Thematic Evaluation on UNFPA Support to Family Planning (2008-2013)

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

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

First, I would like to warmly welcome H.E. Mr. Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve, the new Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations, and also the new Vice-President representing WEOG (Western Europe & Other Groups) at the Executive Board.

Ambassador, my colleagues and I look forward to a successful collaboration with you, and wish you all the best!

Distinguished Members of the Executive Board,

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 Family Planning for the period of 2008-2013.

UNFPA Management welcomes the evaluation and its findings and recommendations as an opportunity to further advance our work in family planning and improve other areas of UNFPA’s mandate.

As the evaluation findings are related to the period 2008-2013, UNFPA Management acknowledges that significant progress has been made in improving family planning programming as reflected in the advanced stage of implementation of the recommendations. This progress was made through implementing the Strategic Plan 2014-2017, which provides an integrated focus on advancing family planning through a dedicated Output and a supporting results framework which directs and measures progress in this area.

As a core convener of Family Planning 2020, UNFPA drives its support to family planning through its Family Planning Strategy, “Choices not Chance” (2012 -2020). Lessons and good practices from UNFPA’s work in implementing this Strategy constitute an important knowledge base, and UNFPA will use the evaluation findings to further scale up family planning in an effective, coordinated and strategic manner with partners.

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Allow me now to outline Management’s response to each recommendation.
In response to recommendation 1 which pertains to UNFPA’s role in coordination of family planning actions and brokerage for increased national ownership – significant progress has been achieved informed by new global partnerships such as Family Planning 2020 and the strengthening of UNFPA Global Programme on Reproductive Health Commodity Security (now UNFPA Supplies). Through UNFPA Supplies UNFPA is improving partnership with the public and private sectors and non-state service providers; and, promoting alignment, integration and coherence of efforts to scale up family planning.

Additionally, Costed Implementation Plans for family planning have been developed and are in effect in many countries including, for example, Uganda, Nepal, Indonesia, and Nigeria. This demonstrates UNFPA’s leadership and ability to leverage resources and deliver common results. UNFPA has achieved a more coherent approach in its support to countries to adopt the Total Market Approach, through global coordination efforts in two work streams: the Market Development Approaches Working Group of the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition, and the UNFPA/USAID-led Total Market Approach collaboration. This is contributing to reducing overlaps, optimizing use of resources, and has facilitated the focus on underserved, poorer and marginalized populations.

Furthermore, UNFPA developed and disseminated guidelines to Country Offices to implement the Family Planning Strategy such as the 10 Steps for Family Planning: Choices not Chance Operational Guide as well as guidelines for ensuring human rights in contraceptive services. Progress in the implementation of UNFPA’s work in family planning area is monitored through UNFPA annual reports, country programme reports and evaluations. The implementation of Phase II of the Global Programming System Project will offer a monitoring and progress reporting tool for our implementing partners; a tool which will enhance transparency of reporting by governments and accountability for results in all areas, including family planning.

Since the period of the evaluation, UNFPA introduced normative and system-support changes such as mandatory capacity assessments of implementing partners; integration of implementing partner capacity development into country programme activities; updated policy and procedure to guide monitoring results; strategic indicators to monitor progress (through myResults platform); and, the integration of the human rights-based approach. UNFPA confirms that a more strategic focus across operational areas will be reflected in the context of the next Strategic Plan to maximise results, with implementation supported by the Family Planning Strategy.
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**Recommendation 2** relates the importance of *integration of family planning within a sexual and reproductive health and human rights context.*

Management agrees and notes the centrality of family planning in the sexual reproductive health agenda and the value of it being reflected in UNFPA’s internal communications and translated into programmes. Particularly following the 2008-2013 time period of the evaluation, UNFPA improved implementation of integrated sexual reproductive health programme at country level which must be noted. Since its inception in 2007, the Global Programme on Reproductive Health Commodity Security (now UNFPA Supplies) established an integrated approach to reproductive health commodity security, with a strong focus on a more enabling environment, demand-side support, supply-side focus on the availability of quality supplies, stronger in-country supply chains, and access to quality services.

