

COMMENTS ON THE UNFPA DRAFT COUNTRY PROGRAMME DOCUMENT FOR BANGLADESH

Second regular session 2021

Comments by Denmark	UNFPA country/regional office response
<p>The proposed country programme interventions in Bangladesh are well aligned with UNFPA global policies and strategies as well as with UNDAF priorities and national policies and strategies.</p>	<p>Noted with appreciation.</p>
<p>The proposed interventions also have direct and indirect relevance with the broad policy framework of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB), as reflected in the policy document 8 Five Year Plan (8FYP). There is a definite need for more work to promote Sexual and reproductive health, Adolescents and youth, gender equality and empowerment of women and population dynamics and address the challenges. So UNFPA’s proposed engagements as stipulated in the CPD for Bangladesh are timely and relevant.</p> <p>The Outcome Area 1 on the Sexual and productive health component of the programme is consistent with the 8FYP of GoB that recognises the need for optimising the “demographic window of opportunity” through the population aged 15 and above. The Plan also recognises the need for the review of the contents of education to reduce gender bias and to incorporate sexual and reproductive health issues.</p> <p>The Outcome Area 2 on Adolescents and youth adequately complements the 8FYP plan. The Plan recognises the need for “working with children and adolescents to develop norms of more egalitarian relationships” and emphasises the need for establishing and operating social clubs and recreation centres for the “development of adolescents and for ending the child marriages”. The Plan further suggests developing extensive programmes and projects for the development, protection of the adolescents to address violence and repression, the need for the teaching of reproductive health education for adolescents in the school curriculum. Furthermore, the plan emphasizes on the</p>	<p>Noted with appreciation.</p> <p>Throughout the outputs of the country programme, UNFPA will focus on vulnerable populations.</p>

<p>need for adequate access of minority/vulnerable groups like, Dalit adolescents and youth to all government-owned skill training institutions.</p> <p>The outcome Area 3 on Gender equality and empowerment of women is duly recognized by Section 14 of the 8FYP emphasizing along with others the need for national-level changes in the development process to ensure and institutionalize gender equality and women’s rights. The plan also recognizes the need for ensuring gender equality by providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, employment, and representation in the political and economic decision-making process. The Plan also emphasized that gender equality should be recognized as “a necessary condition for achieving inclusive growth and to help achieve both equity and efficiency”.</p> <p>Similarly, the proposed outcome Area 4 on Population dynamics is also aligned with the 8FYP which aims at incorporating the changing population dynamics and the associated population management agenda in defining the national and sectoral development strategies and policies.</p> <p>Furthermore, the proposed areas for engagements is also consistent with SDG 5 and SDG 10 dealing with Gender and Social Inequality that emphasizes on the combined attempt to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls Gender equality.</p>	
<p>The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, GoB has been running the Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence against Women in Bangladesh (MSPVAW) with support from Denmark since 2000. The main rationale behind the design was the mobilisation of state machinery in prevention and redress of violence against women. The mainstreaming and integration of MSPVAW with the GoB structures have come a long way over the years. So the development partners should let the momentum to continue rather than duplicating efforts to combat GBV. UNFPA could build on the technical support to keep the process ongoing so that GoB can fully take over the responsibility to address GBV including providing integrated support to the survivors of the GBV.</p>	<p>This is well noted.</p> <p>We are continuing to work to further support efforts to take forward the Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence Against Women in Bangladesh, in the context of the UNSDCF. UNFPA interventions on GBV have been ongoing over multiple programme cycles; the work has been done in close collaboration, partnership and consultation with a requisite variety of partners, both within the UN and outside.</p> <p>UNFPA will continue to consult/discuss with various partners including Denmark, especially through established mechanisms such as the Local Consultative Group on Women Advancement Gender Equality – a platform that has been established between the Government of Bangladesh, the UN and development partners for a</p>

