

COMMENTS ON THE UNFPA DRAFT COUNTRY PROGRAMME DOCUMENT FOR PALESTINE

First regular session 2023

Comments by Belgium	UNFPA country/regional office response to comments
Belgium thanks UNFPA for its consultation process with a broad range of donors (core, non-core, emerging) and welcomes the specific approach and shortened programming in this fragile context.	UNFPA extends appreciation to the Government of Belgium for reviewing the 7th Country Programme for Palestine and also for the direct partnership at country level with the Consulate General of Belgium in Jerusalem and Enabel. Indeed, the programme was developed thanks to the close engagement with the Government, Member State partners (core, non-core and emerging donors), civil society and host of key stakeholders.
UNFPA Country Program is aligned with the national strategies and priorities 2021-2023. Technical consultations have been also conducted with key ministries such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Education who are already a strategic partner to UNFPA. Through those national and privileged partnerships, UNFPA can reach the most vulnerable and can intervene on a large scale to address sensitive topics such as SRHR, GBV, early marriage, cyberbullying within schools, universities and primary healthcare units. Those venues are key in detecting and preventing cases of violence, but also in raising awareness and educating the community on good and healthy practices.	This comment is well noted and much appreciated. The country office appreciates the recognition of the new programme's alignment with national priorities, and the technical consultations with key ministries. The new country programme in fact builds on its existing partnerships with national governmental and non-governmental organizations, women-led and youth-led coalitions and platforms, which will be further expanded and strengthened while pursuing new partnerships with the private sector, professional associations and academia around the three transformative results – especially focused on geographic areas most in need.
UNFPA has developed key knowledge and expertise in working with Palestinian youth including school children and their parents, teachers and school counsellors, in addition to university students, mainly on raising awareness on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, on challenging social norms and stereotypes which are not only conducive to gender based violence, but also contribute in preventing young girls and boys from reaching their full potential including their participation in decision making and leadership positions. Further efforts in integrating and mainstreaming SRHR in the education system within the school curricula or as extra-curricular activities is needed in order to maximize the benefit. Therefore the existing partnership between UNFPA and the MoE is key.	UNFPA's partnership with the Ministry of Education is critical and UNFPA will continue supporting national institutions to improve skills, capabilities and opportunities for adolescents and youth to ensure bodily autonomy, leadership and participation in sustainable development. UNFPA will be providing policy and technical support to the Ministry of Education in their review of the curriculum to reintegrate comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in line with international standards for national adaptation, and also operationalize out-of-school CSE through a curriculum adapted and adopted at national level; and scaling-up innovative educational tools, including digital solutions, to accelerate the achievement of the transformative results.

<p>In partnering with key national institutions, competent Civil Society Organisations with recognized expertise and the private sector, ensures the sustainability of the interventions and especially strengthens the local capacities. Thus, the impact and continuity of good practices is ensured to support their integration into local and national structures. In order to spread the knowledge and know-how, it is recommended that UNFPA expands its partnerships to new civil society partners should they prove to be competent and well experienced.</p>	<p>This comment is well noted with appreciation. UNFPA acknowledges the importance of expanding its partnerships to new civil society partners to accelerate progress towards achieving the three transformative results. The programme is reviewing all implementing partners to ensure selection of CSOs who can help UNFPA reach those at risk of being left behind, including adolescents and youth, people with disabilities, as well as women and girls at risk. The intention is to extend the reach and impact of UNFPA programmes and to create synergies across efforts to address the needs of these vulnerable groups. With the intention of developing new and innovative approaches to partnerships, the country office has recently launched a new call for proposals to identify new eligible non-governmental organizations for prospective partnership to support achievement of the 7th country programme results - towards accelerating the three transformative results.</p>
<p>UNFPA programmes and interventions are inspired and based on studies and surveys conducted on the field and with the community. They are based as well on priorities collected from the field. Therefore, more interventions are still needed to address Gender Based Violence and harmful practices within the Palestinian society estimated at 29% in 2019, early marriage (13.4%) especially in the most impoverished communities such as in East Jerusalem and Area C. Additionally, with a population growth that remains high, estimated to reach 6.9 million by 2030, and the high poverty rate, better family planning practices are encouraged among couples. UNFPA work on positive and transformative masculinities is encouraged and is hoped to bring positive change within the society. Therefore by choosing to focus on Palestinian youth representing 66% of the population and on young couples, it is hoped that a well-informed and better capacitated generation will lead to a positive and real change in the coming years.</p>	<p>UNFPA country office welcomes that the Government of Belgium views pursuing the reduction of gender-based violence as highly relevant. The new UNFPA programme recognizes the urgency to accelerate progress towards reducing gender-based violence in Palestinian society, noting that in 2019, 59 per cent of women and girls reported suffering at least one form of gender-based violence by their husband - as stated in the CPD (paragraph 5, p.3). The programme will focus on reducing rates of gender-based violence and child marriage by supporting national stakeholders to improve the national policies, updating the national Violence Against Women strategy and the national gender-based violence referral system. Additionally, the programme will invest in strengthening health and social services systems to ensure the availability and accessibility of integrated, high-quality gender-based violence services to women and girls at risk, and gender-based violence survivors in the most vulnerable areas.</p> <p>A key shift in this new programme will be to have a systematic structuring of interventions based on the gender-transformative approach to address social root causes of gender inequality, and thereby promote more equitable outcomes, particularly for Palestinian</p>

