



Statement by Marco Segone

Director, Independent Evaluation Office

United Nations Population Fund

on

Item on evaluation

Formative evaluation of the organizational resilience of UNFPA in light of its response
to the COVID-19 pandemic

UNFPA/UNDP/UNOPS Executive Board

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Mr. President,

Distinguished Members of the Executive Board,

It is my pleasure to present the main results of the formative evaluation of the organizational resilience of UNFPA in light of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the response by UNFPA to the global COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to draw lessons from the COVID-19 response with a view to informing UNFPA preparedness and its response to future global crises.

Covering the period from 2020 to 2023, the evaluation assessed the performance of UNFPA in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, its ability to work across the humanitarian-development-peace continuum during the pandemic, and analyzed the capacity of UNFPA to anticipate, prepare for, respond and adapt to global crises.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

Please allow me to present the key highlights of the evaluation.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNFPA demonstrated commendable agility in quickly identifying threats to the three transformative results and formulating strategies to address them. The initial UNFPA response and preparedness planning were swift and relevant, thanks to a multifaceted assessment of the needs of populations during the COVID-19 pandemic and the tailoring of the response to the specific contexts of different countries. However, the pandemic exacerbated existing programmatic challenges around family planning, harmful practices and UNFPA work in the field of data that may impact resilience to future crises.

In responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNFPA leveraged its inherent flexibility and the commitment and resourcefulness of its personnel to innovate across all programmatic levels. Yet, opportunities to embed work across the humanitarian-development-peace continuum were missed in some contexts, mainly due to the dichotomy between development and humanitarian skills.

UNFPA made important efforts to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on maternal health, family planning and gender-based violence service provision and uptake, but its contribution was limited by resource constraints, insufficient or inadequately skilled service providers and the significant delays in global supply chains.

While the COVID-19 pandemic revealed shortcomings in business continuity management, some lessons were learned from the pandemic, leading to the development of a new business continuity management policy subsequent to the pandemic.

UNFPA worked to safeguard personnel and partner health, welfare and security during the crisis. Nonetheless, disparities between staff and non-staff personnel regarding safeguarding and welfare were highlighted by the pandemic, as was a lack of clarity around duty-of-care to partners, challenging resilience.

The COVID-19 crisis has presented significant opportunities for organizational learning and development. Although UNFPA has undertaken some internal learning, the lack of a systematic approach to capturing and retaining insights from crisis responses limits its preparedness for future global crises.

Mr President, Distinguished Delegates,

Please allow me now to turn to the seven recommendations of the evaluation.

First, in the aftermath of COVID-19, and in anticipation of future crises, UNFPA should increase efforts to strengthen resilience in key mandate areas, such as family planning, harmful practices and data.

Second, UNFPA should sustain and build on technical and policy work to operationalize the humanitarian-development-peace continuum approach in order to improve resilience and mitigate disruptions to its activities and results.

Third, UNFPA should better embed business continuity management in the everyday work of all business units.

Fourth, UNFPA should foster a workplace culture where all its personnel are appropriately supported and valued and where personnel and implementing partners are better prepared to anticipate, respond to and recover from crises.

Fifth, UNFPA should take steps to improve the resilience of its supply chain, and ensure that it is in a position to continue procuring and supplying services and goods needed for the safety and security of its personnel and for effective business continuity and humanitarian programming.

Sixth, UNFPA should strengthen its systems to plan, monitor and report on results achieved in response to serious disruptions.

Seventh, UNFPA should systematize its organization-wide knowledge management and learning to capitalize on innovations, maximize effectiveness and ensure no-one is left behind.

Mr President, Distinguished Delegates,

The COVID-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented test of the resilience of communities and organizations, including UNFPA.

It is my hope that the lessons learned, and the recommendations contained in this evaluation will help UNFPA to improve its preparedness as well as its capacity to respond to future global crises, including those related to climate change or future global pandemics.

This concludes my presentation, Mr President. I thank you and the Executive Board for your continued support and guidance, and I am at your disposal for any questions or clarifications.