Evaluation of UNFPA support to population dynamics and data
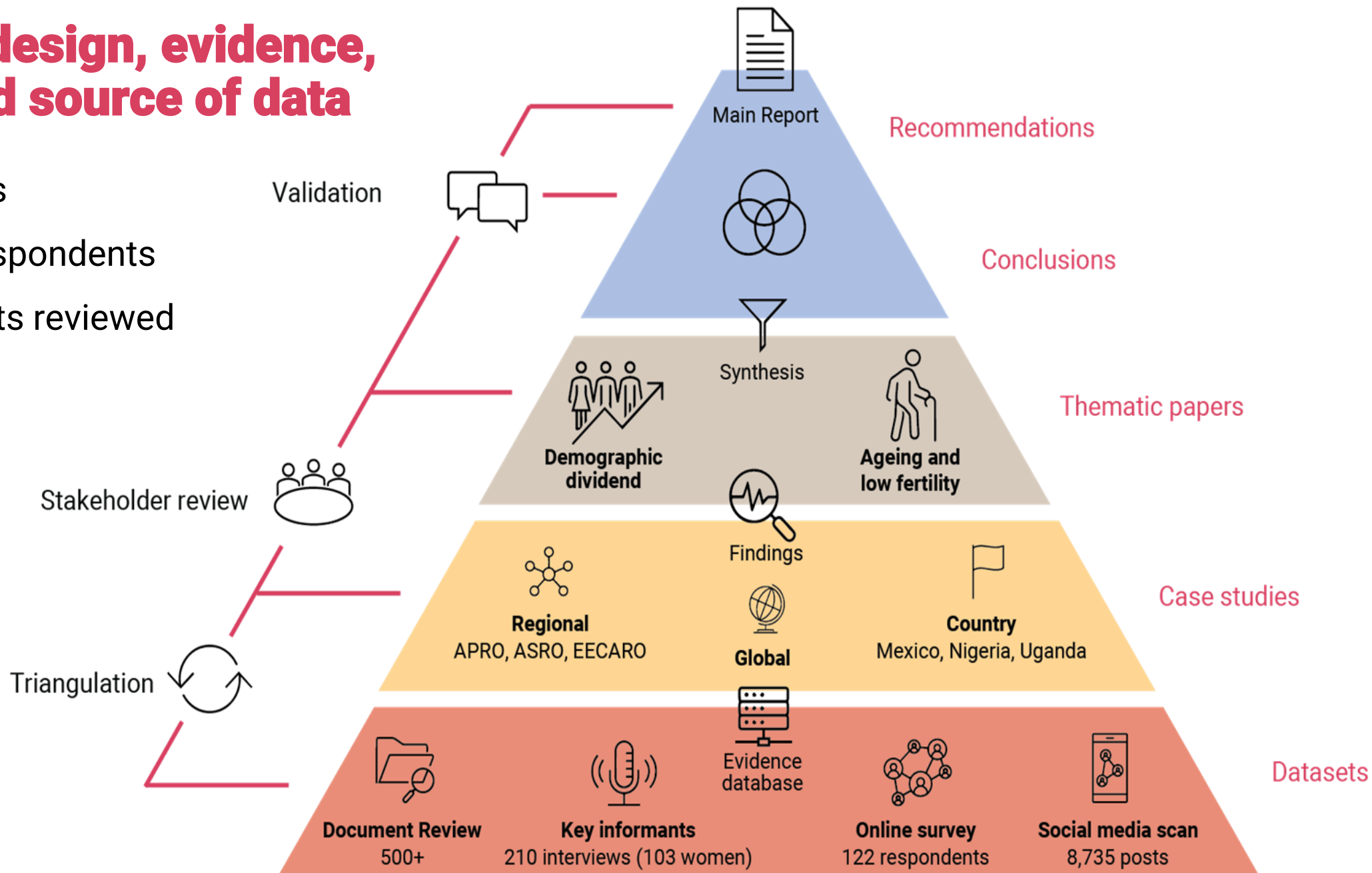
UNFPA Evaluation Office

