



MOPAN

Multilateral Organisation
Performance Assessment Network

Synthesis report

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Executive Summary · 2014



MOPAN

Executive summary

This report presents the findings of an assessment of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) conducted by the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN). MOPAN reports provide an assessment of four dimensions of organisational effectiveness (strategic management, operational management, relationship management, and knowledge management), an assessment of the evidence of the organisation's relevance and development results, and snapshots of UNFPA performance in each of the six countries included in the survey.

UNFPA is a subsidiary body of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) whose mission is to “deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, and every young person's potential is fulfilled.”

The organisation's mandate is guided by the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (ICPD PoA) adopted in 1994 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) established in 2000 at the Millennium Summit. UNFPA works with governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), foundations, the private sector, civil society organisations and in partnership with other UN agencies to bring about changes in women's, youth and adolescents' lives, ensure that their rights are fulfilled and their needs met.

In 2011, UNFPA conducted a mid-term review of its strategic plan. Based on review findings, UNFPA began to implement a series of initiatives to strengthen the organisation's mandate and its focus on results and improve accountability. Key changes deriving from this process include the review of the organisation's strategic direction, resulting in what is known as the bull's eye, which was reconfirmed in the 2014-2017 UNFPA Strategic Plan. An integrated results framework, outcome theories of change, and a revised business model accompany the Strategic Plan. During the period under review, UNFPA also completed a regionalisation process initiated in 2007 to strengthen support to country offices with the establishment of regional and sub-regional offices.

MOPAN assessment

In 2014, MOPAN assessed UNFPA based on information collected through a survey of key stakeholders, document review, and interviews with UNFPA staff. The survey respondents included UNFPA's direct partners, MOPAN donors based in-country and at headquarters, and peer organisations in countries where UNFPA engages in emergency/humanitarian programming. UN country team partners were also included as respondents in Tanzania. Six countries were included in the MOPAN survey of UNFPA: Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Kenya and Tanzania. A total of 225 respondents participated in the survey (34 MOPAN donors based at headquarters, 22 MOPAN donors based in-country, 155 direct partners, and 14 representatives of peer organisations). The document review examined approximately 375 documents including publicly available corporate documents and internal country programming and reporting documents from all six countries. The assessment team interviewed 42 UNFPA staff members (27 at UNFPA headquarters, 8 UNFPA representatives in country offices, and 7 UNFPA representatives in regional offices).

The main findings of the institutional assessment of UNFPA are summarised below.

Key findings

Strategic management

MOPAN established five key performance indicators to assess an organisation's leadership for results and its capacities for developing and following institutional and country strategies that reflect good practices in managing for results.

Since the 2010 MOPAN assessment, UNFPA has improved its management for results at both organisational and country levels. It has implemented efforts to instil a results-oriented culture at the organisational level through refocusing the strategic direction (bull's eye) and adopting a robust integrated results framework and outcome theories of change. At country and regional levels, UNFPA continues to make efforts to further strengthen monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacities, improve the quality of country planning documents (and their related results frameworks), and ensure their alignment with the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan.

UNFPA was rated as strong for the clarity of its mandate and ensuring alignment of its strategic plan to the priorities of the quadrennial comprehensive policy reviews (QCPR). Strong ratings were also awarded for maintaining a focus on the cross-cutting priorities identified in its strategic framework, namely gender equality, HIV/AIDs, and human rights-based approaches. While good governance and environmental sustainability are not priorities or cross-cutting themes for the organisation, the Fund has made efforts to address them.

Operational management

MOPAN established eight key performance indicators to determine if an organisation manages operations in a way that is performance-oriented, thus ensuring organisational accountability for resources and results.

UNFPA was found to have transparent systems in place for the allocation of its regular resources to countries. The organisation's first integrated budget (for 2014-2017) represents the most recent enhancement in UNFPA budgeting practices, and relates planned resources to results in the UNFPA Strategic Plan. In reporting on expenditures, there remains some room for improvement in linking actual expenditures not only to outcome areas, but also to outputs.

Financial management was found to be UNFPA's strongest area of performance in operational management. The Fund has adequate policies and processes in place for financial accountability and has steadily improved its internal audit function. UNFPA continues to work on further strengthening its strategies for the identification, mitigation, monitoring and reporting of risks.

At the time of this assessment, the organisation had adopted a new human resource strategy and was in the process of re-profiling its offices/realigning its staffing structure to the revised business model.

UNFPA has adequate systems in place to manage staff performance. These are, however, not yet being used consistently to their full advantage. For surveyed MOPAN donor respondents, UNFPA's management of human resources was an area of concern.

UNFPA has developed tools, including a guidance note on evidence-based programming (2011), to ensure that new programming initiatives are informed by appropriate types of analysis. The organisation is working to further enhance country office capacity for results-oriented monitoring using indicators and targets and by trying to ensure the consistent application of existing tools across country offices.

