

INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION

BOLIVIA

2008-2011

Context

This report presents the results of the first country programme evaluation (CPE) in Bolivia. The programme evaluated is the fourth UNFPA country programme in Bolivia with a budget of fifteen million dollars and three areas of intervention: population and development, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and gender equality.



Bolivia is currently undergoing an important process of social, political and economic change. The country has the highest maternal mortality rate in South America, and is one of the poorest and most unequal countries in South America, presenting major disparities between rural and urban areas.

Objectives and Scope

The objectives of the evaluation are to provide a useful, independent assessment of the country programme for 2008-2011, to contribute to the accountability process and to corporate learning, and to provide practical recommendations that can be used in the formulation of the next programme document for Bolivia. The evaluation terms of reference requested the analysis of the country programme monitoring and evaluation system.

Methodology

The evaluation process had two main components: an assessment of achievements in relation to expected outcomes and outputs in UNFPA programming documents and the analysis of the UNFPA strategic positioning vis a vis its response to national needs and changes in the country development context. The evaluation criteria used to assess achievements by focus area were: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. In addition to these two levels of analysis, a further analysis of the country programme monitoring and evaluation system was carried out focusing on five different areas: monitoring of inputs and activities, monitoring of outcomes and outputs, monitoring of risks and assumptions, the integration of the evaluation function in the monitoring and evaluation system, and the

support to national capacity development in monitoring and evaluation. The evaluation followed a multiple methodological approach, both for data gathering and for data analysis. The data gathering methods used included a documental review, field visits, and individual and group interviews by focus area. The analysis methods included triangulation techniques based on diverse sources, and verification and validation methods, such as internal team meetings, a reference group meeting, and a workshop to discuss preliminary findings with the UNFPA office in Bolivia.

The evaluation was constrained by problems with the quality and weakness of the results framework and the monitoring and evaluation framework. To overcome this deficiency, the evaluation team assessed the effectiveness of the country programme based on the revised monitoring and evaluation framework, which allowed for a more realistic and updated assessment of progress towards results. Another limitation was the weakness of the outcome and output monitoring system, which was remediated by means of triangulating evidence gathered in the field (through individual and group interviews) with information included in the country office annual reports, in standard progress reports, and in other thematic studies and reports.

Main evaluation conclusions

Conclusions related to strategic positioning

The country office is aligned with the principles of the Strategic Plan in terms of national capacity development and in its focus on supporting vulnerable groups, but it has not managed to integrate south-south cooperation as a cooperation modality in the country programme. Although south-south cooperation has been integrated into some interventions, the country office has not formalised the strategy nor adequately managed knowledge generated through this cooperation. There have been some achievements in national capacity

development, but there is no clear, formalised, continuous strategy or a programme plan for this core area, and this affects the effectiveness and potential sustainability of this area.

The country office has revitalised, strengthened and promoted mechanisms for inter-agency coordination and dialogue.

There have been good experiences with joint interventions by United Nations organizations, and UNFPA has demonstrated great commitment, ability to convene different parties, a good knowledge of contexts and themes, dynamism and effectiveness in its interventions. However, some weaknesses in inter-agency collaboration are the absence of a strategic vision of the role of the different agencies and a clear plan of action, and the diverse working styles, administrative systems, approaches and conceptual frameworks on critical issues amongst UN organizations, which does not facilitate a fluid coordination.

The country office was highly responsive to both urgent demands from partners

as well as to medium and long-term requirements, and demonstrated a high degree of adaptability to a changing political context and the emergence of new actors. The response provided by UNFPA was of good quality, timely, flexible, respectful of national leadership and sovereignty, and without imposing an institutional agenda. A weakness in the ability of UNFPA to respond to demands is the lack of clear selection criteria used when prioritising which demands to respond to and the absence of sustainable exit strategies.

The added value of UNFPA as a development partner is high,

demonstrating several comparative advantages, including: its experience in the field, its closeness with community bases and social movements, and a good ability to convene key stakeholders. UNFPA has facilitated and contributed to fundamental development processes and public policies, has acted as a leader and addressed highly sensitive issues of crucial importance for the International Conference on Population and

Development (ICPD) agenda. It has also mobilised and strengthened networks and brought together donors, the government, civil society and social movements.

Conclusions related to the programme

The programme is very relevant vis a vis the national context and priority issues (adolescent pregnancy, maternal mortality, violence against women), international commitments and is coherent with national policies and strategies. The main challenge for UNFPA is providing technical support across different departments with a limited budget.

As a facilitator, UNFPA has been successful in driving forward the ICPD agenda and the MDGs, and in participating in the constitutional process and the subsequent formulation and implementation of new national and sector laws and norms. UNFPA has made a significant contribution to the development and strengthening of government capacities in the production and use of information, and has driven forward public policy evaluation processes. Furthermore, UNFPA has also contributed to empowering social movements, with a particular focus on indigenous women, strengthening their ability to make demands and formulate proposals. UNFPA also supported vulnerable groups, such as the Guarani communities in Alto Parapetí, groups in emergency situations, pregnant adolescents, people living with HIV and transsexuals working in the sex industry.

