



Statement by Marco Segone

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on

Item on evaluation

Formative evaluation of the UNFPA support to population dynamics and data

UNFPA/UNDP/UNOPS Executive Board

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Mr. President,

Distinguished Members of the Executive Board,

I am very pleased to present the main results of the formative evaluation of the UNFPA support to population dynamics and data. This is the first evaluation at UNFPA on the theme of population dynamics.

The evaluation focused on UNFPA support to population data, population dynamics, and population and development from 2014 to 2022. In particular, the evaluation assessed the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the UNFPA support in the area of demographic dividend, and population ageing and low fertility.

This evaluation also provides valuable insights into the progress and evolution of UNFPA in the field of population data, population dynamics and population and development over an eight-year period.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

The evaluation contains nineteen findings that lead to eight conclusions. In the time available today I will highlight the overarching conclusions of the report.

First, the evaluation concluded that UNFPA has provided relevant and timely support throughout the 'data chain' from the collection of quality disaggregated population data, to analysing population dynamics, to supporting the use of population data for development. In the period 2014 to 2022, support to census has remained a relevant strength and focus of UNFPA. This is despite a view that UNFPA reframed the centrality of population dynamics after 2014. However, there is a clear consensus that population data and dynamics is regaining increasing prominence within UNFPA, ensuring its alignment with and relevance to the current global issues related to demographic shifts, including to sexual and reproductive health and rights, and gender equality issues.

Second, the evaluation found that UNFPA is well-respected for a human rights-based approach, inclusive, and gendered approach to population and development work, including across ageing and low fertility and the demographic dividend.

UNFPA has started to shift, in different areas and at different levels, the focus from funding to financing, merging the rights-based argument with the economic argument. This approach holds immense potential for UNFPA to provide policy and advocacy support that is based on the idea that this is not only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do. However, despite recent enhancements, UNFPA currently faces the challenge of staffing capacity, notably having enough economists and related social scientists to effectively make and communicate these economic and rights-based arguments at various levels.

Third, the evaluation demonstrated that UNFPA has been forward looking and effective about positioning the organization as a global leader in understanding and responding to demographic shifts. UNFPA has added value by advancing the concept of demographic dividend and, more recently within certain regions, contributed significantly to the ageing and low fertility agenda. This has been achieved thoughtfully and is likely to reap positive and significant returns in the future.

On the demographic dividend, UNFPA is well-positioned and has a solid history of working in this area. The UNFPA value proposition for the demographic dividend remains relevant globally and has been a successful vehicle for strategically positioning and mainstreaming the demographic dividend at all levels. The success of the value proposition notwithstanding, there is a clear understanding that the pool of countries for which demographic dividend potential is relevant is decreasing with every year.

On the other hand, the evaluation revealed that while ageing and low fertility issues have been increasingly incorporated into the remit of UNFPA, there is still a gap in the organisation's theory of change regarding how ageing and low fertility intuitively relate to the three transformative results. There is also a need for greater clarity on the role of UNFPA in relation to ageing under the current strategic framework and corporate priorities. The Demographic Resilience Programme and the life-cycle approach promoted by UNFPA are some of the organisation's most crucial contributions to responding to demographic trends, providing countervailing alternatives to conservative policies.

Fourth, UNFPA has relatively small staff body stretched across a varied, complex, and demanding mandate. Within this context, the evaluation revealed that the current structure and capacity of the Population and Development branch may not be sufficient

to position UNFPA as a population data agency, particularly given the pressing need for UNFPA to provide cross-cutting leadership and expertise on evolving population and development priorities such as population ageing, digitization, climate change and migration.

Mr President, Distinguished Delegates,

Please allow me now to turn to the five recommendations of the evaluation.

First, UNFPA should develop a bold Population and Development Strategy reconceptualized around the data, dynamics and development continuum, and including demographic dividends, resilience and policy.

Second, 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.

Third, to maintain its leadership position and credibility regarding population data, dynamics, and development, UNFPA should ensure continued investment in signature data products, such as the Population Portal, that have been invested in to date.

Fourth, UNFPA should enhance the organization's data and analytics capacity by developing a corporate data strategy and investing in a data quality assurance capacity.

Fifth and lastly, UNFPA should re-assess the current human and technical capacity on population and development considering the increasingly visible leadership statements of UNFPA regarding demographic shifts as a megatrend.

Mr President, Distinguished Delegates,

To conclude, the evaluation's timing is particularly significant with the global population reaching eight billion people and the growing emphasis on demographic shifts as a mega-trend defining the 21st century. In addition, evaluation results may contribute to the global review of the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action, on its 30th anniversary in 2024.

In this context, I believe the evaluation will help UNFPA to refine its value proposition, relevance, and positioning to more effectively address demographic shifts and demographic diversity, leading to the achievement of the three transformative results.

This concludes my presentation, Mr President. I thank you and the Executive Board for your continued support and guidance, and I am at your disposal for any questions or clarifications.