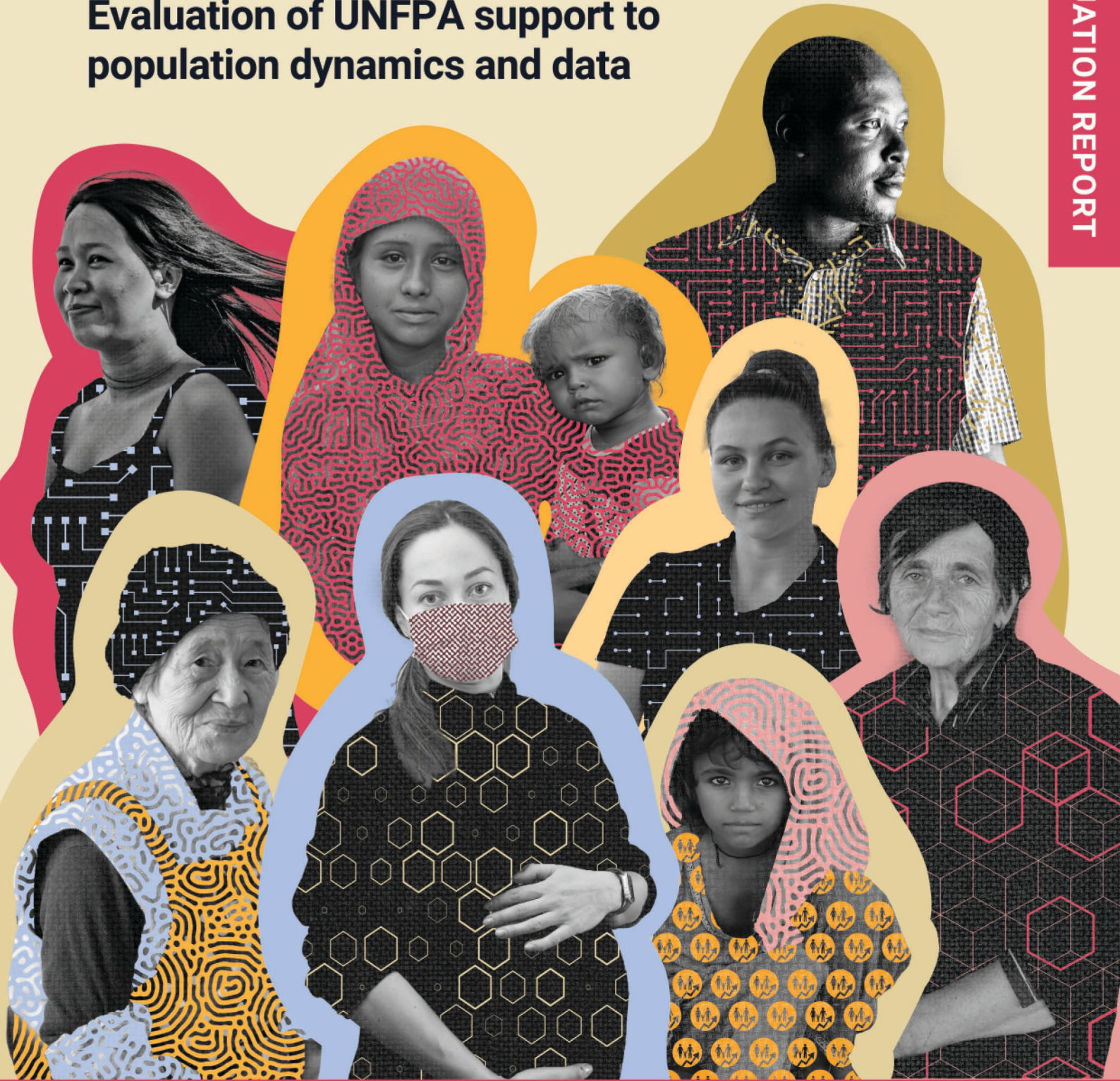


Evaluation of UNFPA support to population dynamics and data



UNFPA Evaluation Office

2023

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Foreword

The global population reaching 8 billion is a significant landmark in human development, coinciding with an unprecedented level of demographic diversity. The United Nations Secretary-General recognizes demographic shifts as one of five megatrends shaping our common future. In line with its mandate, UNFPA plays a vital role in the United Nations efforts to comprehend and use population dynamics and data, incorporate a gender perspective, and strengthen the capacity of Member States to generate and use disaggregated data on population dynamics.

With this context, the Evaluation Office undertook the first thematic evaluation of UNFPA support to population dynamics and data with a specific focus on demographic dividend, population ageing and low fertility. This evaluation covers an eight-year period, from 2014 to 2022, providing a valuable opportunity to examine the progress and evolution of UNFPA in the area of population data, population dynamics and population and development over time.

The evaluation indicates that UNFPA has provided relevant and timely support throughout the 'data chain' from the collection of quality disaggregated population data, to analysing population dynamics, to supporting the use of population data for development, without any loss of concrete support to foundational data collection exercises such as census. Moreover, UNFPA has been forward-looking and effective in positioning itself as a leader in comprehending and responding to demographic shifts. The use of overarching concepts such as demographic resilience has brought together various demographic shifts in a framework that emphasizes rights-based and inclusive approaches. This has been achieved thoughtfully and is likely to see positive and significant returns in the future.

The evaluation has also brought to light the growing importance of demographic shifts and their impact on people worldwide in the coming decades. Against this challenge, the population and development work of UNFPA requires thought leadership with a clear conceptualization and future-casting. While UNFPA includes ageing and low fertility issues in its remit, there remains a gap in the organization's theory of change regarding how these issues are linked to the organization's three transformative results: ending preventable maternal deaths; ending the unmet need for family planning; and ending gender-based violence and all harmful practices. The current structure and capacity of the Population and Development Branch may not be sufficient to position UNFPA as a population data agency, particularly given the pressing need for UNFPA to provide cross-cutting leadership and expertise on evolving population and development priorities such as population ageing, digitization, climate change and migration.

As UNFPA prepares for the global review of the International Conference on Population and Development on its 30th anniversary in 2024, I am hopeful that the evidence and insights in this evaluation will help UNFPA to refine its value proposition, relevance and positioning in order to more effectively respond to demographic shifts and demographic diversity, to ultimately achieve the three transformative results.

Marco Segone

Director, UNFPA Evaluation Office

Acknowledgements

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In addition, we would like to extend our gratitude to colleagues in the regional and country offices, who participated in the case studies, for their contributions. This includes the UNFPA regional offices in Asia and the Pacific, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and Arab States; and the UNFPA country offices in Nigeria, Uganda and Mexico.

Special thanks also go to Alexandra Chambel for her great contributions during the preparation and inception phase of the evaluation process. Finally, we would like to thank all those who engaged or participated in this evaluation, be it through responding to a survey and making themselves available for interviews and consultations, which was central to the completion of this evaluation.

Messay Tassew

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Regional case study: Arab States
Country case study: Mexico
Country case study: Nigeria
Country case study: Uganda

Acronyms

APRO	Asia and the Pacific Regional Office	NTTA	National time transfer accounts
ASRO	Arab States Regional Office	OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
AU	African Union	PDP	Population data portal
CCA	Common country analysis	PSA	Population situation analysis
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
COD-PS	Common operational datasets - population statistics	SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
CoE	Centre of Excellence	SSC	South-South cooperation
CPD	Country programme document	SSTC	South-South and triangular cooperation
CRVS	Civil registration and vital statistics	SWEDD	Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend Initiative
EECARO	Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office	TFR	Total fertility rate
EGRISS	Expert Group on Refugee, Internally Displaced Person and Statelessness Statistics	UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
ESARO	East and Southern Africa Regional Office	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
GBV	Gender-based violence	UNECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
GRID-3	Geo-Referenced Infrastructure and Demographic Data for Development	UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
HDX	OCHA Humanitarian Data Exchange	UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
HRBA	Human rights-based approach	UNESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
IDRC	International Development Research Centre	UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency
IOM	International Office of Migration	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
LACRO	Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office	UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, plus	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
LNOB	Leaving no one behind	WCARO	West and Central Africa Regional Office
LSSC	Local shared service centre	WHO	World Health Organization
NPP	National Policy on Population for Sustainable Development		
NTA	National transfer accounts		

Executive summary

INTRODUCTION

The Evaluation Office of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) commissioned this independent evaluation of “UNFPA support to population dynamics and data” to address an information gap identified within centralized UNFPA evaluations on the theme of population dynamics.

The evaluation is forward-looking and strategic in nature with the primary purpose being to inform UNFPA future support and programming on population data and population dynamics as well as on population and development within the framework of the current UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025.

The two specific objectives of the evaluation are: (i) to assess the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the UNFPA support to population data and population dynamics, as well as population and development; and (ii) to identify lessons learned, which can be used to inform the mid-term review of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and the design of evidence-based population policies, programmes and strategies.

The scope of the evaluation has three aspects: (i) the temporal scope, which is 2014-2022; (ii) the geographic scope, in that the evaluation covered interventions on population dynamics and data at global, regional and country levels; and (iii) the thematic scope, which covers population data, population dynamics, and population and development.

Primary users of the evaluation are UNFPA population and development colleagues at global, regional and country levels and, more broadly, other UNFPA staff and the UNFPA Executive Board. Further users are expected to be national governments, donors and civil society organizations.

EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

This evaluation is primarily formative and forward-looking with a strong focus on utility for future UNFPA programming. The overarching evaluation approach started with a reconstructed theory of change, in line with the evaluation’s adoption of a contribution analysis approach. The reconstructed theory of change was used primarily as a foundational tool by the evaluation team to inform the development of the evaluation matrix.

From this evaluation matrix, data collection methods and tools were derived to ensure that evidence was collected across countries and at global and regional levels in a consistent and utility-focused manner. An evidence database was developed to ensure that all evidence could be collated, recorded and coded in a manner that supported robust analysis.

This main evaluation report is accompanied by two specific internal thematic papers: one on the demographic dividend and the other one on ageing and low fertility. These thematic papers were developed from the same datasets (the six case studies, the global-level data collection, and the internal survey) as the main report, focusing, specifically, on the topics of the demographic dividend and ageing and low fertility respectively.

The evaluation was framed around a nested approach of seven primary dataset components:

- Three regional case studies: Asia Pacific Regional Office (APRO); Arab States Regional Office (ASRO); and Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (EECARO)

- Three country case studies: Mexico, Nigeria and Uganda
- One 'additional' dataset being evidence collected at the global level and the regional level (outside of the three regional case studies).

Data collection consisted of document review, semi-structured key informant interviews, a survey and a social media scan.

The evaluation ensured compliance with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation and the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation, and the four ethical principles of integrity, accountability, respect and beneficence.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 1: Overall, UNFPA has provided relevant and timely support to population data, population dynamics, and population and development across the time period 2014 to 2022. This is despite a view that UNFPA reframed the centrality of population dynamics from 2014 with the introduction of the “bullseye”¹. There is a clear consensus that the area of population data and dynamics is gaining increasing prominence within UNFPA, ensuring its alignment with, and relevance to, the current global issues related to demographic shifts.

In general, there is consensus that UNFPA remains a strong and relevant player in population data, particularly with regard to population and housing census. Beyond census and support to civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) and other data collection exercises such as demographic health surveys, UNFPA has increased investment in data systems, particularly the population data portal (PDP), which has been relevant to needs across a range of internal and external stakeholders. Support to census in particular has remained a relevant strength and focus of UNFPA across the time period of this evaluation (2014-2022).

This has continued even as the organization has articulated a focus on the “three zeros”, all grounded in data and evidence. Some feel that the introduction of the bullseye with the Strategic Plan 2014-2017 was a critical moment in downplaying population and development, as it literally put sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) front and centre with population dynamics one of the three supporting concentric areas. However, there was never a substantive move away from the foundational population data work of UNFPA (particularly census). In terms of population and development, it was more of a rebranding exercise that has resulted, for many external stakeholders, in UNFPA being seen more as the ‘SRHR agency’ than the ‘population data agency’.

In reality, population data and SRHR are not delinked and increasingly all overarching demographic shifts – high fertility, the demographic dividend potential, the second demographic dividend, and low fertility as a contributory factor in ageing societies – link to SRHR. A recent increase in focus on demographic shifts (the Secretary-General has identified such shifts as a key megatrend of the 21st century and the global population has recently reached 8 billion) has opened up the opportunity for UNFPA to enhance further its data work. This has been articulated well in the current strategic plan, where data and evidence are accelerators towards the three transformative results. However, this is not yet currently supported by population and development capacity.

Conclusion 2: UNFPA has shown effectiveness for strengthening national and subnational data systems, particularly capacity-building support to national statistics offices for conducting a census and, to a lesser extent, CRVS. Capacity-building on population dynamics and demographic intelligence has a relatively shorter history within UNFPA but is an area of increasing focus.

Regardless of any consideration of UNFPA being seen more as the ‘SRHR agency’ than the ‘population data agency’, the continued UNFPA support to population data, population dynamics, and population and development, is considered effective and valuable by external stakeholders. There is a clear evolution of increased support up the ‘data chain’ from

¹ The ‘bull’s eye’, first introduced during the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2008-2013 (DP/FPA/2011/11) and reaffirmed in the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, resulted in a significant refocusing of UNFPA, with SRH and reproductive rights placed squarely at the centre of UNFPA work.

data, to dynamics, to development, without any loss of concrete support to foundational data (census, CRVS, and other population datasets) where it is still required. This has evolved naturally as more countries move into the middle-income category and require less financial and direct support in collecting data and more sophisticated technical assistance on interpreting and using population data. It has also evolved despite the setback of the COVID-19 pandemic, which delayed censuses around the world and slowed down planned maturation from data to demographic intelligence in some contexts.

UNFPA does not currently have a data value chain that conceptually links population data (work on census and, increasingly, on CRVS), population dynamics (analytics such as national transfer accounts) and population and development (using overarching umbrella frameworks such as demographic resilience to ensure that population data and dynamics are incorporated into development policies through a clear, rights-based, gendered and inclusive lens). There is an increasing focus on demographic shifts and the understood impact that these shifts will have on all people, everywhere, throughout the coming decades. UNFPA needs to consider clearly, and with a view to the future, its level of population and development expertise in the world. One issue highlighted at all levels within UNFPA is the issue of population situation analysis (PSA), which used to be a cornerstone of UNFPA programming but is now considered to be in decline as it is an optional exercise for countries rather than a core function of population and development at the country level.

Conclusion 3: UNFPA has integrated people-centred, cross-cutting issues consistently and strongly in all population and development activities, from design to implementation. With regard to other megatrends, such as migration and climate change, the approach or pattern of response is less coherent.

UNFPA has been successful in capitalizing on the rights-based and inclusive added value that UNFPA brings to development issues, including within the framing of population and development. UNFPA is well respected for its human rights-based, inclusive and gendered approach to population and development. There is a clear and visible rights and gender lens in many aspects of UNFPA population and development work, including across ageing and low fertility and the demographic dividend; and there is a clearly emerging focus on other aspects such as CVRS and national transfer accounts (NTAs). More recent approaches such as demographic resilience have been entirely conceptualized based on rights-based arguments. Internal and external stakeholders perceive this to be a strong and significant added value of UNFPA to the area of population data, dynamics, and development. Nonetheless, in order to fully exploit the expertise and credibility UNFPA has in this area, there is more scope for UNFPA to meaningfully participate in conversations regarding issues of exclusion relating to migration and displacement, which is increasingly climate-driven as much as conflict-driven, in matters of population data, dynamics and development.

UNFPA has started, in different areas and at different levels, to shift focus from funding to funding and financing, marrying the rights-based argument with the economic argument. This has strong potential for UNFPA to ensure that effective policy and advocacy support is firmly grounded upon the notion that this is both the 'right' thing to do and the 'smart' thing to do.

Conclusion 4: UNFPA has been relatively successful at strategically positioning and mainstreaming dialogue on population dynamics at different levels. At the global and regional levels, UNFPA has been adding value by advancing the demographic dividend concept and, more recently within certain regions, contributing significantly to the ageing and low fertility conversation. Concepts such as 'demographic resilience' are being increasingly used to bring together different demographic shifts anchored in a rights-based and inclusive framing.

UNFPA has been forward looking and effective with regard to positioning the organization as a leader in understanding and responding to demographic shifts. This has been achieved thoughtfully and is likely to see positive and significant returns in the future.

On the demographic dividend, UNFPA is well positioned and has a solid history of working in this area. There are obvious and intuitive linkages between the demographic dividend work and other mandate areas of UNFPA work, across SRHR, gender and adolescents and youth. The success of the value proposition notwithstanding, there is a clear understanding that the pool of countries for which demographic dividend potential is relevant is decreasing on a yearly basis. With regard to

ageing and low fertility, UNFPA contributions to this demographic shift are not as visibly long-standing as the demographic dividend work, although there has long since been an understanding of the need to address demographic diversity, including the concept of the 'double dividend'. Although ageing and low fertility issues have become increasingly incorporated into the UNFPA remit, there is a gap within the organization's theory of change on how ageing and low fertility link to the three transformative results. Notwithstanding this, UNFPA currently undertakes a variety of initiatives that help in practice, to bridge the gap in the theory of change. They do this by partially aligning the ageing and low fertility agendas to the three transformative results, even if the initiatives are not necessarily part of a strategically deliberate and coherent approach, and some possibilities have remained unexplored.

Conclusion 5: There are solid and concrete examples of close and thoughtful collaboration between population and development and SRHR and gender at different levels within UNFPA (global, regional and country levels), particularly regarding population data. However, these collaborations are not as systematized as they could be and tend to be more ad hoc and project-based with inconsistency across levels (global, regional, and country).

Across the three strategic plans that have driven UNFPA activities since 2014, there has consistently been a strong understanding within UNFPA across global, regional and country levels of how essential population data and dynamics are for the implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, the achievement of the three transformative results and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). But the conceptual linkages in strategic frameworks do not always automatically mean sustained and consistent linkages in practice. This is easier in some areas (such as the demographic dividend and adolescents and youth) than it is in other areas (such as ageing and low fertility).

Conclusion 6: UNFPA provides a significant contribution to population data in humanitarian settings through the common operational datasets-population statistics (COD-PS), which is viewed as a development contribution to humanitarian preparedness and response, managed by the Technical Division. However, there is not a consistent understanding across UNFPA regarding population data in humanitarian settings and humanitarian data.

There is a clear understanding among humanitarian actors that the UNFPA contribution specifically to COD-PS is effective and impactful for planning for a humanitarian response. However, there is an inconsistent understanding across UNFPA as to the structure and difference between population data in humanitarian settings and humanitarian data, which continues to cause some degree of confusion. The evaluation notes that the field of population data is the longest-standing core expertise of UNFPA, while humanitarian data, and population data in humanitarian preparedness and response, are much newer areas of expertise. As such, the degree of confusion is understandable at this point in time, and is likely to naturally resolve as UNFPA humanitarian response continues to evolve and grow as it has done over the past ten years.

Conclusion 7: UNFPA has leveraged partnerships at different levels to further the effective use of population data and dynamics for development purposes. There is an understanding that a range of partnerships across population data, dynamics, and development areas – both traditional and more innovative – are critical to achieve development objectives, such as the SDGs.

The multisectoral nature of population data, dynamics and development means that partnerships are crucial, and this is well recognized by UNFPA at all levels. This is specifically true for work on the demographic dividend and ageing and low fertility, where the multidimensional nature of the issues requires strategic and innovative partnerships. UNFPA has developed a strong network of partners across the areas of population data, dynamics and development, and is beginning to explore important opportunities for innovative partnerships, including with the private sector. Nonetheless, opportunities with the private sector have not been fully explored, yet some encouraging examples and potential opportunities exist. Enhanced clarity on the specific role and focus of UNFPA in relation to emerging demographic shifts, such as ageing, in connection with the three transformative results will most likely better inform coordination, enhance strategic value and guide future partnerships.

Conclusion 8: UNFPA has a relatively small body of staff stretched across a varied, complex and demanding mandate. Within this context, UNFPA staffing capacity in population and development is considered to be inadequate, with a need for mapping of the skillsets required and a capacity planning framework for the future thought leadership of UNFPA in this area.

The financial resourcing of population and development provides a more complex picture: while the area of population and development is always less well-resourced than other thematic areas, there are clear differences in resource requirements across different mandate areas of UNFPA. Apart from capacity-building support to census (which is highly resource-intensive) other areas of capacity-building and upstream knowledge management and advocacy work are less resource-intensive than service delivery and capacity-building interventions for SRHR, gender equality, and adolescents and youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Develop a bold population and development strategy reconceptualized around the data, dynamics and development continuum, and including demographic dividends, resilience and policy.

UNFPA should develop a bold population and development strategy for the next decade that builds upon the current strengths and provides an umbrella strategic framework. This should include working across the humanitarian, development and peace continuum, and across the dimensions of population data, dynamics and development that is fit for purpose to achieve the three transformative results within the context of climate change and migration as increasing mega-trends.

This strategy should include:

- 1.1.** A data value chain across population data, dynamics and development at global, regional and country levels and through different modes of engagement
- 1.2.** A clear statement on the UNFPA added value areas of HRBA, inclusion and a gender scale monitoring framework, for all aspects of population and development across negative, blind, neutral, responsive and transformative results
- 1.3.** Linking of all demographic concepts to UNFPA mandate areas, including the demographic dividend linked to adolescents and youth (already strong); healthy ageing linked to adolescents and youth (also already strong through the life-cycle approach); but also strongly linking ageing to gender-based violence (GBV) and SRHR needs for older women; and low fertility to the second transformative result through a more comprehensive understanding of family planning around reproductive choices
- 1.4.** A cross-unit proposal for how UNFPA offices and divisions can expand work on population data, dynamics and development from COD-PS to census work, CRVS, national transfer accounts, demographic dividend, demographic resilience, among others, in chronic and protracted situations.

Recommendation 2: Enhance programming priorities and linkages for internal clarity and external positioning

UNFPA should develop an internal capacity-building and learning priority workplan to increase the common understanding of demographic dividends, resilience and policy, and the role of UNFPA, and how these all link to the three transformative results. This internal clarification should then be used to ensure a common and consistent messaging from all UNFPA headquarters and regional and country offices, with a view to coherently positioning UNFPA at the forefront of demographic shifts and demographic diversity.