	<p>coordinated collaboration on this important issue. The focus on technical support and capacity building within the CPD aims to increase sustainability and scalability of efforts towards achieving its objectives, including ending GBV.</p>
<p>The women's movement, NGOs and human rights organisations have played a key role in implementing programmes, providing services and upholding rights of women, children and socially excluded groups. While spread across the country, these agencies apply multi-layered prevention and response approaches, from the village and ward levels to the district and national levels. Over the last few years, such agencies have come together to join forces in mass awareness and behavioural change campaigns and where possible, to work collaboratively to end GBV. UNFPA could consider more active engagements with these groups.</p>	<p>Well noted.</p> <p>In the new country programme, which inter alia aims to transform gender norms through social and behavioural change communication and community engagement initiatives, UNFPA will build on partnerships with various actors, including civil society. This is recognized in the Integrated Resource Mobilization and Partnership Plan and will be further considered in the operationalization of the country programme. Expanding and leveraging partnerships at national and subnational levels is a key strategy of the programme, in line with the UNFPA strategic plan mode of engagement on partnerships.</p>
<p>In Bangladesh, since the late 1980s gender budgeting has been recognised as an essential instrument to ensure gender mainstreaming through budget allocations at all levels with a gender perspective. However, available research and empirical data suggest that the gender budget in Bangladesh is more of a ritualistic matter which is yet to make an impact on gender equality, access, and distributive justice. More proactive actions and programmes related to the modalities of operationalising the gender budget need to be recognized and addressed accordingly.</p> <p>In view of the above, UNFPA may consider supporting efforts on data collection to gather sufficient evidence for resource allocations in family planning and strengthening health workers' capacity to follow up.</p>	<p>Mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment in planning and budgeting are important areas of work by the United Nations in Bangladesh and reflected in the final draft United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. UNFPA will continue to draw on data and analysis for advocacy in support of Government budget allocations and expenditures for sexual and reproductive health, including family planning, under the universal health coverage efforts.</p>
<p>It would be beneficial if UNFPA may focus more strategically on prioritising and targeting women and girls vulnerable to abuse of their rights, and those not fully accessing the health and education systems. The CPD may also consider placing wider emphasis on women and girls who risk home births and adolescent pregnancy, and who are at high-risk sexual practices.</p>	<p>Well noted.</p> <p>The new country programme focuses particular attention on ending child marriage as one of the key areas of development, focusing on abuse of rights for one of the more vulnerable populations in the country. The revised results and resources framework reflects the programme's focus on child marriage and adolescent pregnancy.</p>

	<p>In the context of targeting vulnerable women and girls, UNFPA will be working on the intersection of climate change and sexual and reproductive health and towards increasing access to protection interventions and services across the development-humanitarian continuum.</p> <p>The country programme will focus on interventions for prevention and response to GBV, child marriage, as well as on supporting life skills education for adolescent girls and boys. Within the efforts to reduce maternal deaths, there will be a specific focus on adolescent pregnancy.</p>
<p>It needs more clarity in the CPD on how UNFPA would add value to the national gender equality agenda, and where the UNFPA role lies in relation to that of other actors, such as government ministries and other UN agencies and development actors. It would be beneficial if UNFPA can strengthen the profile of the gender equality programmatic area and press for greater clarity in the division of roles among UN Country Team and other stakeholders.</p>	<p>As indicated in the CPD, UNFPA outputs related to gender equality focus on: (1) addressing harmful social norms at community and individual levels; and (2) supporting an enabling legal and policy environment; and (3) strengthened national and subnational capacities and improved coordination to better address GBV.</p> <p>These outputs have been designed to contribute to the UNSDCF outcome on gender equality. The UN and UNFPA roles concerning gender programming are more elaborately articulated in the final draft UNSDCF. UNFPA will continue to work closely with inter-agency groups on gender equality and women’s empowerment. Substantive joint programming is envisaged to be further strengthened in the new country programme.</p>
<p>The local governments in Bangladesh play a pivotal role in community service providing/ rehabilitation efforts. Therefore, the programme interventions might consider a wider focus involving local governments more in its project implementation to enhance the effectiveness of the interventions. This will facilitate strengthening the micro-macro linkage through ground and policy level coordination.</p>	<p>Well noted.</p> <p>Since Bangladesh continues to operate under a centralised government system, UNFPA along with other UN agencies will have a more targeted discussion around sub-national level development interventions to ensure investment in the most needed locales, given limited resources.</p>

