



22 January 2020

## Information note

# Implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on repositioning of the United Nations development system

*UNFPA is pleased to provide an update on its engagement in the repositioning of the United Nations development system (UNDS) since August 2019. This note complements the earlier information notes presented to the Executive Board in 2019.*

### 1. Introduction

2020 kick-starts the Decade of Action to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the midterm review of the Strategic Plan. UNFPA fully supports the United Nations Secretary-General's call to accelerate the SDGs achievement. It is clear that the 2030 Agenda cannot be met without the achievement of the goals laid out in the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action. To accelerate this agenda, the Governments of Kenya and Denmark, together with UNFPA, convened a summit on ICPD25 in Nairobi, Kenya from 12 to 14 November 2019. The Nairobi Summit led to over 1,200 commitments from stakeholders, galvanizing change and mobilizing leadership to address persistent and emerging challenges related to the ICPD Programme of Action. Building on the momentum of the Nairobi Summit, UNFPA is ready to support the charge towards sustainable development by 2030.

To that end, UNFPA will leverage system wide approaches that have been strengthened by the UNDS reform such as the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) guidance, the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF) at the country level, as well as the Secretary-General's Funding Compact and the 1-per-cent Coordination Levy. UNFPA will further align its strategic direction with the outcomes of the UNDS reform in the midterm review of its strategic plan, 2018-2021. To inform the midterm review of the strategic plan and better understand the impact of the reform, as well as its early implementation challenges and opportunities, UNFPA has conducted a survey of its country offices. The results of the survey were used to inform this note and will guide UNFPA in the implementation of UNDS reform.

To ensure full alignment with the UNDS reform and facilitate the necessary transformation, UNFPA is undertaking a thorough review of its internal corporate policies, processes and systems, such as the Policy and Programming Manual, planning and reporting systems, and its business model. UNFPA will remain closely engaged in implementing other ongoing and interconnected UNDS repositioning streams.

### 2. Implementing the Management Accountability Framework and partnering with the new resident coordinator system

The revised Management Accountability Framework is a central element of the new resident coordinator system. Guided by the new Management Accountability Framework, UNFPA has revised its representatives' job descriptions in close coordination with other entities to include common language on responsibilities as a United Nations country team member, on joint programming and on the matrixed reporting arrangement.

The United Nations resident coordinators are critical partners in promoting key normative issues on the ground, and accelerating progress towards the achievement of the Agenda 2030. In the lead-up to the Nairobi Summit,



resident coordinators played a critical role in engaging the UN country teams, Governments and other stakeholders to fulfil the unfinished business of the ICPD Programme of Action.

The results of the UNFPA internal survey on UNDS reform reveal that the new resident coordinator system and the Management Accountability Framework have contributed to a more transparent and collaborative environment with more opportunities for joint initiatives among UN agencies. Our representatives have noted that they have increased access to the highest levels of government, and an improved ability of UNFPA country offices to engage with UN country teams and resident coordinators on normative issues and women's rights. The results of the survey show there are more opportunities for mobilizing resources and partnering with a broader range of stakeholders. The support of resident coordinators to the UNFPA mandate and their engagement on normative issues has improved. Country offices also noted the increased ability of the resident coordinators and their office staff to facilitate inter-agency work.

It was noted that there is a need for greater popularization and full understanding of the recently introduced instruments such as the Management Accountability Framework across all United Nations agencies at the country level to ensure compliance and common understanding. During the transition, the lack of staff in resident coordinator offices, as well as pending appointments of resident coordinators, in some instances, was mentioned as a challenge.

#### *Building UNFPA country leadership capacity*

As a prerequisite for successful and mutually beneficial partnerships, UNFPA is investing in staff skills and capacities. In approximately 30 countries where UNFPA does not have an international representative, the senior national professional officers will be empowered to become 'heads of office' in 2020. These will be supported by international country directors usually situated in a neighbouring country. In September 2019, 28 of the organization's acting national heads of office gathered in Bonn to prepare to lead UNFPA in a new generation of UN country teams in countries where UNDP will no longer represent UNFPA. The heads of office will be tasked with positioning UNFPA issues in the Cooperation Framework, engaging directly with the resident coordinators, to leverage the ICPD as an accelerator for Agenda 2030.

The move will strengthen UNFPA programmatic and management capacities, visibility, and accountability for results. Most importantly, it will promote stronger substantive partnerships with the new resident coordinator system and the United Nations country teams, but also with Governments and all stakeholders.

#### *Driving sustainable financing for the SDGs*

UNFPA recently developed a costing methodology for the investments needed to achieve the three transformative results of its Strategic Plan. An important element in improving access to finance is identifying the financial gap that must be bridged to attain the SDGs. United Nations entities can support Governments in estimating how much investment is needed to achieve particular development results. With less than 10 per cent of voluntary national reviews adequately costed, costing can help draw in domestic resources and harness private-sector financing mechanisms that increase investment in the SDGs, and further mobilize development assistance. Costing also plays a bridging role in allocating resources at global, regional and country levels.

