



January 2021

Information Note

Update on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system

I. Introduction

The present note provides a further update on UNFPA engagement in the repositioning of the United Nations Development System (UNDS), complementing the previous Information Notes to the Executive Board. This note provides UNFPA's initial reflections on the recently adopted 2020 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) resolution. It also focuses, in particular, on updates of the implementation of the recently endorsed repositioning of UNDS Regional Assets and the Multi Country Office (MCO) Review as well as other UNDS reform streams.

II. 2020 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review

UNFPA welcomes the adoption of the 2020 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

The resolution reinforces the direction of the ambitious UNDS reform and recognizes the need to enable its full implementation. For UNFPA and all UN entities, the resolution paves the path to fully realize the changes in the UN Resident Coordinator system and the UN Cooperation Frameworks on the ground, implementing the MCO review recommendations and repositioning at the regional level, and continuing integration to deliver better joined-up results on the ground.

The more strategic and evolutionary nature of the resolution gives more flexibility and operational space to the entities to focus on programmatic delivery using the new architecture that was put in place through the UNDS repositioning process. UNFPA fully appreciates a special focus on several critical issues, such as investments in the wellbeing of adolescents and youth, gender-based violence, data, people with disabilities, and universal health care, all of which reaffirm the strong relevance of UNFPA's mandate and specific contributions to leaving no one behind and the achievement of the transformative promises of the 2030 Agenda.

UNFPA will align the Strategic Plan 2022-25 with the new QCPR and its major provisions. Internal Strategic Plan working groups have already started an analysis of the implications of the new resolution on UNFPA. Examples of how UNFPA plans to take forward the implementation of the resolution, include, but will not be limited to, the following areas:

- In response to the calls for flexibility and responsiveness of the UNDS in supporting countries implement the 2030 Agenda in the new QCPR, UNFPA will further strengthen its distinct operational business model with differentiated modes of engagement tailored to national circumstances. Specifically, UNFPA will continue to explore new ways to respond to the realities of different country contexts, including for countries in special situations, and employ multidimensional poverty indices, such as equitable access to health, and adjust, where needed, country classifications.
- UNFPA has become a more inclusive organization for people living with disabilities, with relevant

provisions in programming and internal policies. It will continue to build in-house expertise, provide information and evidence to ensure disability inclusion, and undertake disability-inclusive evaluations. Corporate reporting on people with disabilities captured in country programmes will be maintained and strengthened.

- As the new QCPR calls for more coherence between humanitarian, development and peace pillars, the new Strategic Plan is an opportunity for UNFPA to clearly define the roles that its work on sustainable development and humanitarian assistance plays to mitigate drivers of conflicts, disaster risks, humanitarian crises, and complex emergencies. This will include strengthening our programming on building resilience, and enhancing the youth/women peace and security dimensions of our work, as well as the preparedness components.
- Guided by the QCPR call to strengthen transparency and reporting, UNFPA is committed to further harmonizing its monitoring and evaluation systems with sister UN agencies and move beyond the common process indicators towards a more substantive integration and joined-up results.
- In response to the call to mainstream climate- and environment-responsive approaches in the Strategic Plans and UNSDCF's and to reduce its environmental footprint, UNFPA, among other measures, will step up implementation of its Environmental Efficiency Strategy to contribute to achieving the UN's strategy for sustainability management. UNFPA will strengthen its commitment to social and environmental sustainability in programming. Moreover, the mid-term review of the current Strategic Plan agreed on a strengthened thematic focus on climate change.

Efforts are also underway to harmonize specific parts of the new Strategic Plans with those of other Funds and Programmes, including the results and resources frameworks (RRF) and the organizational effectiveness and efficiency (OEE) sections.

UNDS entities will promptly develop a monitoring framework to ensure accountability in the implementation of the mandates contained in the new QCPR. As with the established practice, UNFPA will provide a comprehensive annual update on the implementation of QCPR mandates as part of the Executive Director's Annual Report to the Executive Board at the June annual session.

III. Regional Review

UNFPA welcomes the UNDS repositioning at regional level and believes that the proposed architecture for harnessing the regional assets will enhance results at country level, unlocking the wealth of UN regional expertise to better support countries to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Fund is strongly committed and continues to step up its efforts to enhance coordination and integrated policy advice, normative support, and technical capacity on region-specific priorities.

