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UNFPA – Evaluation**United Nations Population Fund****Formative evaluation of the UNFPA support to adolescents and youth¹***Summary*

The Evaluation Office conducted this formative evaluation of the UNFPA support to adolescents and youth as part its quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan (2022-2025). Intended to support UNFPA organizational learning on past and present adolescent and youth initiatives to inform the acceleration of the implementation of the UNFPA Strategy on Adolescents and Youth, the evaluation assesses the initial implementation of the Strategy (also known as My Body, My Life, My World). While the scope of the evaluation covered adolescent and youth programming from 2015 to 2022, the focus of the evaluation was on the period following the launch of the Strategy in 2019.

¹ This paper is a summary of the full evaluation report available at: <https://www.unfpa.org/evaluation/news>

I. Background

1. Adolescents and youth face challenges across multiple and intersecting areas of their lives, affecting their education, health, economic opportunities and participation in civic affairs. Even as young people have become more connected technologically, a digital divide persists, so that the lack of access to technology may reinforced inequalities. In low-income and middle-income countries, a significant proportion of young people are poor, have had little access to education and training or to productive employment, and live in marginalized rural or urban slums. In humanitarian settings, young people experience exclusion more acutely, which has a negative impact on their health, education, and their economic and social wealth.
2. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in increased challenges for adolescents and youth across the world. The pandemic has disrupted education as well as the delivery of routine health services to young people, sharply limiting their access to sexual and reproductive health services. The loss of employment and livelihoods due to the pandemic has worsened gender and power inequalities and increased the risks of HIV infection and adolescent pregnancy in young women and girls. Moreover, owing to the extended lockdown measures during the pandemic, young people have had limited access to positive coping mechanisms; this has further exacerbated the existing and heightened risk of mental health problems.
3. Since the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994, UNFPA has consistently advanced the sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights for all, including for adolescents and youth. The UNFPA mandate for the advancement of the health and rights of adolescents and youth is elaborated in the UNFPA strategic plans as well as the organization’s strategic frameworks on adolescents and youth. This includes the current UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, as well as the UNFPA Strategy on Adolescents and Youth, adopted in 2019.
4. The UNFPA Strategy on Adolescents and Youth – titled ‘My Body, My Life, My World’ – emphasizes three dimensions of UNFPA efforts:
 - (a) ‘My Body’ focuses on giving adolescents and youth the access, capacity and the enabling policy and societal context to exercise their rights to make informed choices over their own bodies;
 - (b) ‘My Life’ supports adolescents and youth in exercising their rights to make informed choices for a healthy life and successfully transition to adulthood through interventions such as comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and life skills and girls-centred programmes, among others; and;
 - (c) ‘My World’ focuses on interventions aiming to help adolescents and youth exercise their right to participate in efforts related to sustainable development, humanitarian and climate action and sustaining peace.
5. Together, these areas of intervention for adolescents and youth contribute to the three transformative results, as outlined in the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, as well as the broader goals of the ICPD and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

II. The purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

6. The evaluation assessed the implementation of the UNFPA Strategy on Adolescents and Youth with a view of informing the acceleration of its implementation. Specifically, the objectives of the evaluation were as follows:
 - (a) Assess the conceptual framework of the UNFPA Strategy on Adolescents and Youth, including the relevance of the Strategy to meet the needs of young people across different contexts; its coherence with the UNFPA overall strategic direction, as outlined in the strategic plans for 2018-2021 and 2022-2025; and its coherence with other frameworks for adolescents and youth, in particular the United Nations Youth Strategy 2030, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
 - (b) To facilitate learning, capture good practices and generate knowledge from UNFPA experience on what worked and did not work in the implementation of its (previous and current) Strategy on Adolescents and Youth;

(c) To provide actionable inputs for the acceleration of the implementation of the UNFPA Strategy on Adolescents and Youth, the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, and, more generally, UNFPA programming on adolescents and youth;

(d) To integrate practical and innovative ways of engaging young people in this evaluation as contributors and co-creators as well as sources of evidence and insight.

7. The evaluation covered all thematic aspects of the UNFPA adolescents and youth programming that are being implemented within the framework of the Strategy. While the scope of the evaluation covered adolescent and youth programming from 2015 to 2022, its focus was on the period since the launch of the current Strategy in 2019.

III. Evaluation methodology

8. The evaluation methodology followed a mixed multi-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection, including a desk review of documentation, key informant interviews, focus group discussion, in-depth country case studies and a global online survey.

9. The evaluation analysed the data at global, regional, and country levels and applied triangulation techniques that included comparing results from different data sources for specific lines of inquiry. Data was validated through the presentation of preliminary findings to country offices at the conclusion of each case study, as well as two data analysis workshops with the evaluation team and Evaluation Office, and in consultation with the Evaluation Reference Group on preliminary findings and during the drafting of the final report.

10. Overall, 419 stakeholders were interviewed, 832 young people participated in focus groups, 70 UNFPA staff members participated in an online survey, and 15 country offices took part in in-depth case studies for the evaluation. This included the UNFPA country offices in Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Colombia, Ghana, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Mozambique, Niger, Philippines, Türkiye, Ukraine and Zimbabwe.

