

23 May 2019

Excellency,

On behalf of UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, I would like to thank the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) members and Secretariat for conducting the 2017-18 assessment of UNFPA, in particular Japan and Switzerland for acting as institutional leads for this cycle. UNFPA appreciates the professional and constructive collaboration experienced throughout the assessment process.

We at UNFPA value the MOPAN review as a multi-partner assessment approach, which brings consistency in donor monitoring, coherence in evaluative parameters, and contributes to reducing transaction costs associated with multiple individual donor assessments.

We also value the MOPAN 3.0 assessment methodology, which builds on previous iterations, and offers stronger evidence, including the country and regional perspective. We believe this methodology has generated a fair, comprehensive and accurate assessment of UNFPA's performance trajectory and situation at present.

UNFPA is pleased to note the 2017-18 MOPAN assessment is overall very positive, with 11 out of the 12 performance indicators ranked highly satisfactory or satisfactory. UNFPA is particularly pleased and proud of its performance journey since the last MOPAN assessment (2014), which MOPAN qualifies as "very positive", with all areas of improvement addressed in a systematic and satisfactory manner, bringing the agency to "high levels of functionality" in 2018.

UNFPA appreciates the recognition of its strengths in 2018, indicating continuous and strong operational, programmatic and managerial improvement, acknowledging our impact in both developmental and humanitarian settings. We are gratified that MOPAN states that UNFPA "still embodies the strengths identified in 2014", and has become "more focused, building organizational good practice at all levels."

His Excellency
Mr. Koro Bessho
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Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations
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His Excellency
Mr. Jürg Lauber
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We are particularly satisfied with the strong ratings and positive findings in the following areas:

- Clear, focused, results-oriented strategy closely aligned with global frameworks, ownership of which is strong across the organization;
- Human resources function, a strong asset of UNFPA;
- Knowledge management as a key resource, bolstered by improved evaluation processes;
- Good translation of expertise and results base into accessible information;
- Robust and carefully monitored financial and risk management systems;
- Results-based management and monitoring systems well entrenched within UNFPA; which enables linking of activities and expenditures to outcomes and strategic results;
- Active commitment to partnership synergies through Delivering as One and UN reform processes, as well as leadership role in humanitarian settings.

UNFPA also acknowledges the areas identified for improvement that the report highlights, which we are working to improve through actions and initiatives already underway. They are described in more detail below.

In the area for improvement 1, UNFPA recognizes the unique offering it has regarding supporting the production, utilization and dissemination of population and data analytics. Since 2017, we have implemented a renewed Strategy for the 2020 Census Round, which focuses on modernization of censuses and strengthening capacity for greater utilization of census data. Additionally, UNFPA has undertaken an assessment of in-house census expertise, and designed a capacity development strategy to address existing gaps. A process of establishing a census roster for rapid deployment of experts to support countries in need is also ongoing.

In 2018, UNFPA launched the Geo-Referenced Infrastructure and Demographic Data for Development project to support the production, collection, use, and dissemination of high-resolution population, infrastructure and other reference data. UNFPA has been piloting an innovative Population Data Platform, a one stop shop for population data that facilitates access to multiple data sources like censuses and surveys, geospatial boundaries and other geospatial infrastructure data which would be available for all of the United Nations system. External partnerships with World Bank, UN Population Division, and others are also leveraged through the International Committee on Census Coordination. A corporate resource mobilization strategy and fund to support population data generation, utilization and dissemination until 2030 is expected to be launched in late 2019.

In the area for improvement 2; “internal delays in sign-offs and disbursements,” UNFPA now periodically measures and reports the amount of time it takes to complete disbursements to implementing partners (IP). Overall, 72 per cent of the disbursements to IP are processed within 15 working days from submission of the funding requests to UNFPA and we continue to work towards more efficient disbursement processes. In the short-term, offices with a larger number of disbursements to IP taking more than 15 working days from the date of submission of the funding requests will be engaged to identify bottlenecks and process issues.