	<p>adolescents and youth. Addressing the linkage with positive masculinity, while ensuring the engagement of men and boys as agents of change, will be key to long-term change. Together with United Nations entities, especially UN-Women, UNFPA will partner with the Government, community-based organizations (including youth-and women led organizations), coalitions and networks, academia, social media influencers, religious leaders and the media to promote innovative and creative ways of engagement.</p>
<p>It should be noted that despite the high relevance of the UNFPA Country Program and the good ambitions that are set for the coming three years, it should be endorsed by putting in place proper national policies and ensuring of their real implementation. Moreover, without a proper national legal framework based on HBRA, and the enactment of laws that provide protection to the family and citizens, little progress could be achieved. More pressure should be exerted on the Palestinian Authority to sign the revised Family Protection Bill and amend the Family Status Law and the Penal Code to ensure better protection of victims of violence. More punitive measures, could hopefully contribute in reducing cases of violence and bringing perpetrators to justice. As discussed in the consultations with UNFPA, parallel effort should be put on conducting awareness raising of the community on understanding the content of CEDAW to which Palestine has acceded to in 2014 as misconceptions about this international convention is pulling the Palestinian society in two opposite main poles, hindering the “fragile” Palestinian government in making the move towards endorsing the laws that provide protection and justice to the Palestinians family and community.</p>	<p>Acknowledging the weak legislative frameworks and accountability mechanisms that limit observance of human rights principles, as well as the urgent need to focus on the implementation of policies, the UNFPA new programme has a specific output (Output 1) to focus on policy and accountability, as well as strengthening advocacy of civil society to enable change. The programme will also utilize the human rights-based approach as an accelerator to support accountability mechanisms that will improve transparency and empower youth, women and people with disabilities as right holders to hold duty bearers accountable and engage in decision-making in policies related to the three transformative results.</p> <p>UNFPA fully supports creating deterrents and bringing perpetrators to justice. At the same time, the new programme’s focus on community engagement, strengthening advocacy capacities of diverse and inclusive national mechanisms, existing community platforms, as well as youth and women-led networks, social movements and active youth groups, to undertake harmonized and effective advocacy campaigns focused on ending child marriage, the enactment of the draft Family Protection Law, and positive masculinities is paramount to influencing positive community awareness and bringing about lasting change.</p>

Comments by Germany	UNFPA country/regional office response to comments
<p>Appreciation for UNFPA’s engagement in the Palestinian Territories since the health sector and especially the reproductive health of women are of paramount importance.</p>	<p>UNFPA extends appreciation to the Government of Germany for reviewing the 7th Country Programme for Palestine, and acknowledgement of the importance of supporting the health sector and reproductive health of women.</p>
<p>In particular support UNFPA’s approach to design interventions addressing multidimensional vulnerabilities considering vulnerable target groups but also regions. We would be interested to exchange on your experience especially in East Jerusalem where Germany attempts to take multiple vulnerabilities into account when designing projects fighting the high unemployment rate among young Palestinians.</p>	<p>This comment is well noted with appreciation. UNFPA will be glad to continue dialogue to discuss the country office experience in designing interventions addressing multidimensional vulnerabilities. Our new programme aspires to ensure further complementarities and coordination with partners, including the Government of Germany.</p>
Comments by Sweden	UNFPA country/regional office response to comments
<p>The CPD is comprehensive, and evidence based.</p>	<p>UNFPA extends appreciation to the Government of Sweden for reviewing the 7th Country Programme for Palestine and for this comment.</p>
<p>UNFPA seems to be careful in using the R language of the SRHR. Almost everything is packed under the gender equality and GBV with no clear strategy on how issues related to safe abortion, LGBTIQI+ and sexual rights in general will be addressed or targeted.</p>	<p>The programme will utilize the human rights-based approach as an accelerator to support accountability mechanisms that will improve transparency and empower youth, women and people with disabilities as right holders to hold duty bearers accountable and engage in decision-making in policies related to the three transformative results.</p>
<p>The external reader might get an impression from the CPD that it is more about Maternal and Women’s health and Rights more than the comprehensive productive and sexual health and rights approach.</p>	<p>Furthermore, UNFPA aligns the programme and interventions to the national Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Strategy in Palestine. UNFPA is supporting the assessment process of the current strategy and development of the new one for 2023-2025. The standards of this strategy reflect major principles of no discrimination in receiving services as well as no stigmatization.</p> <p>Also, the programme will specifically focus on those furthest left behind first and interventions will target those in marginalized communities, suffering from multidimensional vulnerabilities.</p>