IV. Conclusions

Conclusion 1. The Strategy on Adolescents and Youth is relevant to UNFPA programming and articulates changes that are needed to fully realize the three transformative results. The integrated and multisectoral nature of the Strategy has the potential to fundamentally change the way UNFPA addresses adolescent and youth issues but it has yet to be fully operationalized.

11. The Strategy provides an excellent framing of the intersectional needs of adolescent and youth, showcasing UNFPA strengths and its comparative advantage in all three of the Strategy's dimensions (body, life, world). It aligns well with the organization's past and present strategic plans by embracing a life-course approach, placing adolescents and youth at the centre of development and humanitarian programming, and prioritizing the poorest, the most vulnerable and those left furthest behind. The Strategy reinforces the UNFPA change story and demonstrates how the realization of youth rights is needed to fully realize the three transformative results and, more broadly, the ICPD and the SDGs.

12. Through the three dimensions of the Strategy, UNFPA is able to develop multisectoral programming, leveraging its comparative advantage and exploring new pathways for UNFPA support, integrated in a systematic effort to fulfil its commitments to young people. However, the integrated and multisectoral vision of the Strategy has yet to be fully operationalized. While the adolescent and youth team participates in cross-thematic discussions and strategic thinking of thematic areas, such as sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender, and population and development, at headquarters and regional offices, the collaboration between the adolescent and youth team and other thematic teams has the potential to be expanded and rendered more systematic under the umbrella of the Strategy on Adolescents and Youth.

13. Similarly, UNFPA technical programmes mainstream adolescent and youth interventions within their implementation strategies but they could do more in providing explicit and comprehensive focus to the targeting of interventions at adolescent girls and young women, especially in cases where the

outcomes to be achieved are directly linked to young people (e.g. reducing early and unintended pregnancy). Collaboration between technical teams are often based on personal working relationships among staff rather than as part of a strategic and institutionalized approach.

Conclusion 2. UNFPA support to adolescents and youth has positively contributed to each of the Strategy's dimensions (body, life, world), particularly in the areas where UNFPA has traditionally led. The Strategy also offers an opportunity to amplify support within UNFPA mandate areas by including youth economic empowerment or youth participation in climate action.

My Body

14. UNFPA has been a longstanding partner in the global efforts to support access to a wide range of high-quality adolescent SRHR services. For example, at the global level, UNFPA leads in the areas of adolescent sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights and delivering youth-responsive services. At the country level, UNFPA has helped to create enabling policy environments to advance adolescent and youth rights as well as build the capacity of national health institutions to become more youth-responsive and deliver high-quality adolescent sexual and reproductive health services. UNFPA has also contributed to reducing early and unintended pregnancy among young people through policy advocacy and technical assistance to ensure adolescents and youth have access to family planning information and services.

15. Some areas could be strengthened or expanded upon, including UNFPA work to enhance the uptake of services, menstrual health and self-care. While the organization's longer-term strategy is to make services more youth responsive, there are interim solutions that have yet to be leveraged. In particular, referrals and cross-linkages across services have yielded positive results in enhancing service uptake but have not been fully prioritized. Digital solutions and mobile clinics have also proven effective in improving service utilization, in both development and humanitarian contexts, but have not yet been fully embedded across interventions. Regarding menstrual health and self-care, where efforts are evolving, UNFPA has the opportunity to strengthen its impact in both areas.

16. On HIV prevention and treatment, UNFPA has adapted its approach effectively, targeting and serving adolescents and youth as well as seeking to reach more marginalized and vulnerable groups, to ensure youth can access such services. UNFPA has also demonstrated its effectiveness and strong coordination between its programming on adolescent and youth and its thematic programming on gender, developing a multisectoral approach to gender-based violence prevention and response, as well as harmful practices such as female genital mutilation.

My Life

17. UNFPA has shown important results and leadership in this area, including in in-school and out-of-school CSE, asset-building programmes for adolescent girls and addressing child marriage. UNFPA has long been seen as an effective and valued partner in CSE. UNFPA support at global and country levels to in-school CSE has been effective in providing a gender-sensitive CSE curriculum that aligns to international standards, adapts to the various contexts and, where possible, makes the link to service delivery. UNFPA has made significant strides in supporting the targeting of harder-to-reach groups in the out-of-school space through locally adapted interventions. In addition, the joint UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage clearly demonstrates the strength and advantage of multisectoral programming to contribute effectively and efficiently towards integrated and multisectoral positive youth outcomes and, ultimately, the three transformative results.

18. Amid such progress, there have also been challenges, including opposition to CSE, weaknesses of the education sector and the limits of out-of-school CSE scalability. In reaction to growing opposition to in-school CSE in some regions, pragmatic adaptations of CSE delivery were made so that the curricula, while not fully exhaustive of all topics, could still be delivered.

