



14 May 2019

## Information note

### **Implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system**

UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS and UN-Women are pleased to provide their Executive Boards with “harmonized agency-specific information” on their respective implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/279, in accordance with UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS Executive Board decision 2019/4, UNICEF Executive Board decision 2019/8 and UN-Women Executive Board decision 2019/1. Under the principle of collective ownership, we remain fully committed to a repositioned United Nations development system (UNDS), optimally equipped to support countries achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We are unwavering in working together to drive UNDS reforms forward, under the primary objective of delivering more and better collective development results for the people we serve.

Much of the collective implementation of UNDS reform is being undertaken jointly by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General and with the support of United Nations Development Coordination Office (DCO) and the Transition Team. Our entities are very closely engaged in these ongoing system-wide processes. Meanwhile, there are also elements of the reform that impact us individually as agencies, and which may require specific adjustments and actions, in consultation with the respective Executive Boards. This background note focuses on these elements.

#### **1. Introduction**

It has been a year since the General Assembly adopted resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system, which guides the system’s transformation to better support countries to implement the 2030 Agenda. Building on this momentum, UNFPA will capitalize on UNDS reform as an opportunity to deliver with greater impact on the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, and its three transformative results in this critical year of the 50th anniversary of UNFPA and the 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

Being at the forefront and always a strong supporter of the UNDS reform, UNFPA has been continuously recalibrating its own processes and systems to adapt accordingly. We are also leading by example to improve system-wide coherence and inter-agency collaboration in many reform streams. Our executive management have been entrusted to coordinate two important processes in this reform: the Strategic Financing Results Group (SFRG) of the UNSDG, together with UNCTAD; and the re-design of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework – now called United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework / UNSDCF or “Cooperation Framework” – together with UNESCO. Both these partnerships are in their own way critical to enabling change on the ground and to maximize joint approaches offered by this reform. The following updates on the implications of the UNDS reform on UNFPA are subject to a rapidly changing environment with interconnected and mutually reinforcing streams that are still unfolding towards increased collective results and joint work.



## **2. Supporting the reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system**

UNFPA welcomes the strengthened independence and impartiality of the Resident Coordinators (RCs), enhancing their authority, effectiveness and capacity to ensure a comprehensive and coherent United Nations response to the 2030 Agenda at country level. The empowered RC system is central to the repositioning of the UNDS at country level and their inherent coordination function adds critical value to the UNDS offer through the delivery of more strategic and better integrated joint programmes and operations. We fully commit to supporting the RCs to play an empowered leadership role to achieve collective results outlined in the UNSDCF and other system-wide results frameworks.

Predictable and timely funding of the RC system will be a critical success factor. UNFPA will continue to provide timely and full contributions using the agreed cost-sharing formula. We are already rolling out the 1 per cent levy as an important means by which Member States can provide funding to a repositioned RC system. Most donors have opted for the agency-administered option; however, the administration of the levy is not cost-neutral as tracking and collecting the levy is process-heavy. The exact implications for UNFPA and the sustainable funding for the RC system are yet to be established. In close coordination with other UNDS entities, UNFPA is monitoring the implications on programming resources and aims to quantify, to extent possible, additional transaction and administration costs associated with the levy.

RCs should have capacities and strong knowledge of the mandates of the United Nations entities as well as the human rights treaties and normative instruments that guide their work. As the UNFPA mandate is central to sustainable development, the organization will strengthen its partnership with RCs to rally the UNCTs around the transformative results of UNFPA. In support of the partnership, UNFPA has developed an RC engagement strategy to guide and strengthen strategic collaboration. UNFPA also supports and encourages staff with the aspirations of becoming RCs through tailored training and coaching.

The revised Management and Accountability Framework (MAF) is a central element of the new RC system. Guided by it, UNFPA has revised job descriptions of its representatives in close coordination with other entities to include common language on responsibilities as a UNCT member, joint programming and the matrixed reporting arrangement. The UNFPA performance appraisal system integrates feedback from the RCs and the principle of mutual accountability. UNFPA will monitor the implementation of the MAF and will actively engage in its collective revision during the third quarter of 2019.

## **3. Strengthening system-wide analysis, planning and reporting**

### *Alignment with the UNSDCF*

UNFPA and UNESCO co-chaired the redesign of the UNDAF which has now been renamed the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), or “Cooperation Framework”.

The new UNSDCF guidance was endorsed – in principle – by the UNDS principals on 8 May 2019. The Development Coordination Office (DCO) will spearhead the roll-out of the new guidance, which includes translation in all United Nations languages; webinars and regional workshops, and a possible partnership with the United Nations System Staff College to develop online and face-to-face courses.