Two recommendations relate to the ability of the organization to generate evidence of results in family planning. One on *strengthening the capacity of country offices to document and report on results of UNFPA support to family planning* (**recommendation 3**); and the other on the *mode of engagement* (**recommendation 5**). Management accepts these recommendations and acknowledges the progress made.

Specifically, on **recommendation 3**, Management is pleased to inform that in the last three years, two critical applications were launched – the Strategic Information System and the Global Programming Systems – these have enabled significant improvement in results-based planning, monitoring and reporting. This supplements the organization’s routine documentation and dissemination of good practices through knowledge management and learning systems.

Management recognizes the value of having learning embedded into family planning programming. UNFPA motivates staff to document good practices – including on integrated sexual reproductive health, midwifery and family planning – and these are published in the UNFPA “Evidence and Action” good practice series. UNFPA will launch in 2016 the Knowledge Management Strategy, which will further strengthen the organization’s work in this area.

Regarding modes of engagement, **recommendation 5**, under the current UNFPA Strategic Plan 2014-17, UNFPA operates in four quadrants which defines how UNFPA engages in different country contexts. It is a
business model which has enabled upstream programming. All country operations are aligned to this model and, to date, detailed alignment reports have been presented to the UNFPA Executive Board.

As a practical example of progress made in operationalizing this business model, UNFPA is closely collaborating with partners and stakeholders through country coordinating platforms, including in the context of Sector Wide Approaches in Ghana and Tanzania; and Pooled Financing in Bangladesh and Mozambique. For the 11 Global Financing Facilities countries, UNFPA engages at global, regional and country levels to ensure that sexual reproductive health and reproductive rights – including family planning, maternal and adolescent health – are clearly prioritized while using the opportunity to enhance collaboration with key partners such as the World Bank Group.

Looking ahead, UNFPA will coordinate the roll out of the new operational model of UNFPA Supplies in order to contextualize the programme to the particular situation of each recipient country and to incorporate an “exit strategy” component. Lessons learned from this exercise will be used to inform the development of UNFPA’s next Strategic Plan.

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Allow me to emphasize Management’s response to recommendation 4 which speaks to the human rights-based approach and vulnerable and marginalized groups in line with the 2030 Agenda as this area is key to the mandate of UNFPA.

Management wishes the Board to kindly note that in line with Agenda 2030, UNFPA defines its programmatic approaches to ensure targeting the most vulnerable populations, and those furthest behind. The most recent work at country, regional and global levels exemplify concrete areas of action including the roll out of the Family Planning Strategy and producing associated guidelines to clarify organizational expectations. And, for each new country programme, high-level results that will contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals have been established and captured in a “Compact of Commitment” which will be regularly monitored and reported on to Senior Management. In addition to UNFPA’s current strategic focus being responsive to Agenda 2030, its call to “leave no one behind” will inform the development of UNFPA’s new Strategic Plan, including an analysis of the financial requirements to deliver such targeted programmes.
The need for rights-based family planning is also articulated and illustrated through messaging and multimedia across the comprehensive One Voice suite of activities, tools and channels – including the mobile app, mandatory e-orientation for all staff, and the toolkit of communications resources which informs and supports UNFPA communications at all levels.

Management accepts recommendation 6 on technical support and oversight, noting that the availability of quality and timely technical support to Country Offices is reinforced through the provision of strategic and relevant advisory services bolstered by the issuance of technical guidance. The UNFPA global consultant roster was expanded in 2015 which enabled Country Offices to benefit from over 2,800 vetted technical experts to support integrated sexual reproductive health and family planning, among other areas. UNFPA’s business model also promotes partnerships and leveraging up-to-date technical expertise to inform results-oriented family planning programmes. Monitoring and Evaluation Advisors have been placed in all Regional Offices, and Monitoring and Evaluation staff presence at country level has increased to ensure continued attention to the oversight of family planning and other programmes.

The launch of the Technical Assistance Management System in 2014 was aimed at improving the provision and coordination of technical assistance and tracking technical support requirements. Additionally, global quality assurance support is provided to all country programmes. And, the deployment of staff from the UNFPA Internal Consulting Group mechanism further supports the integrated approach to providing technical assistance.

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 family planning, and to reassure the Board of the thorough follow-up and the ongoing commitment by Management to continue implementing the recommendations.

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

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