2023

Objectives

- Assess the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the UNFPA support to population dynamics and data from 2014 to 2022

- Identify lessons learned to inform mid-term review of the Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, and the design of evidence-based population policies, programmes and strategies, as well as the next Strategic Plan

The evaluation focused on UNFPA support to:

- Strengthening national population data systems, in both development and humanitarian contexts

- Promoting rights-based and evidence-based public policies integrating population dynamics

- Analyzing population and development trends to harness demographic dividend and addressing ageing and low fertility

Evaluation design, evidence, analysis and source of data

- 210 interviews
- 122 survey respondents
- 500 documents reviewed

Pyramid levels (right labels): Recommendations, Conclusions, Thematic papers, Case studies, Datasets

Top: Main Report

Left process labels: Validation, Stakeholder review, Triangulation

Second tier: Synthesis — Demographic dividend — Ageing and low fertility

Third tier: Findings — Regional (APRO, ASRO, EECARO) — Global — Country (Mexico, Nigeria, Uganda)

Bottom tier: Evidence database — Document Review 500+ — Key informants 210 interviews (103 women) — Online survey 122 respondents — Social media scan 8,735 posts

Conclusions

Conclusion 1

- Overall, UNFPA has provided relevant and timely support to population data, population dynamics, and population and development. This is notwithstanding a view that UNFPA reframed the centrality of population dynamics and data from 2014 onwards

- There is a clear consensus that population data and dynamics is once more gaining increasing prominence within UNFPA, ensuring its alignment with, and relevance to, the current global issues related to demographic shifts

Conclusion 2

- UNFPA has shown strong effectiveness for strengthening national and subnational data systems, particularly capacity building support to national statistics offices for conducting a census and, to a lesser extent, civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS)

- Capacity building on population dynamics and demographic intelligence has a relatively shorter history within UNFPA but is an increasing focus

Conclusion 3

- UNFPA has integrated people-centred, cross-cutting issues consistently and strongly in all population and development activities, from design to implementation

- Regarding other megatrends, such as migration and climate change, the approach or pattern of response is less coherent

Conclusion 4

- UNFPA has been relatively successful at strategically positioning and mainstreaming dialogue on population dynamics at different levels

- At the global and regional level, UNFPA has been adding value by advancing the 'demographic dividend' concept and, more recently, within certain regions, contributing significantly to the ageing and low fertility conversation

- Concepts such as 'demographic resilience' are being increasingly used to bring together different demographic shifts anchored in a rights-based and inclusive frame of reference

Conclusion 5

- There are solid and concrete examples of close and thoughtful linkages of population and development to SRHR and gender at different levels within UNFPA (global, regional and country levels), particularly with regard to population data

- However, these collaborations are not as systematized as they could be and tend to be ad hoc and project-based, resulting in inconsistency

Conclusion 6

- UNFPA provides significant contribution to population data in humanitarian settings through the Common Operational Datasets-Population Statistics (COD-PS), which is viewed as a development contribution to humanitarian preparedness and response, managed by the Technical Division

- However, there is not a consistent understanding across UNFPA with regard to population data in humanitarian settings and on humanitarian data

Conclusion 7

- UNFPA has leveraged partnerships at different levels to further the effective use of population data and dynamics for development purposes

- There is an understanding that a range of partnerships across population data, dynamics, and development areas – both traditional and more innovative – is critical to achieving development objectives, such as the SDGs

Conclusion 8

- UNFPA has a relatively small staff body stretched across a varied, complex and demanding mandate. Within this context, UNFPA staffing capacity in population and development is considered to be inadequate, with a need for mapping of the skillsets required and a capacity planning framework for the future thought leadership of UNFPA in this area

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

UNFPA should develop a bold population and development strategy reconceptualized around the data, dynamics and development continuum, and including demographic dividends, resilience and policy

Priority: High
Target: Technical Division/Population Development Branch

Recommendation 2

UNFPA should develop an internal capacity building and learning priority workplan to increase common understanding of demographic dividends, resilience and policy, and the role of UNFPA, and how these all link to the three transformative results

