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UNFPA MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

to

Annual report on the evaluation function, 2018

Report of the Director, Evaluation Office

(DP/FPA/2019/5)

Agenda item 10: UNFPA – Evaluation

Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS
Annual session 2019
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Management response to the annual report on the evaluation function, 2018

I. Introduction

1. UNFPA management is pleased to present its response to the annual report of the Director of the Evaluation Office on the evaluation function for 2018 (DP/FPA/2019/5).
2. Management acknowledges the progress made by the Evaluation Office in addressing the concerns and recommendations presented in the management response to the 2017 annual report on the Evaluation, especially with reference to the percentage of programme-level evaluations implemented as planned.
3. In the present response, management addresses mainly the following areas: (a) activities performed by the Evaluation Office in support of United Nations development system (UNDS) reform to deliver on the 2030 Agenda; (b) the revised UNFPA Evaluation Policy 2019; (c) the performance of the evaluation function; (d) the use of evaluation to foster change; and (e) the decentralized evaluation system.

II. Activities performed by the Evaluation Office in support of UNDS reform to deliver on the 2030 Agenda

4. Management reiterates its strong commitment to fostering coherence and synergies among the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations development system, and is pleased to note that almost 50 per cent of centralized evaluation that the Evaluation Office will manage in 2019/2020 is either joint or system-wide.
5. Management looks forward to the completion, in 2019, of the joint evaluation of UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation, joint evaluation of UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage and the system-wide Inter-Agency humanitarian evaluation of United Nations system response to the drought crisis in Ethiopia. Lessons learned from those evaluations will inform and improve future joint programmes.
6. Management also acknowledges the efforts of the Evaluation Office in working with the members of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) to deliver technical advice and advocate for the integration of evaluation into both the United Nations funding compact and the revised United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) guidance.

III. UNFPA Evaluation Policy

7. UNFPA management welcomes the revised Evaluation Policy endorsed by the Executive Board at its first regular session in 2019. The updated definitions, principles, norms and standards, and clarification of roles and responsibilities will further strengthen the evaluation function and improve its products. Management supports the policy's three priorities:
 - Enhanced focus on the use of evaluations;
 - Greater United Nations coherence through joint evaluations, system-wide evaluations, UNEG and Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation initiatives and multi-stakeholder partnerships to strengthen national capacities to evaluate the SDGs;
 - Increased support to national evaluation capacity development through multi-stakeholder partnerships for country-led evaluation systems.

8. UNFPA management appreciates that the Evaluation Policy was developed through a highly transparent and participatory process, taking into account lessons learned, challenges, recurrent issues emerging from reviews and assessments, and consultations with and recommendations of the Executive Board and relevant UNFPA staff at all levels.

IV. Performance of the evaluation function

9. Management takes note of the consistent overall progress in key evaluation performance indicators and is especially pleased to acknowledge the significant improvement in:
 - *Implementation rate of planned evaluations* – 92 per cent in 2017, compared to 55 per cent in 2017;
 - *Financial resources for evaluation* – more than double, compared to 2014;
 - *Implementation rate of evaluation recommendation actions* – reaching 89.5 per cent in 2018, a 4.5 per cent increase over 2017 and the highest implementation rate in seven years.
10. Management agrees with the Evaluation Office that there is room for further improvement in some areas, most notably in the *quality of evaluation reports* and the *use of evaluation findings in programme development*. UNFPA management, and especially the Evaluation Office and the Policy and Strategy Division, will work closely to support the use of credible evaluative evidence in the development of country programme documents.
11. With regard to the *decrease in the implementation rate of recommendation actions of centralized evaluations* to 64 per cent, Management notes that this decrease is mainly because of the complexity of the recommendations that often target corporate policies, strategies and resources, which many times not only involve multiple business units but also require institutional changes that take time to implement.
12. In addition, in 2018, management effected changes in the way it counts the number of due management response actions in order to strengthen accountability for implementation. In the past, a common action for several offices constituted one action point. Since 2018, such actions are split into multiple actions and assigned to one per office.
13. Management is following up closely on the implementation of these recommendations and commits to resolving any bottlenecks to their implementation.

V. Use of evaluation to foster change

14. Management takes note of the need to improve use of evaluation results in developing new country programmes. Management prioritizes the use of evidence, including evaluative evidence, to inform programmes. This priority is central to its results-based management action plan that will accompany the implementation of the strategic plan, 2018-2021.
15. Management particularly welcomes the changes spearheaded by two evaluations: *End-line evaluation of the H4+ (now H6) joint programme Canada and Sweden (Sida), 2011-2016*, and *Evaluation of UNFPA support to adolescents and youth*. It is pleased to report that recommendations of these evaluations informed ongoing and new initiatives, particularly in the areas of (a) comprehensive sexual and reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health services and (b) programming on adolescents and youth.

VI. Decentralized evaluation system

16. Management is satisfied with progress in the implementation rate of decentralized evaluations, from 55 per cent in 2017 to 92 per cent in 2018. In this regard, it commends the joint efforts of the Evaluation Office and the Policy and Strategy Division for the remedial measures such as the financial ring-fencing of evaluation budgets, stronger monitoring mechanisms and improved expenditure tracking.
17. Management reaffirms its commitment to strengthen further its oversight of the planning and costing of country programme evaluations through the corporate Programme Review Committee mechanism, and planning, budgeting and implementation of evaluations.
18. Management also acknowledges efforts by the Evaluation Office to strengthen evaluation with stronger communication and knowledge management. The Evaluation Office Communication Strategy, to be finalized in 2019, envisions going beyond traditional dissemination and engagement to expand the audience, both internal and external, through a multitude of platforms, including social media.

VII. Conclusion

19. Management welcomes continued progress in strengthening the UNFPA evaluation function and reaffirms its commitment to greater accountability, transparency, evidence-based decision-making and organizational learning. Management takes note of the Evaluation Office's programme of work and budget for 2019 and affirms its commitment to working with the Office to carry out its important role in supporting organizational results.
 20. Management fully supports the elements for decision proposed by the Evaluation Office for consideration of the Executive Board – (a) *take note* of the present report on the evaluation function of UNFPA, 2018, and of the programme of work and budget of the Evaluation Office in 2019; (b) *welcome* the efforts made by UNFPA and the significant progress achieved in strengthening the evaluation function, in actively contributing to United Nations system-wide evaluation efforts, and in fostering national evaluation capacity development; (c) *reaffirm* the role played by the evaluation function at UNFPA and underscore the importance of high-quality, independent evaluation evidence in the context of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2018-2021, and its contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
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