<p>Great that there is a focus on UN coordination. Some indicators shall be in place to measure that.</p>	<p>This comment is well noted with appreciation. This programme is derived from and aligned with the new UNSDCF. At the country level (as well as global level) UNFPA is strongly committed to UN joint coordination and programming in order to deliver results that are coherent, efficient and effective. One third of UNFPA country office resources of its sixth programme is from UN pooled / joint programming. In the new programme, the UNFPA country office aspires to further increase its UN coordination and joint programming - working closely especially with UN Women, WHO, UNICEF, OHCHR and other key UN partners.</p> <p>In terms of indicators, key UNSDCF indicators are embedded within the country programme, which will be jointly pursued with UN partners. As part of the monitoring of the UNFPA Strategic Plan (2022-2025), the Palestine country office (along with other country offices) will report progress on an indicator measuring the functionality of the inter-agency coordination mechanisms to address gender-based violence (SP Indicator 5.2.a Country has a functioning inter-agency coordination mechanism or platform to address gender-based violence). This indicator measures UNFPA contribution to the GBV-sub cluster coordination as part of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), which is the longest-standing and highest-level humanitarian coordination forum of the United Nations system.</p>
<p>How will UNFPA work on Nexus? And what does it mean for them in practice?</p>	<p>Within the current context of Palestine, UNFPA's approach is focused on the humanitarian-development complementarity, and the new programme considers both the immediate and long-term needs of the population, particularly the needs of vulnerable groups, and those located in geographically vulnerable areas as per the occupied Palestinian territory humanitarian needs overview (HNO). The particular humanitarian context is reflected in the fact that for the past 19 years, the territory has concurrently had both humanitarian response and development plans. Hence, the new programme will continue to respond to the immediate humanitarian needs of the population within the humanitarian programme cycle and bridge humanitarian and development programming by strengthening emergency preparedness</p>

and humanitarian response capacities, while also working on a more sustainable response for improved resilience of systems and communities. This approach will be integrated in the new programmatic interventions, including in two aspects:

- Humanitarian interventions, while addressing the most critical immediate needs, will endeavour to contribute to reducing future humanitarian needs by improving health systems, and helping Palestinian institutions take the leading role in responding to humanitarian crises, where appropriate, to build overall resilience.
- Development interventions will seek to reduce future humanitarian needs preparedness capacities of Palestinian actors to respond to emergencies and humanitarian crises while building resilience.

In terms of the peace dimension, the role of youth as enablers for social cohesion, community resilience and civil peace is an element of UNFPA's work. Grounded by the Youth, Peace and Security framework (SCR2250 and Women Peace and Security Agenda), UNFPA programming builds on its previous interventions with youth to enhance their leadership and role in social cohesion and community resilience. Output 3 in the new CPD focuses on enabling youth to be active contributors in community, volunteering civic participation, as well as represented in good governance and decision-making processes.

With relation to equitable access to quality services, significant barriers to sustainable development include the lack of regular, equitable, and high-quality provision of SRH and GBV services, particularly in the Gaza Strip, Area C, and East Jerusalem. UNFPA efforts and interventions will be directed towards strengthening institutional arrangements, enhancing the capacities of health and social providers for improved inclusive, equitable and gender-responsive quality SRH services, including multisectoral, essential services to combat and respond to violence against women and girls.