This workplan should include:

- 2.1.** Implementing a strategy to boost the global appropriation and implementation of the demographic dividends, resilience and policy framework to accelerate a common vision, taking into account context particularities and adaptation needs. The strategy should include contextualization, adaptation and operationalization guidelines to address different realities
- 2.2.** Developing and disseminating information papers and associated learning webinars on demographic dividends, resilience and policy, explaining what it is, what it means and how it mirrors the life cycle approach, bringing in an economic societal argument to add strength to the rights-based, individual perspective of the life-cycle approach, including good practice and impactful activities
- 2.3.** Developing and disseminating information papers and associated learning webinars specifically on ageing and low fertility, explaining the role of UNFPA and its niche area in connection with the three transformative results
- 2.4.** Developing and implementing a common advocacy messaging platform on demographic diversity and the role of UNFPA, under the mandate of the ICPD Programme of Action, as a thought leader in this area.

Recommendation 3: Invest corporately in signature data products

For UNFPA to maintain its leadership position and credibility with regard to population data, dynamics and development, the organization should ensure continued investment in the signature data products that have been invested in to date.

This should include:

- 3.1.** Continued corporate financial support for the continued administration, maintenance and update of the population data portal (PDP)
- 3.2.** Continued support to UNFPA products (including the population data portal), that showcase specifically UNFPA expertise and its added value in data and visibility in leaving no one behind (LNOB) factors.

Recommendation 4: Improve data and analytics across UNFPA

UNFPA should use the Secretary-General's data strategy as a basis for developing a UNFPA-specific understanding of what being 'data literate' means for UNFPA.

This should include:

- 4.1.** Developing a UNFPA data strategy, together with the roll-out of a dissemination plan. Within this data strategy, UNFPA should ensure:
 - 4.1.1.** Defining what 'data literacy' means for UNFPA and how to measure it. This should be done in general in the first instance and then specifically for the areas of SRHR, gender, and adolescents and youth; and
 - 4.1.2.** Designing and conducting an internal survey to estimate the current percentage of data literate' staff, as per the UNFPA definition, and creating a plan to fill the gap through internal training (design of online courses, communities of practice etc) and by revising job profiles for external recruitment to ensure that the UNFPA definition of 'data literate' is included in all relevant job profiles.
- 4.2.** Investing in a data quality assurance capacity that oversees not just population data but all published UNFPA data: the quality assurance unit should identify what it should cover and where it should sit within the organization.

Recommendation 5: Enhance human and technical resourcing of population and development

UNFPA should re-assess the current human and technical capacity of population and development at different levels, in light of the increasingly visible leadership statements of UNFPA regarding demographic shifts as a megatrend.

This reassessment should include:

- 5.1.** Mapping all current skillsets within UNFPA and cross-referencing that mapping with dimensions of data, dynamics and development at the different levels. The mapping should also include new skillsets around: digitalization and geospatial technologies; economic future casting; population registers; and communicating arguments founded equally in economic and rights-arguments with different partnerships, including ministries of finance or planning and private sector
- 5.2.** Development of a three-to-five-year resourcing and recruitment plan for skillset gaps as have been identified above, both through internal training and capacity-development and through external recruitment, including enhancing and leveraging young professionals.



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A teacher and mother from Brazil's Macuxi Indigenous group, playing with her daughter.



INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.1 EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The Evaluation Office of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) commissioned this independent evaluation of “UNFPA support to population dynamics and data including links to ageing, low fertility, the demographic dividend and demographic resilience” to address an information gap identified within centralized UNFPA evaluations on the theme of population dynamics.^{2,3}

The evaluation is forward-looking and strategic in nature with the primary purpose being to inform UNFPA future support and programming on population data and population dynamics as well as population and development with a gender lens within the framework of the current UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025.

The **two specific objectives** of the evaluation are:

1. To assess the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the UNFPA support to population data and population dynamics, as well as population and development with a specific focus on: (i) the demographic dividend; and (ii) population ageing and low fertility. The evaluation also integrated demographic resilience in addition to a gender-responsive approach across all aspects of the evaluation
2. To identify lessons learned that can be used to inform the mid-term review of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and the design of evidence-based population policies, programmes and strategies.

“Population dynamics and population data” is a broad and complex area to evaluate, with a plethora of associated terms and concepts. The evaluation inception phase included a consultative exercise to clarify the definitions of core terms used within this evaluation. These are described in Box 1.

Alongside the scoping exercise to ensure a common understanding of global population data, population dynamics, population and development trends, and the role of UNFPA, the inception phase further elaborated and refined the methodology suggested in the terms of reference. This was based on: (i) a reconstructed theory of change; (ii) scoping interviews with key staff at headquarters (HQ) and regional levels; and (iii) a scoping document review (see Sections 2.1 and 2.2 for a full narrative of the process of developing the approach and the methodology, and the actual approach and methodology).

2 Within both Strategic Plan 2014-2017 and Strategic Plan 2018-2021, population dynamics was one of four high-level outcomes for UNFPA, the others being sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR); gender equality, and adolescents and youth. In Strategic Plan 2022-2025, the three transformative results of UNFPA (ending preventable maternal death; ending unmet need for family planning; and ending GBV and harmful practices) have become the outcomes within the strategic plan and population change and data is now framed as one of six key outputs necessary to meet these three transformative results (outcomes), with the others being policy and accountability; quality of care and services; gender and social norms; humanitarian action; and adolescents and youth.

3 In February 2023, as this evaluation was coming to a close, UNFPA internally agreed to expanding the term “demographic resilience” to be “demographic dividends, resilience and policy”. As this change occurred after the evaluation was conducted, the evaluation report notes the change here, but will continue to reference demographic resilience throughout the report, as the correct terminology used during the evaluation temporal scope (2014-2022) and at the time of the evaluation.

Finally, the **scope of the evaluation** has three aspects:

1. The temporal scope, which is the time period 2014-2022
2. The geographic scope, in that the evaluation covered interventions on population dynamics and data at global, regional and country levels, including the strength of UNFPA linkages and synergies between and across levels, with a particular focus on the country level
3. The thematic scope, which covers population data, population dynamics, and population and development with a specific focus on UNFPA support to: (i) strengthening national population data systems, including data collection, analysis, dissemination and utilization in both development and humanitarian contexts; (ii) promoting rights-based and evidence-based public policies, integrating population dynamics, including in common country analyses (CCAs), United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks (UNSDCFs) and country programme documents (CPDs); (iii) analysing population and development trends, utilizing and mainstreaming population data/demographic intelligence to improve development policies and leverage the demographic dividend, and addressing ageing and low fertility with a lens of gender and broad inclusion.

Primary users of the evaluation are UNFPA population and development colleagues at global, regional and country levels and, more broadly, other UNFPA staff and the UNFPA Executive Board. Further users are expected to be national governments, donors and civil society organizations.

Box 1: Key terms and definitions used in the evaluation

Demography: The study of human populations with respect to their size, geographic distribution, composition, components of change (births, deaths, migration), and the determinants and consequences of population change.

Population data: Data that are disaggregated by characteristics of a population such as demographic, socioeconomic, geographical location etc., and have a clear sampling frame and are representative.

Population dynamics: Changes in population growth rate, size and age structure, and distribution.

Population and development: The impact or consequences of population dynamics (trends) on socioeconomic development, human welfare and the natural environment.

Demographic intelligence: Insights into how demographic changes shape social, economic and environmental development.

Demographic resilience: An aspiration that involves the ability to predict demographic shifts, understand their implications and develop policy responses that are based on evidence, gender equality and human rights. It means moving beyond narrow quick-fix approaches focused on population numbers towards comprehensive population and social policies aimed at ensuring prosperity and well-being for all.

Demographic dividend: The economic and social growth potential/development that can result from shifts in a population's age structure, mainly when the share of the working-age population (15 to 64) is larger than the non-working-age share of the population (14 and younger, and 65 and older).

Ageing: A population is classified as ageing when persons aged 60 or over become a proportionately larger share of the total population.

Low fertility: Sustained total fertility rate below the replacement level threshold of 2.1 births per woman.

1.2 BACKGROUND CONTEXT

Population dynamics and data - global trends

The world population is estimated by the United Nations to have reached 8 billion in November 2022.⁴ This is a moment of reflection on the impact of population dynamics and demographic shifts on the development of nations. A key facet of current demographic trends is the sheer diversity of changing age structures across countries. While the total population of the world has grown enormously in recent decades, changes in population growth rate, size and age structure, and distribution (in other words, population dynamics)⁵ are highly variable across the globe. While some regions – particularly in sub-Saharan Africa – are experiencing high fertility rates and population growth, others – predominantly in the Global North – are experiencing low fertility rates and population ageing.⁶ It is noted that these geographic classifications are generalized, and there are broad diversities of demographic transition across and within regions. So, for example, low fertility rates and population ageing are not merely characteristics of the Global North, but are also occurring in eastern and south-eastern Asia and Latin America, and even in some contexts in Africa.⁷ Migration and human mobility, as well as urbanization, further shape and frame population dynamics in local contexts within regions.⁸ Indirectly, trends in population dynamics are also impacted by poverty, access to education, gender equality and access to family planning and sexual and reproductive health services.

Population dynamics present both opportunities and challenges for sustainable development and for mitigating humanitarian crises. Countries experiencing high fertility rates and population growth have an opportunity to harness the demographic dividend – the economic potential that can result from a shift in the population age structure in favour of the working age population.⁹ However, they must also contend with the challenge of ensuring economic opportunity and social security for their growing populations.

Conversely, countries with low fertility rates – in which the sustained total fertility rate is below the replacement level threshold of 2.1 children per woman – and rapid population ageing – where persons aged 60 or over become a proportionately larger share of the total population – must contend with the health needs and economic desires of a large older population.¹⁰ They must also address the economic pressure that this places on the younger workforce, notwithstanding the positive indicator of increased life expectancy that ageing populations represent.

In policy terms, the ability to document, measure, analyse and forecast shifts in population dynamics – from global to local levels – is key to attaining and monitoring progress towards many Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets.¹¹ It requires an understanding of historical, present and likely future trends in population dynamics. Knowing “how many people are living and will be living on this planet” requires access to, and the collection of, timely, accurate, comprehensive, disaggregated and georeferenced population data. In 2020 the United Nations released the Secretary-General’s Data Strategy,¹² which articulated a vision of “building a whole-of-UN ecosystem that unlocks our full data potential: For better decisions and stronger support to people and planet – in the moments that matter most”.¹³

4 UNFPA. 2022. World Population Day Circular – 11 July 2022.

5 Global Thematic Consultation on Population Dynamics. 2013. Population Dynamics in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Online at: https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/migrated_files/What-We-Do/docs/Outcome-Report-Pop-dynamic-and-post-2015-dev-agenda-14-March-2013.pdf, accessed: 7 March 2022.

6 UNFPA. 2022. UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025. (FP/FPA/2021/8). Online at: <https://www.unfpa.org/unfpa-strategic-plan-2022-2025-dpfa20218>, accessed: 7 March 2022.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Working age population is categorized as 15-64. UNFPA. 2022. UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025. (FP/FPA/2021/8). Online at: <https://www.unfpa.org/unfpa-strategic-plan-2022-2025-dpfa20218>, accessed: 7 March 2022.

10 UNFPA. 2022. UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025. (FP/FPA/2021/8). Online at: <https://www.unfpa.org/unfpa-strategic-plan-2022-2025-dpfa20218>, accessed: 7 March 2022.

There is also the potential for a second demographic dividend here. The second demographic dividend occurs when people move into higher-paying jobs and countries experience higher per capita income. Online at: <https://www.prb.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/africa-second-demographicdividend.pdf>.

11 UN General Assembly. 2015. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. (A/RES/70/1).

Online at: https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf

12 UN. 2020. Secretary General’s Data Strategy: Data Strategy of the Secretary General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere: With Insight, Impact and Integrity.

13 Ibid.

Historically, population and housing censuses have been the primary source of data used to discern and analyse population dynamics and trends.¹⁴ The main policy-making role of a census is to, “collect, process, and disseminate small area detailed statistics on population, its composition, characteristics, spatial distribution and organization (families and households).”¹⁵ While censuses are still the foundational sources of data on demographic and population trends, they face a number of limitations. Firstly, censuses are generally costly and complex data collection exercises that require large numbers of enumerators to conduct. Secondly, given their size and complexity, censuses are prone to being negatively impacted by contextual conditions, such as public health emergencies or instability, for example, related to conflict. In this regard, several countries postponed their 2020 round of censuses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thirdly, partly because of their complexity and cost, censuses are usually only conducted decennially or at best once every five years. As the value of census data diminishes over time as it becomes more outdated, its utility to policymakers also diminishes towards the end of a census cycle.

In addition to this, there are increasing numbers of complex humanitarian emergencies in the world and political tensions that present obstacles to organizing a census, where collecting data in traditional ways is not possible. Currently, 103 million people are displaced.¹⁶ Access to conduct population data surveys such as census or to collect data for functional civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems is limited in multiple countries, and often for decades. For example, Lebanon has not had a population census since 1932. Similarly, Afghanistan last had its last census in 1979.¹⁷

To address these challenges, initiatives such as the PopGrid Data Collaborative,¹⁸ the Geo-Referenced Infrastructure and Demographic Data for Development (GRID-3),¹⁹ and WORLDPOP²⁰ undertake research and produce tools on how geospatial data can be used to measure model populations, identify living conditions, estimate poverty rates and much more. Moreover, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Data2X²¹ are contributing to multilateral efforts to improve the lives of women and girls by strengthening systems that often have incomplete or missing sex disaggregated or gender-specific data.²² Data and insights gleaned from initiatives such as these are now being used by national statistics offices and policymakers in numerous countries as supplements to traditional census and household survey data. In some instances, innovative approaches are even able to fill some of the gaps where censuses have not taken place or are incomplete, although these measures are not a replacement for census data.²³

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) sits within this context of a growing (yet regionally variable and ever changing) global population, and emerging opportunities from new data sources and technologies promised by the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development. Within the 2030 Agenda, the role of the United Nations, including all its bodies, is paramount as the custodian of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since 1994, six major multilateral policy processes have framed United Nations support and work on population dynamics and data:

- **The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) (1994):** The ICPD process that commenced in 1994 is widely regarded as a major milestone within the sustainable development sector. UNFPA describes it as being the origin of the ‘realization’ that “fulfilling the rights of women and girls is central to development”

14 UN Statistics Division. 2022. Demographic and Social Statistics: World Population and Housing Census Programme. Online at: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/census/>, accessed: 7 March 2022.

15 UN Statistics Division. 2008. Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses: Revision 2, p. 5. Online at: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/docs/P&R_Rev2.pdf, accessed: 7 March 2022.

16 OCHA. Global Humanitarian Overview 2023. November 2022. Online at: <https://humanitarianaction.info/article/glance-0>.

17 UNFPA. (ND). Afghanistan Population Matters. Online at <https://afghanistan.unfpa.org/en/node/15230>, accessed: 9 March 2022. The evaluation notes that UNFPA did conduct a full household survey in 2001 (UNFPA respondents), but a census has not been conducted since 1979.

18 POPGRID. 2022. Homepage. Online at: <https://www.popgrid.org/>, accessed: 7 March 2022.

19 GRID3 Inc. 2023. Homepage. Online at: <https://grid3.org>, accessed: 9 March 2023.

20 WorldPop. 2022. Homepage. Online at: <https://www.worldpop.org/about>, accessed: 7 March 2022.

21 Data2X. 2022. Homepage. Online at: <https://data2x.org>, accessed: 15 March 2022.

22 Ibid.

23 See for example research supported by the Flowminder Foundation (www.flowminder.org) such as: N.A. Wardrop et al. 2018. Spatially disaggregated population estimates in the absence of national population and housing census data. PNAS. Vol. 115. No. 14. Online at: <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1715305115>, accessed: 7 March 2022.

- **The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (2002):** This plan of action was adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing that took place in April 2002. Composed of a political declaration as well as an action plan, it was designed primarily as a resource for policymakers and represented the “first time that governments agreed to link questions of ageing to other frameworks for social and economic development”, including United Nations processes
- **The Report of the Global Thematic Consultation on Population Dynamics (2013):** This outcome report represents the culmination of the Global Consultation on Population Dynamics and the Post-2015 Development Agenda (i.e. the 2030 Agenda). The report contains the Dhaka Declaration, which frames population dynamics as being indispensable to the attainment of sustainable development outcomes
- **The Montevideo Consensus (2013):** Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have adopted the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, agreeing to prioritize population dynamics in sustainable development, issues of youth and aging, and access to sexual and reproductive health services
- **The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015):** The implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires effective monitoring from a population perspective. The availability of timely and reliable disaggregated data on population size, distribution, sex, and age structure, as well as socioeconomic indicators to track progress towards the achievement of the SDGs, is fundamental for governments to secure their present and future populations and to ensure that no one is left behind
- **The African Union (AU) Road Map on Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investment in Youth (2017):** This road map, supported by UNFPA and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa among others, links policies designed to exploit the demographic dividend in Africa with the African Union’s broader development objectives, as set out in Agenda 2063, which is also aligned with the United Nation’s 2030 Agenda.

UNFPA and population and development

The UNFPA contribution to population and development is inextricably linked with the 2030 Agenda and particularly the concept of leaving no one behind:

“The imperative to leave no one behind assumes new urgency this year... [T]he resounding consensus of all Member States gathered at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo was to support governments to confront their demographic challenges by enhancing rights and choices and investing in the capacity of all people.”²⁴

Across the three strategic plans that have driven UNFPA activities since 2014, its organizational goal has remained the same: the achievement of universal access to sexual and reproductive health, realization of reproductive rights, and acceleration of progress on the implementation of the ICPD. Given this core mandate, UNFPA sits at the heart of United Nations efforts to better understand population dynamics and data, including through a gender lens, and support the strengthening of Member States’ capacities to generate and use disaggregated data on population dynamics. Since 2014, the ways in which UNFPA has structured its three strategic results frameworks in relation to its support for population dynamics and data has evolved in line with organizational needs and priorities. The UNFPA Strategic Plan 2014-2017 established an outcome-level target for UNFPA support to population dynamics, aiming for strengthened and improved national policies and global agendas through the integration of evidence-based analysis on population dynamics to sustainable development. Building on the Strategic Plan 2014-2017, the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 pivoted towards the inclusive outcome that “[e]veryone, everywhere, is counted and accounted for, in the pursuit of sustainable development.”²⁵

24 UNFPA. 2022. Statement of the Executive Director to the Second Regular Session of the Executive Board 2022.

25 UNFPA. 2017. UNFPA Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

The most recent UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025 no longer contains an outcome-level result pertaining to demographic dynamics and data. Instead, the current strategic plan articulates the three transformative results (ending preventable maternal deaths, ending unmet need for family planning, and ending gender-based violence (GBV) and all harmful practices) as outcomes. Under these outcomes, the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 includes an output on population change and data: "by 2025, strengthened data systems and evidence that take into account population changes and other megatrends (including ageing and climate change), in development policies and programmes, especially those related to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights."²⁶ The strategic plan also recognizes demographic shifts as a 'megatrend' and data as an accelerator.²⁷

UNFPA recently launched a population data portal (PDP).²⁸ The portal combines the newest population data on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights (SRHR), family planning, maternal health, and gender-based violence gathered from multiple sources. Added to this is the systematic integration and use of geospatial data towards mapping shortfalls in the three transformative results, and populations and areas left furthest behind. UNFPA also launched a global dashboard on population data for COVID-19, helping to map vulnerable persons.²⁹

With regard to humanitarian crises, the main contribution of UNFPA to population data in humanitarian settings is through support to common operational datasets (CODs), and particularly the population statistics element of the common operational datasets (COD-PS).

UNFPA financial support to population dynamics and data

UNFPA global total budgets and expenditure on Outcome 4 under Strategic Plan 2014-2017 and Strategic Plan 2018-2021 have generally declined for the period 2014–2021. Overall, Outcome 4 dropped from being the second highest budgeted outcome within the Strategic Plan 2014-2017 budget (15 per cent of the overall programme budget, being USD 541 million out of USD 3,514 million) to having the lowest budget of all outcomes in Strategic Plan 2018-2021 (13 per cent of the overall programme budget, USD 370 million out of USD 2,825 million). Under the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 budget, it is more difficult to continue this comparison, since population dynamics is no longer one of four outcomes as within the previous two strategic plans, but instead is one of six outputs.

Further points to note on the financial support to population dynamics and data include:

- Investments in population dynamics and data declined from an annual USD 164,399,725 (budgeted) and USD 140,778,562 (expenditure) in 2014, to an annual USD 91,049,817 (budgeted) and USD 54,243,983 (expenditure) by 2021. This is a drop in expenditure of over USD 85 million per year
- Based on the UNFPA modes of engagement and nature of population dynamics and data interventions in the regions, financial data shows regional variations in spending on Outcome 4 (population dynamics) for strategic plans 2014-2017 and 2018-2021. The Asia Pacific region allocated the highest budget over the period of 2014-2021 (approximately USD 250 million) and the eastern Europe and central Asia region allocated the lowest budget over the same period (approximately USD 40 million)
- Between 2014 and 2021, Outcome 4 was resourced almost equally across core and non-core funds
- In Strategic Plan 2022-2025, the actual dollar amount allocated to population dynamics has substantially increased from the 2018-2021 budget, moving back towards the 2014-2017 actual amount allocated, at USD 528.2 million. Population dynamics (Output 4 within the current strategic plan) is 12 per cent of the overall budget. This is 12 per cent across six outputs. Strategic Plan 2022-2025 now includes a specific output on humanitarian action that was not a stand-alone

26 UNFPA. 2021. UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025.

27 Ibid.

28 UNFPA. (ND). (Population Data Portal Homepage). Online at: <https://pdp.unfpa.org/>, accessed: January 2023.

29 UNFPA. (ND). COVID-19 Pandemic Homepage. Online at: <https://www.unfpa.org/covid19>, accessed: February 2023.

outcome within the previous strategic plans, and so the funding was mainstreamed across the four outcome areas in the previous strategic plans. If population dynamics is measured in comparison to the total of outputs 1,2,3,4, and 6 (i.e. those that are comparable to the four outcomes in Strategic Plan 2014-2017 and Strategic Plan 2018-2021) then the current population dynamics output is in fact 18 per cent of the overall budget, which reflects an increase compared to previous strategic plans.

