

COMMENTS ON THE UNFPA DRAFT COUNTRY PROGRAMME DOCUMENT FOR THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

First regular session 2023

Comments by Belgium	UNFPA country/regional office response to comments
<p>Belgium has the highest regard and appreciation for the work of UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA in Iran and thanks them for the efforts in the development of new country program documents for Iran. Especially given the challenging and evolving context of daily and long-term operations in Iran we wish to stress our appreciation for the hard work of the organisations on the terrain.</p>	<p>Thank you. This expression of support is much appreciated.</p>
<p>Though the CPDs are intended to align with and support national development plans and priorities, the UN and Member States need to ensure that the language used in these documents supports core UN principles and values and does not undermine a rules-based international system that upholds human rights and democratic governance.</p>	<p>This is well noted.</p> <p>UNFPA remains committed to UN principles and values which are mainstreamed in all its operations and programmes. In its work in Iran and under the new country programme, UNFPA would like to assure that it remains fully committed to upholding core UN principles and values in a way that upholds human rights, is in full alignment with the ICPD Programme of Action as stated in paragraph 15 of the CPD and does not undermine democratic governance; the CPD also makes it explicit that it is guided by the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and is aligned with relevant international instruments.</p>
<p>This oversight function on the respect of these very basic core UN principles is one of the essential roles of the Executive Boards. A role that as a long-standing donor with a key priority to core funding is, with an eye for pragmatism, a necessity to demonstrate the fit-for-purpose of the system overall. It are these basic tasks of oversight that allows member states to check and attest that, amongst many other objectives, organisations work to uphold the Charter, notwithstanding the specific context that might exist.</p>	<p>This is well noted, and the oversight function of the Executive Board is duly acknowledged and appreciated. UNFPA as an UN agency remains fully committed to the UN charter, the ICPD programme of action, and advancing human rights-based approaches; through its 7th Country Programme, UNFPA has ensured that there is indeed no compromise on these fundamental values and norms. In line with national ownership, the programme has duly taken into consideration the national priorities and has been guided by the UN commitments as articulated in the UNSDCF.</p>
<p>While the overall deteriorating situation of human rights in Iran remains deeply concerning, current developments in the country demonstrate the profound</p>	<p>UNFPA agrees with the importance of advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The differences in economic</p>

<p>plight of women’s human rights. We encourage the UN to continue to work towards advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as the most effective way to eliminate poverty, create lasting peace, and achieve sustainable development.</p>	<p>participation in women and men is described in paragraph 6 and output 5 is focused on enhancing resilience and socio-economic empowerment of poor women and girls. In addition, UNFPA will leverage its comparative advantage in data and evidence generation anchored in ICPD to inform policies and support the realization of the demographic potential. UNFPA will also support Iran in eliminating poverty and achieving sustainable development.</p>
<p>Although we recognize that in some aspects the CPDs have evolved for the better (amongst other things a more integrated approach and the overall attention that is given to women) we urge the agencies to more clearly bring the CPDs in line with the overall core UN principles and values based on wider and more transparent consultations with all stakeholders and partners in-country, such as women’s rights organizations. This especially regarding their contribution to gender equality and the respect and promotion of human rights and also with an eye to better adjust implementation of the CPD to the evolving context, leaving no one behind.</p>	<p>UNFPA will implement the programme in full alignment with core UN principles and values as well as the ICPD Programme of Action. In para 15, the CPD makes it explicit that it is guided by the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and is aligned with relevant international instruments. Furthermore, in para 19, the CPD confirms that it has been developed in line with the principles identified in the UNSDCF and with the mission of ‘leaving no one behind’ and doing no harm, and in pursuit of sustainable development. The CPD derives from the UNSDCF, which was developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. There is further scope to engage other stakeholders mentioned during the preparation of annual work plans and programme implementation.</p>
<p>Comments by Canada</p>	<p>UNFPA country/regional office response to comments</p>
<p>While normally Canada would avoid commenting at this stage of the process of the country program documents (CPDs), in light of the overall deteriorating situation of human rights in Iran, the UN and Member States must ensure that CPD language reflects core UN principles and values and does not undermine a rules-based international system that upholds human rights and democratic governance.</p>	<p>This is well noted. In its work in Iran under the new country programme, UNFPA remains fully committed to uphold core UN principles and values in a way that does not undermine a rules-based international system, upholds human rights, is in full alignment with the ICPD Programme of Action, and does not undermine democratic governance. Paragraph 19 of the CPD outlines the reference to core UN principles as identified in the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDCF) including the emphasis on ‘leaving no one behind’ which will form the basis for the implementation of the CPD.</p>
<p>Current developments in the country demonstrate the profound plight of women’s human rights. We expect the UN to work towards advancing gender</p>	<p>Three outputs of the CPD (namely outputs 1, 5 and 6) focus on women and girls while the other three outputs utilize an inclusive approach with a focus on populations in vulnerable situations</p>

