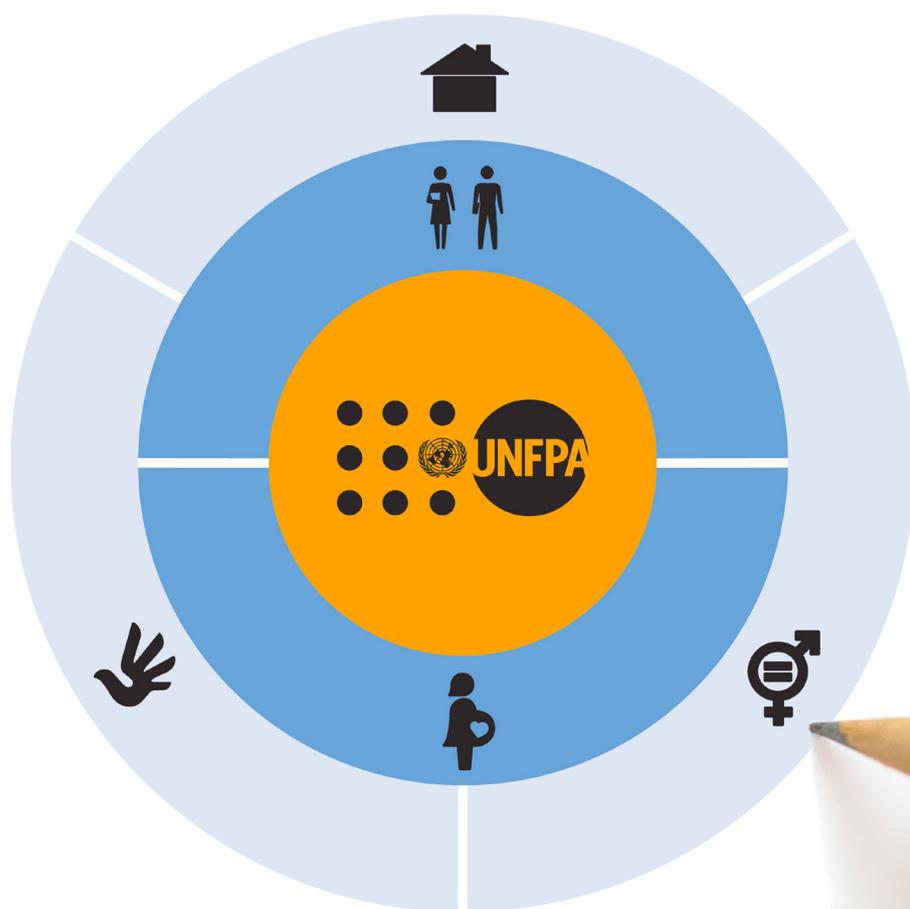


Evaluation of the architecture supporting the operationalisation of the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2014-2017



UNFPA Evaluation Office
2017

THE PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The Evaluation Office conducted the independent evaluation of the architecture supporting operationalisation of the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2014-2017 as part of its Quadrennial Budgeted Evaluation Plan 2016-2019. The evaluation began in September 2016 and was completed in May 2017. The primary purpose of the evaluation is to feed into the preparation of the new UNFPA strategic plan with independent evaluative evidence and lessons learned, specifically related to the elements of the architecture supporting its operationalisation. This evaluation is one among several sources of information that will contribute to the development of the new strategic plan. It focuses on macro-level issues within the defined scope and provides recommendations at the same level.

The scope of the evaluation includes the elements of the architecture supporting operationalisation of the strategic plan as summarised below.

I: Results	II: Business model	III: Funding arrangements
Integrated results framework outcomes and outputs	Country classification	Resources Allocation System
	Modes of engagement	Global and Regional Interventions
Theories of change	Humanitarian assistance	

Within the scope, the evaluation had three core objectives:

- To assess whether the key elements of the architecture supporting the operationalisation of the strategic plan have helped UNFPA to strengthen its performance. Specific criteria for making the assessment were developed in the inception phase of the evaluation.
- To identify the factors that can explain why the elements of the architecture supporting the operationalisation of the strategic plan have been successful or not.
- To provide recommendations for strengthening the strategic planning architecture for consideration by the UNFPA management.

METHODOLOGY

A simple intervention logic was developed to help identify the evaluation questions as well as associated assumptions to be assessed. An evaluation matrix was developed to link the evaluation questions to the various data collection methods. The evaluation matrix revealed that a number of data collection methods were required to assess the validity of the assumptions and to identify the explanatory factors. The multiple methods of data collection provided an opportunity for triangulation by source of evidence/data collection methods: (a) country and regional studies, (b) analysis of administrative data, (c) interviews with key informants, (d) stakeholder surveys, and (e) document review.