Through close inter-agency collaboration in each region, UNFPA works to implement the UNSDG roadmap for the operationalization of the reprofiling and restructuring of the regional assets. This includes working with all UN entities and partners in each region to establish and operationalize Regional Collaborative Platforms, including Issue-based Coalitions, stronger knowledge management hubs, inter-agency results based management at the regional-level, data and statistics capacities and common back office services.

The work is underway to develop region-specific and demand-driven joint workplans, provide effective policy and analytical support to resident coordinators and United Nations country teams, for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including in the context of the Decade of Action and ongoing COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

Support for numerous UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF) formulation and development, facilitated by DCO and the UN regional teams through the Peer Support Group (PSG), has led to one single stream of quality assurance presenting an important opportunity to live up to the ambitions in support of UN reform.

UNFPA collaborated closely with the UN partners to develop region-specific technical guidance to UNCTs on the integration of sexual and reproductive health services, gender equality and adolescents and youth in socio-economic analyses and rapid assessments on the impact of COVID-19. For example, in both Asia and the Pacific and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, UNFPA, through inter-agency coordination mechanisms, developed region specific guidance for UNCTs on the integration of gender equality into socio-economic impact assessments of COVID-19.

As a co-chair of several Issue-Based Coalitions and thematic groups in each region, including on data and statistics in Africa and Asia and the Pacific, gender equality in Asia-Pacific, Arab States and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, we will continue our active close collaboration with UN system partners to support enhanced results at the country level.

IV. Multi-Country Office Review

With the endorsement of the UN Secretary-General's recommendations for the Multi-Country Office (MCO) review, UNFPA works actively with UN system partners to operationalize the UNSDG roadmap for the strengthening and reinforcing support in MCO settings, in the context of the Decade of Action and ongoing COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

The Fund has made efforts within existing capacities and resources to reinforce support to countries covered by the MCOs and additional core funds were allocated for UNFPA's work in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in 2021. Through non-core funding support from donors, UNFPA has been able to significantly expand and scale up its programmatic work in the Pacific sub-region. Overall, UNFPA continues to assess measures that can be taken to strengthen its work in SIDS, in particular reviewing UNFPA's physical presence, business models and resource allocations.

Going forward, UNFPA will be leading the efforts, on behalf of the UNSDG Core Group, to develop a common narrative and approach on how to step up UNDS' policy and technical support to the countries covered by the MCOs and translate individual entities' commitments for this action area into a coherent UNDS offer to the SIDS countries.

To ensure a tailored approach to each set of countries, dedicated consultations will be convened with national partners, UN Resident Coordinators, UN Country Teams and relevant colleagues in the regional/subregional offices in both Asia-Pacific and Latin America and Caribbean regions. The outcomes will help further define and streamline policy and technical support offers and facilitate linkages with efforts undertaken under other MCO review action areas.

In the lead up to the 2021 ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment, UNFPA looks forward to continued engagement with the Executive Board to fully operationalize the Secretary-General's recommendations of the MCO review, including in the context of increasing physical presence, reviewing its business models and resource allocations in MCO settings, and strengthening support to South-South cooperation.

V. Update on other UNDS reform streams

Supporting the empowered Resident Coordinator system

UNFPA continues to consistently implement the country-level Management and Accountability Framework (MAF) and provide support to the Resident Coordinator (RC) system, through the agreed UNSDG cost-sharing arrangement and the one (1) percent coordination levy. The total value of the agreements signed in the first three quarters of 2020, subject to the coordination levy, is approximately US\$50 million, which results in a levy income of around US\$500,000.

As emphasized previously, the administration, tracking and reporting of the levy however remains process-heavy and therefore not cost-neutral for UNFPA, as the majority of donors continue to choose the agency-administered option. It is important that the principle of “additionally” is maintained when applying the levy so that programme funding is not negatively impacted and does not translate into a net reduction of development resources.

In accordance with the 2020 QCPR guidance, UNFPA Representatives’ and Heads of Office’ Terms of Reference specifically reflect the authority and mutual accountability vis-a-vis the UN Resident Coordinators as per the new MAF. All UNFPA Country Programmes are developed in full consultation with the UN Resident Coordinators and relevant UN Country Team members as per the new UNSDCF guidance and the MAF.