<p>equality and the empowerment of women and girls, to eliminate poverty, create lasting peace, and achieve sustainable development.</p>	<p>including women and girls. UNFPA will also work closely with all UN agencies on the multi-dimensional empowerment of women and girls as referred in the UNSDCF.</p>
<p>Canada also urge Agencies to meaningfully further their work with the most vulnerable and excluded groups, including, but is not limited to, ethnic and religious minorities, individuals from LGBTQ2I communities, women with disabilities, and women living in rural and remote communities.</p>	<p>The programme components detailed in the CPD are guided by the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025 as well as the UNSDCF to mainstream equity, inclusiveness and resilience in the programme with focus on the most vulnerable target populations.</p> <p>The work planned under the CPD is focused on ‘people and populations in vulnerable situations’ which is referred to in the CPD in multiple places; this is broad enough to accommodate that support can be provided to any group in need. There is adequate flexibility in the programme to accommodate other groups as needs emerge under output 4.</p>
<p>We would welcome wider and more transparent consultations with stakeholders and partners in-country, such as women’s rights organizations, in the implementation of the CPD to better adjust to the evolving context, leaving no one behind.</p>	<p>The CPD derives from the UNSDCF, which was developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. There is further scope to engage other stakeholders mentioned during the preparation of annual work plans and programme implementation.</p>
<p>Comments by Netherlands</p>	<p>UNFPA country/regional office response to comments</p>
<p>Para 7: NL support this paragraph and would like to ask UNFPA whether it would be possible to mention ‘information and education’ after ‘reproductive health knowledge’ – which would be better in line with SDG 3.7?</p>	<p>This preference is well noted. During programme implementation, the term “information and education” will also be used as and when country circumstances allow.</p>
<p>Output 1: Why does this output not refer to ‘sexual and reproductive health services’? Women-friendly services is not defined and the way the sentence is currently phrased excludes girls and adolescents. Moreover, the previous CPD included ‘Sexual and Reproductive Health Services’ as the first outcome area. This is now completely missing. KNL would like to avoid regression in ambition and asks if this could be reconsidered.</p>	<p>UNFPA appreciate this comment and notes its intention to maintain a high level of ambition in all its CPDs. The template of the previous CPD included verbatim outcome language of the previous UNFPA strategic plan (2018-2021). The current CPD follows the new CPD guidance and is in line with the current strategic plan (2022-2025). UNFPA has used the definition of women friendly services from the WHO publication ‘Advancing safe motherhood through human rights’ (2001). While the primary focus of output 1 is on maternal health, output 2 focusses on young people (including boys and girls)</p>