The conduct of the evaluation was followed closely by an evaluation reference group consisting of staff members of UNFPA units directly concerned with the results of this evaluation. The reference group supported the evaluation at key points during the evaluation process, providing substantive technical inputs, facilitating access to documents and informants, and ensuring the high technical quality of the evaluation products.

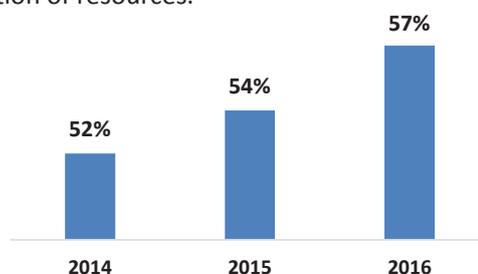
FINDINGS

The findings are articulated around five evaluation questions:

- To what extent did the architecture supporting the operationalisation of the Strategic Plan **contribute to an improved allocation of resources within UNFPA?** [Findings 1 and 2](#)
- To what extent did the architecture supporting the operationalisation of the Strategic Plan **help UNFPA to become more focused and to deliver interventions to where they make the most impact?** [Findings 3, 4 and 5](#)
- To what extent did the architecture supporting the operationalisation of the Strategic Plan **help UNFPA tailor its programmes to the priority needs of countries?** [Findings 6, 7 and 8](#)
- To what extent did the architecture supporting the operationalisation of the Strategic Plan **help UNFPA respond to changes in country context (including humanitarian crises)?** [Findings 9 and 10](#)
- To what extent did the architecture supporting the operationalisation of the Strategic Plan **help UNFPA become more accountable to all stakeholders?** [Findings 11 and 12](#)

Finding 1. There has been progress towards a unified funding architecture with the introduction of a policy for non-core resource management in 2016.

Finding 2. There has been an increase in the proportion of regular resources allocated to countries with the greatest need and the lowest ability to finance, in line with the expectations of the Executive Board, but existing allocation criteria may not be enough to ensure the most effective allocation of resources.



Share of regular resources for countries in red quadrant

Finding 3. Maintaining the bull's eye and introducing the four outcomes of the integrated results framework have contributed to greater focus in the country programmes that were developed or realigned after the adoption of the Strategic Plan 2014-2017.

Finding 4. For many countries in the pink quadrant, as well as some in the yellow and orange quadrants, the alignment with the limited modes of engagement, as envisaged in the business model, has not been realised.

	Need			
Ability to finance	Highest	High	Medium	Low
Low	A/P, KM, CD, SD	A/P, KM, CD, SD	A/P, KM, CD	A/P, KM
Lower-middle	A/P, KM, CD, SD	A/P, KM, CD	A/P, KM	A/P
Upper-middle	A/P, KM, CD	A/P, KM	A/P	A/P*
High	A/P*	A/P*	A/P*	A/P*

A/P: Advocacy and policy dialogue/advice
 (* Physical presence only in select countries)
 KM: Knowledge management
 CD: Capacity development
 SD: Service delivery

The model of differentiated modes of engagement as per the Strategic Plan 2014-2017

Finding 5. The guidance on alignment lacked clarity. This led to different perceptions in countries on the degree of flexibility allowed in aligning to the model of differentiated modes of engagement.

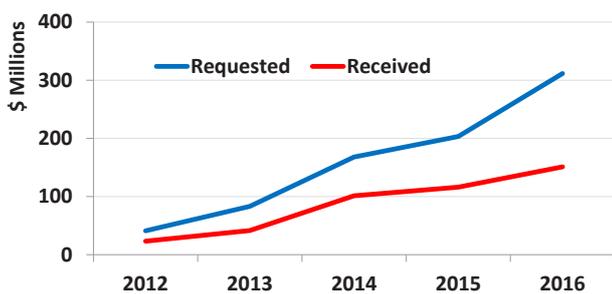
Finding 6. The lack of conceptual clarity in the strategic plan itself, and in the guidance subsequently provided by headquarters and regional offices, has led to an uneven understanding of the modes of engagement.

Finding 7. The model of restricting modes of engagement in some countries does not always reflect the reality of programming (and the policy cycle) on the ground.

Finding 8. Alignment of human resource capacity at country level to the needs of the strategic plan has been slow and there is no evidence that processes are fully in place to ensure appropriate capacity to meet the requirements of the strategic plan.

Finding 9. Humanitarian mainstreaming has improved particularly through a focus on preparedness, but not all elements of the architecture aimed at supporting the UNFPA response to a humanitarian crisis have been implemented.

Finding 10. UNFPA has successfully mobilised resources to support humanitarian crises but key mechanisms, such as the emergency fund and humanitarian response reserve, have faced resource constraints.



UNFPA humanitarian funding: requests and receipts

Finding 11. While the results monitoring and reporting system has been strengthened since the start of the strategic plan, the system still faces challenges related to adaptation to the upstream orientation of the business model.