UNFPA is collaborating closely with the Development Coordination Office and other United Nations funds and programmes on improving and harmonizing reporting on the progress of the UN Funding Compact implementation. UNFPA is adhering to the Funding Compact principles and parameters, including through the regular structured funding dialogues with Member States. The focus of the structured funding dialogues has been on predictable and sustainable funding for the duration of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, with core funding as the bedrock of UNFPA; increasing the quality of non-core resources, including addressing fragmentation and compliance as factors for the cost recovery policy; improving presentation of results and



resources; transparency and visibility initiatives; and collaboration with the other United Nations funds and programmes. The UNFPA structured funding dialogues have provided a unique platform for Member States to gain insight into the funding situation of UNFPA, and to exchange on ways to better link results to resources and to discuss progress on the instruments central to the UNFPA funding architecture.

#### *Funding the resident coordinator system*

In 2019, UNFPA paid its doubled contribution to the funding of the resident coordinator system in a timely manner and operationalized the 1-per-cent levy on all tightly earmarked non-core contributions. While almost all donors have opted for the agency-administered option, it is worth noting that the administration and tracking of the levy is process-heavy and therefore not cost-neutral. In close coordination with other UNDS entities, UNFPA monitors the additional transaction and administration costs associated with the levy and will report on this to the Executive Board.

As of 31 December 2019, preliminary figures show that the total value of the agreements subject to the levy is projected to be below \$100 million; this will result in a levy income of below \$1 million. About 20 per cent of the amount is donor-administered, while the 80 per cent is agency-administered. Notably, the private sector is contributing less than 1 per cent of the total levy value. The introduction of the levy has, in many instances, increased the time and complexity of agreement negotiations. It has also resulted in a reduction of resources allocated to programme budgets.

### **3. Strengthening system-wide support to the 2030 Agenda at the country level**

The Decade of Action, as called upon by the Secretary-General, offers an opportunity to accelerate system-wide implementation of the SDGs. UNFPA is ready to support this joint effort in its specific areas of comparative advantage. UNFPA will build on the momentum of the Nairobi Summit, particularly more than 1,200 concrete national and global commitments, to advance the Decade of Action and ensure sexual and reproductive health and rights for all by 2030.

On the three fronts – mobilization, raising ambition and generating solutions – the Deputy Secretary-General presented to Member States in December 2019 to advance SDGs implementation in the coming decade, below are some key examples from the perspective of UNFPA:

- *Mobilization.* The ground-breaking Nairobi Summit – with its landmark statement, widespread participation, and over 1,200 commitments across stakeholders – placed sexual and reproductive health and rights at the top of the political agenda. Follow-up arrangements and analyses are underway, and the commitments will be tagged and aligned to specific SDGs, targets and indicators, to dedicated support within the UN country teams, and to the new wave of voluntary national reports to support streamlined and strengthened reporting.
- *Raising ambition.* UNFPA has embarked on the first-ever costing of its three transformative results, raising the level of ambition by signalling how much it really takes to get to ‘zero’, and accelerating the funding momentum to close implementation gaps.
- *Solutions.* Empowering and investing in young people, guaranteeing their access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, comprehensive sexuality education, and equipping them with life skills for the future are some of the demonstrated sustainable development solutions that have the potential to catalyse development, including through the realization of a demographic dividend in certain countries; these must be brought to scale in the coming decade.



UNFPA advocates for the creation of a dedicated mechanism within the United Nations Sustainable Development Group to facilitate and bring together system-wide efforts for acceleration in achieving the SDGs. This would serve as a mechanism to review joint United Nations support to countries in the Decade of Action, to better leverage synergies, accelerate implementation and showcase progress on the ground. The global call and the concrete measures to accelerate progress towards the SDGs will be prioritized at the UNFPA regional planning meetings in early 2020. This will be expanded on in the upcoming midterm review of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2018-2021.

#### *Strengthening system-wide analysis, planning and reporting through UNSDCF's*

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) represents a clear shift from the previous era of programming. It serves as the central joint planning instrument to respond to Member States needs and priorities. It is essential that UNFPA staff is ready to plan and partner strategically throughout all phases of the UNSDCF cycle to ensure that the ICPD agenda is effectively positioned. To ensure its staff are adequately trained in this new era of programming, UNFPA invested heavily in developing staff capacity through a series of webinars, the creation of a UNSDCF toolkit, and organized a global learning workshop in June 2019 to establish a roster of staff ready to support countries.

The preliminary results of the UNFPA internal survey on UNDS reform demonstrate that the organization's investment in staff capacity in common country programming has already borne fruit. Country offices demonstrate confidence in engaging in the development and implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. The overwhelming majority of senior staff in country offices exhibit strong command of the new UNSDCF guidance and a clear understanding of the implications of the new framework for UNFPA programmes and operations. As an example, during the formulation of the United Nations Pacific Strategy, UNFPA led the development of the new UNSDCF theory of change and results framework for the next five years covering 14 Pacific island countries and territories.