In the medium-longer term, the process followed for disbursements to IP will be significantly revised as part of the prospective Enterprise Resources Planning system. The new process will, among other things, reduce the frequency of submission of certified forms, allowing advances for longer periods and reducing the administrative workload for both UNFPA and the IP.

In the area for improvement 3; “seniority level of country representatives for advocacy and policy dialogue,” the 2016 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) and General Assembly (GA) 72/279 resolution on the repositioning of the United Nations Development System (UNDS) mandated the UNDS to rethink and optimize UN configuration and programme delivery in countries. Accordingly, a dedicated task team in UNFPA has reviewed the management and accountability arrangements in countries without senior UNFPA Resident Representatives in order to strengthen representation and accountability for results, empower national staff and reinforce partnerships with governments, the new Resident Coordinator (RC) system, and members of the UN Country Teams (UNCT). As the transition to a fully transformed UNDS and new generation of UNCTs will require optimization and rethinking of UN configuration, any changes to the management arrangements and representation will take into account the outcome of the ongoing UNDS repositioning processes, such as the multi-country office and regional reviews, as well as redesigned United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNDSCF, formerly known as UNDAF).

In area for improvement 4, “UNFPA’s engagement with partners at country level,” we are pleased of the acknowledgment that most Country Offices engaged effectively with IP. UNFPA will further improve, as stated in the Strategic Plan 2018-2021, multi-stakeholders partnerships by supporting innovative platforms that strengthen collaboration with governments, as well as with civil society and the private sector. To strengthen national ownership and capacity, and delivery of the Sustainable Development Agenda, UNFPA will continue building on progress in engaging through volunteerism, empowerment, participation and other means. UNFPA will better engage stakeholders and partners at country level in UNDSCF and Country Programme development, underpinned by the common country assessment, from which theories of change can be drawn, and knowledge and expertise can be collaboratively shared and used.

In the area for improvement 5, “procurement of humanitarian supplies and personnel,” we are pleased to note that the report concludes that UNFPA responds swiftly with supplies and personnel over the last strategic plan period. Measures put in place to further improve humanitarian responses include quarterly inter-divisional meetings on humanitarian procurement set-up to discuss and address procurement challenges, including with Country Offices. Additionally, UNFPA’s Procurement Services Branch has successfully increased the supply base for emergency reproductive health kits through intensive market research, contributing to an increase in the availability of stocks. We are also revising policies and procedures for humanitarian contexts, including increased levels of revolving funds and bridging mechanisms.

In the area for improvement 6, “capacity building interventions,” we agree that programme sustainability is a perennial challenge in all forms of development assistance, and that more work-focused, interactive methodologies for capacity training within government and partner institutions are needed. It is in this spirit that UNFPA is moving away from didactic training interventions towards more empowerment approaches through recognition, incentives and motivation. For instance, UNFPA intends to capitalize on innovative ways of institutionalizing a results culture across the organization through the results-based-management (RBM) “Seal Initiative.” This corporate initiative will empower Country Offices to build capacity of implementing partners in RBM with the use of RBM standards. The standards will also be available publicly to allow other development partners to identify existing strengths and gaps, and apply standards.

UNFPA’s leadership is committed to use the findings and recommendations of MOPAN to improve UNFPA’s effectiveness, performance and accountability through multifaceted changes at various levels. In this spirit, the implementation of the above mentioned actions and initiatives will be accompanied and supported by the ongoing projects of UNFPA’s Comprehensive Change Process and relevant work streams of the UN Reform.

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary since UNFPA’s creation and the 25th year of implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, the MOPAN assessment report offers a great opportunity to engage in a constructive dialogue with all our partners, foster learning, improve our contribution to leave no one behind and achieve our three transformative results by 2030: ending the unmet need for family planning, ending preventable maternal deaths, and ending gender-based violence and harmful practices.

We look forward to working with MOPAN, its membership and UNFPA partners at all levels to build on our organizational strengths and collaborate to further improve performance for the benefit of women, girls and young people.

Please accept, Excellencies, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Dr. Natalia Kanem
Under-Secretary-General