



## **INFORMAL CONSULTATION**

**UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board First Regular Session 2017**

### **Thematic Evaluation on UNFPA Support to Adolescents and Youth (2008-2015)**

## **MANAGEMENT RESPONSE**

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Distinguished Members of the Executive Board, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to present the management response on the findings and recommendations presented in the Report of the Thematic Evaluation of UNFPA Support to Adolescents and Youth for the period of 2008-2015.

UNFPA Management welcome the evaluation and appreciate the extensive work in reviewing the evolution of UNFPA's policy and programmatic support to adolescents and youth worldwide. Many of the evaluation findings and conclusions are relevant, forward-looking, and timely, and will be used to inform and strengthen our leadership with and for adolescents and youth on the global development agenda.

The evaluation is a valuable source of knowledge and comes at a timely juncture as the organization is in the process of developing its new Strategic Plan 2018-2021, and many findings and recommendations are aligned with ongoing discussions within the Fund. These recommendations will be used for stronger positioning for the adolescent and youth agenda within the new Strategic Plan. They will also reinforce the guidance on, and advocacy for, optimal strategies for addressing the Fund's core priorities for adolescents and youth programming (for example: on policy engagement, adolescents sexual reproductive health services, marginalized adolescents with a focus on girls, and youth leadership and participation). The evaluation guidance will further contribute to shaping UNFPA's support to Governments and other partners in their efforts to achieve adolescents- and youth-related targets under the SDGs at the country level, as well as to provide useful feedback to country-level programming for adolescents and youth. We further recognize the important overarching recommendation for

a stronger culture of evaluation to improve and align UNFPA's efforts with evidence-based programming more broadly across our mandate areas, and especially on adolescents and youth and those being left behind.

In this context, I would like to highlight three main points from the Management Response:

First, that UNFPA will consolidate and build on our strong progress, in order to ensure an even more coherent and synergistic approach to adolescent and youth programming. As adolescents and youth themselves expect continued leadership and partnership from UNFPA, we will put more robust efforts in:

- Leading and anchoring adolescents and youth sexual and reproductive health services and comprehensive sexuality education;
- Championing and expanding work on adolescent girls; and
- Remaining the vanguard with youth leadership and participation models.

Second, UNFPA is already working to improve on areas recommended by the evaluation, including those concerning:

1. The value proposition to strategically communicate our value and contributions in support of adolescents and youth worldwide, especially on sexual and reproductive health issues that are fundamental to our humanity.
2. Advocacy and policy engagement for increased multi-sectoral investments in adolescents and youth work, building on opportunities afforded by wide interest in the Demographic Dividend.
3. Use of disaggregated data for advocacy and programming. While we discern a strong confluence between our mandate, the data revolution and the needs of countries in carrying forward the SDGs, we also recognize significant efforts are needed to better count and reach the most vulnerable, including very young adolescents, aged 10-14 years old.

4. Improving the quality, effectiveness, and sustainability of our adolescent and youth programmes, involving: (a) strengthening evaluation and aligning programming with evidence-based practices; (b) supporting national efforts to scale-up evidence-based adolescent sexual reproductive health programmes from the onset; (c) tracking and monitoring activities that are dedicated under adolescent and youth and mainstreamed within other thematic areas including family planning, maternal health, data, etc.; and (d) leveraging new innovations such as young people leading the way with our Country Offices in pioneering new approaches to tackle the sexual reproductive health challenges they find most pressing for them.

The third main point from the Management Response is that UNFPA's powerful mandate with adolescents and youth remains unfinished. However, we have learned and generated knowledge since 2008. While the evaluation noted our resources on adolescents have increased over the years, UNFPA will have to continue to expand advocacy, strengthen our internal capacities, and to consolidate and leverage partnerships toward the resources component of our agenda.

Distinguished Members of the Board,

Allow me now to outline Management's response to each recommendation.

In response to **recommendation 1** which pertains *to consolidating all UNFPA targeted and mainstreamed adolescents and youth programming within an overarching theory of change, and ensuring its full representation within the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2018-2021 and relevant strategic frameworks* – this recommendation is accepted and well in line with the Fund's ongoing work.