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A crowded street in Chattarpur, Madhya Pradesh. Madhya Pradesh is the fifth most populous state in India.



2

EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 EVALUATION APPROACH

This evaluation is primarily formative and forward-looking with a strong focus on utility for future UNFPA programming. The mixed-methods approach was designed to capture good practices, lessons learned and common challenges with UNFPA support to population dynamics and data across different contexts. The overarching evaluation approach started with a reconstructed theory of change (see Figure 1), in line with the evaluation's adoption of a contribution analysis approach. Initially, this was not designed as a programmatic theory of change but, instead, designed as a tool to assist in the development of an evaluation matrix that is grounded in the articulated strategic direction of UNFPA for population dynamics and data, and more generally to provide a framework for conceptualizing the activities of UNFPA during the periods under examination and their connections to outcomes. However, the theory of change was validated and expanded together with the inputs of the evaluation reference group, which increased the value of the theory of change beyond the formulation of the evaluation matrix to something of broader utility to UNFPA population dynamics and data programming.

For the evaluation approach, the reconstructed theory of change was used primarily as a foundational tool by the evaluation team to inform the development of the evaluation matrix (see Annex III). The eight overarching evaluation questions (evaluation questions) are provided in the box below.

Box 2: Evaluation questions

Evaluation question 1. To what extent has UNFPA support to population dynamics and data been relevant and timely across different contexts and to the changing needs at subnational, national, regional and global levels?

Evaluation question 2. To what extent has UNFPA integrated cross-cutting issues: particularly gender, human rights, disability, leaving no one behind (LNOB) and emerging megatrends, within population dynamics and data programming and support?

Evaluation question 3. To what extent has UNFPA ensured the support to and use of population dynamics and data links with other UNFPA mandate areas for the achievement of three transformative results?

Evaluation question 4. To what extent has UNFPA contributed to strengthening national and subnational data systems across different modes of engagement?

Evaluation question 5. To what extent has UNFPA support been successful in strategically positioning and mainstreaming population dynamics, including demographic resilience and the demographic dividend within development policies and programmes?

Evaluation question 6. To what extent has UNFPA successfully collected, collated and disseminated population data within humanitarian contexts?

Evaluation question 7. To what extent has UNFPA leveraged partnerships to further the effective role of population dynamics and data for monitoring SDGs, shifting from funding to financing, and tracking progress on the three transformative results and the ICPD Programme of Action?

Evaluation question 8. To what extent has UNFPA human and financial resources supported the ambition and priorities set out in the strategic plan(s) in relation to population change and data?

From this evaluation matrix, data collection methods and tools were derived to ensure that evidence was collected across countries and at global and regional levels in a consistent and utility-focused manner. An evidence database was developed to ensure that all evidence could be collated, recorded and coded in a manner that supported robust analysis.

This main evaluation report is accompanied by two specific internal thematic papers: one on the demographic dividend, and the other one on ageing and low fertility. These thematic papers were developed from the same datasets (the six case studies, the global-level data collection, and the internal survey) as the main report, focusing, specifically, on the topics of demographic dividend and ageing and low fertility respectively.

2.2 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

In line with the evaluation's adoption of an approach based on contribution analysis, the data collection and analysis methods focused on both quantitative and qualitative data. These methods were applied across all components of the evaluation matrix (see Annex III). Data collection was focused on the specific purpose and modality of population dynamics support and programming, thereby enabling the evaluation team to gather and analyse a breadth and depth of both qualitative and quantitative data from a range of primary and secondary data sources.³⁰

The evaluation was framed around a nested approach of seven primary dataset components:

- Three regional case studies: Asia Pacific Regional Office (APRO); Arab States Regional Office (ASRO); and Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (EECARO)
- Three country case studies: Mexico, Nigeria, and Uganda³¹
- One 'additional' dataset being evidence collected at the global level and the regional level (outside of the three regional case studies).

Analysis was conducted for each individual case study (including the additional dataset 'case study' at the global level) and then the datasets were used as building blocks for the overall evaluation analysis.³²

³⁰ For UNFPA population and development work, there is no substantive interaction at the community level, and therefore community data collection methods – such as focus group discussions – were not considered to be relevant or appropriate to this particular evaluation.

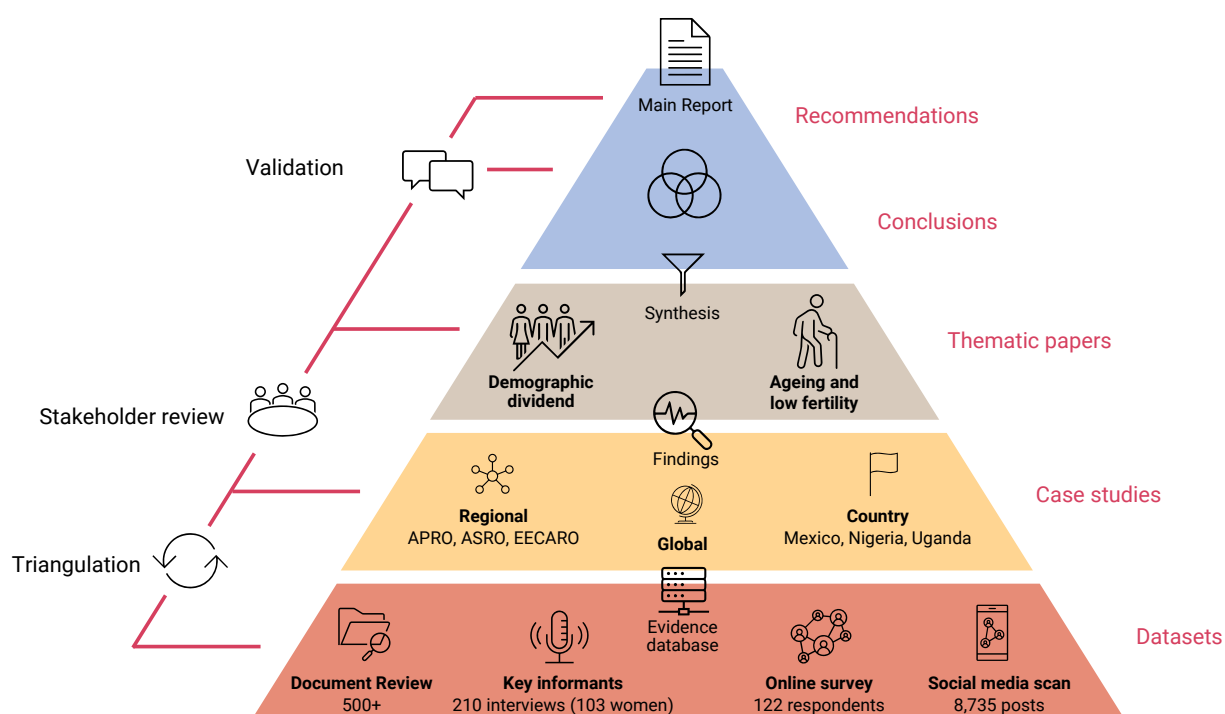
³¹ The full sampling strategy for choosing these particular case studies (APRO, ASRO, EECARO, Mexico, Nigeria, and Uganda) can be found in the inception report.

³² The three regional and three country case studies were developed as standalone case studies and shared with the respective UNFPA offices for feedback. These case studies are available within Volume III of this report. The additional global and regional data was developed as an internal analysis only for the use of the team in contributing towards the overall analysis for this main evaluation report, and for the two thematic papers.

FIGURE 1: Reconstructed theory of change



FIGURE 2: Overall evaluation design, evidence and analysis of the evaluation



Source: Evaluation team

Sampling

Both regions and countries were purposively selected from among those in which UNFPA works in order to provide an illustrative sample. The regional and country case studies were selected using a comprehensive set of criteria agreed among the evaluation team, the Evaluation Office and the Evaluation Reference Group during the inception phase. These criteria were:

1. Relevance to the thematic priorities on “ageing and low fertility” and the “demographic dividend”
2. Distribution across all six regions where UNFPA works³³
3. UNFPA country classification system by quadrants, in order to capture diverse development contexts from at least three of the four quadrants
4. UNFPA expenditure on Outcome 4 during the strategic plans 2014-2017 and 2018-2021³⁴ to identify countries in which UNFPA expenditure has been relatively high in order to ensure that a range of programming can be evaluated
5. Involvement in humanitarian settings, in order to include in the sample at least one region and two countries with significant humanitarian work
6. Expenditure distribution across modes of engagement, strategic plan outputs and gender marker, in order to identify a sample of countries with a varied combination of effort in order to illustrate diverse approaches
7. Potential links with other megatrends such as migration, urbanization and climate change
8. Factors that might facilitate or hinder the evaluation data collection, such as the availability of documentation and data for the desk review, and the security situation for the data collection in country.

33 (i) Arab States, (ii) Asia and the Pacific, (iii) East and Southern Africa, (iv) Eastern Europe and Central Asia, (v) Latin America and the Caribbean, (vi) West and Central Africa.

34 Atlas/GPS data, retrieved in September 2021.

Collating and recording data

The evaluation team gathered a substantial volume of qualitative and quantitative data and evidence throughout the evaluation (detailed below). Each primary dataset (three country case studies, three regional case studies, and the additional global and other regional data collection) had its own established Microsoft Excel-based evidence database that was used to collate, code and analyse data for that particular case study, and then further used to synthesize findings for the global evaluation report.

For the three country case studies and the three regional case studies, each core team member worked closely with a national or regional consultant to increase the value of the overall evaluation with specific expert knowledge of the countries included within the case studies. These national and regional experts were identified during the inception phase, mainly with the assistance of local UNFPA offices. Comprehensive training was provided to national and regional consultants, and they were subsequently involved in all aspects of data collection and analysis at the country/regional levels. The case studies were further complemented by an online survey and a social media scan. Collectively, these sources provided evidence for the combined analysis used to develop the overarching evaluation findings, in addition to the two thematic papers on the demographic dividend and ageing and low fertility. Data collection thus consisted of:

- **Document review:** A full and comprehensive document review³⁵ was conducted for each of the three country case studies; the three regional case studies; and more broadly at the regional and global level. Documents included UNFPA strategies, reports, evaluations, studies and assessments; other United Nations and NGO documentation; and government and regional-level body documentation
- **Semi-structured key informant interviews:** Key informant interviews were conducted with UNFPA and external stakeholders and the interviewees were selected for their ability to speak to the evaluation's areas of enquiry; they included:
 - UNFPA select executive committee members
 - UNFPA headquarters and regional office management and technical staff
 - UNFPA country office staff, including senior management and technical staff
 - Staff at national statistics offices and relevant line ministries and experts at the national and subnational levels
 - Staff at United Nations agencies that work with data in both development and humanitarian settings
 - Members of civil society organizations and other partners that work with data and population dynamics
 - Members of research institutions and academia
 - Staff at donor organizations.
- **Online survey:** A survey was administered globally in three different languages to UNFPA staff both working on, and interested in, population and development at country, regional and global levels. The primary objective of the survey was to complement primary and secondary data sources with broad perspectives from within UNFPA. It was designed in an iterative manner, in that the survey questions were designed halfway through primary data collection and after a mid-term review within the evaluation team, to see where gaps were emerging, or where interesting themes would benefit from further evidence³⁶
- **Social media scan:** Social learning approaches were applied to examine social media data, with a focus on the global level. While the social media scan was intended to contribute as an additional dataset for the final analysis and to contribute to the overall evaluation report and the two thematic papers, in reality it provided limited additional evidence for this evaluation.³⁷

35 See Annex VII for the bibliography.

36 See Annex VIII for a full overview of the survey methodology and a full analysis of the survey results.

37 Regardless of the limited utility of the social media scan, Annex IX provides an overview of the social media scan methodology and results.

Integrating cross-cutting issues

In close alignment with UNFPA Evaluation Quality Assurance and Assessment system,³⁸ the evaluation data collection and analysis was gender and human-rights responsive. The evaluation aimed for an intersectional approach to assess UNFPA response and contribution to specific and most vulnerable populations. Evaluation question 2 was fully focused on people-centred cross-cutting issues as well as related megatrends. The design and methodology ensured that the evaluation was able to assess/capture the extent to which a gender and human rights-based approach was integrated in the development and implementation of the population dynamics area, and also the extent to which a focus on most vulnerable populations and inequalities was systematically applied. Further, the design of the evidence database allowed for the sex of respondents to be recorded and for a gender lens to be applied to the analysis of the data. As can be seen in Figure 3 below, the respondent profile for key informant interviews is largely equal for men and women.

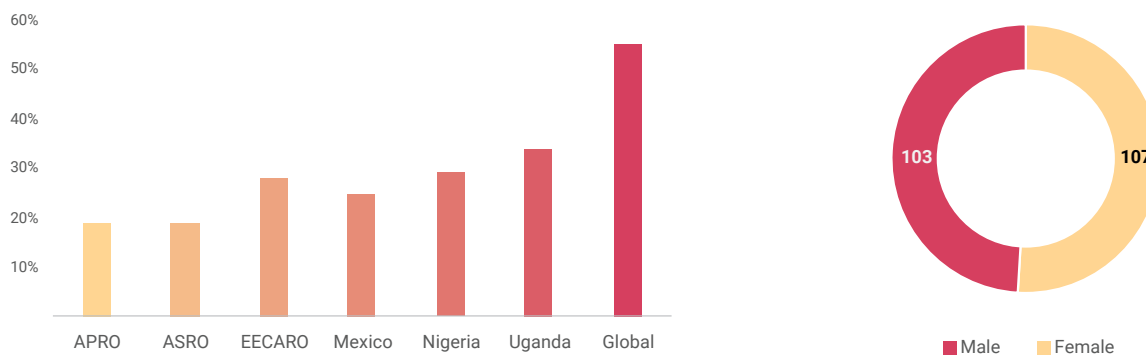
Evidence for this report underwent a deliberate ‘gender-lens’ secondary analysis of each preliminary finding to ensure that a gendered perspective is included in each finding where appropriate. This secondary gender-lens analysis was undertaken with the gender results effectiveness scale (as referenced in the inception report methodology) as a foundational concept, and findings below (Section 3) are presented with this analysis integrated within them.

Data analysis workshop

After the collection and collation of all data, the analysis of the evidence was centred around an analysis workshop held in New York in October 2022. This brought together the analysis of all the different datasets. This workshop included all evaluation team members and the Evaluation Office Evaluation Manager and Evaluation Analyst and resulted in initial emerging findings.

2.3 DATA SOURCES

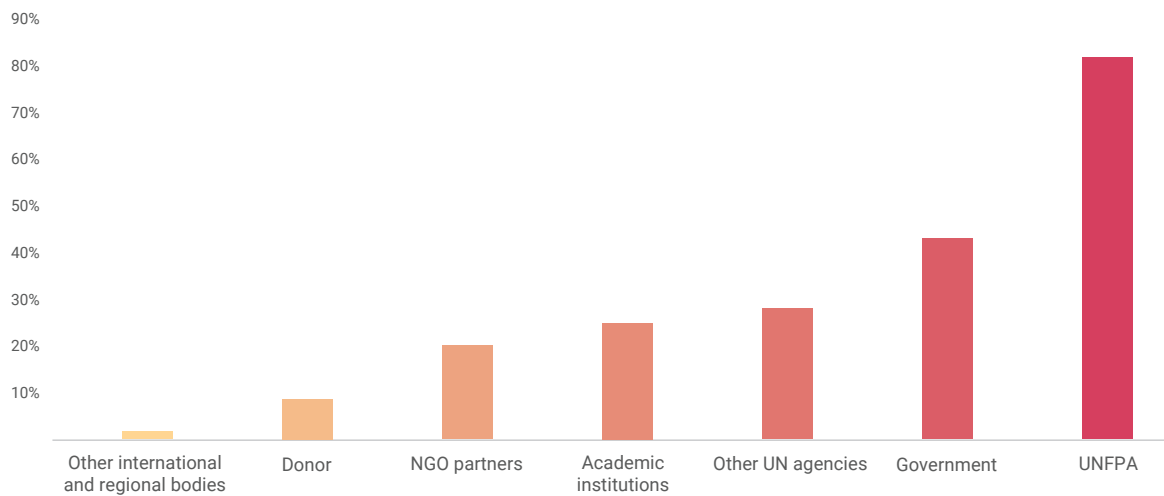
FIGURE 3: Key informant interviews by geographical location and sex



Source: Evaluation team

38 The EQAA is in itself aligned with the Evaluation Policy (2019), the updated UN Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016), Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations (2014), and the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (2019).

FIGURE 4: Key informant interviews by type



Source: Evaluation team

Across the three regional case studies (APRO, ASRO, and EECARO); the three country case studies (Mexico, Nigeria, and Uganda); the global and regional additional data collection; and the survey, the evaluation collected information and evidence from 331 individuals: of which 210 individuals were interviewed, and 122 individuals responded to the survey.³⁹ The evaluation reviewed and analysed over 500 documents.

2.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The evaluation ensured compliance with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation and the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation, and the four ethical principles of integrity, accountability, respect and beneficence. Specifically:

- **Integrity.** The evaluation team ensured full and informed confidentiality for all stakeholders taking part. The evaluation team developed overarching protocols for key informant interviews during the inception phase, which included ensuring verbal informed consent through a full introduction to the evaluation and the purpose and use of data, and by ensuring confidentiality for all stakeholders. The evaluation team acted professionally throughout all interviews
- **Accountability.** The evaluation team used evidence databases to ensure that the perspectives of all respondents to the evaluation were included in final country- or regional-level analyses and that equal attention was paid to all evidence using an objective and robust system
- **Respect and beneficence.** The evaluation team acted with respect and courtesy at all times. The data collection training materials included an overview of conduct when speaking with key informants and instilled a common understanding across all team members that a key informant interview must be conducted with kindness and civility: remembering at all times that no person is obliged to provide any information and a key informant interview is not intended to make anyone feel inadequate, but rather it should be an enjoyable conversation for the respondent, with them feeling respected and heard.

With regard to data management and protection, the evaluation followed the steps set out below to ensure data security.

³⁹ For an overview of survey respondent profiles, see Annex VI.

TABLE 1: *Data security processes*

Source	Data collection	Capture and structuring	Storage and organisation	Treatment and cleaning	Accessibility and use	Protection
Semi-structured interviews	Zoom, Skype for Business and MS Teams	Interview templates with written notes in MS Word	Folder structure by case study, tagging by source metadata	Key point synthesis from each interview	Core evaluation team access to MS Word	Access by evaluation team only erased post evaluation
Web-based survey	SurveyMonkey	Web-based structured form	Anonymous data export to Excel, saved in Google Drive	Quantitative analysis in Excel, Qualitative analysis in MS Word	Core evaluation team and Evaluation Office access to UNFPA Google Drive	Password protected survey admin
Social media	Mention	Mention Sentiment Analyzer	Results recorded in Word Doc, saved in Google Drive	Short analysis/synthesis note	Core evaluation team and Evaluation Office access to UNFPA Google Drive	UNFPA managed Google Drive
Document analysis	Client provided documents, web search	Via email, web search, or direct inclusion by Evaluation Office	UNFPA Google Drive with team-managed file structure	Qualitative analysis in MS Excel and MS Word	Core evaluation team and Evaluation Office access to UNFPA Google Drive	UNFPA managed Google Drive
Analytical workshops	Zoom and in-person	Case-based deep dives, recording, minutes, live notes	PPT slides and recording saved to Google Docs	PPT clean-up post workshop, note for the record	Core evaluation team and Evaluation Office access to UNFPA Google Drive	UNFPA managed Google Drive
Written feedback	Track changes and audit trail	Consolidated comment audit trail	UNFPA Google Drive with Evaluation Office -managed file structure	Submitted deliverables and audit trails	Core evaluation team and Evaluation Office access to UNFPA Google Drive	UNFPA managed Google Drive

Source: Evaluation team

2.5 LIMITATIONS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

During the inception phase, the evaluation identified a number of potential limitations and intended mitigation measures. Table 2 provides a summarized overview of the limitations and mitigation measures. The complete table of limitations (both anticipated and unanticipated) can be found in Annex IV.

TABLE 2: Anticipated and unanticipated limitations

Anticipated limitation	Anticipated mitigation measure	Actual limitation and mitigation
Extracting sufficient data from only three country case studies and three regional case studies to make credible conclusions for UNFPA at the synthesis level.	The evaluation team tried to mitigate against this in multiple ways, including having a strong and purposeful sampling strategy, and ensuring that the regional case studies provide a broader overview of country-level work within the region. The global and additional regional data, and the online survey also contributed to broader perspectives.	The regional case studies include a rich array of evidence and data from different countries within those regions, and as the evaluation included three regional case studies out of a total of six regions for UNFPA this allowed for a breadth of data beyond simply 'six' case studies. The global and additional regional data collection was strong and in-depth.
Potential limitation of collecting data from the beginning period of the evaluation.	The evaluation was focused on learning for the future and expected to have less key informant evidence for early years.	The timeline was beneficial as many respondents to this evaluation – both internal to UNFPA and external – see a clear narrative and evolution from 2014 onwards.
COVID-19 potential disruption.	The evaluation intended to adhere to the guiding principles vis à vis COVID-19, being that no data collection method would be undertaken if it heightens the risk of COVID-19 to national or regional consultants, or interviewees.	There was no international travel by the core team or focus group discussions for this evaluation. The planned New York analysis meeting in October 2022 went ahead and was not disrupted by COVID-19.
Possible disruption in EECA region due to conflict in Ukraine.	The evaluation team was ready to find other ways to collect data, based on experience of conducting evaluations in complex humanitarian settings.	There were some EECARO stakeholders who were unable/unwilling to participate in the evaluation due to political sensitivities. The evaluation team mitigated this by having a very broad document review.
Unavailability of key stakeholders due to remote or limited time availability or interest in the evaluation.	The team planned to have a systematic methodology for reaching out to stakeholders and an increased timeline to ensure contact with critical stakeholders is maximized.	This proved problematic at all levels. However, the evaluation highlighted during the inception phase a minimum number of key informant interviews for country and regional case studies and that number was achieved, or very nearly achieved, across all case studies.
Specific issues with regard to population data in humanitarian contexts.	The team planned to ensure the comprehensive input of the UNFPA humanitarian data advisor.	The evaluation involved a number of interviews with humanitarian actors and two interviews with UNFPA headquarters staff.
Unanticipated challenges		
1. Challenges with recruited national and regional consultants.	The evaluation team encountered some challenges with the recruited national and regional consultants, which were mitigated by reviewing task allocation between core team members and recruited consultants.	
2. Challenges with respondents understanding or adhering to the scope of this evaluation.	There was an overall challenge with stakeholders not necessarily understanding the scope of this evaluation, and – particularly for evaluation question 4 to evaluation question 6 – providing examples of effectiveness that were programmatically SRHR or GBV examples, rather than population data, population dynamics, or population development examples of effectiveness.	