The country office has developed and supported data generation, studies and systematisation processes, **but does not have a knowledge management strategy** (generating evidence, good practices and lessons learned) that could potentiate its systematic use for decision-making both at the internal and public policy levels.

Programme efficiency overall and by component is good, with a high level of execution and important achievements in terms

of quality, quantity and strategic potential for all three components. However, a low capacity to absorb funds and delays by national partners limit national execution, leading to difficulties when it comes to completing activities and adhering to budgets. This situation causes an increase in direct execution by the country office, which collides with the UNFPA principles of capacity development and national implementation. Furthermore, cross-component integration and coordination is a structural issue and still needs to be achieved.

The sustainability of benefits is the greatest challenge faced by UNFPA, and it varies according to the strategies implemented, the areas, and the levels and stakeholders involved. Sustainability of benefits is high in the case of UNFPA introducing and tackling sensitive issues which have been appropriated and incorporated into the national and social agenda. However, sustainability is variable in the case of the strengthening of government organisations and civil society. Key threats to potential sustainability result from the institutional weaknesses of national partners - reflected in the high rate of civil servant turnover, absence of technical teams, high dependence on international cooperation, and inadequate national budgets for the scale of the problems at hand.

Conclusions related to the monitoring and evaluation system

The monitoring of inputs and activities is functional and highly effective, the monitoring of risks and assumptions is regular and effective but not systematised nor formalised; the monitoring of outputs and outcomes is practically non-existent at the aggregate level and is not operational; and the evaluation function is under-utilized. Results-based monitoring is the weakest area, mainly because there is no functional monitoring and evaluation framework and an information system linked to that framework. This, along with problems with the quality of

output and outcome indicators, means that the country office cannot objectively measure country programme achievements and be accountable based on evidence and comparisons between targets and achievements. Progress towards developing results-based monitoring systems is limited by the absence of a specific budget and staff to achieve this goal and because the area of monitoring and evaluation has not been integrated into the country office organisational structure nor in the functions or responsibilities of technical staff.

Main evaluation recommendations

Strategic Recommendations

Promote and develop conditions to allow for a systematic and integral country programme, defining the issues, criteria and strategic and operational mechanisms. To maximize the effects of UNFPA support, the evaluation recommends a more rational and strategic decision-making in relation to the assignment of human and financial resources for specific focus areas and for cross-cutting issues. To achieve this, corporate support from headquarters is essential, but so are the institutional tools and mechanisms required for the formalization, analysis, monitoring and evaluation of these initiatives.

Prioritise the allocation of resources in order to adhere to the corporate policy on results-based monitoring.

Headquarters and the regional office should ensure that enough funds are allocated so that results-based monitoring systems can be set up in a practical and effective manner. Secondly, priority should be given to requests for the recruitment of monitoring and evaluation officers working exclusively on results-based monitoring, since they are fundamental pillars for the creation of such systems.

Recommendations related to the programme

Develop strategies, tools and mechanisms to increase the sustainability of benefits, by strengthening institutional capacities and by creating favourable environments to sustain achievements. Sustainability must become a structural element of the planning process and an inherent part of the implementation of interventions. As such, exit and replication strategies should be included at the planning stage with partners, knowledge management processes and mechanisms should be integrated in the interventions at the planning and budgeting stage, innovative capacity-development strategies should be systematised in order to validate their effectiveness and sustainability, and finally, there should be greater articulation of actors, networks should be strengthened, and institutional alliances developed in order to ensure the continuity of achievements and benefits.

Develop and institutionalize an integral capacity-development strategy, which includes the identification and use of indicators to measure its effects, in the new country programme. Strategic alliances with partners should be strengthened and utilized to guarantee knowledge retention and ensure a more continuous and sustainable capacity development.

Recommendations related to the monitoring and evaluation system of the country programme

Prioritise the development of quality control mechanisms and tools associated with the results-based monitoring frameworks. Headquarters should prioritise the development of guides and tools for developing capacity in results-based monitoring, emphasizing the development of a guide for the formulation and approval of results and monitoring frameworks of country programmes and the procedures for updating and adjusting both frameworks during the programme cycle. Furthermore, the regional

office should systematically assess country programme results frameworks for quality at the time they are formulated, ensure that the country programme action plans (CPAPs) are realistic and of acceptable quality, and guarantee that the results framework and the monitoring and evaluation plan are functional.

With regard to the development of a results-based monitoring system, the country office should start designing and budgeting for results-based monitoring utilizing a budget directly linked to the country office management budget, and formalise the mandate and responsibilities in results-based monitoring.

Evaluation Team:

Evaluation Branch at DOS: Alexandra Chambel, Team Leader, Valeria Carou-Jones, Evaluation Specialist;

External thematic experts: Jordi del Bas, Silvia Salinas and Guido Pinto

Any enquires about this evaluation should be addressed to:

Evaluation Branch, Division for Oversight Services, United Nations Population Fund

E-mail: evb@unfpa.org Phone number: +1 212 297 2620

Full document can be obtained from UNFPA website at: <http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/about/Evaluation/EBIER/CPE>