19. Scaling up out-of-school CSE interventions and embedding them in local or national structures remains a challenge, particularly in humanitarian contexts. Message-crafting and programmatic approaches that interweave out-of-school CSE, asset building, girls' empowerment and gender-based violence prevention, as well as including child marriage, could offer promising avenues. Other areas where further integration of gender-transformative approaches are needed include working with boys and

young men on positive masculinities as well as with particularly marginalized groups and other youth populations left furthest behind.

20. There is a real opportunity to develop strategies to embed non-SRHR thematic work, such as mental health and psychosocial support as well as access to opportunities and economic empowerment, into UNFPA adolescent and youth programming, particularly for adolescent girls. UNFPA has shown its effectiveness in expanding its adolescent and youth programming to respond to the linkages between SRHR and mental health and economic empowerment. This is particularly the case where mental health and psychosocial support became a more prominent focus in CSE during the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, UNFPA efforts in economic empowerment have leveraged its interventions in the areas of adolescent sexual and reproductive health, adolescent girls-centred programming and the demographic dividend. However, the lack of a clear corporate positioning on these emerging areas of work hinders the organization's ability to accelerate progress in these areas.

My World

21. UNFPA is recognized for being a leader in youth participation, including by creating enabling environments for youth participation, supporting young leaders in their national institutions as well as in international platforms such as the United Nations youth advisory panels, and investing in and strengthening the capacities of youth-led networks and movements. In addition, UNFPA has made strong efforts to adapt its approaches across regions and countries to enhance youth participation in a meaningful way.

22. However, the diverse adaptations of youth engagement across regional and country levels also pose some challenges. While UNFPA offices have adapted the 'My World' dimension to their contexts with some success, it is not clear if their efforts respond to strategic and informed choices. Further, there is a risk that differing interpretations of what counts as meaningful youth participation will lead to inconsistencies. To this end, there could be more clarity on whether UNFPA considers youth participation a goal or a part of a process, or both. Finally, there is an opportunity for UNFPA to consolidate the lessons learned as well as good practices and promising approaches in youth engagement with the aim of establishing with a more coherent and strategic approach.

Conclusion 3. UNFPA has been responsive to humanitarian settings and emerging crises, including through strong and effective leadership in the development of the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action. However, the roll-out of the Compact has only recently started to reach the country level. There are financial and capacity challenges to integrate adolescents and youth into the humanitarian response as well as limited assessments and data collections on the needs of youth to understand their vulnerabilities in humanitarian settings. Untapped avenues remain for UNFPA to expand its work around youth, peace and security; youth and climate resilience; and the humanitarian-development-peace continuum, in line with its mandate.

23. At the global level, UNFPA has demonstrated its strong commitment to supporting adolescents and youth in humanitarian settings through its leadership in the development of the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action – which includes Governments, United Nations entities, international and local non-governmental organizations, the private sector, major youth organizations and networks, its active role in adolescent and youth humanitarian cluster groups – and guidance on how to integrate adolescent and youth-responsive services in humanitarian response. However, at the country level, the roll-out of the Compact is still nascent. There are challenges in terms of funding and capacities as well as limited assessments and data collection on adolescents and youth in humanitarian contexts.

24. Across UNFPA offices, the integration of adolescents and youth into humanitarian response varies and is often dependent on the focus of UNFPA efforts in a country. In countries where humanitarian programming is the focus of its work, existing humanitarian interventions lend themselves to the integration of adolescent and youth aspects. However, in countries where the humanitarian response is not at the centre of UNFPA efforts, successful integration of adolescent and youth programming in humanitarian response has been mixed.

25. In some instances, youth, peace and security (YPS) initiatives are being rolled-out in a siloed manner and the linkages between YPS and the work with and for adolescents and youth in humanitarian settings remains fragile and unclear. Moreover, YPS is often framed as appropriate only for conflict-

related settings, despite clear guidance from the Security Council resolutions on youth, peace and security. A more comprehensive understanding of YPS and how to integrate adolescent and youth interventions across contexts, in line with the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, could expand the organization's work in (and beyond) humanitarian settings or conflicts, with opportunities for linkages to its work on prevention.

26. While there are good examples of practical integration between UNFPA programming on development and humanitarian response programming, unexplored opportunities within YPS and youth and climate resilience remain.

Conclusion 4. The tenets of a human-rights-based approach are evident in adolescent and youth programming, where it strongly emphasizes non-discrimination and participation measures. While this promotes the spirit of 'leaving no one behind,' a deeper examination of underlying factors of discrimination, inequality, and exclusion would enable UNFPA to better target those left furthest behind first.

27. In line with other UNFPA strategic frameworks, the Strategy embraces with a human rights-based approach and espouses the principles of 'leaving no one behind', gender equality and diversity. The human-rights-based approach and the principles of 'leaving no one behind' and gender equality are often well reflected across interventions of UNFPA support to adolescents and youth, primarily by adapting adolescent and youth interventions to local contexts and needs to address exclusion and support participation.

