitation, that there was no formal theory of change for S-S, the evaluators reconstructed one that could indicate what to measure at different levels.	
<i>To ensure a rigorous design and methodology</i>			
4. 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	The framework is described in the text, but the annex is very complete, showing the questions, assumptions, indicators, and data sources.	
5. Are the tools for data collection described and their choice justified?	Yes	The evaluation report identifies the sources of data, both qualitative and quantitative, in the evaluation matrix and their justification or rationale for use. The respective data collection tools are described and included in the Annexes.	
6. 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	An initial stakeholder mapping and stakeholder analysis was done at the beginning of the evaluation. The description is in Annex II: Methodology, including Figure 2. which indicates the type and coverage of stakeholders, including the purpose of their engagement and their intended use as users of the evaluation. In Section B: Methodology and Approach, the report states that "the evaluation was transparent, inclusive, and conducted on a participatory manner ... [with] a high degree of engagement and intense consultation and interaction with stakeholders throughout . " Specific mention was made of "recommendations workshop with all stakeholders" in Figure 3: Evaluation process.	
7. Are the methods for analysis clearly described for all types of data?	Yes	The report describes the methods as descriptive analysis helped to understand the contexts within which UNFPA SSC initiatives are being implemented. Content analysis constituted the core of the qualitative analysis. The evaluation team analysed and coded documents, interview transcripts, and observations from the field to identify common trends, themes, and patterns for each of the key evaluation questions and criteria. Comparative analysis examined findings across different initiatives, countries, themes, or other criteria.	
8. Are methodological limitations acknowledged and their effect on the evaluation described? (Does the report discuss how any bias has been overcome?)	Yes	Figure 7: Limitations and mitigation measures in Section B: Methodology and Approach outline the main limitations, their effect and what adjustments were made to deal with them.	

9. Is the sampling strategy described?	Yes	The summary of sampling methods and tools is provided in Figure 4 of Section B: Methodology and Approach Section and is elaborated upon in Sampling methods and selection of informants, including site visits, as it spun out of the Stakeholder Analysis in Annex II. There are a variety of samples, depending on the source of data. They range from a 100% sample (the survey of UNFPA staff) to a stratified purposive sample (with snowballing) for individual interviews.
10. Does the methodology enable the collection and analysis of disaggregated data?	Yes	Data can be disaggregated in both content analysis and comparative analysis.
11. Is the design and methodology appropriate for assessing the cross-cutting issues (equity and vulnerability, gender equality and human rights)?	Yes	Cross-cutting issues dealing with gender, human rights and youth aspects as well as coordination are integrated into the evaluation and described in Annex II: 6. Integration of Cross-Cutting Issues in Annex II.

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	Specific mention is made of data triangulation of the multiple sources of data outlined in the evaluation matrix and Annex II: Methodology and Approach . All of the findings used multiple sources of data.	
2. Did the evaluation clearly identify and make use of reliable qualitative and quantitative data sources?	Yes	The evaluation was careful to identify and describe the various sources, and all were used, both qualitative and quantitative.	
3. Did the evaluation make explicit any possible limitations (bias, data gaps etc.) in primary and secondary data sources and if relevant, explained what was done to minimize such issues?	Yes	The evaluation notes that data collected from various sources and through various methods were collaborated with data available in Atlas in Section B: Methodology and Approach.	
4. Is there evidence that data has been collected with a sensitivity to issues of discrimination and other ethical considerations?	Yes	The evaluation report notes ethical aspects were in line with the UN Evaluation Group Guidelines for Evaluation and the UNEG code of conduct in Section B: Methodology and Approach.	

4. Analysis and Findings	Yes No Partial	Assessment Level:	Very good
<i>To ensure sound analysis and credible findings</i>			
1. Are the findings substantiated by evidence?	Yes	The findings in the evaluation report are supported by sources of evidence in the text and in footnotes in each of the three areas of inquiry - conceptual, results, and modality.	
2. Is the basis for interpretations carefully described?	Yes	In each finding, the basis on which the interpretation was made is shown in detail. Terms commonly used are "the survey shows...," case studies reveal or highlight... " a number of interview respondents..." "some respondents reported..." so "there are several cases that show..." "another example is...". And then at the end of the specific finding, the report state "in sum, the evidence suggests..." Footnotes are widely used.	
3. Is the analysis presented against the evaluation questions?	Yes	Each of the three substantive Findings sections start with the Evaluation Question and then give the specific findings in summary form before providing the detailed evidence supporting those results.	
4. Is the analysis transparent about the sources and quality of data?	Yes	In each case, the source and quality of data was described in detail. The quality of data is noted where appropriate with statements such as "many initiatives have no formalized documentation and evidence", ,, "current data available is limited"	
5. Are cause and effect links between an intervention and its end results explained and any unintended outcomes highlighted?	Yes	Where causal connections can be observed, they are reported. This includes connections between training and its use, databases and their use. This was particularly true of the case studies where the connections between interventions and results connected to S-S aspects. The evaluators clearly looked for unintended outcomes in some of their analysis.	
6. Does the analysis show different outcomes for different target groups, as relevant?	Yes	Where outcomes are provided, it is usually at the case example level noting different target groups. Results often are expressed more as outputs and activates than actual outcomes, due to the "absence of an explicit results framework" noted as a major limitation in Section B: Methodology and Approach.	
7. Is the analysis presented against contextual factors?	Yes	The findings presented in the evaluation report within contextual factors are at the global, national, regional or local levels as appropriate to help provide the basis for developing lessons learned or identify factors that might affect future development of the SCC approach.	
8. Does the analysis elaborate on cross-cutting issues such as equity and vulnerability, gender equality and human rights?	Yes	While the evaluation report (Conclusion 5) found results in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights and ageing as promising areas for the future SSC initiatives, "gender equality, however, is an area less addressed by SSC initiatives."	

