

Annex IX: Main results of the study on Lessons learned from country programme evaluations, 2014-2015

In order to contribute to organizational learning and evidence based programming and in light of increased quality of decentralized evaluations, the Evaluation Office conducts a synthesis of lessons learned from country programme evaluations every two years. The current synthesis exercise brings together evidence from 26 UNFPA country programme evaluations conducted from 2014-2015 and quality assessed as “good” or higher. Lessons were structured around UNFPA outcome areas (as identified in the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017) in order to facilitate use for programming and subsequently sub-divided by evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and efficiency). In addition to UNFPA outcome areas, the synthesis includes lessons on other areas of work seen as particularly important for organizational learning, strategic development, and alignment with UNFPA strategies and the ICPD, including lessons on modes of engagement and resource allocation, UNFPA engagement in humanitarian settings, human rights based approaches to programming and targeting those in marginalised and vulnerable situations.

The initial synthesis of lessons has been completed and preliminary findings (i.e. lessons learned) highlight the collaborative manner in which UNFPA works and the organization’s important contributions to sexual and reproductive health, adolescents and youth, gender equality and population and development.

Lessons varied by outcome area and across contexts. Within **sexual and reproductive health**, for example, the synthesis found that support to interventions that target groups with influence on the sexual and reproductive health decisions of women— such as husbands, parents and community and religious leaders – helped to broaden women’s access to family planning and sexual and reproductive health services. Ongoing advocacy and sensitization efforts, particularly with communities, were found to be critical for the sustainability of sexual and reproductive health services.

Emerging lessons in the area of **adolescents and youth** underscored the importance of identifying creative entry points to innovatively target adolescents and youth: connecting sexual and reproductive health education with vocational training, for example, or engaging youth as genuine partners in project implementation were found to improve the effectiveness of programming.

To better ensure the relevance of UNFPA’s work on advancing gender equality, participatory approaches to planning and implementation that incorporate the views of civil society organizations, including women’s rights organizations, should be used. Working together with grassroots and community groups, including via community dialogues, proved especially effective in promoting gender equality. On addressing gender based violence specifically, lessons learned point to the effectiveness of using holistic approaches in GBV programming, combining, for example, service delivery for survivors with improved legal and police responses, awareness-raising trainings and dialogues, and network-building. The absence of a consistently applied multi-sectoral approach was found to compromise the contribution of GBV interventions.

Finally, the synthesis showed that, within programming on **population and development**, systematically assessing the political and ethical dimensions of data collection, and their potential effect on dissemination, are critical to ensure UNFPA’s ability to efficiently and effectively support the production and use of data.

Looking ahead, important lessons emerged on the business model of the current Strategic Plan (2014-2017), including challenges faced by country offices required to shift modes of engagement. This was found to be particularly pronounced in middle-income countries (including those in Latin America and the Caribbean and Eastern Europe and Central Asia). Additionally, working with and targeting those in marginalised and vulnerable situations and consistently utilizing a human rights based approach were found to be important drivers to accelerate implementation of the ICPD and the imperative of the

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Sustainable Development Goals to “leave no-one behind”. Toward this end, the synthesis underscored the importance of building long-term, relationship-focused partnerships with partners, which contributed to building trust, improving collaboration and supporting local ownership. Lessons learned are currently being finalized with the final synthesis report expected in April 2017. Emphasis has been placed on user-friendliness and use for programming.