28. Reaching young people that are left furthest behind, however, is a resource-intensive task that requires strategic planning and design at the onset of projects. This is a particular challenge, given the limited resources available. Many country offices opt for maximizing programme reach versus the more resource-intensive task of purposefully targeting and reaching those most in need. These trade-offs risk UNFPA unintentionally leaving out the most marginalized adolescents and youth in its efforts.

Conclusion 5. UNFPA has assumed multiple leadership roles in the broader adolescents and youth agenda, becoming the 'de facto' leading United Nations agency on youth. However, such leadership comes with costs as well as risks. Further institutional clarity is needed regarding which thematic areas UNFPA should lead on and which areas it should play a supporting role, and where it can leverage partnerships to galvanize additional funding and technical support.

29. At the global level, UNFPA has effectively taken on multiple leadership roles, filling a gap and becoming the de facto leading United Nations agency on youth, in both traditional (SRHR) and new areas of intervention (YPS, within its expertise). UNFPA has effectively contributed to the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth; the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action; the Global Coalition on YPS; and in areas of the Strategy, such as sexual and reproductive health, CSE, female genital mutilation, child marriage and meaningful youth participation. At the country level, however, UNFPA is at times stretched too thin to participate in and lead the adolescent and youth agenda across all thematic areas – particularly when the engagement extends beyond the focus of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, and the Strategy. In some regions, UNFPA has become the de facto leader in almost all United Nations agendas on adolescents and youth. This poses several risks to UNFPA, including the fragmentation of its specific contributions, diminishing its impact. To this end, UNFPA would benefit from more clarity on which thematic areas it should lead and in which areas it could engage in a supporting role.

30. Assuming a leadership role carries a high burden as it requires a certain level of human and financial investment. Often, UNFPA faces a trade-off between allocating more time and resources in building its leadership capacity and investing in the actual implementation of UNFPA adolescent and youth interventions. In countries with existing financial and staffing constraints, taking on a leadership role further exacerbates the fundamental challenge of working with limited resources, placing the effectiveness, sustainability and scalability of these adolescent and youth interventions at risk.

31. The innovative and diversified partnerships that UNFPA has established have proven strategic in addressing the challenge of limited resources as well as raising awareness and advocating for the agenda on adolescents and youth. However, the UNFPA approach to partnerships, particularly innovative models to partnering (South-South cooperation and youth networks) has not been systematically applied across

all contexts, leading to missed opportunities. Harnessing the complementarities among different types of partnerships as a strategic approach to addressing all dimensions of the Strategy has mostly been achieved through the initiative of individual country or regional offices; it has not yet been fully explored as an organization-wide approach.

Conclusion 6. Despite the clear case being made by UNFPA for investing in young people, there is limited measurement beyond the output level or the impact on individuals. In addition, there are opportunities for UNFPA to strengthen and leverage its population data and dynamics capabilities to enhance its policy advocacy for adolescent and youth, including through investment cases.

32. Overall, UNFPA has leveraged its population data component to inform adolescent and youth programming. To a lesser extent, UNFPA has also achieved results related to support governments in incorporating an adolescent and youth lens into national statistics and national reporting for the SDGs, even if this has been inconsistent across countries.

33. Although UNFPA is assessing its own youth interventions, this is mainly done at the output or individual level. Clear outcome and impact-level indicators are not in place, especially at societal levels. Currently, the analysis of population dynamics for adolescents and youth has mostly remained at the level of situational analysis; it is not accompanied by a strong body of evidence of the impact of the adolescent and youth programming contribution to the three transformative results or on causal linkages.

34. Not having a robust measurement framework poses a challenge to the UNFPA capability to provide strong data analytics and evidence to support its case for investing in youth and the resulting impacts and benefits to the whole of society

Conclusion 7. The positioning of the adolescent and youth team within UNFPA, together with its limited staffing and capacities, pose challenges to the effective and efficient delivery of the adolescent and youth agenda.

35. Even though UNFPA has allocated human resources to support adolescent and youth programming, challenges remain to effectively implementing its multisectoral Strategy and ensure the organization adequately leads and fulfils its mandate on adolescents and youth. The establishment of the adolescents and youth team has strengthened the organization's work on adolescents and youth across the different support areas, but challenges remain in terms of staffing, functional levels, supervisory lines and job descriptions.

36. In addition, the organizational setup and positioning of the adolescents and youth team within one of the branches of the Technical Division does not support multisectoral programming of all dimensions of the Strategy, including sexual and reproductive health, gender, youth participation, data on youth, humanitarian action, and youth, peace and security. Better positioning of the adolescents and youth team within UNFPA is important both in terms of functionality and efficiency.

37. The institutional setup for support to adolescents and youth in humanitarian settings is inadequate to ensure its effective delivery, which poses a potential risk in its growing portfolio of work in humanitarian response. At present, there is no dedicated adolescents and youth position in the Humanitarian Response Division; and beyond this, staff across business units are limited in their skills and capacities to integrate adolescent and youth interventions in humanitarian and emergency settings. At the country level, in most offices, there is a low visibility and prioritization of staff working on adolescents and youth, evidenced by the insufficient number of dedicated adolescents and youth staff as well as the more junior professional levels and temporary contractual arrangements for such staff.

