



Statement by Dr. Natalia Kanem

UNFPA, Executive Director

on

Annual Report on the UNFPA evaluation function 2019

Evaluation of the UNFPA capacity in humanitarian action (2012-2019)

Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS

Annual Session 2020

Informal Board Meeting

15 May 2020

New York

Ambassador Panayotov,

Distinguished delegates,

Good morning! I extend my personal good wishes to you and your families during this unusual time of safe-distancing that we're all experiencing. It is a pleasure to join you today for this informal meeting on evaluation.

As we together confront the COVID-19 crisis, evaluation is more important than ever. UNFPA remains steadfast in our commitment to learning, to evidence-based decision-making, to transparency and accountability.

While the pandemic has widespread implications, women and girls and older people are particularly hard hit.

Sexual and reproductive health is a significant public health issue during epidemics, because women and girls face additional challenges that make them ever more vulnerable. Women form 70 per cent of the health work force. In many societies, women are expected to be caregivers for the immediate and extended family; they also do the cooking and cleaning and interact with everyone, intimate contact that puts them at more risk of getting sick.

There is no current evidence of adverse effects on pregnant women from COVID-19, yet pregnancy itself causes a suppression of the immune system.

To make matters even worse, as countries 'lock down' to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus, extended home confinement is correlating with alarming increases in gender-based violence.

In this time of uncertainty for everyone, Evaluations at UNFPA are being adapted in real time on the ground, so that evidence and lessons are available to the organization as we adapt our programming to respond to the crisis.

UNFPA appreciates the efforts made by the independent Evaluation Office to further strengthen the evaluation function. We are pleased that seven of nine key performance indicators for 2019 were achieved or are on track. Moreover, innovations undertaken by the Evaluation Office have yielded evaluations that are more relevant and responsive to the demands of the organization, with important strengthening of evaluation use, through more effective communication and knowledge management.

UNFPA is committed to learning from evaluations and to implementing management responses. We have consistently increased investments in the independent oversight and assurance functions, as evidenced by the more than 200 percent increase in evaluation between 2010 and the midterm review of the integrated budget 2018-2021. Evaluations continue to be implemented in a timely manner, and half of all centralized evaluations in 2019 were joint or system-wide, reflecting a strong commitment to UN reform.

UNFPA appreciates the efforts of the Evaluation Office in supporting National Evaluation

Capacity Development, working closely with Parliamentarians and youth. I welcome the Evaluation Office's co-lead role for the "Decade of Evaluation for Action" campaign, known as Eval4Action.

In line with the Secretary-General's "Decade of Action" on the Sustainable Development Goals, Eval4Action calls upon all actors at all levels to accelerate delivery by advocating for stronger evaluation capacities, and evidence-based policies. Young and emerging evaluators are actively and enthusiastically engaged in Eval4Action, to help drive sustainable development around the globe.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

More than 168 million people will need humanitarian assistance this year. The number continues to rise exponentially, showing that the COVID-19 pandemic is not just a health crisis, it is also a humanitarian crisis.

UNFPA is hard at work on the ground in over 150 locations. We will be there ... before, during and after Covid and humanitarian crises, working with partners to ensure that sexual and reproductive health and rights, and measures to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, are well integrated into the emergency response to protect women and girls.

Last year, the Evaluation Office completed the first-ever evaluation of UNFPA capacity in humanitarian action globally, in terms of both preparedness and response. Very timely. This evaluation allows UNFPA, particularly the new Humanitarian Office based in Geneva, to take stock of lessons from nearly a decade of humanitarian action since 2012.

The evaluation findings and recommendations have informed the humanitarian work plan and priorities. In particular, UNFPA is to implement a comprehensive corporate approach on preparedness for supplies, including decisions on stockpiling key humanitarian supplies and elaborating guidance on national preparedness and prepositioning.

The lessons from this and other evaluations better equip UNFPA to increase our capacity to work well with other agencies, funds and programmes and our Government and civil society partners in countries, as we use data and evidence to deliver on our 3 Transformative Results by 2030:  
Zero unmet need for family planning,  
Zero preventable maternal deaths, and  
Zero gender-based violence and harmful practices in all countries, including those affected by conflict and disaster.

I would also re-emphasize that evaluation results are also providing UNFPA with a body of evidence and lessons that we need, to improve our real time response to COVID-19, always with a focus on the most vulnerable women and girls.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

In the words of the poet Audre Lorde:

"Life is very short and what we have to do must be done in the now."

UNFPA will persevere. Our hope is to overcome this crisis and as the Secretary-General says, build back better — with strengthened health systems in countries and life-saving universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

In closing, allow me to reiterate UNFPA's full commitment to enhancing the use of evaluations for evidence-based decision making and action, in all contexts.

I thank the Members of the Executive Board and your governments, for your continued partnership and support, and look forward to our discussion this morning.