UNFPA will be adjusting its internal procedural guidelines, systems and processes for country programme documents (CPDs) with the new guidance, particularly those related to monitoring, evaluation and reporting at country, regional and global levels. An internal pool of trainers will be created to support offices in the roll-out countries. We will support the RCs to coordinate and lead the UNSDCF planning process, making use of regional and global expertise to maximize the impact, safeguard United Nations norms and values and anchor it in regional and transboundary concerns.



The UNSDCF triggers a review of the UNCT configuration to ensure it has the necessary capacity and access to the required expertise to deliver on the commitments contained therein. As an entity with a business model for differentiated country support, under five modes of engagement, customized to respond to the specific needs under different settings and at different development levels, UNFPA can contribute to the development of innovative and modern alternative business models.

#### *UN INFO as the flagship UNDS planning*

UNFPA supports UN INFO as the UNDS planning, monitoring and reporting platform at country level. The discussion is underway on the architecture and roll-out as a single data entry and national ownership to benefit to the multiple utility of the data captured in UN INFO. It will be integrated into the corporate performance management and reporting tools, fully harmonize the system with the prospective plan-to-report functionality of the UNFPA enterprise resource planning (ERP) system under development.

#### *Financial Data Cube / IATI*

For improved transparency, visibility and monitoring of Member States contributions to core and pooled funds, UNFPA continues to strengthen its resource planning and tracking systems to be able to effectively contribute to system-wide requests for data and evidence, joint reviews and reporting. To strengthen mechanisms for transparency and accountability for core and non-core fund management, UNFPA is tracking and reporting on resources in line with the harmonized financial reporting standards, known as “Data Cube”, as agreed by the UNSDG entities and the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI).

### **4. Strengthening joint implementation/support to the Sustainable Development Goals**

UNFPA has introduced several measures in the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 to support national Governments in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Goals 3, 5, 10, 17 and 16. This includes policy and advocacy support, service delivery, knowledge management, capacity development and promoting partnerships including South-South and triangular cooperation as well as generation, analysis and use of data in implementing the SDGs in cooperation and close collaboration with other entities of the UNDS.

#### *Common chapter*

UNFPA has a strong track record in joint implementation of SDGs support to Governments, including through the implementation of the common chapter of the strategic plans of UNFPA, UNDP, UNICEF and UN-Women. The four agencies have introduced a common set of SDG indicators in the Integrated Results and Resources Framework (IRRF) to monitor collaborative contributions to the SDGs through the implementation of the common chapter. Relevant indicators of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) were also incorporated in the IRRF and reported on to monitor how agencies work together to achieve organizational effectiveness and efficiency.

#### *Joint work for SDG implementation*

Joint programmes, collaboration and coordination with the United Nations system and other stakeholders have always been a natural *modus operandi* for the Fund. Globally, UNFPA participates in the largest number of United Nations joint programmes and one of the three agencies chairing most of the UNSDCF results groups, fostering greater collaboration to implement system-wide responses in a comprehensive and integrated manner.

The dedication of staff has been decisive in determining the overall impact of system-wide actions on the ground over the years and will only become even more relevant in a repositioned UNDS. UNFPA country offices are stepping up to provide the support and leadership needed to advance the implementation of the reforms, primarily through engagement in the UNSDCF results groups, joint programmes and common services, and through the Mainstreaming, Acceleration, Policy Support (MAPS) approach and related missions, among other measures.



### *SDG Training*

UNFPA participates in the development of the SDG certification training for the RCs, so called “SDGs Primer” but also rolled out its own manager certification programme, in cooperation with the United Nations System Staff College, to facilitate and train managers use more collaborative and joined-up interagency approaches at all levels.

### *Driving sustainable financing for SDGs*

The United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG), under the new working arrangements, has developed common strategic priorities to facilitate a step change in the quality and impact of United Nations support at country level. The resources needed to implement the ambitious 2030 Agenda are substantial; this requires shifting from funding individual projects to financing transformative change. To this extent, the UNSDG Strategic Financing Results Group (SFRG), co-chaired by UNCTAD and UNFPA, aims to help optimize the degree to which United Nations spending can mobilize additional finance and leverage new financing partners and modalities, to help developing countries meet their ambitious SDG financing requirements. A system-wide data standard has already been developed to enable comparable reporting and analysis of financial data across all agencies. In addition, the SFRG works to make all relevant expertise and support platforms readily available to the new UNCTs and RCs to help them transform the United Nations system support to the SDG financing agenda of Member States. UNFPA will stay committed to this course.

## **5. Efficiencies through shared business operations and premises**

UNFPA has always been a strong proponent of common back offices and currently outsources various essential services at field and headquarters level to sister agencies to realise efficiency gains. Some 68 per cent of UNFPA premises are already shared with other United Nations agencies, which exceeds the General Assembly resolution 72/279 target of 50 per cent common premises. As a pioneer in this area, UNFPA is interested to share experiences and increase its uptake of such services.