Led by Programme Division, a consolidated, overarching theory of change for UNFPA's adolescent and youth programming is under development as part of the

new Strategic Plan exercise. The adolescent girl will continue to be featured in UNFPA programming. A guidance to develop country-specific theories of change (for priority strategic plan thematic areas, including adolescents and youth) has recently been piloted through selective Country Offices to further substantiate country programme documents. And, such country-specific theories of change are expected to describe the rationale, determinants, and expected results from UNFPA programmes of support to national counterparts.

A suite of tools and resources has been developed by Technical Division to support Country Offices to construct logic models on adolescent programming. These tools have been used to prioritize adolescent health interventions, such as preventing child marriage and mitigating the impact on married girls, technical guidance on and HIV. In the Strategic Plan 2018-2021, other relevant outcome areas will take on an 'adolescent lens' to ensure the needs of adolescents are incorporated within the anticipated theories of change, planned outputs, and expected activities. Specific indicators to capture process and quality/results of the interventions will also be developed within the results framework of the next Strategic Plan.

We agree that a substantive mapping of UNFPA's adolescent and youth programming (under the current Strategic Plan period) will provide further insights on the scale and scope of current investments and the extent to which UNFPA's programmes are aligned with best practices. The selective mapping will be taken forward within UNFPA in support of the development of the adolescent and youth outcome area for the next Strategic Plan (2018-2021), also based on substantive criteria and availability of resources. Furthermore, the Evaluation Office will be consulted for lessons learned and good practices that emerged from the extensive portfolio mapping of adolescent and youth programming conducted under the present evaluation.

Distinguished Members of the Board,

***Recommendation 2*** relates to the *importance of UNFPA and our role in providing strong leadership on adolescents and youth issues within the framework of Agenda 2030*. This recommendation is partially accepted.

In 2015, UNFPA presented the corporate value proposition that outlined the Fund's comparative advantage on adolescent and youth issues in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. The draft final document is currently under review and will be completed by early this year.

Concerning the alignment of the UNFPA Adolescent and Youth Strategy within the new Strategic Plan 2018-2021 and Agenda 2030, kindly note that the Strategy will clearly articulate key priority areas on adolescents and youth which remain core to the UNFPA mandate, and hence need not be changed in the SDG era. This means UNFPA will remain focused on its core mandate areas, and accelerate its operational efforts to deliver the work that is expected of the Fund. Notwithstanding, UNFPA recognizes the importance of taking into account emerging issues and needs related to adolescents and youth. This includes the role of adolescents and youth as change agents and making linkages to other sectors such as education and employment as we develop the next Strategic Plan. We believe that providing further operational guidance to Country Offices, including adapting to a changing environment, will advance programming on these priorities and in so doing bring greater value to the organization, rather than to update an existing corporate strategy which is already consonant with the Agenda 2030.

To facilitate this process, an Inter-Divisional Working Group on Youth and Empowerment has been established with specific terms of reference to develop the youth-related components within the Strategic Plan 2018-2021. However, in terms of an inter-divisional oversight body on adolescent and youth programming, kindly note that the organization previously had an inter-divisional Adolescent and Youth Cluster. Its impact was negligible due to the existence of other oversight platforms that were better equipped to monitor accountability targets; and it is therefore unlikely that creating another oversight and coordination mechanism such as an inter-divisional working group would strengthen oversight and results. Building on lessons learned, UNFPA will strengthen the existing oversight mechanisms and practices within adolescents and youth programming in order to better measure the effectiveness of interventions.

UNFPA issues integrated guidance to Country Offices to operationalize the 2030 agenda, including in thematic areas such as adolescents and youth. SDG Capacity Development Workshops were conducted in all 6 regions of UNFPA in 2016 in order to provide a deeper analysis at how adolescents and youth needs were addressed within Agenda 2030 and regional development frameworks, and relevant indicators were reviewed. In addition, in 2015 and 2016 Regional Offices supported approximately 30 Country Offices to conduct national studies on the status of demographic dividend, many of which included reviews on the status of adolescents and youth development needs. The latest work, and priorities moving forward, will include capacity building for analysis of adolescents and youth programming needs at the sub-national level. The variety of knowledge management work undertaken in 2015 and 2016 increasingly harmonized the work at headquarters, within the Regional and the Country Offices. It also well-positioned organizational efforts to integrate adolescent and youth programming within broader development frameworks, including in

UNDAFs – UN Development Assistance Frameworks in the countries – and UNFPA Country Programmes, and reflective of country-specific contexts.