	and provides exclusive focus on strengthening life skills and making health care and social services friendly for young people.
Para 24: It is important to KNL that, in line with the previous CPD, besides maternal health and reproductive health, also ‘sexual health’ is mentioned.	This preference is well noted. During programme implementation the term sexual health will also be used as and when country circumstances allow
Comments by United Kingdom	UNFPA country/regional office response to comments
<p>We welcome the efforts of UNFPA to develop this CPD for Iran in an evolving and difficult operating context. Recent developments in the country heighten the importance of the UN clearly setting out how it will continue to uphold the UN Charter, especially promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction. We continue to expect that all UN Agencies ensure their work contributes to upholding the Charter, regardless of the country context.</p> <p>In considering this CPD, we note the efforts of the Government of Iran to deflect scrutiny of its repressive practices. As a result, the balance of analysis in this document is of concern. While derived from the UN Sustainable Cooperation Framework, it disproportionately emphasises external factors as drivers of challenges instead of recognising or acknowledging any domestic shortcomings. It also lacks any focus on addressing the problems arising from specific policies of the Iranian Government including, narrow economic development, regression on gender equality issues, increased attacks on religious and ethnic minorities, surging use of the death penalty, and crack downs on civic space. The UK urges the Agencies to more clearly articulate their contribution to gender equality and the respect and promotion of human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights.</p>	<p>Thank you. This expression of support is much appreciated.</p> <p>UNFPA remains committed to UN principles and values which are mainstreamed in all its operations and programmes. UNFPA can confirm that its work in Iran, as in all other countries, will be undertaken in full alignment with and be guided by the UN Charter and the ICPD Programme of Action including all its principles.</p> <p>In para 15, the CPD makes it explicit that it is guided by the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and is aligned with relevant international instruments. Furthermore, in para 19, the CPD confirms that it has been developed in line with the principles identified in the UNSDCF and with the mission of ‘leaving no one behind’ and doing no harm, and in pursuit of sustainable development and the right to development.</p> <p>The analysis undertaken to prepare the UNSDCF and the UNFPA CPD used a population lens, which included a focus on gender equality, a human rights-based approach and leaving no one behind, to identify priorities. Within its development mandate in Iran, UNFPA will focus on addressing population challenges considering the evolving policy and programming context. UNFPA will utilize different modes of engagement, including provision of technical assistance, capacity building and knowledge management to address these challenges as articulated in paragraph 20 of the CPD. In particular, output 3 will harness UNFPA’s comparative advantage in evidence generation anchored in ICPD to inform policies and help realize the demographic potential of Iran.</p>

	<p>As indicated in paragraph 30 of the CPD, UNFPA will strengthen the capacity of institutions and populations to prepare for rapid population ageing and advocate for the development of plans and programmes to support not only older people, but also other populations affected by widening socioeconomic vulnerabilities, such as people with disabilities.</p> <p>Finally, the differences in economic participation in women and men is described in paragraph 6 and output 5 is focused on enhancing resilience and socio-economic empowerment of poor women and girls.</p>
Comments by the United States of America	UNFPA country/regional office response to comments
<p>We note the CPD’s lack of scrutiny of repressive practices by the Iranian government and a lack of acknowledgement of the need to address problems resulting from government the government policies, including those related to gender equality, economic development, religious and ethnic minorities, and crack downs on civic space. We believe there is a strong need to clearly articulate and address the consequences of these policies on Iranian people’s economic development, human rights, and health and wellbeing, including the impact on their sexual and reproductive health and rights.</p>	<p>UNFPA as an UN agency remains fully committed to the UN charter, the ICPD programme of action, and advancing human rights-based approaches.</p> <p>The UNSDCF and the CPD were developed based on independent analysis by the UN. In the CPD, the rationale section utilizes available data to present specific population challenges in Iran. The CPD identifies proximal factors within UNFPA’s development mandate as the basis for all proposed evidence-based development interventions in the respective outputs.</p> <p>UNFPA will utilize different modes of engagement, including provision of technical assistance, capacity building and knowledge management as articulated in paragraph 20 of the CPD to advance the ICPD including its principles. In particular, output 3 will harness UNFPA’s comparative advantage in evidence generation anchored in ICPD to inform policies and help realize the demographic potential of Iran.</p> <p>In para 15, the CPD makes it explicit that it is guided by the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and is aligned with relevant international instruments. Furthermore, in para 19, the CPD confirms that it has been developed in line with the principles identified in the UNSDCF</p>

	<p>and with the mission of ‘leaving no one behind’ and doing no harm, and in pursuit of sustainable development and the right to development.</p> <p>Finally, the differences in economic participation in women and men is described in paragraph 6 and output 5 is focused on enhancing the resilience and socio-economic empowerment of poor women and girls.</p>
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