UNFPA and 11 other United Nations entities signed the high-level statement, agreeing with the principle of mutual recognition, thereby facilitating active collaboration across agencies and reducing transaction costs for Governments and participating agencies, especially in the area of procurement. UNFPA envisions to extend its application to other areas as well, including human resources, information technology and finance.

In terms of efficiency gains envisioned by the Secretary-General in General Assembly resolution 72/684, the Business Innovation Group (BIG), a strategic results group of the UNSDG, leads efforts at the system-wide level to develop common policies or systems to measure progress. The work of the BIG on consolidation of common back offices is moving to a critical operational phase, with pilots foreseen in six countries. UNFPA is fully engaged in the process, providing the perspective of both a medium-size organization and an intended recipient of common back office services.

## **6. Review of agency assets at country and regional level**

UNFPA is committed to the ongoing review to optimize and restructure United Nations regional assets in support of the 2030 Agenda. UNFPA will continue to engage proactively in implementing the recommendations contained in the latest Secretary-General’s report on QCPR implementation and UNDS repositioning for better streamlined and effective coordination, following feedback from the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) deliberations at its Operational Activities Segment.



In line with the outcome of the Multi-Country Office Review, UNFPA will work with UNSDG partners to identify specific actions to “ensure a more coherent, effective and efficient coverage and collaboration for results vis-à-vis multi-country office settings”. In the Pacific, this will include assessment of the Joint Presence Office structure co-administered by UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women, as well as reviewing staff capacities in order to maximize programmatic support and expertise and assess capacities available in each country.

## **7. Funding Compact**

The final version of the Funding Compact with Member States was shared in March 2019, and will be considered during the ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment in May 2019. Largely building on the QCPR and existing reporting obligations, the Funding Compact is not intended to create parallel mechanisms but rather a clear commitment on both sides – the United Nations development system (financial reporting data standards, transparency reporting, commitment to UN INFO and joint activities) as well as Member States (less earmarked and fragmented funding of the United Nations development system).

At the same time, the Funding Compact has created a positive momentum among Member States around the issue of adequate levels of sustainable and predictable funding for the UNFPA strategic plan, relating to core and non-core funding as well as its thematic funds. UNFPA derives a large share of its co-financing from pooled funds and already has strong thematic and internally pooled funding elements in its funding architecture as well as the Integrated Results and Resources Framework (IRRF) to accompany its strategic plan, and the three transformative results to frame funding and financing aspirations aligned to the SDGs. Thus, UNFPA can build on its strengths and improve areas that require further prioritization, in line with UNSDG commitments to continue successful engagement in bilateral funding dialogues, agency-specific structured funding dialogues as well as the system-wide funding compact.

UNFPA routinely surpasses the target 15 per cent of non-core resources to joint activities and is building on ongoing partnerships, including those to better harness innovative funding sources and to engage in development financing. UNFPA needs to prioritize visibility to that experience along with bilateral funding to help the organization to leverage this success. As a requirement for better visibility of Member States contributions to core and pooled funds increases, UNFPA continues to strengthen its own resource planning and tracking systems to be able to effectively contribute to system-wide requests for data and evidence, joint review and reporting.

### *Joint SDG Fund*

The Joint SDG Fund aims to stimulate integrated and transformative policy shifts, and supports the UNDS in creating SDG financing strategies and making strategic investments, so that countries can accelerate progress on the SDGs. In the first round, the Joint SDG Fund will provide \$60 million to leverage financing for social protection, including floors, paying special attention to the most vulnerable and marginalized populations, including children, women, adolescents, people living with disabilities and older people. As the theme relates strongly to the UNFPA mandate, the Fund has organized webinars on the topics of social protection and ‘leaving no one behind’, which were also a platform to provide feedback on opportunities and challenges related to this particular process. UNFPA will stay committed to further engage in the process.



## **8. Conclusion**

UNFPA will continue to champion United Nations reform by providing the support and leadership needed to accelerate its implementation at all levels within and outside the organization. UNFPA has participated actively in the development of proposals under other important and interconnected workstreams, such as the system-wide strategic document, to ensure that the Fund's assets are supporting the delivery on the ground in the best way possible. UNFPA therefore welcomes the recent report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the QCPR and looks forward to the deliberations and support of Members States during the ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment.

The ongoing UNDS repositioning presents new opportunities and has direct implications for UNFPA, the full extent of which is still partly unknown at this stage. UNFPA see the changes as an enabling opportunity to become even more coordinated, more results-oriented, more agile and more innovative. This, in turn, will help UNFPA engage better with more partners, generate greater commitment and galvanize the global movement needed to fulfil its mandate.

In conclusion, together with UNDP, UNICEF, UNOPS and UN-Women, UNFPA reiterates its commitment to the implementation of UNDS reform and to build on the lessons learned to further strengthen our common impact on the ground.

---