Source: Evaluation team

© UNFPA/Luis Tato.

Internally displaced Somali women who have been displaced by drought.



3

FINDINGS

This section presents 19 findings with supporting evidence organized by the eight evaluation questions. The evaluation recognizes the different aspects of work of UNFPA across population data, population dynamics (analysis of population data and identification of trends) and population and development (integrating population data and the analysis into development policies). Where necessary, this report will distinguish between these areas, but where referencing the work of UNFPA as a whole, this report will refer to “population and development” work.

3.1 RELEVANCE OVERALL

Evaluation question 1: To what extent has UNFPA support to population dynamics and data been relevant and timely across different contexts and to the changing needs at subnational, national, regional and global levels?⁴⁰

As per the framing of this evaluation question, the findings below are presented as one overarching finding, and then one finding each for each of the sub-questions related to population data, population dynamics, and population and development (see footnote 36).

Finding 1: There was a reframing of the centrality of population dynamics and data within UNFPA from the 1994 ICPD onwards, and specifically from 2014 with the introduction of the “bullseye”. There is a clear sense within UNFPA that the area of population data and dynamics is once more gaining increasing prominence within the organization and so ensuring its alignment with, and relevance to, the current global issues related to demographic shifts.⁴¹

There is a clear narrative of reframing the centrality of population dynamics within UNFPA from 2014 onwards. Multiple internal UNFPA and external stakeholder respondents to this evaluation at global, regional, and country levels highlighted this, with different perspectives as to both the rationale and the benefits.⁴²

40 Sub-questions: 1.1 UNFPA has provided relevant and timely support to generation of quality, disaggregated population data across different contexts. 1.2 UNFPA has provided targeted and timely support to analysis of population trends/population dynamics, including in relation to low fertility and ageing, demographic dividend and demographic resilience across different contexts. 1.3 UNFPA has provided relevant and timely support to the use of population data and trend analysis for critical population and development issues, including in relation to low fertility and ageing, demographic dividend and demographic resilience across different contexts.

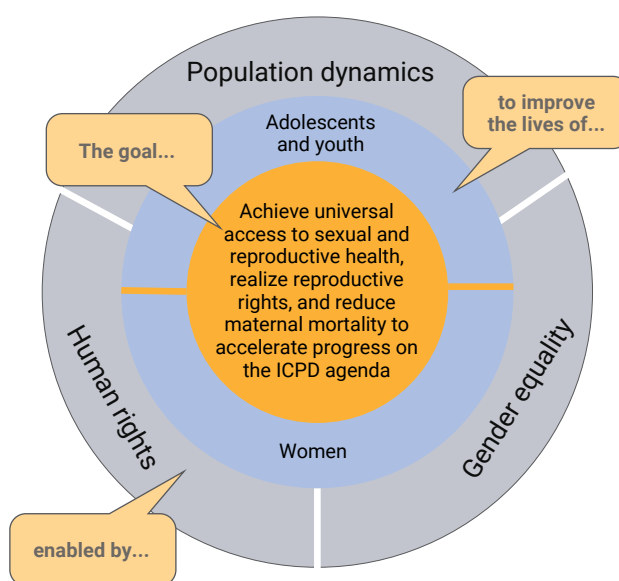
41 Sources of finding: UNFPA, other UN agency, academic institution, NGO partner, government, and donor respondents at the global level and from APRO, ASRO EECARO, Mexico, Nigeria and Uganda case studies/cross-referenced with country and regional level UNFPA reports; Global level UNFPA and UN reports and strategies. Strength of finding: HIGH.

42 Sources of finding: UNFPA, other UN agency, NGO partner, and donor respondents at global level, regional level (EECARO, ASRO and APRO case studies) and country level (Uganda case study).

There are some reports of this shift happening much earlier, and particularly from the moment of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994. However, a majority of respondents highlighted a more visible and obvious shift since 2014. This was reflected in the staffing profiles of the organization at that time, with a greater preponderance of staff working on SRHR and with a medical health background than on statistics and demography.

Since 2014 there has been a clear focus of the Population and Development Branch on quality data, linked from 2015 onwards to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The focus has also been on increasing quality data-based evidence of demographic shifts and trends. More generally, the sense that SRHR has “taken a front seat”⁴³ is largely shared among long-standing UNFPA staff in particular, and this was linked particularly to the introduction of the UNFPA bullseye in the Strategic Plan 2014-2017.

FIGURE 5: UNFPA bullseye⁴⁴



Source: UNFPA Strategic Plan 2014-2017. 2013.

The bullseye is widely appreciated within UNFPA in terms of harmonizing the work of UNFPA across different areas and it does not exclude population dynamics, which is clearly shown in the outer ring as an area of work that is essential for achieving the central statement of the bullseye.⁴⁵ This does not change the perception that the bullseye reframed the centrality of population dynamics within UNFPA. The quotes set out below represent the views of multiple UNFPA staff at global, regional, and country levels:⁴⁶

Since the introduction of the bullseye UNFPA support to population dynamics has been declining. Over time we have recruited more and more health providers at the expense of statisticians rather than those who are experts in population and development. In the past we used to be the first UN agency supporting generation and distribution of data. Since 2013 this has changed and our role has reduced and that is because we changed our strategy. We lost the platform where UNFPA was the population organization: we are not any more.⁴⁷

43 UNFPA ASRO respondent.

44 The bullseye was first introduced during the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 mid-term review, formally adopted within Strategic Plan 2014-2017 and kept within Strategic Plan 2018-2021. It firmly places SRHR as the central goal of UNFPA, with population dynamics – along with gender equality and human rights, and adolescents and youth and women, as enablers and target audiences, respectively.

45 Global, regional and country level UNFPA respondents.

46 This perspective was provided not just by UNFPA staff in interviews within the six case studies, but also by staff responding to the survey and providing open-ended answers to this question.

47 UNFPA ASRO respondent.

Very broadly, the 'P' of UNFPA became smaller and smaller and in the last few years there is the realization of its importance and when demographic change became a Secretary-General megatrend in general UNFPA started changing its approach and bringing the P more prominently in[to] its work.⁴⁸

However, there are three key facets to the narrative of the evolution of population and development within UNFPA that are critical to understanding the overall relevance of the direction taken. Firstly, UNFPA is still broadly considered a relevant partner for population and development activities. In general, the credibility, legitimacy and valued relevance of UNFPA in these areas is due to its longstanding relationships with national statistics offices at the country level, its coordination with the United Nations Population Division and the Statistics Division within the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) at the global level, and multiple UNFPA publications and programming on the impact of ageing and low fertility, and harnessing the demographic dividend. The social media scan also found a strong correlation between UNFPA and references to population data; and there is more evidence presented for this below in findings 2-4 (which speak directly to UNFPA relevance for population data, population dynamics, and population and development, respectively).

Secondly, regardless of whether or not respondents believed this to be a beneficial strategic shift,⁴⁹ there is a general understanding that this strategic shift was connected to funding opportunities and the future of the organization. The increased focus on SRHR and medical expertise of the organization, as well as the increased focus on population data and dynamics work specifically related to SRHR – and particularly, since 2015, related to those SDG indicators for which UNFPA is custodian⁵⁰ – are considered by many internal and external respondents to this evaluation as being a relevant and pragmatic shift.

Thirdly, there is a clear sense that, aligned with a global refocus on the issue of demographic shifts – now identified as a megatrend – there is more of a pivot back towards population and development, not only as an enabler for SRHR, but in its own right.

In 2020 the Report of the UN Economist Network for the UN 75th Anniversary: Shaping the Trends of Our Time⁵¹ identified demographic shifts, and particularly ageing, as one of the five key megatrends of our time.

Demographic trends constitute one of the most significant transformations of our time, for individuals, societies and the world at large. ... International discussions about global demographic trends have now shifted from a predominant emphasis on population growth to the implications of slower growth. A particular focus is the progressive shift from predominantly younger populations to older ones.⁵²

UNFPA has visibly recognized this megatrend at the global level and embedded this within Strategic Plan 2022-2025. This strategic plan is explicit about how population data, dynamics and development link to the three transformative results. Output 4 of Strategic Plan 2022-2025 on population change and data articulates the output objective as having, by 2025, “strengthened data systems and evidence that take into account population changes and other megatrends (including ageing and climate change), in development policies and programmes, especially those related to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.”⁵³ The generation of data (and evidence) is also identified as one of the six key accelerators required to realize all six output areas of the strategic plan.⁵⁴

48 UNFPA EECARO respondent.

49 The evaluation notes that as an evaluation focusing on population data, dynamics, and development, many internal respondents were involved in this area of work rather than in SRHR and naturally had a more negative perspective of any shift away from population dynamics as the core business of UNFPA. The evaluation also interviewed many management-level UNFPA staff who had a more overarching perspective of the shift.

50 UNFPA is custodian of 2 SDG indicators: 5.6.1 and 5.6.2 under SDG 5.6 - Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

51 UN. 2020. Report of the UN Economist Network for the UN 75th Anniversary Shaping the Trends of Our Time.

52 Ibid.

53 UNFPA. 2021. UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025.

54 Ibid.

In 2022, the Executive Director's Statement to the Second Regular Meeting of the Executive Board highlighted that:

Demographic diversity is the current world reality with sweeping implications for societies and economies – with low fertility and ageing in some countries and rapid population growth in others. Unfortunately, we know from experience that population concerns – whether about a 'population boom' or about a shrinking population – too often devolve into fights over women's bodies and attempts to undermine their rights and agency.⁵⁵

This not only shifts the focus back towards population dynamics and data, but also links it firmly to SRHR and gender equality issues, highlighting that it is not necessarily an 'and/or' issue. Rather, it is an increasing understanding that the need for broad population data, dynamics and development work (across all areas, and in their own right, rather than just as support for SRHR) also, ultimately, supports SRHR goals. Further, there is clarity in the Executive Director's statement that for UNFPA, there is particular relevance in viewing population and development through a gender lens – ensuring that as population dynamics once more becomes visible and prominent, it does so in a gendered manner.

Finding 2: UNFPA has a strong history of providing relevant and timely support to population data, with more consistent evidence of relevance for census than for civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) and, increasingly, of ensuring that issues of inclusion are embedded in the generation, analysis and reporting of population data.⁵⁶

In general, there is consensus that UNFPA remains a strong and relevant player in population data, particularly with regard to population and housing census. Beyond census and support to CRVS and other data collection exercises such as demographic health surveys (DHS), UNFPA has increased investment in data systems, particularly the PDP;⁵⁷ which has been relevant to needs across a range of internal and external stakeholders.⁵⁸ Support to census in particular has remained a relevant strength and focus of UNFPA across the time period of this evaluation (2014-2022).⁵⁹

The 2014 evaluation of UNFPA support to census⁶⁰ highlighted that UNFPA had provided relevant support through advocacy and policy dialogue, capacity development, financial support and coordination to census work in more than 130 countries during the 2010 census round. The main relevance of UNFPA support was framed around the provision of quality technical assistance, the credibility that UNFPA adds to the process and the convening role of UNFPA. This evaluation also confirmed the strong evidence that UNFPA provides relevant (and effective) support to the process of conducting census (relevance of support to population data), and less substantial but increasing evidence that UNFPA has increased the use of census data in policymaking (relevance of support to population and development).

This evaluation finds that the conclusion of the 2014 evaluation on UNFPA support to population data (that is, support to the process of conducting censuses) is unchanged and as referenced above, there has been a positive shift and improvement in UNFPA support to the integration of data in policymaking (see Finding 4 below, and Findings 11 under evaluation question 4).⁶¹ While this becomes more a question of effectiveness, the applicability of this to the issue of relevance lies in how UNFPA support has shifted from support to census towards support to integration of data into policy frameworks, as relevant both to changing capacities in different country contexts, and changing focuses within UNFPA and more broadly within the United Nations system. There are also linkages here to increased digitalization (discussed under evaluation question 2, Finding 7), and partnerships, including South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC) and the funding to financing agenda (discussed further under evaluation question 7, Finding 16).

55 UNFPA. 2022. Statement of the Executive Director to the Second Regular Session of the Executive Board 2022.

56 Sources of finding: UNFPA, other UN agency, academic institution, NGO partner, government, and donor respondents at the global level and from APRO, ASRO, EECARO, Mexico, Nigeria and Uganda case studies/cross-referenced with country and regional level UNFPA reports; global level UNFPA reports. Strength of finding: HIGH.

57 UNFPA Population Data Portal. (ND). (Homepage). Online at: <https://pdp.unfpa.org>, accessed: January 2023.

58 Source of finding: UNFPA, other UN agency, NGO partner, and donor respondents at global and regional levels and country levels (Mexico and Nigeria case studies).

59 Source of finding: UNFPA, other UN agency, academic institution, government, NGO partner, and donor respondents at global level, regional level (APRO, ASRO, and EECARO case studies) and country levels (Mexico, Nigeria and Ugandan case studies).

60 UNFPA. Evaluation of UNFPA support to population and housing census data to inform decision-making and policy formulation 2005-2014.

61 Source of finding: UNFPA, other UN agency, academic institution, government, NGO partner, and donor respondents at global level, regional level (APRO, ASRO, and EECARO case studies) and country levels (Mexico, Nigeria and Ugandan case studies).

Notwithstanding the fact that the 2020 census round was significantly disrupted by COVID-19,⁶² UNFPA has continued to be relevant in terms of support for census.

The UNFPA Census Strategy 2017 highlights that the “population and housing census is among the most complex and massive peacetime exercises a nation can undertake.”⁶³ The relevance of continued support to census – that is, the continued need for census data in many countries around the world, even when other countries are moving towards more registry-based systems, is also highlighted in this strategy:

*While national registry systems are evolving worldwide, and in some countries replacing reliance of population and housing census, for the majority of countries the population and housing census remains the primary source of data on the size and spatial distribution of the population and its related characteristics, and the central role of census within national data ecosystems is likely to remain for the foreseeable future.*⁶⁴

Support to census is considered both an entry point to broader discussions on population dynamics and development, and a necessary support in its own right.

Across the eastern Europe and Central Asia region, the contributions of UNFPA in various countries for census are considered highly relevant and much appreciated, particularly in relation to the support to the 2020 round. Censuses are the primary country expectation for UNFPA support and the current round is perceived as a critical cycle to draw lessons learned on data disaggregation, interpretation and utilization, particularly aiming to mainstream the importance of understanding the “stories” behind the numbers and build the required capacities.⁶⁵

In the Asia Pacific region, while UNFPA regional support is focused significantly on population dynamics, there is continued support to population data in some countries, where required. APRO support to UNFPA country offices in the region is demand-driven, which involves country offices requesting support from the regional office based on the support being requested by governments. There remains continued support to census in some countries, such as the recent census in Nepal. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) highlights that UNFPA is a strong partner in continuous national data collection and support to census.⁶⁶ Various country programme documents highlight the focus of UNFPA on data at the country level within the Asia-Pacific region. For example, the Myanmar country programme document highlighted how UNFPA supported the Government in the 2014 census (the first Myanmar census in 30 years).⁶⁷

In 2020 UNFPA produced additional guidance to “better understand the census processes and identify potential areas and roles that UNFPA can play to ensure successful implementation of the census”.⁶⁸

An issue that emerged from this evaluation is the continuing relevance of UNFPA population data support in countries where capacity has been built and national statistics offices manage census more fully without external support, particularly if the support to national statistics offices for census is also understood as an entry point for further conversations. Related to this is whether the decreasing support to national statistics offices for census in such contexts potentially decreases UNFPA legitimacy for engaging in other issues, and in particular the inclusion/leave no-one behind agenda, which is viewed by many as a core added value of UNFPA. For example, in Uganda there was clear consensus that UNFPA support to the Government of Uganda for population data work, including census support, is highly relevant and valued. UNFPA remains the main United Nations partner for the Uganda Bureau of Statistics and National Population Council and is a key partner of the National Planning Authority. UNFPA support in foundational data collection exercises such as the decennial census are vital to government planning efforts.⁶⁹ Notwithstanding the value of its support, there is a concern among respondents

62 More information with regard to the disruption of census because of COVID-19 can be found under EQ4. In 2020 UNFPA produced a technical brief – ‘Technical Brief on the Implications of COVID-19 on Census’ – which highlighted that a number of the 150 countries that were planning to conduct a census in 2020 or 2021 had already decided, early in 2020, to postpone the exercise.

63 UNFPA. 2017. UNFPA Strategy for the 2020 Round of Population & Housing Censuses (2015-2024).

64 Ibid.

65 EECARO regional case study.

66 APRO regional case study.

67 Ibid.

68 UNFPA. 2020. Guidance Note: UNFPA Technical and Operational Support to the 2020 Census Round.

69 Uganda country case study.

that because of the strategic shift within UNFPA towards SRHR – or at the very least the way in which that pivot was communicated – the organization is not always able to keep up with the needs and expectations for population data from government, including around issues of inclusion.⁷⁰

For **CRVS**, there is less clarity on UNFPA relevance than there is with census work across the timeline of this evaluation, which is 2014 onwards. However, UNFPA has recently developed a new strategy (2021 draft) that clearly and explicitly highlights that strong CRVS systems are a “vital pillar”⁷¹ to population data systems. It confirms the strong linkages with human rights and leaving no one behind, and the UNFPA added value and its relevance particularly in this area. Civil registration and legal identity “facilitate access to basic rights such as health care, primary and secondary education, and social support”.⁷² There is clear recognition in the strategy that inequality in registration between men and women (across the life cycle, so inequality in the registration of deaths as much as inequality in the registration of births) has a clear gendered impact and hinders gender equality goals.⁷³

*UNFPA combines expertise across gender and human rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as population data systems and policies. It is therefore well-positioned to support integrated and human-centred civil registration systems, in strong partnership with UN member states, civil society partners and its UN sister organizations, as a critical tool to advance human rights, societal inclusion and sustainable development progress.*⁷⁴

However, the clarity articulated in this strategy is not always visible to country offices’ external stakeholders, who still report different perspectives on both what UNFPA relevance *is*, and what UNFPA relevance *should be*.⁷⁵ There is currently no coherent approach to CRVS at the country level. It has been acknowledged by many respondents to this evaluation that coordinating the multisectoral needs of a CRVS system is a challenge. CRVS is a wide and multisectoral area, with a number of actors; traditionally, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) for birth registration, and the World Health Organization (WHO) for death registration. The role of UNFPA is more ambiguous, either as an overarching CRVS data actor, or specifically for marriages (and divorces) and the UNFPA role, relevance, and added value is seen quite differently across stakeholder groups and across diverse contexts, and not necessarily seen as articulated within the 2021 strategy.⁷⁶

UNFPA has also taken on the hosting of the Centre of Excellence (CoE) on CRVS systems, as of 21st September 2021.⁷⁷ This was previously hosted by the Canadian International Development Research Centre. The rationale behind the transfer to UNFPA was to “increase the scale and impact of the CoE’s thought leadership, knowledge management, and technical assistance”.⁷⁸ This has highlighted to some stakeholders the ambiguity of UNFPA relevance in CRVS (an ambiguity that has been clarified within the new strategy, but the strategy is yet to be finalized).⁷⁹

70 Ibid.

71 UNFPA. 2021. UNFPA CRVS Strategy 2021-2025 DRAFT.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

75 Sources of finding: interviews with other UN agency, NGO partner, donor, and government respondents across global, regional level, and country levels.

76 Ibid.

77 The Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems is global platform and hub on civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems that collaborates with organizations and experts to broker access to information and expertise, including global standards, tools, research evidence, and relevant good practice! <https://crvssystem.ca/>.

78 UNFPA. 2021. UNFPA CRVS Strategy 2021-2025 DRAFT.

79 Ibid.

Recently UNFPA became the home for the centre of excellence for CRVS: this is one example where UNFPA is going beyond what they are expected to be doing. It is not so clear from their mandate as executive agency but shows the willingness to go beyond and make the difference in areas that are not traditional UNFPA areas such as [...] CRVS. But this requires a lot of coordination efforts [and] they have put their imprint in many areas.⁸⁰

There is some clarity within UNFPA at different levels, and aligned with the new strategy, that the key added-value relevance of UNFPA for CRVS is linked to human rights, leaving no one behind and gender equality. There is also clarity that a key entry point of UNFPA within CRVS at the country level is supporting overarching coherent national population data systems, that is, linking CRVS to census support where the relevance and credibility of UNFPA are commonly, consistently and solidly agreed by all stakeholders.⁸¹

Beyond census and support to CRVS, UNFPA continues to provide support to other population data survey exercises at the country level, such as the demographic health survey. This includes support to integrating gender and other issues of inclusion (such as in Somalia, see evaluation question 2 below) and the increasing digitalization of exercises such as the demographic health survey (see evaluation question 3 below).

Further, UNFPA has increased investment in population data management, particularly the population data portal, which has been very relevant to needs across a range of internal and external stakeholders. This was launched in 2022 and designed as a flagship product both as a valuable and relevant resource in its own right and also as a resource to support the delivery of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and the achievement of the three transformative results by 2030.⁸²

The population data portal itself supports the issues raised under Finding 1, as the overview of the portal highlights that the data is focused on SRHR and gender-based violence.

The population data portal is UNFPA's ultimate data source and tracker for population and development data. It combines the newest population data on topics like sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, family planning, maternal health, or gender-based violence gathered from multiple sources.⁸³

Finding 3: Regarding population dynamics, UNFPA has strong experience of timely support to both countries with a demographic dividend (youth bulge) and those with ageing and low fertility. UNFPA also has strong experience ensuring the incorporation of gender equality and human rights-based approaches and of leaving no-one behind.⁸⁴

UNFPA support to population dynamics – that is, analysing the trends of demographic changes and providing evidence and analytics, and using or integrating population data into development policies – has emerged over the last eight years to heavily focus on either the demographic dividend or ageing and low fertility, as contextually relevant.

UNFPA population dynamics contributions to the concept of the demographic dividend, and its potential, have evolved strongly over the years based on its relevance to a significant – but overall decreasing – number of countries over the time period of this evaluation. The work is centred around a demographic dividend value proposition and not only remains relevant to a large number of countries but also aligns well internally with the UNFPA core area of work with adolescents and youth.⁸⁵ The UNFPA demographic dividend value proposition posits that:

80 Source: Other UN agency respondent, global level.

81 Source of finding: Other UN agency, NGO partner, donor, and government respondents across global, regional level, and country levels.

82 The PDP was launched in April 2022 and while some respondents to this evaluation have knowledge of it, there has been limited use so far and therefore limited evidence on the relevance of the PDP in practical terms from respondents to this evaluation.

83 UNFPA. (ND). Population Data Portal Homepage. Online at: <https://pdp.unfpa.org/>, accessed: March 2022.

84 Sources of finding: Global and regional level UNFPA respondents; multiple UNFPA and external stakeholders from APRO, EECARO and Nigeria case studies; global level UNFPA and UN reports; regional UNFPA reports. Strength of finding: HIGH.

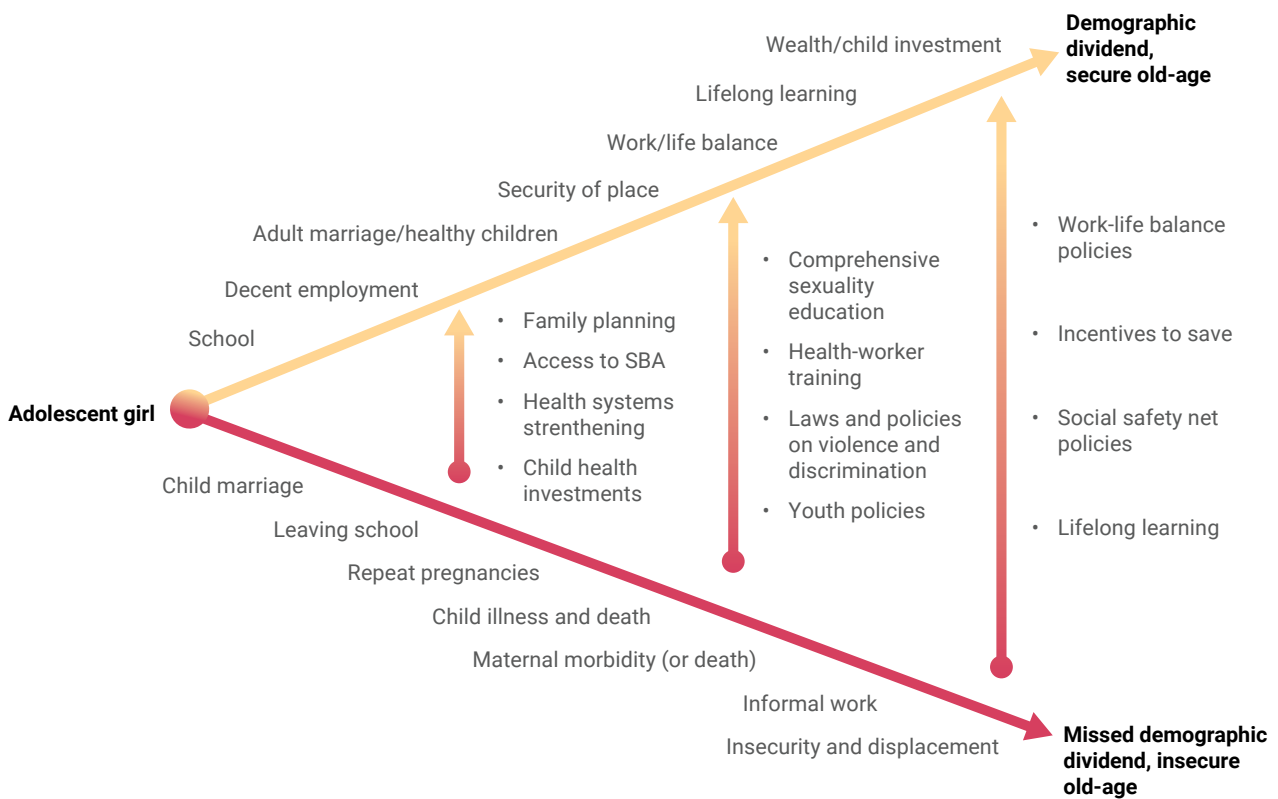
85 The World Bank categorises 62 countries as early-demographic dividend. <https://data.worldbank.org/country/V2>. However, as evidenced further in this report and in the demographic dividend thematic paper and the ageing and low fertility thematic paper, the number of countries with high fertility and current or future potential demographic dividends are decreasing and becoming increasingly more regionalized to sub-Saharan Africa.

Countries with the greatest demographic advantages for development are those entering a period in which the working age population will have a low proportion of young dependents...The smaller number of children per household generally leads to larger investments per child, more freedom for women to enter the formal workforce, and more household savings for a secure old age. When this happens, the national economic payoff can be substantial, leading to a demographic dividend.⁸⁶

The demographic dividend value proposition can be articulated or demonstrated both as an individual rights-based benefit (as represented in Figure 6 below) and as a societal benefit, as represented in the overarching value proposition statement (quoted above). This UNFPA demographic dividend value proposition also clearly articulates the added value relevance of the role of UNFPA in supporting this, being specifically that:

The demographic dividend presents an opportunity for UNFPA to draw a clear causal line from the empowerment of young women and the delivery of SRHR to sustainable economic development, garnering the interest of governments to investments that have been under-valued in the past.⁸⁷

FIGURE 6: Demographic dividend life cycle



Source: UNFPA. A Value Proposition for the Demographic Dividend.

The relevance of the concept of the demographic dividend to individuals, communities and to UNFPA internally in terms of linking with other UNFPA areas of work (SRHR, gender equality, and adolescents and youth) has been sustained over the time period of this evaluation. This is also true for how stakeholders perceive the added value of UNFPA in this area. UNFPA publications and programming at global, regional and country levels reflect this relevance.

86 UNFPA. A Value Proposition for the Demographic Dividend.

87 Ibid.

For example, at the global level UNFPA has supported the “4D series” (diversity dialogues for the demographic dividend). This was an initiative, in cooperation with the African Union and the German Foreign Ministry, to produce a series of dialogues/knowledge management products that highlighted the relevance and importance of the demographic dividend, specifically for African countries.⁸⁸

At the regional level, a clear example of relevance in programming is the West and Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO) supported Sahel Women’s Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD) project.

Box 3: UNFPA West and Central Africa: Sahel Women’s Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD) regional initiative

The UNFPA West and Central Africa Sahel Women’s Empowerment and Demographic Dividend regional initiative aims to accelerate the benefits of a demographic dividend, specifically focusing on economic empowerment of women and girls. SWEDD is a partnership between UNFPA and the World Bank and it started in 2015, with the current funding secured until 2024. It is framed around the three transformative results of the UNFPA strategic plan but also around a ‘3E’ approach – “empower, educate, and employ”, which form the demographic dividend programming areas. This has meant a shift from the UNFPA demographic dividend value proposition to a more transformative, interactive and integrative system.

Source: UNFPA SWEDD Report Summary 2020.

At the country level, many UNFPA country offices, particularly in Africa, have supported demographic dividend road maps. In Africa, UNFPA supported the development of the African Union Demographic Dividend Road map in 2017. This was of clear relevance to the member states of the African Union.⁸⁹ Since then, UNFPA country offices across Africa have supported countries not just at the national level, but also at the subnational level to create demographic dividend road maps that align with the African Union continental road map. For example, in Nigeria, UNFPA has currently supported 6 (out of 36) states to develop state-level demographic dividend road maps, with country office staff being aware of the need to tailor road maps to the particularities of each state (that is, whether or not it is a conflict or humanitarian state, and other differences in the demographic transition). There is recognition that the 36 states require different processes and policies to be able to understand and operationalize the concept of the demographic dividend.⁹⁰

With regard to **ageing and low fertility**, UNFPA population dynamics contributions to this demographic shift⁹¹ are not as visibly long-standing as the demographic dividend work, although there has long since been an understanding of the need to address demographic diversity, including the concept of the “double dividend”.⁹² This evaluation finds, however, that work on ageing and low fertility is currently not as coherent as work on the demographic dividend at the global level. Nonetheless, the contributions to this area are no less relevant. Many respondents reported that this is an area of increasing relevance. The 2020 United Nations report on megatrends⁹³ highlighted demographic shifts, and particularly ageing, as one of the key megatrends of the current time. UNDESA highlights that between 2025 and 2030, 67 per cent of the global population will live within contexts of below replacement fertility rates, and 32 per cent will live within contexts of intermediate fertility, leaving only 1 per cent of the global population living in contexts of high fertility.

88 UNFPA. (ND). Democratic Diversity and Dividends Dialogue Homepage. Online at: <https://www.unfpa.org/events/4d-government-government-policy-dialogues-demographic-diversity-and-dividends>. Accessed: January 2023.

89 African Union Commission. 2017. AU Road Map on Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in the Youth. Addis Ababa: African Union Commission.

90 UNFPA, NGO partner Nigeria respondents.

91 As referenced further in this report, and also in the ageing and low fertility thematic paper, ageing and low fertility are not one single demographic shift. Low fertility, combined with increased life expectancy, leads to ageing.

92 The double dividend occurs when the added wealth and social security among the young bulge as they grow older (having benefited from countries’ investment in the first dividend), usually referenced as the demographic dividend, provides a second demographic dividend.

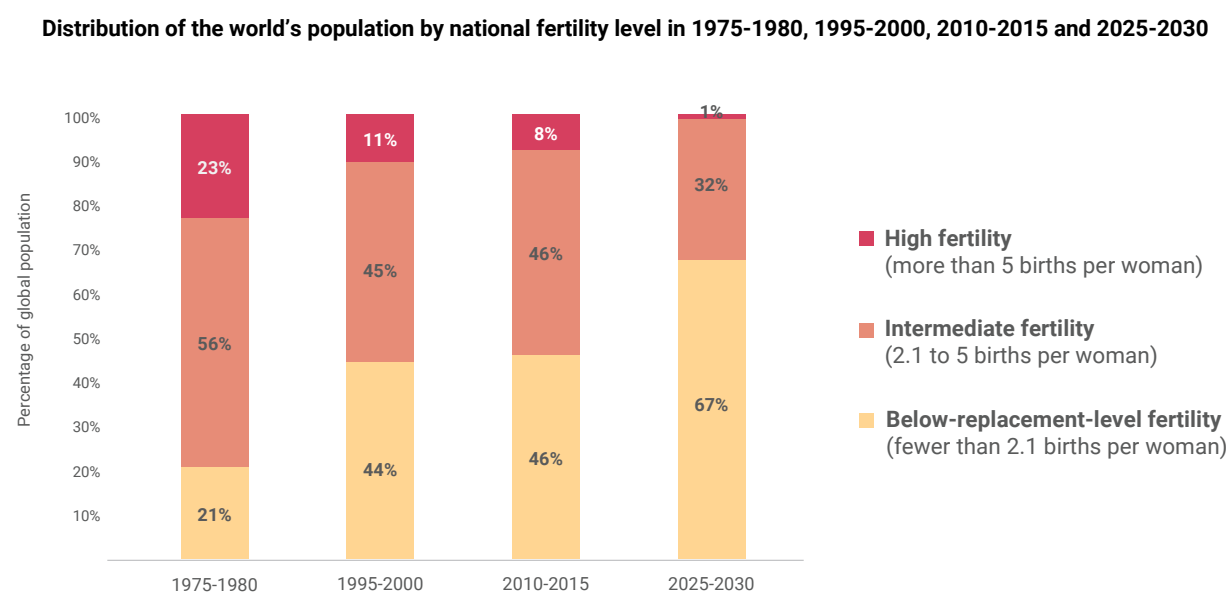
93 UN. Report of the UN Economist Network for the UN 75th Anniversary Shaping the Trends of Our Time. 2020.

In 2022 UNFPA co-hosted a Global Symposium on Low Fertility and Ageing.⁹⁴ At this symposium, UNFPA highlighted that:

The trends towards low fertility and population ageing in many parts of the world present considerable progress in areas such as women's empowerment, reproductive choices, health care and longevity. If countries see population shifts not as a threat, but as an opportunity, and respond with comprehensive policies based on evidence and human rights, they can thrive in a world of rapid demographic change.⁹⁵

Outside of the African continent, and increasingly outside of sub-Saharan Africa, countries are becoming less concerned with addressing unmet need for family planning (the second of the three UNFPA transformative goals) and more concerned with falling birth rates and an ageing, and therefore potentially progressively, unproductive population.

FIGURE 7: Decreasing fertility rates



Source: UNDESA Population Division. *Population Facts. The end of high fertility is near. 2017.*

The fact that ageing and low fertility issues have become increasingly incorporated into the UNFPA remit is strongly relevant. There are two issues that emerged with regard to the relevance of UNFPA work on ageing and low fertility. Firstly, the challenge appears as to how to ensure a common understanding across the organization of the relevance and coherence between this work and the overarching mandate of UNFPA. Even UNFPA staff working on this issue highlight some practical challenges when it comes to ageing and low fertility and some of the output activities that result naturally from this work, such as UNFPA supporting healthy ageing centres.⁹⁶ There is a general consensus that this work, along with work on pensions and financial planning for older populations⁹⁷ is outside the mandate, remit and expertise of UNFPA, even if this is where the needs are within certain countries.⁹⁸

Many respondents highlighted that in fact, with regard to ageing and low fertility, UNFPA relevance and added value is more in the area of the data (collecting quality, disaggregated data with a focus on rights and inclusion) and dynamics – analysing the data – but not on practical implementation of solutions. Many also see the entry point being healthy ageing through a life-course approach, which links the demographic dividend concept (see Figure 6 above) to secure healthy ageing. The life-

94 UNFPA. (ND). Democratic Diversity and Dividends Dialogue Homepage. Online at: <https://www.unfpa.org/events/4d-government-government-policy-dialogues-demographic-diversity-and-dividends>. Accessed: January 2023.

95 Ibid.

96 Such as in Bosnia. EECARO regional respondents.

97 Such as in Asia Pacific or Latin America countries. APRO and LACRO respondents.

98 UNFPA regional and global respondents.

cycle approach is the umbrella approach used in some regions such as APRO to link these two issues and to firmly position UNFPA, with its value-added expertise and mandate areas – as an organization working on the issue of ageing in the future, rather than supporting older persons right now.

The focus of UNFPA on *future* ageing and low fertility challenges within the life-cycle approach remains relevant, but does not always address the need for responses to present-day challenges in that regard.

As articulated by the United Nations report on megatrends, population ageing is caused by two different drivers: one is declining fertility, and the other is increasing life expectancy.⁹⁹ Increasing life expectancy is not a negative shift; it means people are healthier, medicine is more effective and people live longer. This is also an area where UNFPA provides a number of knowledge management products and offers conceptual solutions, such as within the APRO life-cycle approach of redefining older age.

To conduct holistic analyses of population ageing policies and issues, the definition of 'older ages' as we understand it may have to be modified. Apart from their chronological age, a 65-year-old in contemporary Japan has little in common with a 65-year-old in Sierra Leone or an individual of the same age who lived in 1950, or who would live in 2050. Hence, a shorthand could be derived from the 'prospective age' paradigm, where the 'boundary to old age' is fixed at a given remaining life expectancy.¹⁰⁰

This is relevant to the issue of ageing, but less obviously relevant to the mandate of UNFPA.

There is an increasing understanding within UNFPA that the most relevant operational work, as well as data for policy use, for UNFPA as an agency, is the low fertility area. At the same time, in many contexts a more generalized discussion around ageing as a phenomenon is an easier entry point than conversations directly about low fertility. Conversations around generalized ageing as a phenomenon caused by both longer life expectancy and low fertility can then lead to more challenging discussions around low fertility issues. However, the last five years have seen ageing and low fertility progressively moving toward becoming the centre of attention in a more sustained and systematic way. Overall, while UNFPA moves forward to play a leading role in reshaping approaches to ageing and low fertility, efforts to implement the ageing agenda throughout the different modes of UNFPA engagement have been diverse and have not reflected a coherent and consistent underlying logic.

The issue of low fertility links directly to increasingly conservative pro-natalist policies that seek, at their most regressive, to restrict access to contraception, and even at their least regressive to 'encourage' higher fertility by limiting choice for women in different forms.¹⁰¹ The UNFPA added values on human rights-based approaches, inclusion and gender become ever more relevant and pressing in such circumstances. Even more critically, pro-natalist policies have the potential to hinder achievement of the second transformative result (ending unmet need for family planning). Therefore, data, dynamics and development work in this area is both relevant to the needs and entirely relevant to the UNFPA mandate and strategic direction.

A key final point is that the significant progress and development of strategies to address ageing and low fertility has happened within UNFPA at the regional level, not at the global level. Unlike the focus on demographic dividend, which has a clear coherence and investment at the global level, ageing and low fertility work has been increasing primarily through the development of overarching umbrella frameworks within different regions, such as the demographic resilience concept (see Finding 4, below).

Finding 4: For population and development UNFPA has responded to needs by increasingly shifting towards umbrella concepts that seek to support the utilization of demographic data and analysis in policy frameworks in a rights-based and inclusive manner. Demographic resilience is a clear example of this.¹⁰²

99 UN. 2020. Report of the UN Economist Network for the UN 75th Anniversary Shaping the Trends of Our Time.

100 UNFPA APRO. 2020. Addressing Population Ageing in Asia and the Pacific Region. A life-cycle approach. No date.

101 For example, UNFPA APRO produced a rapid scoping catalogue of all relevant policies in the Asia Pacific region that respond to ageing and low fertility, including pro-natalist policies. See: UNFPA APRO. Social Policies Catalogue on Population Ageing. A rapid scoping review.

102 Sources of finding: Global level UNFPA reports; multiple UNFPA and external stakeholders from APRO and EECARO regional case studies/cross-referenced with regional level UNFPA reports. Strength of finding: HIGH.

At the global level, UNFPA State of the World Population (SOWP) reports have, since 2014, consistently highlighted the relevance of demographic shifts to development agendas.^{103,104} While this started with references to the demographic dividend in earlier years, it evolved towards a more comprehensive account of demographic shifts in later years.^{105,106} The SOWP reports reflect the relevance of UNFPA contributions to demographic shift conversations across the years.

At the regional and country levels, UNFPA has developed overarching umbrella programmes and initiatives to provide contextually relevant frameworks and structures that support governments and regional bodies to integrate the use of population data and dynamics into policies. These frameworks are different in each region. For example, APRO has the life-cycle approach; EECARO has the demographic resilience approach; and in both the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO), and ASRO, UNFPA has a strong ageing approach. ASRO works equally on demographic dividend issues, particularly across a number of humanitarian context countries. WCARO and the East and Southern African Regional Office (ESARO) work under the African Union Demographic Dividend Road Map.¹⁰⁷

The common thread through all these regional frameworks, and the support that UNFPA regional offices provide at the country level for national policy development, is the concept of LNOB and the integration of human rights (through a human-rights based approach (HRBA)) within policies. This evaluation provides examples below of two regional approaches.

In EECARO, the **Demographic Resilience** Programme provides an alternative paradigm to address population issues in the context of low fertility, ageing and out-migration in the region, and offers an opportunity for UNFPA to regain relevance and respond with a more articulated, comprehensive and innovative approach to the regional population trends and challenges within the ICPD mandate. This approach is also used in LACRO.

The Demographic Resilience Programme in EECARO aims to support and build the capacity of countries in the region in developing population and social policies and programmes to respond to demographic change, strengthen human capital and shape a prosperous future. It provides support to countries in building a solid evidence base and analysing complex demographic processes and their impact on relevant policy areas. This is carried out by using an array of data, tools and studies. By working towards understanding and addressing the highly political nature of population issues in the region, UNFPA has remained both relevant and influential. This has included contributing to providing countervailing alternatives to conservative, pro-natalist forces through evidence-based political dialogue. UNFPA has used demographic resilience as an alternative conciliatory framework to address the challenges beyond the demographic insecurity approach. UNFPA leadership capacity to positively manage diverse and complex national situations and governmental positions, making its point heard, has been crucial to ensure relevance.

The essence of the demographic resilience approach is aligned with the thinking around the second demographic dividend. The second demographic dividend occurs when people move into higher-paying jobs and countries experience higher per-capita income. These social and economic changes then also motivate people to accumulate greater personal wealth.¹⁰⁸ It is also in line with the mandate on enabling all couples to meet their reproductive goals, and the need to appreciate how the unfolding demographic changes will affect development objectives that are at the top of national agendas – inequality and poverty, employment and social protection, human capital and women’s empowerment, education and health, among others – and how progress towards these development objectives will in turn affect demographic changes.

In APRO, through taking a **life-cycle approach**, UNFPA links support to harnessing the demographic dividend and support to ageing and low fertility, which is relevant to such a diverse region: however, support to ageing and low fertility is more visible. The life-cycle approach emphasises the development steps and events throughout a person’s life. This is aligned with the ICPD Programme of Action, as it takes a rights-based individual approach to addressing macro-level population issues. It also covers generations from childhood to older age. This approach is also used in LACRO.

103 UNFPA. 2014. State of the World’s Population.

104 UNFPA. 2016. State of the World’s Population.

105 UNFPA. 2018. State of the World’s Population.

106 UNFPA. 2019. State of the World’s Population.

107 African Union. 2017. AU Road Map on Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments on Youth.

108 AUC/ECA. (2013). Beyond the first dividend brief.

Online at: <https://www.prb.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/africa-second-demographicdividend.pdf>. Accessed: March 2022.

UNFPA recognizes that often ‘ageing’ is presented as a ‘false binary’.¹⁰⁹ This is articulated by UNFPA APRO as ageing either being a ‘silver tsunami’ that will very negatively impact on all existing social systems, or a ‘silver economy’ that will impact more positively. The life-cycle approach allows a more holistic and longer-term, intergenerational view of the different factors – at the individual level – that will ultimately influence how negatively or positively demographic shifts affect the overall socioeconomic well-being of a nation.

There are multiple examples of UNFPA supporting governments to integrate population data and dynamics into national policies. The challenge is that this work is conducted in a relatively ad hoc manner. The different regional frameworks that support integration of population data and dynamics into rights-based, ICPD-coherent, inclusive policies have commonality in terms of the human rights-based and the LNOB approaches. For the two regional examples provided here, the demographic resilience approach and the life-cycle approach, there are many commonalities in conceptualization, with two key differences.

Firstly, the life-cycle approach is from the perspective of individuals, and the demographic resilience approach is from the perspective of national-level needs and concerns. Secondly, it could even be considered that the life-cycle approach is the practical and pragmatic set of activities required to achieve demographic resilience, which is in fact a goal rather than an approach. However, the challenge is that these are regional initiatives rather than global initiatives. The overarching UNFPA vision, linking data, dynamics and development with a clear end goal – demographic resilience – and a clear articulation of the linkages of this end goal to the three transformative results, together with a road map of how to get there, is missing. While demographic resilience is emerging as the overarching organizational language, as is highlighted through the rest of this report, this has not been fully accepted to date across all regions.

3.2 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Evaluation question 2: To what extent has UNFPA integrated cross-cutting issues, particularly gender, human rights, disability, LNOB and emerging megatrends, within population dynamics and data programming and support?¹¹⁰

Finding 5: UNFPA is widely and consistently commended for the integration of a human rights-based and inclusive approach to population and development: this is viewed as a strong added-value area for UNFPA in all contexts and more so in lower- and middle-income countries.¹¹¹

With regard to a human rights-based approach (HRBA), the essence of UNFPA work on ageing and low fertility, and umbrella concepts such as demographic resilience and a life-cycle approach, all fundamentally assume the human rights-based approach explicit within ICPD. The ICPD was the foundation for a move from numbers to rights.¹¹² UNFPA has, across all aspects of population and development, integrated that rights-based approach in its work. There is a clear and visible gender lens in many aspects of UNFPA population and development work, across ageing and low fertility and the demographic dividend; and there is a clearly emerging focus on other aspects such as CVRS and national transfer accounts (NTAs).¹¹³ With regard to LNOB, at the global level, UNFPA has highlighted in various global population and development publications, guidance and strategies how current data and indicators can hide gross inequalities and also how digitalization and technological innovations can be used to, at least partially, address these issues.

109 AUC/ECA. (2013). Beyond the first dividend brief.

Online at: <https://www.prb.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/africa-second-demographicdividend.pdf>. Accessed: March 2022

110 Sub-questions: 2.1 UNFPA has supported and integrated a rights-based approach to population dynamics and data. 2.2 UNFPA has clearly and visibly supported and integrated gender within population dynamics and data. 2.3 UNFPA has supported and integrated broader inclusion recognizing contextual issues of marginalization and vulnerability such as disability within population dynamics and data, promoting the LNOB agenda. 2.4 UNFPA has supported the inclusion of emerging megatrends such as migration and displacement analysis and climate change analysis within population dynamics and data. 2.5 UNFPA has supported increased digitalization of population data and dynamics.

111 Sources of finding: UNFPA, other UN agency, academic institution respondents at the global level and UNFPA and government respondents from EECARO, Uganda and Nigeria case studies/cross-referenced with country and regional level UNFPA reports; global level UNFPA and UN reports and strategies. Strength of finding: HIGH.

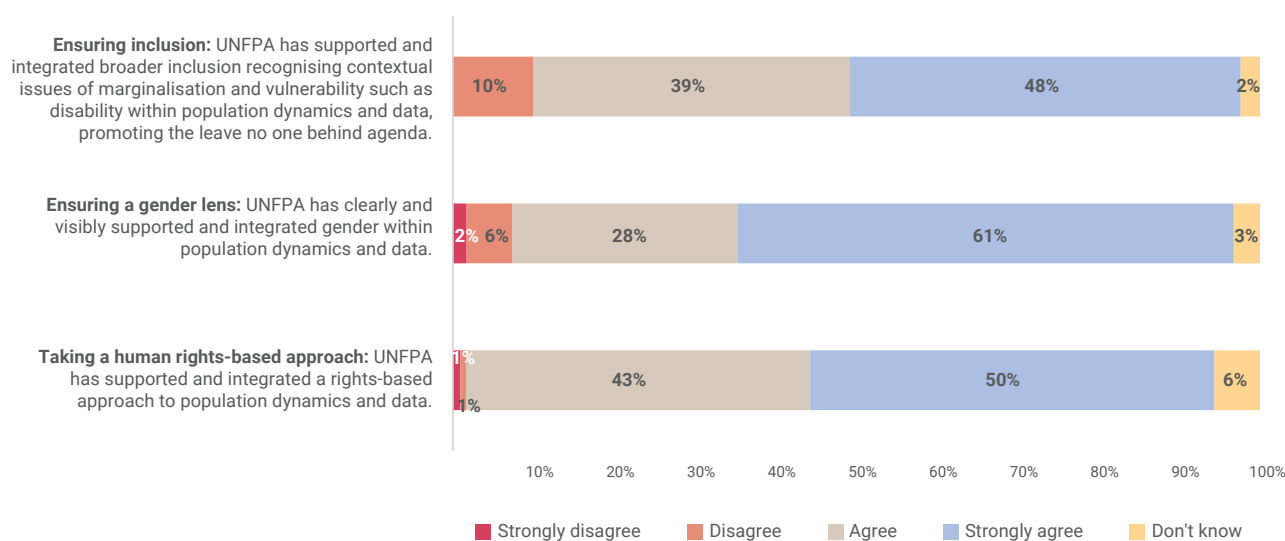
112 See, for example: UNFPA and the Centre for Reproductive Rights. ICPD and Human Rights: 20 years of advancing reproductive rights through UN treaty bodies and legal reform. https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/icpd_and_human_rights_20_years.pdf.

113 National Transfer Accounts (NTA). Homepage. Online at: <https://www.ntaccounts.org/web/nta/show/>, accessed: June 2022.

The evidence for these three different issues – HRBA, gender, and LNOB – will be presented below as a coherent discussion, highlighting examples from regional and country cases studies and speaking directly to the integration of these people-centred cross-cutting issues in population data collection, population dynamics and development, respectively.

Firstly it is useful to highlight that 93 per cent of respondents to the survey shared with UNFPA population and development staff¹¹⁴ agree or strongly agree that UNFPA has supported and integrated a rights-based approach in population and development; 89 per cent agree or strongly agree that UNFPA has clearly and visibly supported and integrated gender within population and development; and 87 per cent agree or strongly agree that UNFPA has supported and integrated issues of inclusion into population and development.

FIGURE 8: UNFPA staff perceptions on the integration of a human rights-based approach, gender and inclusion into population data and dynamics



Source: Evaluation team

Overall, the HRBA, gender and issues of inclusion – particularly under the leaving no one behind (LNOB) agenda¹¹⁵ are often conflated as being the same thing, without the nuanced differences of each being fully understood and addressed. However, in many ways, taking a human rights based approach that is inclusive and ensures rights for all people, women and girls as well as men and boys, including all those from marginalized and excluded communities – does indeed conflate the three areas of work. Further, because all three issues are fundamental to the ICPD agenda, these issues are considered to be at the core of the UNFPA mandate and its areas of work. There is a strong sense that ICPD in Cairo in 1994 was the start of changing the narrative to an individual rights perspective and UNFPA work since then has enshrined a rights-based approach and understanding of gender – which is required to realize the rights of 50 per cent of the global population – and, to a lesser extent, but still key, an inclusive approach. This leads to perhaps a lack of understanding of how, specifically, HRBA, gender, and inclusion are integrated specifically into population and development as there is an assumption that these issues underpin all areas of UNFPA work. For example:

*HRBA has nothing to do with population and development. We are using HRBA in every single thing we do. It is an umbrella for everything. It is fully implemented in all thematic areas, it is the kick-off of everything we do.*¹¹⁶

114 This survey was aimed at collecting the opinion of UNFPA staff working on, or with an interest in, population and development at country, regional and global levels, in order to supplement the data collected through country and regional case studies, thematic papers, and the global literature review. A total of 122 staff responded to the survey and a full overview of the survey, including the profile of respondents (region, job level, gender, length of time at UNFPA) and all Likert scale and an analysis of open-ended questions can be found in Annex VIII.

115 UNSDG. (ND). Leave No One Behind Homepage. Online at: <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/leave-no-one-behind>. Accessed: June 2022.

116 UNFPA regional respondent.

HRBA, gender, and LNOB are all strongly referenced in successive strategic plans as cross-cutting issues applicable to all UNFPA mandate areas, including population and development; in UNFPA global publications – such as annual State of the World Population reports – and in regional- and country-level publications. One practical example of how UNFPA seeks to integrate LNOB in particular is the use of small area estimation.¹¹⁷ Small area estimation is particularly used to ensure inclusion of different groups of people by UNFPA,¹¹⁸ including estimated data on issues such as disability at localized levels. It is referenced in both Strategic Plan 2018-2021 and Strategic Plan 2022-2025 as a tool for supplementing census data and allowing specific programmatic responses to the most vulnerable groups at the lowest administrative level.¹¹⁹ It has also been used successfully in Nepal, where, in 2015, UNFPA reported that small area estimation maps were useful for identifying combined vulnerabilities across areas of health, reproductive rights and climate risks.¹²⁰

In April 2022, UNFPA launched the population data portal and, at the launch event, there was specific and repeated reference to the reason why there is a need for up-to-date and accurate subnational datasets as the population data portal intends to provide: this reason is that national aggregates hide inequality, and the more localized that data can be collected, the more obvious geographic pockets of inequality can be identified and used to ensure that no one is left behind. This is not a new theme for 2022: in 2017 the UNFPA SOWP report highlighted a clear example of how national data can hide inequalities:

There is no better example of inadequate measurement than the still heavy reliance on gross domestic product as an indicator of national well-being. By this standard, one African country grew at a rapid clip of 6 per cent annually between 1998 and 2010. Meanwhile, the poverty rate soared from 43 per cent to 64 per cent, affecting 4 million people. GDP also takes no account of women's unpaid work—even though that amounts to an estimated \$10 trillion [USD] per year, globally.¹²¹

The examples of how UNFPA has practically and pragmatically integrated HRBA, gender and inclusion into population data at the point of data collection – particularly LNOB – exist at the global level, such as the publication referenced above, as well as at the regional and country levels. These examples also exist across knowledge management, capacity-building, and advocacy and policy dialogue.

With regard to population and housing census, there is a clear recognition that a census is, in essence, a political issue. In many countries, there is a specific sensitivity in counting displaced persons, for example. In the past, UNFPA provided a strong financial support component for census but that has slowly evolved into a more nuanced technical advisory role, which includes the political and rights-based aspects of census. There is concern as to how much of an advocate UNFPA can be when this is reinforced with financial assistance, as opposed to how much leverage UNFPA might have without the financial back-up.¹²²

This has not prevented progress in a number of countries. In Mexico, for example, UNFPA has been able to introduce gender identity questions and indicators in multiple surveys and the 2020 population and housing census. In Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole, UNFPA bases its support to census on HRBA to ensure democratic processes are strengthened.¹²³

Overall, at both global and regional levels, UNFPA has drafted a gamut of different technical guidance notes from preparation of a general census plan to analysis and use of data to operationalize the official Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses from UNDESA¹²⁴ 2020 census round. This has included specific LNOB issues: for example, the “measuring disability, migration, and marriage registration – recommended questions for inclusion in censuses” of 2019.¹²⁵ This is not a static area of work and is something that is evolving: in October 2022, UNFPA Population

117 Small area estimation (SAE) offers a means of estimating indicators when critical data are not available at lower levels of geography (i.e. district or municipality levels): https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/19-310_SAE_Brochure_A4-SINGLE-PROOF6.pdf.

118 WCARO and ESARO UNFPA respondents.

119 UNFPA. 2017. UNFPA Strategic Plan 2018-2021. And UNFPA. 2021. UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025..

120 UNFPA. 2015. 2015 Annual Report. For people, planet & prosperity.

121 UNFPA. 2017. UNFPA 2017 State of the World Population Report. Worlds Apart. Reproductive health and rights in an age of inequality.

122 UNFPA, and Government respondents at global level, regional level (EECARO case study) and country level (Uganda case study).

123 UNFPA LACRO respondents.

124 UNSTATS (ND). Homepage. Online at: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/Standards-and-Methods/files/Principles_and_Recommendations/Population-and-Housing-Censuses/Series_M67rev3-E.pdf. Accessed June 2022.

125 UNFPA. 2019. Measuring disability, migration, and marriage registration – recommended questions for inclusion in censuses.

and Development Branch reported having begun engagement with the United Nations Independent Expert on Albinism to discuss how better to include people who live with albinism in the 2030 census round.¹²⁶

CRVS is equally as politically sensitive as the census. The idea of having identity cards, particularly for people of specific minority group status – those of particular ethnicities or religions in some countries, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex populations (LGBTQI+) in many countries – or having any personal data stored at the government level is not attractive to all people in all countries. The level of trust that is required by a population in their government is just as significant as the technical and logistical issues of having a functional CRVS system. At the same time, the very notion of civil registration in particular is entirely founded in an HRBA approach. It is about having a legal identity, which every person deserves. To have a legal identity is to be counted.

This is well-recognized in the draft UNFPA CRVS strategy.¹²⁷ This recognition in the strategy is supported by practical action. UNFPA has currently hosted three gender and CRVS conferences, in collaboration with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).¹²⁸

With regard to other data collection support, such as to demographic health surveys, household surveys, and multiple indicator cluster surveys, there are practical examples of how UNFPA has integrated gender in particular. UNFPA Somalia described how they achieve this in practice by leveraging local knowledge of cultural norms. For example, when the recent demographic health survey was undertaken in Somalia, UNFPA ensured that the majority of enumerators employed were women. This was deemed important to ensure that data on women's sexual and reproductive health be collected given the cultural sensitivities around these issues. As a result, approximately 70 per cent of the enumerators hired were women.¹²⁹

In Nigeria, UNFPA has been increasingly paying attention to and advocating for the integration of an HRBA, particularly an LNOB approach with a focus on people with disabilities, mainly in the collection of disaggregated data and in the analysis of demographic data by different variables. It has also successfully advocated for greater attention to gender in the revised National Population Policy.¹³⁰

When it comes to population dynamics and population and development, as referenced above, UNFPA work on the demographic dividend and ageing has been undertaken purely from a rights-based position. More recent umbrella concepts, such as demographic resilience, have been entirely conceptualized based on countering reactive government responses to demographic challenges with rights-based arguments – including an understanding of the rights of all people, women and girls as well as men and boys, and those who are most marginalized and excluded – for developmental and economic advancement and stability.

Initially demographic resilience was conceptualized as demographic security, a term that was quickly dropped due to its military connotations. The concept itself was always one founded in a rights-based approach, specifically to counteract increasingly conservative and pro-natalist policies that were emerging as a response to rapid demographic shifts, both ageing and low fertility, and demographic dividend contexts.¹³¹ This overarching concept has been supported by an increasing number of knowledge products by UNFPA, not just under the demographic resilience concept itself out of EECARO, but also by other regions, framed around conceptual approaches that are similar to demographic resilience but developed in different ways. EECARO has produced documents such as a question and answer (Q&A) document for policymakers on shrinking populations in eastern Europe, which highlights that low fertility should be addressed from a rights perspective.¹³²

Equally, APRO has produced publications on the life-cycle approach, which has also been conceptualized within an HRBA, and very gendered foundation.¹³³

126 UNFPA global level respondent.

127 UNFPA. 2021. UNFPA CRVS Strategy 2021-2025 DRAFT.

128 IDRC was the home of the CRVS Centre of Excellence until September 2021 when it transferred to UNFPA.

129 UNFPA Somalia country office respondents.

130 Nigeria country case study.

131 UNFPA. Demographic Resilience Programme for Europe and Central Asia. Pathways for societies to thrive in a world of rapid demographic change. No date.

132 UNFPA. Shrinking populations in Eastern Europe. Q&As for policy-makers and advocates. No date.

133 UNFPA APRO. Addressing Population Ageing in Asia and the Pacific Region. A life-cycle approach.

UNFPA has supported practical changes to the national transfer account tool to incorporate gender into what is now referenced as NTTA – national time transfer accounts. These are increasingly (although not exclusively) being used and integrate a gender module. The purpose of integrating ‘time’ in a gendered manner is that this new methodology includes counting unpaid caregiving time for children and elderly relatives, tasks which predominantly fall to women, and how this is being shared across generations. It was born out of a project under Berkeley University called Counting Women’s Work.¹³⁴ UNFPA is currently developing guidance for offices to support the implementation of NTTAs.¹³⁵

Across all aspects of population and development work – population data, population dynamics, and population and development – there are still identified gaps in the work of UNFPA in terms of integrating HRBA, gender and LNOB. One area is regional minorities. As referenced above, Afro-descendants and indigenous groups face multiple factors of vulnerabilities within Latin America, as do the Roma population in eastern Europe. An increasing focus on data, legal identity, understanding demographic trends within these populations, and ensuring these populations are counted and accounted for within development policies is ongoing work within UNFPA.¹³⁶

Disability is a growing, but still relatively nascent area of work. For example, in 2019 UNFPA did produce a census guidance for inclusion of disability in census¹³⁷ but other than this, there is limited visible evidence of consistent inclusion of disability across population and development. A good practice is UNFPA LACRO, which actively advocates for the Washington Group questions¹³⁸ in census in the region, and which supports the National Secretariat of Disability in Panama for the implementation of the Disability Survey.¹³⁹ There is extremely limited focus on LGBTQI+ populations across population and development work.

An issue that arose in this evaluation and which is relevant to population and development, but also in many ways relevant more broadly, is that of a common understanding of LNOB within UNFPA. One of the reasons why UNFPA is so widely lauded for having an inclusive and rights-based approach is that there is an understanding by external stakeholders that UNFPA works - not just to leave no one behind - but genuinely to reach the furthest behind first.¹⁴⁰ Further, UNFPA is taking an increasingly sophisticated approach to LNOB, moving from speaking of marginalized groups to speaking more of factors of being ‘furthest behind’ and the intersectionality of these factors.

Finding 6: Efforts with regard to migration and climate change and an understanding of how relevant these issues are to UNFPA support to population and development work are increasing, but there remains limited evidence of how these issues have been systematically integrated into population and development work and translated into practical action.¹⁴¹

Megatrends, such as migration and climate change, are increasingly being incorporated into UNFPA population and development work but there are still questions regarding the political dimensions of migration and what the UNFPA role is and should be. From the evidence collected within this evaluation, migration is a more visible conversation than climate change within most regions, but of course the two are inextricably linked. Further, ESARO has spearheaded work on climate change that is being increasingly supported at the global level, and climate change itself is fast becoming a more critical conversation.

Survey respondents had a less positive view of the integration of migration and climate change into UNFPA population and development work compared to the integration of people-centred cross-cutting issues (HRBA, gender, and LNOB). Of the respondents, 56 per cent agreed that climate change was incorporated, with 30 per cent disagreeing, and 13 per cent saying

134 Counting Women’s Work. (ND). Who we are. Online at: <https://www.countingwomenswork.org/about/who-we-are>, accessed: December 2022.

135 UNFPA respondents.

136 Sources of finding: Global and regional (EECARO case study) and country (Mexico case study) UNFPA, other UN agencies, NGOs, and government respondents.

137 UNFPA. Measuring disability, migration, and marriage registration – recommended questions for inclusion in censuses. 2019.

138 Washington Group on Disability Statistics. (ND). Question Sets. Online at: <https://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/question-sets/>, accessed: June 2022

139 UNFPA LACRO respondents.

140 Sources of finding: Global, regional and country level other UN agency, NGO, government, academic institution, and donor respondents.

141 Sources of finding: UNFPA and academic institution respondents at the global level and UNFPA, other UN agencies and academic institution respondents from APRO, ASRO, EECARO, and Mexico case studies/cross-referenced with country and regional level UNFPA reports; global level UNFPA and UN reports and strategies. Strength of finding: HIGH.

that they did not know. Regarding migration, 75 per cent of respondents agreed that migration is integrated, with 18 per cent disagreeing, and 8 per cent saying that they did not know.

Migration

The overall UNFPA corporate understanding of migration, and particularly its relevance to population data, population dynamics, and population and development has evolved quite significantly over the timeframe of this evaluation.

The 2015 SOWP report referenced migration and displacement, particularly in the context of adaptation to changing demographics, which included refugees but referenced specifically how UNFPA was addressing this with SRHR-focused interventions (for example the development of a reproductive health toolkit for urban refugees).¹⁴² By 2018, the narrative had evolved and UNFPA produced a technical brief on the need to capitalize on the 2020 census round for migration.¹⁴³ This was beyond SRHR or gender work but highlighted how much migration and mobility must be considered in all national planning strategies, as a demographic shift, and how the 2020 census round should embrace questions on mobility and displacement to provide more robust and credible data on population movements.¹⁴⁴

Migration is meaningfully referenced with thorough analysis in an increasing number of UNFPA population dynamics materials. In 2020, UNFPA and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) collaborated on a report on depopulation as a policy challenge and this clearly recognized migration as the third key factor in population change, together with fertility and mortality.¹⁴⁵ It cites Germany as an example of a population that has continued to expand despite decreasing fertility, due to a high level of immigration from other countries.¹⁴⁶

There are three key issues for UNFPA in the area of migration, all of which link together into one overarching challenge, which is - what is niche of UNFPA in migration? The issues are:

1. There are clear lead actors for migration and displacement – the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for refugees, and the International Organization for Migrants (IOM) for migrants, and this work has been, since 2018, framed under two clear global compacts, on refugees, and on migration¹⁴⁷
2. While UNFPA has produced a number of reports that include reference to migration and recommendations for how the global community should address migration, there is less clarity on what activities UNFPA should or could be doing and where the UNFPA added value is at country and regional levels on migration across the areas of population data, population dynamics, and population and development
3. Migration is a deeply political issue, and UNFPA has yet to agree to what degree and at what different levels (country, regional and global) the organization will address the political aspects.

Migration and displacement normally occur in humanitarian and fragile settings. As an example, the Arab States region is a region where migration is a big issue. One opportunity that was highlighted as a way for UNFPA to potentially do more to fill the gap around demographic data on migrant communities in ASRO was through the work being done in the Arab States region's issue-based coalition on migration, of which UNFPA ASRO is a Co-Chair.¹⁴⁸

142 UNFPA. 2015 State of the World Population Report. Shelter from the Storm. A transformative agenda for women and girls in a crisis-prone world. 2015.

143 UNFPA. 2018. Technical Brief. The Need to Capitalize on the 2020 Census Round for Migration Analysis.

144 Ibid.

145 Wolfgang Lutz and Nicholas Gailey. UNFPA and UNDP. Human Development Series. Depopulation as a Policy Challenge in the Context of Demographic Trends. 2020.

146 Ibid.

147 Under the global compact on refugees (GCR) UNFPA has multiple pledges (actions that UNFPA has committed to), which are predominantly focused on SRHR for refugees, GBV prevention and support, and working with young refugees. There is one pledge on population data which is: supporting capacity strengthening of national statistical authorities to improve the collection, analysis, dissemination and usage of population data in support of refugee and internally displaced populations - via the 2020 census round, by capacity strengthening of national population data systems, augmenting census questionnaires by questions on migratory reasons to help better identify refugees and contributing to the UN Expert Group on Refugee and IDP Statistics. Online at: <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/pledges-contributions>. For the global compact on migration (GCM) there are no such pledges.

148 Together with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the International Labour Organization.

The last evaluation for the ASRO regional interventions highlighted the issue that UNFPA does not have adequate data on migration, partially because of the politicized nature of migrant flows.¹⁴⁹ Given the extent of displaced populations in the Arab States region and the extreme temperatures that much of the region faces, numerous interviewees highlighted the data gap around the climate change-migration nexus. There is a perceived need among many stakeholders for more data on the effects of climate change on migration patterns. There is recognition that lack of data on this nexus is a knowledge gap across the whole United Nations system but that UNFPA is well situated and mandated to work towards filling this gap.¹⁵⁰

A clear population data contribution that UNFPA makes in humanitarian settings is the support to common operational datasets, particularly the population statistics (COD-PS). This is discussed in full under evaluation question 6. Within the new population data portal, launched in 2022, there are migration indicators but with limited data to show currently.

With regard to population dynamics (the analysis of trends, which includes asylum-seekers, migrants, refugees and other displaced populations), there are examples of UNFPA contributions, but they are not as consistent or systematic as the population data contribution of COD-PS. It is not an easy area to work in. UNHCR and IOM produce, respectively, refugee and migration statistics that are as accurate as possible, but the statistics change regularly. There are also particular challenges with obtaining the data to begin with and the data are not considered to be particularly accurate. In fact, migration is generally considered, by many respondents to this evaluation to be the most problematic area to evaluate when it comes to understanding demographic trends.¹⁵¹ This means that there is a gap that is not currently being filled. Migration is missing from a number of analysis tools. An example of this would be national transfer accounts (NTAs). National transfer accounts have, in some instances (such as in Mexico and the Philippines), included remittances from diaspora migrant workers overseas, but it has not been a big focus of NTA/NTTA processes to date,¹⁵² despite migration being clearly highlighted in a 2021 national transfer account report: “Six ways population changes will affect the global economy”.¹⁵³

Further, the gap that requires filling is something that transcends the specific status-based mandates of UNHCR (refugees) or IOM (migrants) and falls squarely within the mandate of UNFPA: population matters. This area of population dynamics (that is, the analysis of population movements to identify trends) is not particularly political: the subject becomes very political at the population and development level, which can be identified as supporting governments to introduce policies that are based on those trends (rather than just reporting trends). For example, while an obvious answer to low fertility is migration in order to boost a working age population, this is a difficult proposition for many governments with national populations wary of incoming migrants. For this reason, this proposition is not a key facet of any UNFPA approach, including demographic resilience. However, linking back to the previous finding, this is where UNFPA has an added strength in terms of the focus on rights-based approaches.

Climate change

On climate change, the conversation within UNFPA has been less evolved than the conversation on migration in all regions apart from the east and southern Africa region. ESARO has spearheaded climate change work across all areas of the organization, not just population and development and currently ESARO still hosts the Global Climate Change Coordinator position. Climate change is a critical issue that is well recognized within UNFPA and has been even before it was identified as a global megatrend. In 2015, the UNFPA SOWP report was titled “Shelter from the Storm” and was focused on natural disasters, which are increasing due to climate change.

The reference to climate change is clear, and the work undertaken first within ESARO is increasingly being anchored at the global level. For example, Strategic Plan 2022-2025 introduces climate change resilience as an accelerator. There is a UNFPA Climate Change Strategy, developed by the Technical Working Group on Climate Change within UNFPA. This strategy comprises three documents: a UNFPA climate change value proposition; a UNFPA environmental standard; and a UNFPA

149 UNFPA. 2020. Evaluation of the United Nations Population Fund Regional Interventions Action Plan for Arab States 2018–2021.

150 References to this theme and gap were made by several respondents across stakeholder groups including ASRO UNFPA, other UN agencies, NGOs and government.

151 Sources of finding: Global, and regional (APRO, ASRO and EECARO case studies) and country (Mexico case study) UNFPA, other UN agencies, and academic institution respondents.

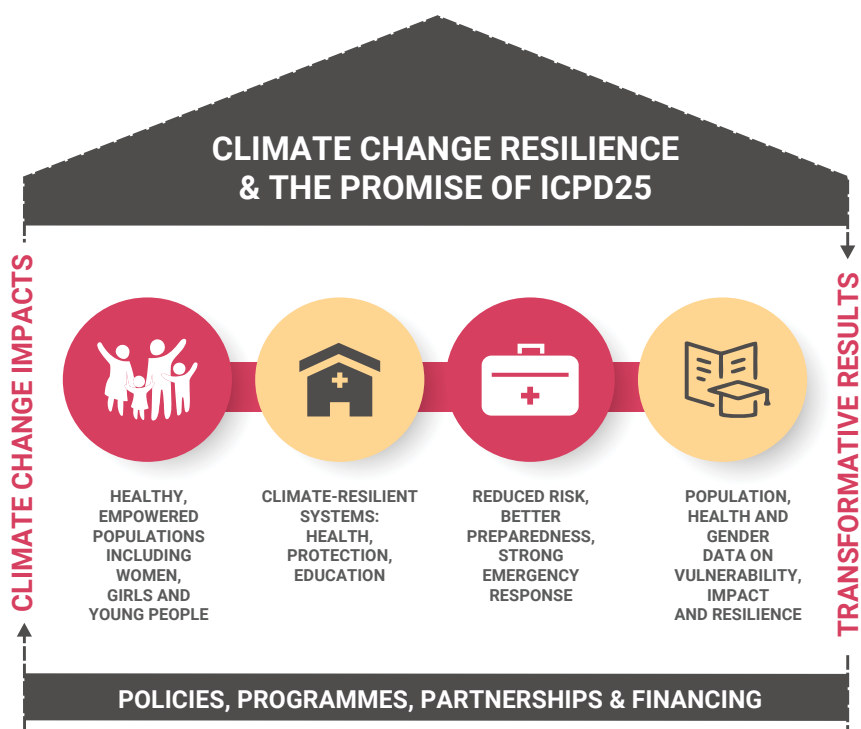
152 Global and regional (APRO case study) UNFPA and academic institution.

153 Andrew Mason et al. 2021. Population and Development Review. Six Ways Population Change is Affecting the Global Economy.

social impact standard. These three documents together have been written to form a strategy that has global corporate approval but has not had: significant global corporate investment or financial commitment for development; finalization; or, crucially, roll-out.

In 2021, UNFPA ESARO published a report on UNFPA and the climate crisis, based on actions to strengthen resilience and protect progress.¹⁵⁴ This report outlined the vision for UNFPA leadership and advocacy on climate change, linking this specifically to population growth.¹⁵⁵ The ESARO initiative also spearheaded first a pilot sample review of nationally determined contributions¹⁵⁶ for a population data and rights-based SRHR perspective, and then a more organized and coordinated overview of countries per region. Nationally determined contributions are at the heart of the Paris Agreement,¹⁵⁷ and frame the specific efforts by each country to reduce, mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

FIGURE 9: Climate change resilience and the promise of ICPD25



Source: UNFPA ESARO. *UNFPA and the Climate Crisis Strengthening Resilience and Protecting Progress within the Decade of Action*. 2021.

UNFPA recognizes that climate change poses a significant threat to the achievement of the ICPD Programme of Action and the three transformative results.¹⁵⁸ There is only limited understanding though (limited right now to ESARO and some other key regional personnel) as to the foundational reason why climate change is a UNFPA concern. In previous decades, (pre 2000) the conversation about climate change and population evolved from a 'population control' perspective, with a global-level sexual and reproductive health commitment to providing full access to contraceptives in order to reduce global populations and so reduce the impact of humanity on the planet. This was not always a rights-based argument. The UNFPA value proposition clarifies, explicitly, that the pathway to resilience is not necessarily population control, or reducing population, but it is instead supporting the rights of all people, in an inclusive way, to make choices that work for them and

154 UNFPA ESARO. *UNFPA and the Climate Crisis Strengthening Resilience and Protecting Progress within the Decade of Action*. 2021.

155 Ibid.

156 United Nations Climate Change (ND). Nationally Determined Contributions. Online at: <https://unfccc.int/ndc-information/nationally-determined-contributions-ndcs>, accessed: April 2022.

157 United Nations Climate Change (ND). The Paris Agreement. Online at: <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>, accessed: April 2022.

158 UNFPA. 2021. *UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025*.

their families. UNFPA is mandated to fulfil the ICPD Programme of Action, and as such has a particular responsibility to ensure that the population, SRHR, and climate change conversation remains rights-based and does not fall back into a population reduction discourse. This is outlined clearly in the ESARO climate change report.

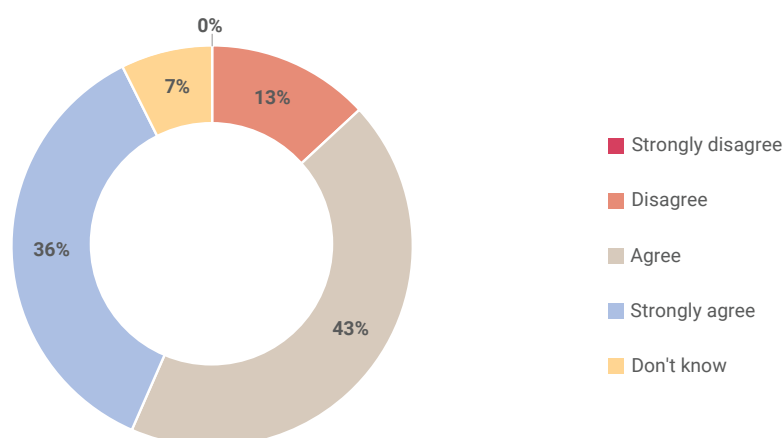
It remains unclear though, how UNFPA intends to consistently integrate climate change into the area of population and development work rather than the current focus on climate change as it relates to SRHR and gender – and gender-based violence. The value proposition has four pillars, the fourth of which is on data and vulnerability assessment. There is limited programming on this, however, to showcase how this value proposition translates into actionable programmes for UNFPA.¹⁵⁹

Finding 7: There are strong country, regional and global examples of UNFPA support to digitalization within population data, and thus of the relevance of that support to the global need for greater digitalization. However, there is some scepticism, both within and external to UNFPA, as to the extent of UNFPA capacity and the clear area of UNFPA added value for this.¹⁶⁰

A majority of UNFPA staff who responded to the survey agree (43 per cent) or strongly agree (36 per cent) that UNFPA has supported the increased digitalization of population data and dynamics.

FIGURE 10: UNFPA staff perceptions on the increased digitalization of population and development work

Digitalization as a megatrend: UNFPA has supported increased digitalization of population data and dynamics



Source: Evaluation team

Overall, UNFPA has integrated digitalization and technological advances into all aspects of population data work and, to a lesser extent, population dynamics work, but this is with the caveat that many respondents believe that no actor is maximizing the use of technology to its full extent within this area, particularly when it comes to data dissemination and analysis.¹⁶¹

At the country level, the increasing digitalization of data collection – predominantly for census, but also for other data collection points such as the demographic health survey and other surveys – has been relatively well established, with evidenced UNFPA support. The 2017 UNFPA census strategy highlights the need for “innovative modelling approaches” for population estimates, particularly in fragile contexts where traditional door-to-door methodologies are not possible due to

¹⁵⁹ ESARO has recently secured funding from the Adaptation Fund, online at: <https://www.adaptation-fund.org> - to start programming on climate change and women and girls in the region in 2023. This is designed to be more SRHR and gender work than population and development work.

¹⁶⁰ Sources of finding: UNFPA, Other UN agency, academic institutions, and donor respondents at the global level and from APRO, ASRO, EECARO, Mexico, and Nigeria case studies/cross-referenced with country and regional level UNFPA reports; global level UNFPA and UN reports and strategies. Strength of finding: HIGH.

¹⁶¹ Global other UN agencies and donor respondents.

conflict and insecurity.¹⁶² While digitalization of census is indeed useful for conflict-affected areas, digitalization is not just a humanitarian reach strategy, but instead something that all countries are seeking to move towards.

There are three different elements to supporting digitalization of census and other surveys that this evaluation brought to light. Below is a brief discussion of UNFPA support to these three key elements:

- Firstly, and where UNFPA has provided significant support, the digitalization of census – and at the most basic level, this has been data collection using tablets – is faster, more efficient and less prone to data error and is likely to produce more expedited and accurate results
- Secondly and as a different approach, the UNFPA 2017 strategy highlights the use of geospatial technology to estimate populations in conflict-affected areas instead of using a more traditional count
- Lastly, there is the understanding that census and CRVS are not delinked. Increasing solid, digitalized CRVS allow a country to move further towards a register-based census where different datasets (held through CRVS or collected through census) are cross-referenced for maximum efficiency.

For the first part, in terms of increasing the use of tablets for census, there is solid evidence of UNFPA support across different countries. The 2020 census round has been characterized by an increasing number of countries using tablets for census. Respondents report that UNFPA ESARO has been a strong promoter of this, including cross-sharing of investment. For example, ensuring that UNFPA-procured tablets used in one country for census were then transferred to another country for continued use, with the example of Malawi and Zambia being given.¹⁶³ Another example was tablets being shared between Kenya and Botswana, and Kenya and Sierra Leone.¹⁶⁴

For the second part – data collection around geospatial satellite technology supporting remote counting of populations, specifically for insecure and high-conflict areas – Geo-Referenced Infrastructure and Demographic Data for Development (GRID-3) is a good global example of UNFPA contribution. GRID-3 is a multi-partner initiative that supports the use of geospatial data on population, settlements, infrastructure and boundaries.¹⁶⁵ It is not a specific humanitarian response tool, but it is easy to see how its applicability and utility is enhanced in hard-to-reach areas. UNFPA is a “significant partner”¹⁶⁶ in this initiative, particularly in terms of the strong relationships UNFPA maintains with national statistics offices at the country level.

GRID-3 and the use of geospatial technology – particularly to map hard-to-reach areas – is closely linked to the LNOB agenda. Those in the most hard-to-reach areas are those least likely to be counted and most likely to be left behind. The initiative is not without challenges, however. As a county level example, in Nigeria, some stakeholders have expressed their concern about the risk of leaving out some areas where digitalization may not be applicable due to low connectivity (for instance, in Borno state). They have also highlighted the limitations faced in the attempt to scale up digitalization, in terms of inadequate infrastructures and resources compared to needs.¹⁶⁷ While UNFPA supported states through the provision of data bundles for internet access,¹⁶⁸ implementing partners reported limited support from UNFPA in terms of digital equipment (for example, information technology equipment).¹⁶⁹

For the third element, which is understanding the digitalization of census and CRVS together, and recognizing that they are not delinked and that digitalization of census is a move towards more efficient and accurate register-based census, UNFPA is reported to be at the forefront of pushing to modernize CRVS systems.¹⁷⁰

Register-based census is the main digitalization-related project for UNFPA in the EECARO region. Moving to register-based census, a megatrend globally, is one of the main projects and challenges of the regional office. To do it is a major operation and it is often underestimated how difficult it is. Turkey is the only country in the region that is successfully performing register-

162 UNFPA. 2017. UNFPA Strategy for the 2020 Round of Population & Housing Censuses (2015-2024).

163 Global level other UN agency and regional UNFPA respondents.

164 Global level UNFPA respondents.

165 Grid 3 Inc. (ND). About Grid 3. Online at: <https://grid3.org/about-us>, accessed: October 2022.

166 Global donor and other UN agency respondents.

167 UNFPA respondents at country level (Nigeria case study).

168 Various UNFPA Nigeria annual reports.

169 UNFPA, NGO partner, and government respondents at the country level (Nigeria case study).

170 Other UN agency global respondents and regional UNFPA respondents and documents (EECARO case study).

based census. In Europe, 30 per cent of the European Union member states are performing either full or partly register-based census. The technical challenges in this regard are that many administrative databases need to be converted to become useful for statistical purposes, while complying with a set of conditions and requirements. Many of the programme countries aim to be operational within 10 years, while others, like Moldova, want to accelerate the transition.¹⁷¹ Moldova implemented the informational system “Population and Migration Statistics”, based on available administrative registers. Another contribution within the Commonwealth of Independent States Population (CISPop) project was the translation into Russian language of a manual for an open-source geographic information system for digital cartography. Digital cartography is an essential part of the modern census; it greatly facilitates planning, monitoring and evaluation activities of the census.¹⁷² UNFPA LACRO also created a regional pool for satellite imagery to create economics of scale when acquiring image resulting at reduced prices.

Beyond population data – particularly census and CRVS – there is more limited evidence of UNFPA support in digitalizing population dynamics. There is evidence of the dissemination of data for development actors (including different government line ministries) to allow them to access and digest data for analysis and use in developing policy frameworks. In APRO, for example, UNFPA has done some work in this area, such as supporting digital platforms for the publication of tables.¹⁷³ There has been less uptake of new technologies to do this quickly and efficiently. This also relates to all actors – governments, UNFPA, and other development partners – not necessarily harnessing the visualization and graphics technology available to translate heavy and hard-to-read census data into more digestible online information.¹⁷⁴

A question remains as to how much UNFPA capacity is keeping up with the fast-paced changes and needs and remaining credible in this area. In the Arab States region perceptions regarding UNFPA suitability as a partner capable of supporting digitization efforts are shifting; the organization is increasingly not perceived to be a partner capable of supporting digitization. Several interviewees from both within UNFPA, and in partner organizations, expressed concern about ASRO’s ability to support digitization drives in the region.¹⁷⁵ While there is recognition and appreciation for the expertise that does exist, for instance UNFPA support to the Government of Iraq and the digitization of its census, there is concern that the organization lacks the technical skills and resources to support more complex or large-scale digitization efforts.¹⁷⁶

In Morocco for instance, although UNFPA has been supporting the High Commissioner for Planning in the country to establish administrative databases at the regional level (governorate), there was concern expressed at the ability of UNFPA to advise on the building of these systems and whether the organization had the technical expertise necessary to do so.¹⁷⁷

Overall, this is a space that requires specific skill sets and a dedication to being a leading agency in this area. It is a busy and continually changing space with one global respondent commenting that:

“[It] is a wild west situation with people producing all kind of different bespoke solutions, vendor lock situations: there are open source solutions for civil registration, there is a lot of homegrown solutions, systems supported by UNICEF etc. It is a complete zoo and the whole notion to have a standard space discussion about how to digitise CRVS systems is long overdue. I think the major funders and practitioners ought to come together in some convening to figure out the rules of road. Otherwise, the most you will get is a mosaic of country-based solutions that are not replicable and the enormous waste of investment that brings.”

171 UNFPA respondent.

172 UNFPA. 2020. Progress Report on the Project “Strengthening data collection, analysis and utilization for evidence-based policy making in the Commonwealth of Independent States”.

173 UNFPA and other UN agency regional respondents (APRO case study).

174 UNFPA, other UN agency, and government regional respondents (APRO case study).

175 UNFPA and other UN agency regional respondents (ASRO case study).

176 UNFPA regional and country respondents (ASRO case study).

177 UNFPA respondents (ASRO case study).

3.3 INTERNAL COHERENCE

Evaluation question 3: To what extent has UNFPA ensured that the support to and use of population dynamics and data links with other UNFPA mandate areas for the achievement of the three transformative results?¹⁷⁸

Finding 8: There are solid and concrete examples of close and thoughtful collaboration across population and development and SRHR and gender at different levels within UNFPA (global, regional and country), particularly with regard to population data.¹⁷⁹

Since 2014 a stated objective of successive UNFPA strategic plans has been to incorporate disaggregated data and demographic intelligence into rights-based and inclusive development policies across all mandated areas of UNFPA work.

Strategic Plan 2014-2017 introduced the bullseye, which has population dynamics as part of the outer ring (see Figure 5 under Finding 1). This strategic plan references UNFPA work on census and other surveys as a “critical means of ensuring that women, adolescents, and youth are at the centre of sustainable development policies, and that programmes have the evidence needed to improve sexual and reproductive health services.”¹⁸⁰ This specifically pegs population data to SRHR (and notably, as discussed under evaluation question 1, this is where the pivotal shift towards rebranding UNFPA as the SRHR agency, rather than the population data agency, is believed by many to have begun).

A key issue highlighted in Strategic Plan 2014-2017 was how UNFPA intended to support the post-2015 (post Millennium Development Goals) agenda, and ensure a robust and evidence-based agenda that included issues of sexual and reproductive health, reproductive rights, gender equality and the needs of adolescents and youth through the use of population data and analysis.

In Strategic Plan 2018-2021, UNFPA introduced the terminology of demographic intelligence and how this should be used to shape overall social, economic and environmental development, and specifically shape rights-based and evolving SRHR and gender equality policies.¹⁸¹

This evaluation highlights that there has consistently, since 2014, been a strong understanding within UNFPA across global, regional and country levels of how essential population data and dynamics are for the implementation of ICPD Programme of Action and the achievement of the three transformative results and the SDGs. UNFPA work is framed more broadly within the SDGs and UNFPA is the sole custodian for the two indicators under SDG 5.¹⁸² This means that there is a clear responsibility for UNFPA to ensure population data are collected and disaggregated in such a way as to understand progress here: although of course the population and development function of UNFPA should provide this disaggregation for all SDGs.