Regarding **recommendation 3** on *resource allocation for adolescents and youth*, Management agrees that current levels of funding for adolescent and youth programming remain insufficient across its thematic priorities – for priorities under the dedicated youth outcome, as well as the relevant adolescent topics under the Fund’s other mandated areas, Sexual and Reproductive Health, Population and Data for Development.

Through the Programme Review Committee, resource allocation is being quality assured through the mandatory review of the quality of content and resource allocation of all new UNFPA Country Programmes Documents. Regional Offices also take part in guiding Country Offices on determining funding allocation for all programme components, including adolescents- and youth-specific interventions against identified country-specific priorities. Further implementation of this recommendation includes using the existing platforms to develop greater coherence and clarity on adolescents and youth funding opportunities as well as effectiveness and efficiency of funding and resource allocation for adolescents and youth interventions. In this context, and as per the availability of funds, UNFPA will consider undertaking financial analysis of the level and use of resources, including thematic funds and joint programmes on specific adolescent issues, such as child marriage, maternal health and family planning, that may have adolescent-specific activities. Building a critical mass of competent staff on adolescent and youth issues will also be a priority to ensure that UNFPA can successfully deliver on our programmes. This is being taken into account fully in discussions around the next Strategic Plan; specifically discussions for a component on internal capacity building for our priority areas, and the institutional architecture and UN-partnerships required to deliver the same.



Two recommendations relate to *institutionalizing stronger evidence-based approach to adolescent and youth programming* – one on *strengthening analysis and use of data to target the most vulnerable and marginalised adolescents and youth* (**recommendation 4**); and the other on *strengthening research, monitoring, reporting and evaluation* (**recommendation 8**). Management accepts these recommendations and acknowledges the progress made.

Specifically on **recommendation 4**, UNFPA adheres to the principles of universality, human rights and leaving no one behind, particularly related to adolescents and youth in vulnerable situations who may have not benefited from existing UNFPA programmes. Specifically, Management is pleased to inform that UNFPA, together with the World Health Organization, developed a technical guidance, under the umbrella of “Every Woman Every Child” initiative, on how to conduct needs assessments and prioritize adolescent health issues, including sexual reproductive health, and how to identify those subgroups most likely missed by programmes. In 2016, a series of workshops were organized for nearly all UNFPA Country Offices and National Statistical Offices to review together the latest SDG data, and to underline gaps and shortfalls in available adolescent and youth data in particular countries, and an increasing demand for sub-national data on adolescent and youth issues.

The UNFPA Technical Division is currently reviewing options for building such capacity through South-South programmes; more dedicated training of trainers; and leveraging the OpenData Database and UNFPA Adolescents and youth data dashboard to bring greater evidence-based granularity to the programmatic responses for marginalized and vulnerable locations and situations.

Moreover, in the next Strategic Plan, UNFPA will accelerate its efforts to strengthen national capacity to generate, analyze, and use disaggregated population data on gender, age, health, education, migration, and other key

domains to allow counterparts to locate and define the needs of those furthest behind, and to inform and shape policies and programmes, including tracking of inequalities, for the SDGs era.

Regarding *results monitoring*, **recommendation 8**, UNFPA has already established systems for monitoring of programmes, and has a policy that guides evaluations. Through these systems and policies, the programme staff working on adolescents and monitoring and evaluation will be further supported, within available resources, on how to strengthen planning of results, quarterly monitoring of milestones, annual reporting, and end of programme evaluations.

The current UNFPA system support, specifically through the *myResults* and the Global Programming System (GPS), will be accompanied with capacity development strategy on results planning, monitoring and reporting to ensure that the results of all programmes, including adolescent and youth programmes, inform decision-making and improvement of the programmes. In the current Strategic Plan (2014-2017), UNFPA already had introduced a dedicated outcomes to adolescent and youth with a further breakdown of three adolescent and youth dedicated outputs that are used for activity tagging in GPS. Under the new Strategic Plan, activity tagging at a granular activity level will be revisited to enable consideration of a number of different options.

UNFPA prioritizes a multi-sectoral approach to partnership building on our leadership on youth issues among UN Country Teams, including partnering with key agencies to implement research that generates evidence for improving programmes. In addition, UNFPA prioritizes the importance of knowledge management in the new Strategic Plan, and will consider a dedicated indicator to measure the organizational progress in generating and using knowledge.

