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UNFPA Management Response

Report of the Ethics Office 2020 (DP/FPA/2021/7)

Reports of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS Ethics Offices

Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS
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1. UNFPA management acknowledges with appreciation the work of the UNFPA Ethics Office, and the accomplishment of its mandated activities for 2020. Management commends the Ethics Office for its continuing work to promote a culture of integrity, and encourage ethical behaviour among all UNFPA personnel.
2. In particular, we commend the Ethics Adviser for responding to 430 requests from across the organization regarding ethical issues in 2020, compared to 309 in 2019.
3. Further, we would like to share our appreciation for the work of the Ethics Office, which has included providing guidance and advice to staff, personnel and management; the administration of the financial disclosure programme; standards development, training and education. We take note of the reported increase in requests from advisory services from 186 in 2019 to 209 in 2020.
4. Management notes the Ethics Office role in managing the financial disclosure programme; the financial disclosure programme is an important tool for UNFPA to help identify, resolve and mitigate conflict of interest risks arising from staff members' personal financial assets, liabilities, investments, and outside activities. Overall, 542 disclosures were completed and 536 reviewed fully (as 6 staff members separated from the organization before completing the form). In addition, 51 cases were independently sampled, and management is pleased to note that no conflict of interest was ultimately found. Management commends the Ethics Office for commencing its review of the financial disclosure programme in consultation with the Ethics Panel of the United Nations (EPUN) members and internal stakeholders, and will continue to engage further with the Ethics Office on this project.
5. Management further commends the Ethics Adviser for her continued involvement and participation in the organization-wide Culture Change initiative and in her ongoing dialogue with management to facilitate and promote an enabling environment for adherence to UNFPA rules and standards
6. Further, management recognizes the work of the Ethics Office in supporting the organization with guidance on ethics standard-setting throughout UNFPA. This included collaborating with UNFPA offices on 58 occasions to review, provide input and seek clarification on new and revised policies and procedures, as well as providing inputs to several other initiatives.
7. Management notes that the office received 2 direct retaliation inquiries and 7 retaliation-related inquiries. Management also notes that a significant effort has gone towards reviewing the merits of the allegations and areas of concern. Management notes that the first complaint had insufficient evidence to refer the matter for investigation, and that the second complaint was referred for investigation, with recommendations for protective measures. Management finds this to be a sign that the policy and the safeguards that have been put in place are effective in addressing the issue. We commend the Ethics Office on this follow-through. Management will continue to work with the Ethics Office to raise awareness and encourage the use of these services.

8. Management also notes with great appreciation the focus on training, education and outreach activities, which assisted in reinforcing the core values and principles of the United Nations and the international civil service, as well as increased knowledge of ethics-related policies. We congratulate the Ethics Office with its successful awareness and training-related achievements, which included the live training of 1,150 personnel - representing an increase of 262 per cent from 2019 and a 95 per cent increase in personnel engagement with the Ethics intranet page compared to 2019. We further positively note that compliance with the completion of the online training programme “Ethics and Integrity at the United Nations Population Fund” increased considerably, from 50 per cent in 2019 to 72 per cent in 2020. This encourages further promotion of this training programme to staff and personnel.

9. The Ethics Office’s strong collaboration within EPUN and the Ethics Network of Multilateral Organizations (ENMO) is well noted and welcomed. Management further congratulates the Ethics Adviser on her election as Alternate Chair of EPUN.

10. Management also takes note of the recommendations to strengthen further the UNFPA Ethics Office. Noting the value the Ethics Office adds to UNFPA in carrying out its mandate, Management supports these recommendations.

11. As in previous years, UNFPA compliments the Ethics Office on continuing to strengthen the services that it provides under its mandated areas of work, and will continue to provide strong support to its work. Management looks forward to a continuing fruitful collaboration to foster a culture of ethics and integrity in UNFPA.