The recently completed regionalisation process has contributed to further clarifying the roles and responsibilities of country, regional and HQ offices. The assessment found that country offices have adequate delegated authority for managing implementation of country programmes.

UNFPA has the appropriate policy documents to guide its humanitarian response and is perceived to respect humanitarian principles while delivering humanitarian/emergency assistance. The Fund is working towards ensuring that the organisation has the appropriate human and financial resources as well as adequate operational and programmatic systems required to effectively engage in humanitarian programming.

Relationship management

MOPAN established five key performance indicators to assess how an organisation is working with others at the country level, and in ways that are aligned with the principles of the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation and previous aid effectiveness commitments.

Since the 2010 MOPAN assessment, UNFPA has maintained its efforts to implement aid effectiveness commitments, and has committed to reform as expected in the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR).

UNFPA performs strongly in demonstrating the alignment of its country programmes to government priorities in programme countries. It appears to be making appropriate use of country systems and is seen to contribute to mutual assessments of progress. As in 2010, UNFPA is recognised for its valuable contributions to policy dialogue at both country and global levels, which also illustrate the importance of its normative and upstream work in general. The organisation will need to remain vigilant with regard to its capacity to adjust procedures (rated adequate) by ensuring that it can respond to partners in a timely way and demonstrate sufficient flexibility to respond to changing circumstances. The recent revision of UNFPA's business model indicates that the Fund is aware of and committed to addressing this concern.

Knowledge management

MOPAN established three key performance indicators to assess an organisation's evaluation function and internal reporting mechanisms, as well as its practices and systems that facilitate the sharing of knowledge, both internally and to external stakeholders.

Since the 2010 MOPAN assessment, UNFPA has strengthened its evaluation function and has taken steps to strengthen related quality assurance processes. Following an independent review of the previous policy, UNFPA revised its Evaluation Policy in 2013. Furthermore, it has established a structurally independent Evaluation Office, which has begun to translate the new policy into workable guidance and evaluation plans. One of the Office's priorities is to further strengthen the quality of country programme evaluations.

The organisation has made progress in strengthening its systems and processes for presenting performance information (e.g. by introducing metadata sheets to capture how information on each indicator in the results framework is calculated and collected). This has contributed to enhancing the transparency of performance reporting. Since 2010, UNFPA has also expanded its efforts to systematically reports on lessons learned based on performance information.

Gaps remain in consistently capturing reliable information on UNFPA's specific contributions to achievements at output and especially at outcome level. At the time of this assessment, the Fund was in the process of finalising two tools aimed at improving its data collection, monitoring and measurement systems to inform organisational performance: the Strategic Information System (SIS) and the Global Programming System (GPS). These are expected to be rolled out in 2015.

UNFPA relevance and development results

MOPAN established four key performance indicators to assess evidence of an organisation's relevance, of its progress toward organisational results and country-level results, and of its contributions to national goals and priorities in the countries that participated in the MOPAN assessment. Given that the UNFPA strategic plan for 2014-2017 is in early stages of implementation, this assessment drew largely on performance information related to the 2008-2013 planning cycle.

The MOPAN assessment rated UNFPA strong overall on relevance. MOPAN perception data and documents consulted present evidence that UNFPA is pursuing results relevant to its mandate that are aligned with global development trends and priorities and that respond to the needs and priorities of beneficiaries, and that UNFPA adapts to changing country circumstances.

UNFPA was rated adequate overall in providing evidence of progress towards organisation-wide results. MOPAN donors at headquarters considered the organisation's greatest contributions to be in the areas of family planning, gender, and work related to improving data availability and analysis around population dynamics, sexual and reproductive health, and gender equality (all of which had ratings of strong).

UNFPA reports provide a fair assessment of the organisation's progress in key output areas. The organisation's contributions to outcomes are well evidenced only in the areas of maternal health and gender equality, for which external corporate level evaluations have been conducted. To address information gaps in other outcome areas, the UNFPA independent Evaluation Office has commissioned corporate evaluations of the organisation's support to three other programmatic areas under the 2008-2013 strategic plan: adolescents and youth (2008-2014), family planning (2008-2013), and population and housing census data generation to inform decision making and policy formulation (2005-2014).

Findings from these evaluations, which at the time of this assessment were in their inception phase, can provide valuable information on UNFPA's contributions in these areas.

In terms of providing evidence of progress towards stated country-level results, UNFPA was rated inadequate overall. While MOPAN survey respondents rated UNFPA adequate or strong for most of the stated results at country level, this perception was not supported by evidence deriving from document review. UNFPA reports and country programme evaluations provide information on what UNFPA has done during the four-year country programme cycle, but vary considerably in the extent to which they explain UNFPA contributions to cumulative changes in the measured indicators. To date, available reports and evaluations do not provide sufficient documented evidence of where progress has been made and why, and there are concerns around the quantity and quality of data used to inform performance reports and evaluations. UNFPA is in the process of addressing this issue. As mentioned above, at the time of the assessment, the Fund was in the process of developing systems aimed at improving data collection processes and data quality. It has also established a data quality working group consisting of selected M&E experts within UNFPA.