38. These challenges, together with a high turnover and difficulty of retention of skilled staff, as well as limitations in existing staff skills and capacities to undertake adolescent and youth programming, continue to hinder UNFPA ability to not only implement its Strategy holistically and effectively, but also influence the adolescents and youth agenda in the global arena.

V. Recommendations

39. The following recommendations are linked to the evaluation's findings and conclusions and take into account consultations held with the Evaluation Reference Group as well as senior management.

Recommendation 1. Enhance the operationalization of the integrated and multisectoral nature of the strategy by ensuring the efficient roll-out, implementation and use of its operational guidance and by expanding corporate learning, experience sharing and cross-fertilization.

40. To operationalize the integrated and multisectoral nature of the Strategy and strengthen internal capacities, UNFPA should invest in the roll-out of its operational guidance. The roll-out should consider strategies beyond the availability of online courses, such as relational strategies to foster in-depth experience sharing and cross-fertilization across regions and countries. This could include closer work between headquarters and regional offices to support country offices, with headquarters backstopping regional offices in contextualizing and disseminating the guidance. Cross-regional experience sharing should also be considered. While the evaluation recognizes UNFPA efforts in developing the operational guidance for the Strategy, it also identifies emerging areas that should be considered for enhancing the existing guidance or for providing additional guidance.

41. Potential actions to be taken:

(a) Enhance the visibility and communication of the Strategy by incorporating how it should be rolled out in the various country contexts (e.g., low- or middle-income country status, protracted conflict, humanitarian crisis, among others.), including with examples of how enhanced communication can benefit programming. Promote the United Nations Youth Strategy (Youth2030) and articulate linkages between Youth2030 and the UNFPA Strategy on Adolescents and Youth, so that UNFPA can become a leader for Youth2030;

(b) Enhance the existing ‘My World’ module by including a clear proposition for contributing to the long-term transformative goal of ‘My World’ and providing a clear articulation of the UNFPA understanding of meaningful youth participation for both internal and external audiences;

(c) Build a knowledge bank of good practices and lessons learned of the integrated, multisectoral approaches across the three dimensions of the Strategy (body, life, world) and demonstrate the conceptual linkages laid out in the Strategy through concrete examples.

Recommendation 2. Further enhance each of the three dimensions of the Strategy based on the evidence provided in this evaluation.

Recommendation 2a. ‘My Body’. Revitalize efforts to support the delivery of youth-responsive SRHR and HIV services that are appropriate, accessible and adequate for young people.

42. Central to achieving the three transformative results is ensuring adolescents and youth have access to and utilize youth-responsive high-quality SRHR services. ‘My Body’ interventions are the cornerstone of the strategy; however, delivering evidence-based high-quality services that are youth-responsive continue to be a challenge. Innovative approaches to reducing barriers to access to care tested during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated new adaptive approaches to delivering for youth where they are needed the most. Where services were available, low uptake was observed, largely due to barriers to access, including a lack of confidentiality and anonymity, and prohibitive cost.

43. Potential actions to be taken:

(a) Ensure country offices prioritize the delivery of youth-responsive services in the context of universal health care by assessing the effectiveness (including quality and use) of current strategies, such as stand-alone youth-friendly health services;

(b) Reach the most vulnerable young people and those furthest left behind through innovative and targeted approaches, including by building on outreach efforts of mobile clinics and pharmacies, hotlines, peer approaches and community-based distribution networks (for condoms, HIV home-tests or other self-care measures);

(c) Reduce barriers to accessing and use of services that young people want, in ways that are appropriate for them. This may require working with ministries of health to ensure health care policies do not exclude adolescents and youth from accessing SRHR services, including due to financial barriers, and may also require financial investment or leveraging by UNFPA to ensure reproductive health commodity security.

Recommendation 2b. My Life’. Continue to support the adaptation of CSE to specific country and regional contexts to remain relevant to adolescent and youth stakeholders, including youths themselves, while maintaining a focus on international standards

44. UNFPA has been a recognized leader in both in-school and out-of-school CSE. While the curricula have largely followed international standards, a number of new, urgent issues have emerged as critical for young people. There is sufficient evidence that CSE approaches are most effective and relevant when they not only provide CSE but also address the economic needs of young people as well as their social and emotional challenges related to substance abuse, mental health, peace and security, and climate change, among others. Building on best practices of holistic programming, UNFPA should advocate that a broader range of thematic issues are included in the curriculum, including youth economic empowerment, reflecting the intersectional needs of young people. To address weaknesses in the education sector (teacher capacity and ability and motivation to deliver CSE that are aligned with international standards), UNFPA should advocate for quality assurance mechanisms in education systems.

45. Potential actions to be taken:

(a) Support the expansion and implementation of in-school and out-of-school CSE, ensuring that the curriculum includes critical issues, such as economic empowerment, mental health, menstrual health, self-care, peace and climate change, using both traditional and innovative digital approaches.