Priority: Medium
Target: Technical Division/Population Development Branch, Regional Population and Development Advisors

Recommendation 3

To maintain its leadership position and credibility regarding population data, dynamics, and development, UNFPA should ensure continued investment in signature data products that have been invested in to date

Priority: High
Target: Technical Division and Senior Management

Recommendation 4

UNFPA should use the United Nations "Secretary General"'s data strategy as a basis for developing a UNFPA-specific understanding of what being 'data literate' means for UNFPA

Priority: Medium
Target: Technical Division/Population Development Branch in collaboration with Division for Human Resources
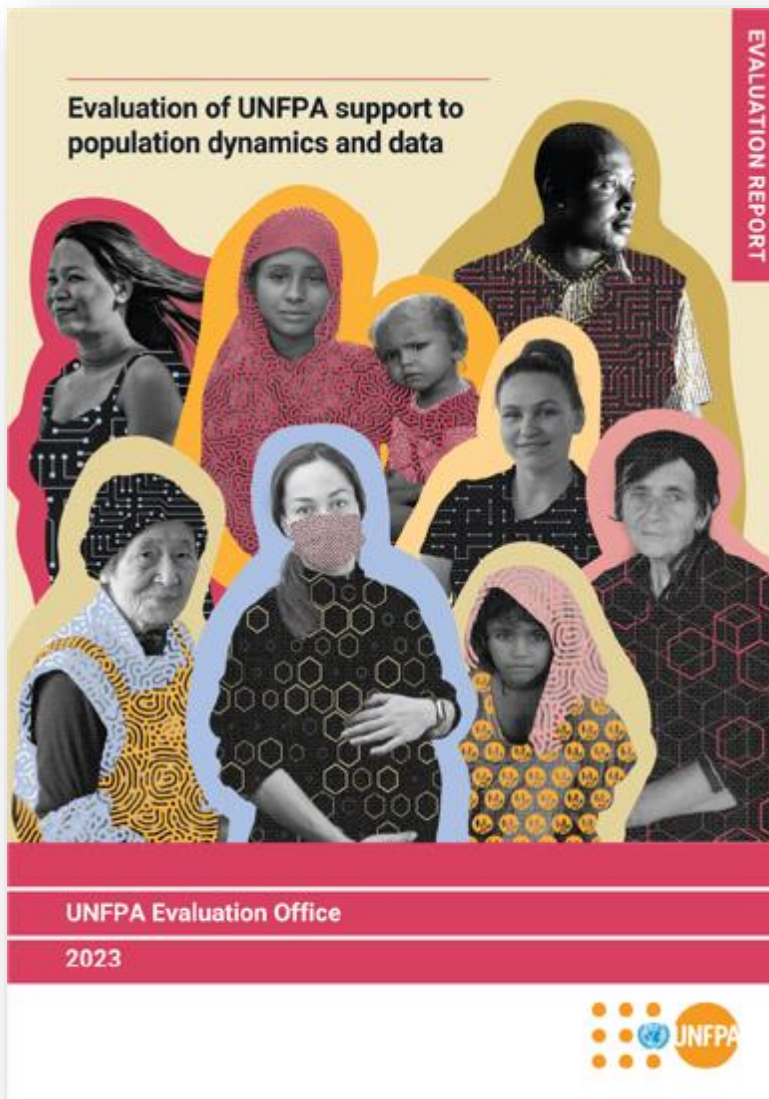
Recommendation 5

UNFPA should re-assess the current human and technical capacity of population and development at different levels, vis-à-vis the increasingly visible leadership statements of UNFPA regarding demographic shifts as a mega-trend

Priority: Medium
Target: Technical Division/Population and Development Branch and Division for Human Resources

Thank you

#PopulationEval

Find related materials at **unfpa.org/evaluation**

- Full Evaluation report

- Evaluation brief (EN, FR, SP)

- Regional deep dive case study notes (APRO, EECARO, ASRO)

- Deep dive country case study notes (Mexico, Nigeria and Uganda)

- Management response

- Short video

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Contributing to accountability, adaptation and acceleration to help UNFPA deliver rights and choices for all