<p>To conclude, UNFPA’s corporate strengths are well amalgamated in the proposed programme document. This CPD has also well captured the need areas of the recipient country. UNFPA’s programme interventions is likely to significantly add value to the GoB’s development goals in the proposed programmatic areas. UNFPA may like to further expand its potential to reach vulnerable groups through public/private partnerships and with local stakeholders.</p>	<p>Well noted.</p> <p>Expanding and leveraging diversified partnerships is a key strategy of the country programme, in line with the UNFPA strategic plan mode of engagement on partnerships, and articulated in the UNFPA Integrated Resource Mobilization and Partnerships Plan of UNFPA Bangladesh.</p>
<p>Comments by United States of America</p>	<p>UNFPA country/regional office response</p>
<p><i>Overarching</i></p> <p>Overall, we appreciate that the draft country programme document is a well articulated document, identifies key challenges, and addresses how to overcome those challenges during the program implementation period.</p> <p>We encourage UNFPA to consider giving greater attention to the engagement of faith-based organizations and institutions. More than 90% of the population of Bangladesh is Muslim, of which a significant portion is conservative. The success of any FP/RH program, particularly engagement of adolescent girls, to a great extent depends on successfully collaborating with faith-based organizations and institutions.</p> <p>We also encourage UNFPA to provide information on how the next country program will address engagement of men and boys. Over the last few decades, Bangladesh has continued to be a largely male-dominated society, which has detracted from significant improvements to women’s empowerment. As a result, the effective engagement of men and boys remains a major issue in FP/RH programming, which is not directly addressed in the draft country programme document.</p> <p>We suggest including data source references throughout the CPD.</p>	<p>Noted with appreciation.</p> <p>UNFPA agrees that working with faith-based organizations is a valuable approach. We have worked with faith-based organizations in the previous country programme in a number of programmatic areas and will continue to do so in the new country programme.</p> <p>Engagement of men and boys is a key strategy concerning addressing positive social norms in support of women’s and girl’s sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights and addressing the prevention of gender-based violence. It is addressed in the programme rationale and in the results framework.</p> <p>The comment is well noted.</p> <p>The data used throughout the CPD is data used by the Government. We have added data sources in key places.</p>
<p><i>Regarding the Four Programme Outcome Areas</i></p> <p>There are varied development challenges for each of the four programmatic areas identified by UNFPA (sexual and reproductive health; adolescents and youth; gender equality and empowerment of women; and population dynamics). Given that Bangladesh has a large youth bulge and specific health</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>The programme on adolescents and youth continues to be a major focus of UNFPA Bangladesh. In addition to the adolescent and</p>

<p>issues that relate exclusively to adolescents (both married and unmarried), we encourage UNFPA to consider increased funding with focused programming for adolescents and youth, especially considering their importance in the demographic analysis for years to come.</p>	<p>youth outputs, adolescent and youth issues will also be specifically addressed within the other outputs.</p> <p>As a part of our resource mobilization strategy, we are exploring innovative ways of raising resources, articulated in the integrated resource mobilization and partnership plan, including partnerships with the private sector.</p>
<p><i>Programme Rationale</i></p> <p>Related to Item 3, the CPD refers to maternal mortality ratio (MMR) data from the Sample Vital Registration System (SVRS). However, the Bangladesh Maternal Mortality Survey (2016) identifies MMR at 196. This difference might mask the actual scenario of what factors affect MMR.</p> <p>We recommend that UNFPA clearly acknowledge the inequities in the MMR and other SRH indicators across various geography and socio economic strata. We encourage UNFPA to consider how the country programme document can support a broad strategy to address these inequities, especially as this represents a central premise of the 2030 Agenda.</p> <p>We appreciate UNFPA’s commitment to reducing preventable maternal mortality and morbidity, especially through the support and strengthening of midwives. We recommend that UNFPA include additional information on how it will emphasize support for maternal morbidities.</p>	<p>We are using the latest agreed Government data on the maternal mortality ratio, which is the Sample Vital Registration System data from 2019, which stands at 165 deaths per 100,000 live births.</p> <p>Well noted. UNFPA will consider this in developing the implementation plan for the country programme. In formulating the country programme, specific attention was placed on interventions to address inequities.</p> <p>The county programme acknowledges the importance of maternal morbidities, which are reflected in the programme rationale and the results and resources framework. Our programme is designed to build on and continue work on maternal mortality and morbidity reduction within the larger health system-strengthening effort, focusing on equitable and improved access to high-quality and available comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services.</p>
<p><i>Programme Priorities and Partnerships</i></p> <p>Related to Item 11, we encourage UNFPA to clarify in which districts they are planning to work, how determinations for focused programming will be made, and how UNFPA will coordinate with other donors to leverage impact.</p>	<p>Well noted.</p> <p>UNFPA will continue to analyse its areas of interventions at the subnational level, in line with the geographic focus guided by – and as agreed to be taken forward under – the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.</p>
<p><i>Results and Resources Framework</i></p> <p>Regarding the output indicator related to the development of a national human rights-based family planning strategy, we appreciate UNFPA’s support in this area as Bangladesh does not have a comprehensive national strategy. As a whole, we encourage UNFPA to take a leadership role in supporting policy development at the national level, with focused advocacy in the four suggested</p>	<p>Well noted.</p> <p>UNFPA support to family planning under the new country programme is intended to be comprehensive, in line with Government commitments. In order to more fully capture</p>

<p>thematic areas. We recommend that UNFPA consider focusing on several additional areas, including addressing adolescent pregnancy; increased family planning options, including long-acting reversible contraceptives, for couples reaching their desired family size and youth; and addressing the reproductive health needs of the urban poor, recognizing the expected increased 50% urbanization into slums as a result of rural migration within the next ten years.</p>	<p>UNFPA's support to Government family planning commitments, the indicator has been revised.</p>
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