Looking ahead, as part of its global South-South Cooperation Project, UNFPA will launch an online training for all staff aimed to strengthen in-house skills to identify, engage and operationalize South-South Cooperation which will be integrated as part of their business model for youth programme delivery. In addition, a South-South tool will be launched to facilitate “matchmaking” between solutions and needs of countries to address adolescent and youth, which will enhance Regional Offices’ support to Country Offices in scaling up South-South Cooperation.

Distinguished Members of the Board,

Allow me to emphasize Management’s response to **recommendation 5**, which speaks to *the human rights-based approach in adolescents and youth programming*. This recommendation is accepted and is ongoing as core business to the relevant units.

Management is pleased to report that UNFPA started the process for developing a guidance for youth leaders to engage in and advocate for their rights in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. This is to be completed within the next two years. In addition, policy guidance on advancing policy dialogues in the Universal Periodic Review for our Country Offices will soon be released. As part of UNFPA’s business operations, bulletins for each country are being issued under the Universal Periodic Review, in which all issues pertaining to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights – including those relevant to adolescents and youth – are being identified, with recommendations to our Country Offices for how to follow-up with their national counterparts. Regional Offices will continue supporting Country Offices to integrate the demographic dividend, where appropriate, together with a human rights-based approach to adolescents and youth programming.

On **Recommendation 6**, *linkages across UNFPA-supported interventions with young people, specifically in programme support for sexual and reproductive health education and information for adolescents and youth and integrated sexual and reproductive health services* – this recommendation is partially accepted.

While the quality of adolescent sexual and reproductive health education and information has been evaluated under this exercise, it was expected that findings would highlight the successful and less effective practices. Consequently, these areas will need further assessment. Management will consider conducting reviews to assess whether these interventions are of good quality and evidence-based. Programme and Technical Divisions will collaborate with the Evaluation Office to ensure this aspect is covered in future evaluations.

Meanwhile, UNFPA has been using an effective system for results planning, monitoring and reporting, and within this system providing the needed technical backstopping and system support to all reporting units, including for adolescent and youth-specific programme interventions. Within the same results monitoring function, Programme Division will continue with capacity building initiatives for to strengthen the needed country level staff capacity.

Management agrees on the inclusion of indicators to capture results of adolescent and youth interventions under different programmatic areas, and their contribution to common indicators. This has been included in the ongoing work on creating programme synergies on adolescents and youth across that outcome areas in the next Strategic Plan.

Lastly, on **recommendation 7**, *meaningful engagement of adolescents and youth at all levels of programming* (national, regional and global), Management partially accepts noting that UNFPA can institute the selection and representation

of constituency-based youth in global and regional events. However, UNFPA's strategic focus is on national-level policy-making processes, such as the national development planning, national peace-building efforts and the humanitarian response. Recently issued minimum standards on consulting with young people to engage meaningfully in these processes will be expanded and supplemented with further tools for adaptation and implementation by Country Offices. Likewise, youth leadership curriculum and programmes that were delivered for the Youth Innovators Fellows Programme in 2016, could be expanded for capacity building and strengthening leadership for marginalized and vulnerable youth.

We, however, disagree that the establishment of a new, permanent structure (Youth Advisory Board) will increase youth participation in key processes. As UNFPA previously had such a global UNFPA Advisory Panel, and young people themselves advised that they desire deeper engagement with UNFPA over simply providing advice. Therefore UNFPA has developed an independent Youth Leadership Working Group, composed of representatives of youth-led and youth-serving organizations. Engagement is further mainstreamed through the UNFPA's partnerships with civil society. This body actively provides advice on strategic, political, and technical discussions on adolescents and youth, it goes further by advocating in partnership with UNFPA, and in implementing global initiatives. Establishing a separate Board would therefore be a step back in terms of youth participation.

Distinguished Members of the Board, Colleagues,

Let me conclude with expressing thanks to the Evaluation Office for the good work done in analysing UNFPA's past work in adolescents and youth, and to reassure the Board of the thorough follow-up and of the ongoing commitment by Management to continue to implement the recommendations to improve the lives of adolescents and youth and the 10-year old girl.

I thank the members of the Executive Board for your continued support and guidance.

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