(b) Build on UNFPA efforts in mental health and psychosocial support as it relates to its comparative advantage in adolescent sexual and reproductive health. This includes piloting initiatives addressing mental health that will complement existing UNFPA interventions, exploring opportunities to partner with other United Nations organizations, and ensuring the human capacity and expertise required to implement these activities are in place;

(c) Build on UNFPA efforts in economic empowerment as it relates to comparative advantage in adolescent sexual and reproductive health and the demographic dividend. This includes piloting initiatives addressing economic empowerment that will complement existing interventions, including by partnering with other United Nations organizations, and ensuring the human capacity and expertise required to implement these activities are in place.

(d) Strengthen the global corporate vision and strategy on adolescent girls-centred programming, emphasizing particularly bodily autonomy and adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights, agency and empowerment, financial and economic empowerment, and connecting them to opportunities and future employability.

Recommendation 2c. ‘My World’: Ensure a common, uniform understanding of meaningful participation of young people, and enhance synergies among the three dimensions of the Strategy.

46. The evaluation observed a lack of common understanding at the country office level of what meaningful participation of young people entails. The forthcoming operational guidance on youth leadership and participation will help to address this issue if the focal points on adolescents and youth are supported to utilize the guidance. Towards this end, the guidance should be disseminated across the organization, along with capacity building support. It should include adolescent and youth participation and youth movement building, not just around SRHR, but also more broadly in development, humanitarian and peace efforts, focusing on accelerating achievement of the three transformative results.

47. Potential actions to be taken:

(a) Ensure proper dissemination and roll-out of the new operational guidance on meaningful participation as a basis for capacity building among adolescents and youth focal points to create a common understanding across the organization of the UNFPA approach to engaging with young people;

(b) Develop a bolder framework for meaningful youth participation that articulates the medium-term and long-term ambitions of UNFPA for strengthening its partnership with youth and youth-led and youth-serving organizations and provides a roadmap for the attainment of these goals;

(c) Strengthen feedback mechanisms between young people and UNFPA, with young people given real-time opportunities to provide input to UNFPA decisions and to receive periodic updates on the work being done to meet their needs;

- (d) Compile and share lessons learned and good practices in supporting meaningful youth participation, to communicate the effectiveness and value of the adolescents and youth agenda both internally and with partners;
- (e) Streamline support for youth participation in voluntary national review and universal periodic review processes at the country level, to ensure alignment and consistent engagement of youth advocacy and accountability movements in channelling youth inputs to both review processes in every country;
- (f) Increase support and capacity building for youth advocacy and youth-led movements, initiatives and campaigns to mobilize on sexual and reproductive health and human rights, gender equality, humanitarian action, climate change, among other issues. This may include facilitating their access to decision-making mechanisms or establishing youth-led accountability mechanisms to measure duty-bearer progress on issues of concern to them;
- (g) Develop a corporate safeguarding policy for young activists and young people who engage with UNFPA.

Recommendation 3. Fully integrate adolescents and youth within the UNFPA humanitarian response and leverage YPS and climate resilience.

48. To meet the global commitment to adolescent and youth in humanitarian setting and emerging conflict areas and to align its adolescents and youth programming with the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action and the Youth, Peace and Security agenda, UNFPA should strengthen its coordination and joint planning across thematic branches and the Humanitarian Response Division. Improving integrated and cross programming will also help to ensure adolescent and youth needs and interests are included in all UNFPA humanitarian response efforts and also reflected in YPS, climate resilience and development/humanitarian/peace programming.

49. Potential actions to be taken:

- (a) Increase systematic communication and coordination between Technical Division and the Humanitarian Response Division to strengthen the integration of adolescents and youth lens in all UNFPA humanitarian responses;
- (b) Work with partners to roll-out existing guidance such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Youth Guidelines and the Minimum Initial Service Package. This may require building staff capacities on development/humanitarian/peace programming, along with adequate resources to operationalize and contextualize the guidance, for it to be sustained;
- (c) Enhance and expand YPS and climate resilience programming as a core element of more sustainable and long-lasting peace and resilience-building efforts. This may require an assessment of the UNFPA investments needed to make a case for this agenda, support existing programming in these areas and expand the scope of work of adolescents and youth focal points to also include YPS and climate resilience;
- (d) Strengthen assessments and collection of disaggregated data as well as data on the needs of youth to understand their vulnerabilities in emergencies and humanitarian settings;
- (e) Support and strengthen country offices in the preparation of proposals under the Peacebuilding Fund to leverage the leadership and comparative advantage of UNFPA working in youth areas related to peacebuilding;
- (f) Support and strengthen country offices in the preparation of humanitarian and emergency appeals, ensuring the integration of dedicated interventions to address the humanitarian needs of adolescents and youth, helping to consolidate UNFPA leadership on this area of work.

Recommendation 4. Ensure all adolescent and youth interventions are grounded in human rights-based and gender-transformative approaches to ensure inclusion across all groups of adolescents and youth, and address the root causes of gender inequality and discrimination.