5. Conclusions	Yes No Partial	Assessment Level:	Very good
<i>To assess the validity of conclusions</i>			
1. Do the conclusions flow clearly from the findings?	Yes	Conclusions are based on the analysis of the findings and clearly flow from the evidence, with each conclusions followed by the number of the respective findings contained in the text of the findings section.	
2. Do the conclusions go beyond the findings and provide a thorough understanding of the underlying issues of the programme/initiative/system being evaluated?	Yes	In presenting the conclusions, the narrative summarizes and ties together the specific findings that are the basis for the conclusion, thereby providing a broad picture of what SSC has done and what should be taken into account in future initiatives.	
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	In each of the four recommendations, the conclusions from which it flows are listed.	
2. Are the recommendations targeted at the intended users and action-oriented (with information on their human, financial and technical implications)?	Yes	The intended users are shown and the operational requirements as well as budgetary implications are shown.	
3. Do recommendations appear balanced and impartial?	Yes	They appear balanced and impartial.	
4. Is a timeframe for implementation proposed?	Yes	The timeframe for each recommendation is shown. Most are immediate but have a time horizon.	
5. Are the recommendations prioritized?	Yes	The recommendations are in a logical sequence that suggests prioritization, since each must be done prior to the implementation of the next one. Also each recommendation is given a level of importance (high or medium).	

7. Gender

0
1
2
3 (**)

Assessment Level:

Very good

To assess the integration of Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (GEEW) (*)

I. Is GEEW integrated in the evaluation scope of analysis and indicators designed in a way that ensures GEEW-related data to be collected?

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)

Gender is mainstreamed in the evaluation objectives. (Score 3)

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)

Gender and human rights were mainstreamed, but there were appropriate references throughout.
Score=3

c. Is there a dedicated evaluation question or sub-question regarding how GEEW was integrated into the subject of the evaluation? (Score: 0-3)

GEEW is addressed in the evaluation matrix with specific focus on gender and related indicators. (Score 3)

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 evaluation noted that these aspects were only partially covered by the program, but this was based on data acquired from interviews and case studies. Score=3

<p>2. Is a gender-responsive methodology used, including gender-responsive methods and tools, and data analysis techniques?</p>	<p>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) Data as preproperate are disaggregated by sex, types of programs examined in the case studies include gender. (Score =3)</p> <p>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) The evaluation methodology is based on a mixed methods approach and appropriate size applicable to evaluating all of the respective evaluation questions (Score 3).</p> <p>c. Are a diverse range of data sources and processes employed (i.e. triangulation, validation) to guarantee inclusion, accuracy and credibility? (Score: 0-3) Yes, there is a mix of interviews, surveys and case studies. Score=3</p> <p>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) The evaluation methodology and sampling frame addresses the diversity of stakeholders, but it is not specified as to how the most vulnerable were reached. (Score 2)</p> <p>e. Were ethical standards considered throughout the evaluation and were all stakeholder groups treated with integrity and respect for confidentiality? (Score: 0-3) The evaluation states that "Ethical aspect were considered in the design and implementation of this evaluation are in line with the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation and the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluations in the UN systems" and that confidentiality of all respondents was guaranteed. (Score 3)</p>
<p>3. Do the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations reflect a gender analysis?</p>	<p>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) Gender is only very briefly mentioned in the broader background to the evaluation. However, there is a dedicated finding subsection that has an explicit lens on gender. Score=2</p> <p>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) There are findings relevant to gender and social groups, but the evaluation does not make different voices or perspectives explicit. Score=1</p> <p>c. Are unanticipated effects of the intervention on human rights and gender equality described? (Score: 0-3) No, unanticipated effects are not covered in detail. Score=1</p> <p>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) Recommendation 1 states: "Include clear and specific guidance on leveraging SSC in all thematic and sector-wide programming guidelines and/or strategies (for example, youth, census, gender equality, humanitarian programming)." Score=2</p>

(* This assessment criteria is fully based on the UN-SWAP Scoring Tool. Each sub-criteria shall be equally weighted (in correlation with the calculation in the tool and totaling the scores 11-12 = very good, 8-10 = good, 4-7 = Fair, 0-3=unsatisfactory).

(***) Scoring uses a four point scale (0-3).

0 = Not at all integrated. Applies when none of the elements under a criterion are met.

1 = Partially integrated. Applies when some minimal elements are met but further progress is needed and remedial action to meet the standard is required.

2 = Satisfactorily integrated. Applies when a satisfactory level has been reached and many of the elements are met but still improvement could be done.

3 = Fully integrated. Applies when all of the elements under a criterion are met, used and fully integrated in the evaluation and no remedial action is required.

Overall Evaluation Quality Assessment

	Assessment Levels (*)			
Quality assessment criteria (scoring points*)	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	93	7		
Overall assessment level of evaluation report	Very Good			
	Very good very confident to use	Good confident to use	Fair use with caution	Unsatisfactory not confident to use

- (*) (a) Insert scoring points associated with criteria in corresponding column (e.g. - if 'Analysis and findings' has been assessed as 'Good', enter 40 into 'Good' column).
 (b) Assessment level with highest 'total scoring points' determines 'Overall assessment level of evaluation report'. Write corresponding assessment level in cell (e.g. 'Fair').
 (c) Use 'shading' function to give cells corresponding colour.

If the overall assessment is 'Fair', please explain

- How it can be used?

- What aspects to be cautious about?

Where relevant, please explain the overall assessment Very good, Good or Unsatisfactory

This is a thorough evaluation of a complex issues using innovative methods.

Consideration of significant constraints

The quality of this evaluation report has been hampered by exceptionally difficult circumstances:

Yes No

If yes, please explain: