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Addendum

UNFPA SEGMENT

Chapter III. REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND PROGRAMME-  
LEVEL ACTIVITIES

C. Programme-level activities (Evaluation)

1. The Deputy Executive Director (Programme) introduced the Periodic report of the Executive Director on Evaluation (DP/FPA/1996/20), which outlined evaluation activities undertaken by UNFPA during the period 1994-1995. In noting that the number of evaluations of UNFPA-assisted projects continued to increase, she observed that evaluation planning within the Fund still required continued improvement to ensure that project design encompassed the critical elements needed for meaningful evaluations. She pointed to some common problems highlighted in recent evaluation findings, indicating that some of them required longer-term solutions.

2. The Deputy Executive Director (Programme) informed the Executive Board that the present monitoring and evaluation system was under revision, with due account being given to the importance of harmonization within the United Nations system. She drew attention to the recently initiated system of policy application reviews to monitor compliance with UNFPA policies and procedures, including, inter alia, the use of evaluation results. The Board was informed of ongoing and planned evaluation activities, highlighting efforts to refine techniques and tools, particularly the development of indicators for programme performance.

3. Many delegations expressed their appreciation for the frankness and candour of the report and of the introductory statement by the Deputy Executive Director (Programme). The importance of evaluation as a management as well as a programming tool was emphasized. The Fund was urged to continue giving priority to evaluation and to the use of evaluation results for strategic programming. Concern was expressed that programme performance and achievements had not been systematically evaluated within the programme review and strategy development (PRSD) process, and UNFPA was urged to increase its efforts in that regard.

4. There was general agreement with respect to the relevance and importance of the topics being studied in ongoing thematic evaluations, and the Fund was encouraged to conduct evaluations of similar key issues related to the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. Delegations welcomed the policy application review initiative and expressed a desire to be informed in due course of the findings of such reviews. The Fund was commended on the initiatives regarding indicators for programme performance and impact assessment, duly recognizing the inherent difficulties with respect to the latter. In the future, the Fund should provide the Board not only with aggregate information on the impact of its endeavours but also with "snapshots" of how the lessons learned were being applied. The need to share lessons learned, both positive as well as negative, was emphasized by several delegations.

5. Several delegations pointed out that the evaluation and monitoring process was of value not just in terms of improving programme performance: another very important aspect was the building of national capacity. By fostering national participation in the evaluation process, the Fund would enable countries to implement and manage their own programmes better and would instill a greater sense of ownership by the countries in which the programmes were being carried out. Also mentioned was the fact that an effective evaluation system was an important tool for resource mobilization since it fostered a sense of confidence that resources were being used wisely. One delegation pointed out that evaluation should not become an end in itself and that it was valuable as long as it was used to improve programme quality and performance. If it became too burdensome, the result would be self-defeating.

6. In reply to questions about what percentage of UNFPA programmes were evaluated, the Deputy Executive Director (Programme) replied that current guidelines require all projects and programmes to have a built-in evaluation component. The number that had an "independent", i.e., external, evaluation did not reach 100 per cent although there had been a continuous increase in recent years. Whether to include such an independent evaluation depended, as delegations had pointed out, on how cost-effective it was. On the question of impact evaluation, the Deputy Executive Director (Programme) said that it was very difficult to assign causality. If a country experienced improvements in its demographic and reproductive health situation, it was not possible to specify what part was the result of the UNFPA-assisted programme, but the Fund continued to work to develop indicators to measure impact as well as other aspects of programme performance.

7. The Deputy Executive Director (Programme) welcomed comments by delegations on the need to include national expertise in evaluation exercises. The Fund recognized the value of doing so both in terms of drawing on the valuable expertise that existed in programme countries and in terms of the impetus that doing so gave to national capacity-building. She also agreed with delegations that it was necessary not just to produce syntheses of evaluations but to pass on lessons efficiently from one programme to another; the country support teams play a critical in meeting that objective.

8. The Executive Board took note of the Periodic report on evaluation as contained in document DP/FPA/1996/20.

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