50. UNFPA country offices are committed to making programmes more accessible to all adolescents and youth by ensuring non-discrimination and often also through subgroup targeting. This is particularly the case for adolescent girls and young women, and notably adolescents and youth with disabilities, among other key populations. While these approaches are effective in including marginalized youth, they

often miss those more disenfranchised due to the multiple, underlying factors of exclusion, inequality and discrimination.

51. Potential actions to be taken:

- (a) Guide country offices in conducting in-depth analysis of the specific exclusion factors that prevail in national contexts and how these affect different groups of adolescents and youth;
- (b) Employ learning from such research and studies to develop specific targeting strategies for the inclusion of adolescents and youth that do not have access to the desired programmes.

Recommendation 5. Identify the UNFPA corporate priorities and approaches for leadership, coordination and partnership within programming on adolescents and youth.

52. In order to maximize efforts and resources dedicated to advancing the work on adolescents and youth, there needs to be clarity on how UNFPA intends to lead, coordinate and partner with others to deliver on the holistic nature of the UNFPA Strategy on Adolescents and Youth. UNFPA leadership should be assumed in its core areas of work and clarified in other areas. At the same time, UNFPA should invest in its capacity to coordinate with United Nations organizations and other partners in joint work and programmes on adolescents and youth as these offer strategic and catalytic programming and funding platforms.

53. Potential actions to be taken:

- (a) Prioritize areas for leadership. UNFPA should conduct a mapping of its leadership and participation in different coordination mechanisms at country, regional and global levels. From this, UNFPA should determine the optimal engagement level for different aspects of programmes on adolescents and youth, along with associated resourcing plans. Special attention should be paid to the UNFPA role in leading the implementation of Youth2030 within the United Nations country teams.
- (b) Leverage UNFPA capacity to broaden its partnership portfolio with youth-led and youth-serving organizations. At the global and regional levels, UNFPA should consider opportunities to join the youth-serving movements (such as the so-called ‘Big 6’ youth organizations, among others) to benefit from more agile funding structures and broaden outreach as well as engage directly and provide support for local youth-led organisations that may not be eligible for funding from UNFPA due to the current risk-mitigating administrative and financial policies;
- (c) Further explore joint programming opportunities as a catalyst for funding. Joint and regional integrated youth programming across the pillars of Youth2030 offer an opportunity for new partnerships, innovation and leveraging across diverse country contexts and programme areas.

Recommendation 6. Leverage population data analytics in the adolescents and youth area to enhance policy advocacy capabilities, including through strong investment cases.

54. In order to enhance policy advocacy and accountability, UNFPA should advance leveraging population data and a bolder measurement framework covering output, outcome and impact levels, tracking resource investments in adolescents and youth, and capturing lessons learned to inform future programming.

55. Potential actions to be taken:

- (a) Strengthen data analytics around adolescents and youth, including through evidence on the impact of adolescents and youth programming and its contribution to the three transformative results and causal linkages, to enhance UNFPA capability in evidence-based policy advocacy and financing, including through strong investment cases;
- (b) Develop a menu of indicators across a matrix of output/outcome indicators and across individual, community and societal-level intervention strategies, including for youth engagement;
- (c) Support national capacities to gather disaggregated data by age and sex, particularly on measures directly impacting the three transformative results. UNFPA should consider investing in partnerships with universities and with other United Nations entities to develop new impact-level indicators that reflect youth voices and their participation;

(d) Invest in cross-fertilizing knowledge around innovative data methodologies on adolescents and youth that provide comprehensive evidence on the situation of adolescents and youth to support policy efforts.

Recommendation 7. Review the UNFPA corporate structure and the adolescents and youth staff capacities to ensure adequate capability to implement the UNFPA strategy on adolescents and youth.

56. UNFPA is recognized for its leadership on adolescents and youth within the United Nations system, and globally in the SRHR space. UNFPA has taken up multiple leadership roles, demonstrating the coherence of UNFPA programming on adolescents and youth, including by successfully confirming UNFPA leadership on adolescents and youth issues in a variety of inter-agency and multi-stakeholder fora. However, the internal positioning of the adolescent and youth team poses a challenge to effectively and efficiently implementing the Strategy and realize its promise for advancing the larger UNFPA agenda of the three transformative results – all of which require attention and investment in adolescent and youth-focused programming. The adolescents and youth team coordinates the UNFPA global community of practice on adolescents and youth – bringing together the regional youth advisors around issues often outside of the SRHR realm – but does not extend to the other branches, which equally require a youth focus to achieve their goals. UNFPA leadership on adolescent sexual and reproductive health (and the full implementation of the Strategy) is further challenged by gaps related to staff capacity that can hinder its ability to effectively lead the adolescents and youth agenda in a particular thematic area, if not across thematic areas.