UNFPA has contributed to the development of a leadership development strategy and implementation plan for Resident Coordinators and talent pool members, linking talent management and performance management functions. The Fund continues to actively support a talent pipeline for Resident Coordinators positions and nominate high-caliber internal candidates for Resident Coordinator assessment.

Funding Compact

The UNFPA corporate resource mobilization strategy, the funding architecture and the Structured Funding Dialogues are fully aligned with the parameters and commitments contained in the SG’s Funding Compact. In line with the relevant provisions in the 2020 QCPR, the Fund continues to enhance presentation of funding requirements, articulate a compelling case for core resources, strengthen management of joint, pooled and thematic funds, and improve transparency on the use of resources, visibility and communication of results.

Contributions from the UN system are now the largest single source of funding to non-core resources for UNFPA (provisionally 36% percent in 2020), making the Fund one of the entities with the highest proportion of non-core resources originating from joint activities. These results demonstrate UNFPA’s investment and readiness to take forward UNDS reform, as it continues to prioritize joint-up mechanisms in order to effectively implement initiatives with UN partner organizations, and delivers on the SDG agenda. UNFPA will further invest in proactively identifying opportunities for high-impact partnerships and monitor the impact of joint efforts.

Business operations

UNFPA continues to implement the common business operations reform and is fully engaged in the Business Operations Strategies (BOS) roll out, with nine Common Back Office (CBO) pilots currently being tested in the field. With 72% of our offices housed in common premises, UNFPA is among the UN entities showing the most commitment for such interagency solutions.

In coordination with the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO), UNFPA is currently undergoing an exercise to measure its efficiency gains from innovation in the business operations area for 2019 and 2020.

The results of those efforts will be reported to the Executive Board through an UN-wide report later in 2021.

Furthermore, in addition to the system-wide business operations improvements, UNFPA continues to engage in the implementation of bilateral initiatives, such as vehicle leasing and vehicle auction sales in cooperation with UNHCR.

UN Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF)

Together with the UN partners, UNFPA continues to address and improve the sequencing, derivation, and alignment of agency-specific instruments with the UN Cooperation Frameworks. An overview of the progress made to date in this area by the New York-based Funds and Programmes - in collaboration with the DCO, Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams - was recently presented at the informal Joint Executive Board briefing on January 18, 2021.

UNFPA has revised programming policies and procedures articulating clearly the derivation and alignment of the Country Programme Documents (CPD) with the UN Cooperation Frameworks, enhancing national ownership of programmes, and ensuring due consultation process with the respective governments and key stakeholders on the ground and at regional and global levels. Internal CPD quality assurance mechanisms were also strengthened to implement corporate commitments to the UN Cooperation Framework guidelines. UNFPA CPDs are developed in full consultation with and are reviewed by the UN Resident Coordinators. UNFPA held workshops with country offices to strengthen institutional capacity to engage and contribute substantively to the development of UN Cooperation Framework/Common Country Analysis (CCA) and related processes, including through the development of national investments cases for UNFPA three transformative results.

UNFPA plays an active role in facilitating and developing options for UN system-wide analytical support for new generation CCAs, the revision of the terms of reference for the UN Regional Peer Support Group, and is currently working on revising the guidelines for joint programming in support of the UN Cooperation Frameworks.

System-wide evaluation

UNFPA remains fully engaged in supporting independent system-wide evaluation mechanisms. In 2020, the UNFPA Evaluation Office took part in several system-wide initiatives related to the response to COVID-19 pandemic as part of the UNEG working group and Global Evaluation Coalition on COVID-19. UNFPA will participate and support the upcoming evaluations of the Multi-Partner Trust Fund and the Global Humanitarian Response Fund.

UNFPA continues to significantly exceed the Funding Compact commitment to collaborate in at least one joint or system-wide evaluation. At least 50 per cent of UNFPA corporate evaluations in 2020 and 2021 will be either joint or system-wide. Examples include the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls and the UN system response to AIDS, 2016-2019.

VI. Conclusion

UNFPA, as part of the broader UN development system, will continue to fully operationalize the Secretary-General's vision of the UN development system reform and to support countries to fully recover from COVID-19 and build back better. Guided by the 2020 QCPR, and building upon its unique mandate, UNFPA will continue to protect and uphold the rights of the women, girls and other marginalized and vulnerable people, with the vision to fully realize the 2030 Agenda.