Finding 12. Monitoring of alignment to the strategic plan has been limited and has not continued over the life of the plan.

CONCLUSIONS

The following three conclusions represent the key messages that the evaluation presents to UNFPA management for consideration. They aim at complementing other efforts within the organization to prepare the strategic plan.

Conclusion 1. Classification of countries based on country needs and ability to finance is at the heart of the architecture supporting the operationalisation of the strategic plan. It has been useful for resource allocation and contributed to the focus of resources to countries with the greatest needs. However, perception of restricted modes of engagement in pink, yellow and orange countries, means that programming strategies have not always been flexible enough to promote national ownership and programme responsiveness. These restrictions are part of a centralisation of decision-making in the organization and a move away from the country focus, as promoted in the transition business plan for 2012-2013. This is also reflected in the performance monitoring and reporting system, which is focused on corporate needs and less on learning and accountability at the country level.

Conclusion 2. The substantial efforts made to support alignment to the strategic plan were impeded by lack of corporate preparedness and, given this unpreparedness, an unrealistic timeframe to address alignment in all its dimensions. Moreover, the introduction of the strategic plan was not accompanied by a comprehensive change management process across the whole organization. Such a process should have led to better integration of alignment guidance with existing processes, policies and strategies (e.g., Policies and Procedures Manual). Organizational plans and strategies were not explicit on how they would deal with changing levels of resource (decrease or increase). In addition, the implementation of specific elements of the architecture of the strategic plan as envisaged in the strategic plan document (unified funding architecture, performance based resource allocation, etc.) should have been better defined and a plan for their implementation clearly articulated and then monitored. Going forward, the challenge will be to implement these changes in the context of a more coordinated and coherent approach to strategic planning in the United Nations development system, where reaching agreement among agencies may cause delays and where a single entity cannot be held accountable for change.

Conclusion 3. Although there has been progress in strengthening the architecture for operationalising the strategic plan, it is not yet aligned to the needs of the requirement of the new environment within which UNFPA operates. Specifically, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for an approach to programming building on the interrelated efforts to deliver on the interdependent Sustainable Development Goals. Achieving these goals will require an enhanced approach to capacity and also requires greater integration through stronger and more strategic partnerships. The business model, which reflects the ‘how’ of UNFPA work, is not comprehensive enough to address these emerging demands.

Recommendation 2. In the Strategic Plan 2018-2021, re-conceptualise the modes of engagement and clarify their relationship to capacity development.

Recommendation 3. Enhance accountability for results, as well as learning at country level, through strengthening the country level capacity for monitoring and evaluation, and promoting national capacity to undertake country level evaluations.

Area 2: Preparing for operationalisation of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 and subsequent strategic plans

Recommendation 4. Develop and implement a comprehensive change management process to enable the organization at all levels to implement the upcoming and subsequent strategic plans to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Recommendation 5. Make the architecture supporting the operationalisation of the strategic plan an effective communication tool.

Recommendation 6. Develop an integrated package of guidance for operationalising the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 before the start of the plan, by updating existing guidance and preparing new guidance as necessary.

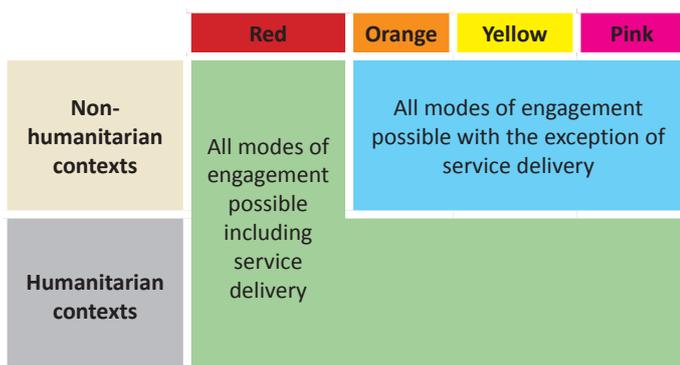
Recommendation 7. Utilise the country programme document process to ensure alignment of new country programmes to the strategic plan, and support country offices that have already started a country programme document cycle to align incrementally according to their context.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations have been grouped into two areas.

Area 1: Developing a stronger business model and increasing country focus

Recommendation 1. Disconnect the existing modes of engagement from country classification, apart from service delivery which will only be undertaken in red countries and in humanitarian contexts.



Reconceptualising the use of the models of differentiated modes of engagement

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The analysis and recommendations of this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Population Fund. This is an independent publication by the independent Evaluation Office of UNFPA.

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Full document can be obtained from UNFPA web-site at:

<http://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/evaluation-architecture-supporting-operationalisation-unfpa-strategic-plan-2014-2017>