57. Potential actions to be taken:

(a) Institutionalize the adolescents and youth team. Consider creating an adolescents and youth branch within the Technical Division to support integrated programming that better reflects the three dimensions of the Strategy and enhances the capacity to influence programming across all thematic areas;

(b) Reinforce the adolescents and youth team capacities at headquarters. Review the terms of reference of staff supporting adolescents and youth to ensure cross-thematic programming can be coordinated by the team, especially related to SRHR, data on adolescents and youth, humanitarian action and YPS. Consider enhancing data and analytics within the adolescents and youth team to enhance investment cases informing evidence-based policy advocacy for financing policies on adolescents and youth and to provide support to monitoring and evaluation activities;

(c) Review adolescent and youth staff profiles at the country office level. Conduct a thorough review of current adolescents and youth staff and focal points profiles at the country office level and define the staff skill-sets required (in comparison to what is currently available). Strategically fill staffing gaps and create new positions as resources become available to complement the capacity of the existing team;

(d) Streamline the adolescents and youth focal points in regional and country offices in terms of their mandate and professional levels to support an integrated programming and embed adolescents and youth into existing structures to enhance their capacity to influence adolescents and youth programming across all thematic areas;

(e) Reinforce the capacities of adolescents and youth staff working in humanitarian response and youth, peace and security. Nominate a dedicated adolescents and youth focal point in the Humanitarian Response Division who can closely coordinate with the adolescents and youth team and support the integration of adolescents and youth programme interventions in the emergency response work. Support the capacity building of regional and country offices on providing emergency response for adolescents and youth and working on youth, peace and security. Conduct a review of the adolescents and youth surge profile and skill-sets required to fill those positions and develop the skills needed.

Recommendation 8. Within the framework of the recently launched ‘People Strategy’, develop a specific human resources workplan for the meaningful participation of young professionals in UNFPA, focused on enhancing recruitment and strengthening the career development of young professionals as well as creating an enabling environment for intergenerational leadership, learning and contribution.

58. The ‘My World’ component of the Strategy places a strong emphasis on the meaningful participation of young people, including in decision-making, which applies both externally and internally

to the organization. In order to “walk the talk,” UNFPA needs to deliver on creating opportunities and space for young professionals to participate in and lead development processes. While UNFPA has created opportunities for young professionals to contribute to institutional processes and the implementation of programmes, there are opportunities to further institutionalize participation and foster intergenerational leadership, learning and collaboration.

59. Potential actions to be taken:

- (a) Collect and analyse data (proportion, age, gender disaggregation) regularly on the workforce at UNFPA (staff and non-staff) as well as the types of functions and contractual modalities of young professionals. Identify any gaps and challenges in the acquisition, retention and management of young talent. Prepare annual reports to inform strategic decisions on meaningful involvement of young people at UNFPA;
- (b) Informed by the above analysis, undertake actions for an increased inclusion of young professionals within UNFPA staffing. This may include reviewing contractual arrangements and career paths, prioritizing young professionals for particular posts and strengthening career development paths for them to grow within the organization;
- (c) Leveraging existing mechanisms (i.e., the ‘Tangerines’ network), enhance an enabling environment for young staff to meaningfully participate, contribute, learn, lead and be involved in decision-making, including through mechanisms that allow for intergenerational leadership as well as for creating opportunities for capable young staff to lead on specific projects or initiatives;
- (d) Leverage the already existing young professionals’ network (i.e., the ‘Tangerines’) at UNFPA and enhance opportunities for their consultation and participation in decision-making processes. Also, explore other opportunities for leadership and contribution in more strategic discussions.

Recommendation 9. Increasingly engage young people in UNFPA evaluations and continue to advocate with partners for the meaningful engagement of young people in evaluation².

60. UNFPA is committed to co-leading a global movement advocating for the meaningful youth engagement in evaluation. This includes evaluations led by UNFPA. Based on lessons learned and youth reflections of their engagement in this present evaluation on adolescents and youth, the following recommendation has been formulated.

61. Potential actions to be taken:

- (a) Continue to co-lead, together with EvalYouth, the ‘Youth in evaluation’ initiative. This includes facilitating the co-creation (by Eval4Action partners) of standards for meaningful engagement of youth in evaluation, involving different typologies of stakeholders; and co-facilitating initiatives to enhance the enabling environment, institutional and individual capacities for the meaningful engagement of youth in evaluation;
- (b) Develop clear guidelines for establishing youth steering committees (YSCs) for future UNFPA evaluations, as appropriate. Specifically, this means:
 - i. *For recruitment:* Dissemination of the vacancy announcement more widely through a clear social media strategy; clarity on whether recruitment is for young leaders or young evaluators; and improved diversity of youth profiles through a higher representation of developing countries;
 - ii. *For ongoing support:* Preparatory capacity building processes on the evaluation thematic area for selected YSC members; use of communication channels that are convenient to youth; and embracing a long-term strategy for YSCs and their members, including by linking former and new members, supporting the professional growth of YSC members by connecting them with country offices and supporting the dissemination of their experience.

² While this evaluation did not assess UNFPA contribution to youth meaningful engagement in evaluation, the youth steering committees independently decided to develop recommendation 9 based on their experience in this evaluation. This recommendation is developed from a summary of recommendations made by youth steering committee members and young evaluators.

(c) Develop clear guidelines for engaging young evaluators. This may include clarifying the roles and ways of working and communication, including feedback sessions for young evaluators and young beneficiaries in programme countries on the outcomes of the evaluation.

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