#### **4. Advancing business operations and common premises**

UNFPA remains a strong proponent of common premises and currently outsources various essential services to partner organizations to realise efficiency gains and increase the quality of services. For example, 72 per cent of UNFPA premises are shared with other United Nations agencies, which is significantly above the target mentioned in General Assembly resolution 72/279. As a pioneer in this area, UNFPA has shared its experience with other agencies and continuously reviews opportunities to increase its uptake of such services. At the global level, UNFPA payroll and treasury is done by UNDP service centres, while at country level, UNFPA uses common services made available by other United Nations partner organizations.

In the context of the UNSDG Business Innovations Group, UNFPA provided the perspective of both a medium-sized organization and as an intended recipient of common back-office services. As a member of the UNSDG Business Innovations Group, UNFPA is working closely with the group's project team to analyse the profile and structure of business operations to increase harmonization. The project team developed a United Nations back-office services marketplace survey request that was issued to 36 entities through the High-Level Committee on Management Secretariat in July 2019. UNFPA participated in the first global marketplace survey to map prospective service providers and recipients. A second survey will be conducted in 2020 to capture the scale and geographic availability of service offerings and requests. The results will provide a comprehensive picture of the global marketplace in early 2020 for further discussion within the United Nations system.



To facilitate greater collaboration among the United Nations agencies, a mutual recognition statement has now been signed by 17 entities (including UNFPA). It represents a broad consensus on adopting common or shared services relying on service provider policies and procedures. UNFPA was one of the early supporters of the mutual recognition approach; UNFPA will work with the Business Innovations Group project team, together with the High-Level Committee on Management secretariat, to develop instructions for its operationalization.

With the active engagement of UNFPA, the UNSDG Business Innovations Group has completed the Business Operations Strategy guidance and initiated its roll-out in November 2019, with trainings of trainers in Istanbul and Amman (other regions to follow in the first quarter of 2020), in which UNFPA regional office staff participated. The new Business Operations Strategy will include an online tool to conduct cost-benefit analysis and guide country-level operations management teams in developing a business operations strategy. This will reinforce the ability of the United Nations system to track impact, and also monitor and report on how United Nations entities are collaborating at the country level.

UNFPA has also prioritized work on the harmonization and simplification of business practices within the United Nations system:

- Implementing the harmonized approach to cash transfers for implementing partners, in collaboration with UNDP and UNICEF;
- Participating in the asset disposal auction system with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR);
- Engaging, together with UNDP, UNICEF and UN-Women, in an inter-agency review of the cost-recovery model, including options for adjustments;
- Issuing, jointly with UNDP and UNICEF, guidance on financial management for implementing partners;
- Joining the United Nations Partner Portal, working on joint audits and policy harmonization with UNDP, UNHCR UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP, sharing a joint anti-fraud course, information and handling of fraud cases;
- Strengthening its partnership with United Nations Volunteers, employing 112 United Nations volunteers in 2018.

## **5. Aligning regional and country configurations to support the 2030 Agenda**

UNFPA is committed to increasing its agility, innovation, and integration, with a focus on impact. In line with UNDS repositioning and through its ongoing change agenda, UNFPA is adjusting to a complex global context to deliver for women, girls and youth. The key performance indicators of the change agenda are the same as the organizational efficiency and effectiveness outputs in the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021.

UNFPA has launched – with the support of partners – a dedicated initiative on its internal organizational culture to ensure that all staff members adopt the values, mindsets and behaviours to deliver the three transformative results – ‘the three zeros’ – by 2030. UNFPA expects that this organizational culture will speak to integration, adaptability, focus on results, agility, innovation, and civility.



UNFPA is contributing to the remaining streams of UNDS repositioning. As part of the inter-agency group to review United Nations development system assets at the regional level, UNFPA helped to define the functions and governance of the new regional collaborative platforms. A ‘new way of working’ at the regional level will centre around issue-based coalitions. UNFPA already co-chairs many thematic and results groups in each region.

UNFPA has been an active member of the inter-agency working group to draft a report on how the system intends to respond and implement the recommendation of the UN Secretary-General to upgrade the support to the countries covered by multi-country offices. This will include both system-wide and individual agency commitments on: (a) increasing presence; (b) increasing access to technical expertise and resources; (c) strengthening data systems; and (d) increasing access to financing for development.

As part of this inter-agency response to the multi-country office review, UNFPA has offered its new costing models and tools to the United Nations system to be scaled up and adjusted for the needs of the countries covered by multi-country offices. Other individual commitments include increasing a physical presence in both subregions, reviewing business model and resource allocations, and strengthening support to South-South and triangular cooperation.

## **6. Conclusion**

The new decade kicks off with a reaffirmation of the commitment of UNFPA towards achieving the 2030 Agenda. With only 10 years left to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals, it is more important than ever for the global community to mobilize for accelerated action. The year 2020 also marks the 75th anniversary of the United Nations. This two campaigns of the Decade of Action and 75th anniversary must be fully leveraged across the United Nations system and beyond.

Moving forward from reform design of the United Nations development system to full-fledged implementation, from vision to results, UNFPA will build on the momentum and outcomes of the Nairobi Summit and leverage partnership to drive the efforts to achieve its three transformative results and the 2030 Agenda, and to better deliver results for the people we serve.

---