UNFPA was rated adequate for demonstrating its contributions to national goals and priorities, including relevant millennium development goals (MDGs). UNFPA's re-alignment led to a focus on improving maternal health, the MDG area that is furthest from achieving the target for 2015. This focus permeates the organisation in its programming/planning documents, and in its reports and evaluations. Surveyed stakeholders hold positive views about the contributions of UNFPA's programming to national priorities.

Conclusions

UNFPA continues to be recognised for the relevance and clarity of its mandate. The organisation's strategic plan for 2014-2017 is suited to further strengthen the alignment of UNFPA's strategy with its mandate.

UNFPA has taken concrete measures to create an organisation with a strong results orientation, and the implementation of these measures is well advanced at headquarters. At the level of country offices, UNFPA is in the process of addressing remaining internal capacity gaps, including through a series of capacity-development workshops that are expected to commence in 2015.

The organisation has also strengthened its systems and processes to report on results. The implementation of related measures is underway, and UNFPA is taking steps to ensure consistent capacity for results-based reporting across organisational levels. At the time of this assessment it is not yet possible to assess UNFPA's overall progress towards its organisational or country level objectives based on available documented evidence.

UNFPA is effectively integrating the cross cutting priorities that fall within its mandate, such as gender equality, human rights-based approaches, and HIV/AIDS. The mainstreaming of humanitarian programming remains a work in progress. The Fund has the policies to guide its humanitarian work but limited human and financial resources to fully engage in humanitarian and emergency settings. UNFPA aims to address this by improving operational and programmatic systems and processes for humanitarian programming, and may seek increases in funding and standby partner arrangements to ensure access to necessary human resources.

Since 2010, the Fund has made notable improvements in systems for accountability and has continued to review/update its methods for allocating resources. Results-based budgeting has also steadily improved over time. The organisation is still in the early stages of establishing systems and a culture to enable it to appropriately handle all kinds of risks.

UNFPA's policies and systems to manage staff performance are considered adequate. The Fund is working to ensure that the existing systems are used to full advantage.

UNFPA has made significant progress in strengthening its evaluation function. Revisions to its evaluation policy, the establishment of a structurally independent Evaluation Office in 2013, and continuing efforts to improve the quality of Country Programme Evaluations are indications of the Fund's commitment to improving the credibility, independence and use of evaluations.

Overall MOPAN ratings of UNFPA

The two charts below show the ratings on the key performance indicators that MOPAN used to assess UNFPA in 2014. The first chart shows the ratings on 21 key performance indicators designed to measure organisational effectiveness (practices and systems), and the second chart shows ratings on the four indicators designed to assess evidence of UNFPA's relevance, progress towards organisational and country-level results, and contributions to national goals and priorities.

Organisational effectiveness– overall ratings

Strategic management

KPI-1 Providing direction for results

Survey respondents

4.32

Document review

4

KPI-2 Corporate strategy based on clear mandate

5.37

6

KPI-3 Corporate focus on results

N/A

5

KPI-4 Focus on cross-cutting priorities

4.57

5

KPI-5 Country focus on results

5.12

4

Operational management

KPI-6 Transparent and predictable funding

4.39

5

KPI-7 Results-based budgeting

3.76

4

KPI-8 Financial accountability

4.39

5

KPI-9 Using performance information

4.15

5

KPI-10 Managing human resources

3.34

4

KPI-11 Performance oriented programming

N/A

4

KPI-12 Delegating authority

4.27

4

KPI-13 Mainstreaming humanitarian programming

4.38

5

Relationship management

KPI-14 Supporting national plans

4.86

6

KPI-15 Adjusting procedures

4.42

N/A

KPI-16 Using country systems

4.80

N/A

KPI-17 Contributing to policy dialogue

4.91

N/A

KPI-18 Harmonising procedures

4.81

5

Knowledge management

KPI-19 Evaluating results

4.44

4

KPI-20 Presenting performance information

4.05

4

KPI-21 Disseminating lessons learned

3.91

5

Legend

Strong or above

4.50–6.00

Adequate

3.50–4.49

Inadequate or below

1.00–3.49

Document review data unavailable

◆

Not assessed

N/A

Relevance and evidence of progress towards results – overall ratings

Relevance and results	Assessment Rating
KPI A: Evidence of UNFPA's relevance	Strong
KPI B: Evidence of progress towards organisation-wide results	Adequate
KPI C: Evidence of progress towards UNFPA stated country-level results	Inadequate
KPI D: Evidence of contribution to national goals and priorities, including Millennium Development Goals	Adequate