The framing of Strategic Plan 2022-2025 has, in some ways, made interlinkages between population and development and the other previous outcome areas (SRHR, gender equality and adolescents and youth) easier under the structure of how all areas link to the three transformative results, in principle if not yet in practice. This is easier in some areas (such as the demographic dividend and linkages with all three other mandate areas of UNFPA) than it is in other areas (such as ageing and

178 Sub-questions: 3.1 UNFPA has ensured linkages with SRHR and supported the use of population dynamics and data for increased effectiveness of SRHR programming. 3.2 UNFPA has ensured linkages with gender equality and women's empowerment and supported the use of population dynamics and data for increased effectiveness of gender equality, GBV, and harmful practices programming. 3.3 UNFPA has ensured linkages with adolescents and youth and supported the use of population dynamics and data for increased effectiveness of adolescents and youth programming.

179 Sources of finding: UNFPA, other UN agency respondents at the global level and UNFPA, other UN agency, academic institutions and government respondents from APRO, EECARO, and Uganda case studies/cross-referenced with country and regional level UNFPA reports; global level UNFPA and UN reports and strategies. Strength of finding: MEDIUM. Note that strength of finding is medium because this EQ is related to internal coherence and therefore has a much higher level of internal (UNFPA) data than external stakeholder data.

180 UNFPA. 2013. UNFPA Strategic Plan 2014-2017.

181 UNFPA. 2017. UNFPA Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

182 SDG 5 is: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Target 5.6 is: Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences. There are 2 indicators: 5.6.1: Proportion of women aged 15–49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care; 5.6.2: Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education.

low fertility – see findings below). But further, the conceptual linkages in strategic frameworks do not always automatically mean sustained and consistent linkages in practice. This differs across and between levels (global, regional, and country).

For example, in EECARO, respondents to this evaluation had different perceptions of the degree of interconnection between population data and dynamics and the other mandate areas. There was quite clear agreement from respondents on the existence of room for improvement to enhance population and development support and interlinkages. Currently, interconnections are limited to specific coordination and collaboration efforts and are not very structured in approach.¹⁸³

Respondents reported that both the new strategic plan and the regional Demographic Resilience Programme bring a more holistic approach to issues, but this has not automatically resulted in staff aligning to these new, more fluid and multidisciplinary expectations in their daily way of working. A number of key factors were identified that hampered genuine integrated ways of working. These were: (a) personalities, how they perceive the other areas and manage this interconnectedness; (b) the organization not encouraging joint interdisciplinary conversations around how to approach multidimensional topics; and (c) leadership that has not yet moved from portfolio thinking to common results and reinforced accountability.

Currently interconnections with population and development are perceived mainly as specific and potential collaborations without a real change in the mindsets towards integrated working. Quite different perceptions about the degree of existing integration between each mandate area and population and development highlight the absence of a shared understanding of what integration implies and what should be expected.¹⁸⁴ In the area of sexual and reproductive health, support towards the Sofia Conference is highlighted. This was a regional conference on demographic resilience that took place in Sofia, Bulgaria, in December 2021. It aimed to contribute to strengthening the capacities of the region to address the profound demographic shifts taking place, and was the start of a ‘Decade of Demographic Resilience’ in the region.¹⁸⁵

Other opportunities and potential collaborations relate, for example, to the outcomes of an action research on infertility and assisted reproductive technologies, which are expected to apply to sexual and reproductive health, but also to provide evidence to the Demographic Resilience Programme. Based on the successful work of the population and development component on ageing, the sexual and reproductive health area envisions some opportunities to expand its outreach. The sexual and reproductive health shift to digital trainings is seen as an opportunity to develop some innovative surveys.

In relation to gender, a strong buy-in is perceived, particularly based on the European-funded project Expanded Choices, which is part of the Demographic Resilience Programme. It is recognized that gender is embedded in the demographic resilience approach, which provides a theoretical framework that expects and favours gender integration. Nevertheless, this has not necessarily implied the existence of a shared vision of “gender”, nor of “integration” of different approaches on equality and the implications of these different approaches for how best to address social phenomena from a gender perspective.

In the case of adolescents and youth, current work around the development of the Youth Index is expected to be a cornerstone for more substantial and continuous integration. Emphasis on ageing and low fertility is perceived as having diminished collaboration opportunities in the past, at the same time that a life-cycle approach to ageing could expand future perspectives.

In APRO, UNFPA has linked population data with a number of SRHR and maternal and new-born health initiatives. Much like in EECARO under the Demographic Resilience Programme, in APRO UNFPA uses the umbrella life-cycle approach framework grounded in an HRBA to support rights-based SRHR policies to address demographic shifts.¹⁸⁶ Further, it links strongly to adolescent and youth work around access to adolescent sexual and reproductive health services and comprehensive sexuality education.¹⁸⁷ The UNFPA population and development unit has supported SRHR inequalities analyses across multiple countries in the region.¹⁸⁸

183 UNFPA respondents, EECARO case study. (note, that when speaking to internal structures, external respondents do not have clear perspectives).

184 Ibid.

185 UNFPA EECA (ND). Shaping Europe’s demographic future. Online at: <https://eeca.unfpa.org/en/shaping-europes-demographic-future>, accessed: June 2022.

186 UNFPA, other UN agency, and academic institution respondents (APRO case study) and UNFPA APRO. Addressing Population Ageing in Asia and the Pacific Region. A life-cycle approach. 2021.

187 Ibid.

188 UNFPA. 2021. UNFPA 2020 Annual Report – Asia and the Pacific Regional Office.

For gender equality, APRO has focused strongly on gender-based violence and violence against women and girls data with good linkages across the gender-based violence and population and development teams. Notwithstanding the linkages with adolescents and youth programming, which encompasses gender equality and the elimination of gender-based violence components under the umbrella of the life-cycle approach, to a large extent, the linkages between population and development and gender equality programming are focused on the elimination of gender-based violence and on data.

Population and development work provides quality disaggregated and meaningful population data for the other areas. For example, the 2017 APRO annual report reported against an indicator that was articulated as the number of countries receiving regional support to improve data on violence against women and girls. In 2017, nine countries had received this support.¹⁸⁹ In 2016, APRO introduced the KNOwVAWdata initiative to specifically improve the measurement of violence against women and girls.¹⁹⁰ In addition to KNOwVAWdata, UNFPA APRO has linked population and development and gender equality with a review of policies that address gender in the context of population ageing.¹⁹¹ Further, LACRO has supported the translation of the KNOwVAWdata initiative into Spanish.¹⁹²

At the country level, there is generally less consistent linkages, and more critique of the lack of systems to encourage linkages. In Mexico, despite increasing recognition of the importance of interlinked work and the positive disposition of all area managers, UNFPA still has important challenges to ensure systematic support and connections to feed population and development into the other mandate areas for the achievement of the three transformative results.

The staff interviewed are aware that the new UNFPA Global Strategic Plan 2022-2025 calls for more interconnected planning, especially in regard to its outcomes, outputs and accelerators.¹⁹³ They also understand the key issue of interconnection behind the “six plus six” output and accelerator framework for the achievement of the three transformative results, as well as the strategic vision and alignment of the strategic plan represented in the bullseye model. However, despite good intentions, different factors, including work overload, hinder effective collaboration of the areas in the daily work and tend to maintain the silos.¹⁹⁴

Box 4: The need for data skillsets across all UNFPA mandate areas

This evaluation highlights evidence of a continually increasing understanding of the role and importance of data and analysis expertise across the whole of UNFPA. Across regional- and country-level case studies, UNFPA staff in SRHR, gender and adolescents and youth recognized the value of including population and development in their different plans and projects as being strategic, in order to provide data, analysis and evidence to support their plans and substantiate their arguments.

In 2020 the Secretary-General released a data strategy that calls for 10 per cent of all positions in United Nations agencies to be “data savvy” positions. UNFPA does not currently have a mechanism to either define or to track the number of “data savvy” positions in the organization. Further, there is no defined strategy as to whether these positions should be peppered across SRHR, gender and adolescents and youth, or sit in a strengthened population data unit, or both. For example, some regions (such as those covered by APRO, LACRO, and EECRO) have health

189 UNFPA. 2018. UNFPA 2017 Annual Report – Asia and the Pacific Regional Office.

190 UNFPA. 2017. UNFPA 2016 Annual Report – Asia and the Pacific Regional Office.

191 UNFPA APRO. 2020. Social Policies Catalogue on Population Ageing. A rapid scoping review.

192 UNFPA LACRO respondents.

193 “The three outcomes are interconnected. Ending gender-based violence and harmful practices contributes to ending the unmet need for family planning and ending preventable maternal deaths. Ending the unmet need for family planning is critical to ending preventable maternal deaths. Interventions to end preventable maternal deaths and end the unmet need for family planning also contribute to ending gender-based violence (...) UNFPA will contribute to these three interconnected outcomes by achieving six interconnected outputs. These outputs are: (a) policy and accountability; (b) quality of care and services; (c) gender and social norms; (d) population change and data; (e) humanitarian action; and (f) adolescents and youth. All the outputs contribute to the achievement of each outcome; they have a multidimensional, ‘many-to-many’ relationship with these outcomes. (...) UNFPA has identified six accelerators to achieve these six interconnected outputs: (a) human rights-based and gender-transformative approaches; (b) innovation and digitalization; (c) partnerships, South-South and triangular cooperation, and financing; (d) data and evidence; (e) leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first; (f) resilience and adaptation, and complementarity among development, humanitarian and peace-responsive efforts. (UNFPA, 2021, The UNFPA Strategic Plan, p. 9,11).

194 In the organizational management literature, “silo thinking” is understood as the unwillingness or impossibility to share information or knowledge between employees or across different areas or departments within an organization.

economist positions. These sit in different sections: the APRO health economist is part of the SRHR unit, for instance.

Linked to this (and expanded upon under EQ4) is a question of quality assurance of data being publicized by UNFPA: a challenge that will only grow with increased “data savvy” positions and increasing use of technology for putting all data into the public domain.

The health economists who work in the regions mentioned provide the evidence UNFPA needs for supporting the case for SRHR, gender equality and the inclusion of adolescents and youth.

In Uganda, while UNFPA programming on population dynamics and data does contribute to the achievement of the three transformative results, the strategic links are not clearly defined. Throughout interviews with stakeholders in Uganda, examples of interlinkages across UNFPA work on population dynamics and data and its other areas of programming were highlighted. Notably, the Cost of Inaction (2022)¹⁹⁵ study on the impact of very high levels of teenage pregnancy during the COVID-19 pandemic was repeatedly raised by interviewees as an example of how collection and use of evidence by UNFPA were used to highlight and analyse an issue that touches on all three transformative results areas.¹⁹⁶ The study exemplifies the multiple dimensions of the challenge of teenage pregnancy, including girls’ access to SRHR and family planning services, gender equality and young mothers’ access to education, and the longer-term impact on population dynamics – including the demographic dividend – in the country.

At the global level, there is strong collaboration between the branches of population and development and SRHR and Human Rights and Gender but, consistent with the evidence collected at country and regional levels, these collaborations tend to be programme and project-based. For example, there is strong ad hoc support from population and development with the Human Rights and Gender branch on reviewing data on violence against women and girls, particularly for the population data portal.¹⁹⁷

Overall, this confirms that internally, the will to collaborate across population and development and other branches is strong, as is the understanding of the benefit of collaboration. However, there remains barriers at different levels to consistent and systematic collaboration that goes beyond specific projects or programmes.

Finding 9: There is a very clear and intuitive linkage for UNFPA between the demographic dividend and adolescent and youth work, and to some extent SRHR: a case in point is the SWEDD initiative in the west and central Africa region. It has been more difficult for UNFPA to conceptually and programmatically link issues of ageing and low fertility with its other three mandate areas.¹⁹⁸

Demographic dividend

UNFPA has developed overarching relevant frameworks, such as the life-cycle approach, which integrate SRHR and gender firmly within the population and development sphere, and vice versa.

There is increasing coherence between adolescents and youth work and population and development in the area of the demographic dividend, particularly since the creation of a demographic dividend coordinator position and regional initiatives such as SWEDD.

UNFPA created a youth and demographic dividend coordinator position in 2018 at the global level, which covers areas that are cross-cutting across different thematic areas of work. The position sits in the Director’s Office rather than in any particular branch and works across the four Technical Division branch areas and the Human Rights and Gender Branch.

195 NPA, NPC, NL & UNFPA. The cost of inaction: The Economic and Social Burden of Teenage Pregnancy in Uganda. 2021.

196 UNFPA respondents (Uganda case study).

197 Global UNFPA respondents.

198 Sources of finding: UNFPA respondents at the global level and UNFPA respondents from APRO and EECARO case studies/cross-referenced with regional (APRO and EECAR) and global level UNFPA and UN reports and strategies. Strength of finding: MEDIUM.

One of the primary purposes of this position was to promote and advance the UNFPA demographic dividend value proposition, framed around “the three E approach” (empowerment, employment and education) and which cuts across different sectoral areas of UNFPA (adolescents and youth, SRHR, and gender equality).

A major initiative that advances this value proposition is the WCARO SWEDD project.¹⁹⁹ The goal of the SWEDD project is to accelerate the demographic transition, spur the demographic dividend and reduce gender inequality in the Sahel. SWEDD is a partnership between UNFPA and the World Bank. It started in 2015 in six west and central African countries and is now implemented across 11 countries. It is framed around three primary objectives: (1) to generate demand for reproductive, maternal, neonatal and child health, and nutrition services by promoting social and behavioural change and the empowerment of women and adolescent girls; (2) to reinforce the regional availability of reproductive, maternal, new-born, child health and nutrition services; (3) to strengthen advocacy, high-level consultation and capacities for the development of policies and their implementation.²⁰⁰

Ageing and low fertility

Under the life-cycle approach in APRO, population and development is clearly linked to SRHR, gender equality, and adolescents and youth. This has been particularly evident in the cementing of linkages between population and development and, specifically, work with adolescents and youth, as a natural entry point for UNFPA. There are innovative, good practice examples of linkages.

For example, UNFPA in Viet Nam is currently discussing innovative ideas with insurance companies with regard to linking population and development expertise with adolescent and youth programming for ageing planning, such as financial planning and investing in the future. UNFPA acknowledges that many might consider this to be outside the mandate or remit of UNFPA, but it links strongly to the focus on ageing that UNFPA population and development programming has in Viet Nam, and also links strongly to the adolescent and youth programming.

Across the region, there is a clear and visibly explicit UNFPA understanding of the linkages between ageing and adolescent and youth programming. Another example is that UNFPA worked with the Government in Lao People’s Democratic Republic to develop a youth profile monograph using census data to clearly spotlight the potential of the demographic dividend.

Ageing and low fertility issues have become increasingly incorporated into the UNFPA remit but they are so often referenced together that the nuanced relevance of each issue – ageing versus low fertility – is often missed. UNFPA has a more natural entry point with the low fertility issue, particularly vis à vis how it links to the second transformative result (ending unmet need for family planning).

UNFPA has produced a number of publications and reports on the issues of ageing and low fertility.²⁰¹ As referenced under evaluation question 1, in order to remain relevant in increasing numbers of countries, ageing and low fertility are issues that UNFPA must address. These issues are clearly population data and dynamics-related issues; but it is less clear how they link with the other mandate areas of UNFPA. This lack of clarity at the conceptual level unsurprisingly translates into less coherent and consistent thinking regarding what support UNFPA should be providing in terms of practical programming.

Gender equality is one area of linkage, when considering the role of older women in society and how women and men are impacted differently in terms of ageing, across health, economic and social dimensions. This includes the issue of gender-based violence against older women. SRHR has a less clear linkage with ageing. The area of adolescents and youth is even more distant in terms of immediately obvious linkages with ageing, although in APRO, UNFPA has been able to link these under the life-cycle approach, and through an approach of working with adolescents and youth for healthy ageing in the future.

199 Note that this project is discussed in more detail in the Demographic Dividend thematic paper.

200 UNFPA. Sahel Women’s Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD). No date.

201 Such as, UNFPA. Social Policies Catalogue on Population Ageing. A rapid scoping review 2020. And UNFPA APRO. Addressing Population Ageing in Asia and the Pacific Region. A life-cycle approach.

However, all three issue areas (SRHR, gender equality, and adolescents and youth) have much greater intuitive links to low fertility than to ageing.

Low fertility and increased life expectancy are two different phenomena that contribute to overall ageing societies. Increased life expectancy is, of itself, not a negative demographic change, but when combined with low fertility, the shrinking of working age populations and the economic burden of older persons it becomes a concern for many governments. This was the driving force for the development of the Demographic Resilience Programme, which started in EECARO and has gradually become a global framework for UNFPA (see evaluation question 5 for more discussion on this), and which promotes rights-based strategies to address demographic shifts, including ageing populations.

For low fertility in particular, determinants can be both positive (women stay in education longer, have better careers, marry later, and exercise choice in planning to have children at a later age and fewer children overall) and negative (lack of family-friendly work-place policies, high cost of living, urbanization and lack of space, climate change concerns), which are usually complex and interlinked within societies with declining fertility rates.²⁰²

The challenge within UNFPA is how to have a coherent strategy to address ageing and low fertility, in terms of both remaining relevant to context but also linking to UNFPA core mandate areas of SRHR, gender equality, and adolescents and youth and, critically, linking ageing and low fertility programming to the achievement of the three transformative results.

Therefore, addressing the needs of older people, for example, through healthy ageing centres such as in Bosnia and Herzegovina²⁰³ is relevant to the context and directly responding to older people's needs. However, it is considered quite removed from the UNFPA core areas of work and therefore raises important questions about its appropriateness. While there is some sense within EECARO that the healthy ageing centres contribute to building a sense of community, which in turn encourages young people to stay, and also potentially reduces violence against older women,²⁰⁴ it is not the core business of UNFPA to support older persons, and there are other United Nations agencies such as WHO that are better positioned to do this.

Conversely, providing the population analytics that highlight demographic shifts and supporting programming on low fertility issues, particularly around inclusion and addressing barriers to low fertility, very much links to SRHR, gender equality, and adolescents and youth when that programming is conducted through the entry point of life skills and empowerment of youth for engagement in advocacy initiatives to ensure that barriers to ideal family size are removed in societies. This links strongly with the second transformative result – ending unmet need for family planning – if family planning is considered in a broader and more holistic manner, which means having the ability to make choices about family size, specifically, planning a family. Indeed, an APRO report highlights that:

Among countries where TFR [Total Fertility Rate] is greater than ~3, the ideal number of children is lower than the TFR in the majority of cases. Meanwhile, in territories where TFR is less than ~3, the ideal number of children is almost exclusively higher than TFR. This suggests that there may still be an unmet need for family planning in the former countries, and an 'unmet need for childbearing' in the latter.²⁰⁵

This unmet need for family planning in high fertility countries and 'unmet need for childbearing' in low fertility countries link the low fertility part of ageing with an inclusive approach to SRHR and gender; the second transformative result, and is furthermore at the very heart of ICPD.

202 See for example: UNFPA. 2019 Working Paper No.1. Policy responses to low fertility: How effective are they? and UNFPA. Working Paper No.2. 2019. Low fertility: A review of the determinants.

203 UNFPA Bosnia and Herzegovina (2020). News Article. Online at: <https://ba.unfpa.org/en/news/healthy-ageing-centres-are-important-older-people-bosnia-and-herzegovina>, accessed: June 2022.

204 UNFPA EECARO respondents.

205 UNFPA APRO. Addressing Population Ageing in Asia and the Pacific Region. A life-cycle approach.

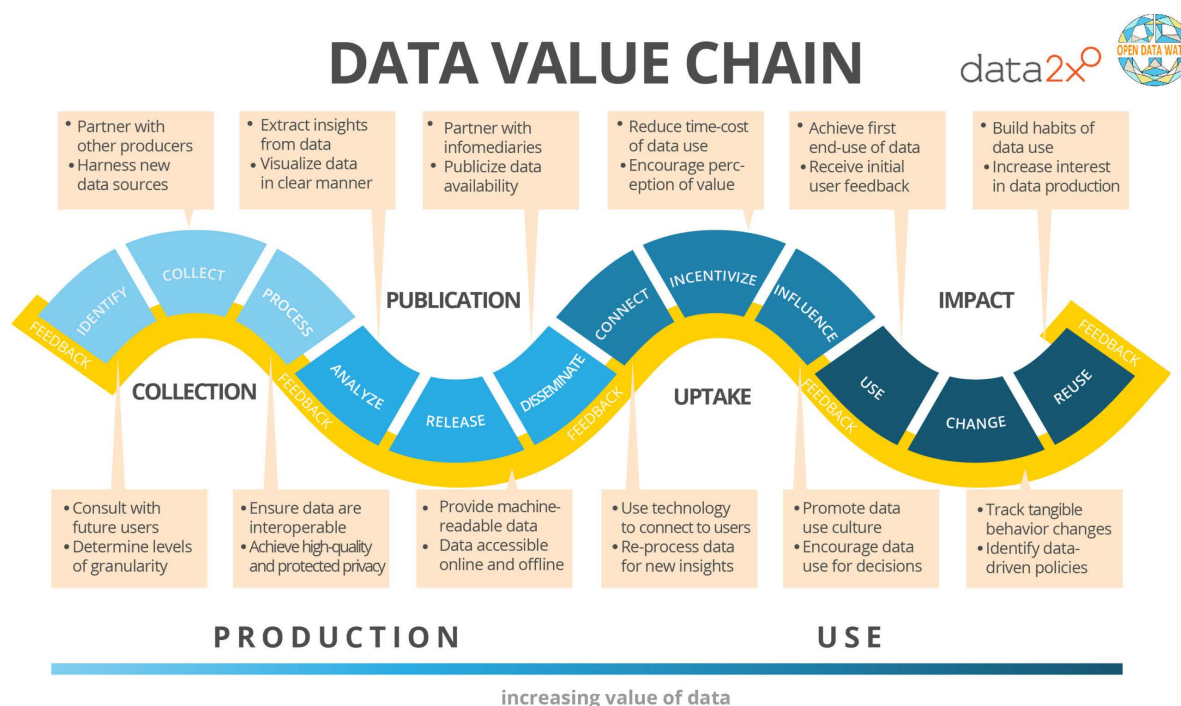
3.4 EFFECTIVENESS

Evaluation question 4: To what extent has UNFPA contributed to strengthening national and subnational data systems across different modes of engagement?²⁰⁶

This section is presented as two findings framed around modes of engagement: findings 10 and 11 focus on the effectiveness of UNFPA support to population data, dynamics and development through capacity-building (the most utilized mode of engagement for population and development). Finding 12 focuses on the effectiveness of UNFPA support to population data, dynamics and development through knowledge management and advocacy and policy dialogue.

The evaluation attempts to construct a data value chain for UNFPA from the collection of population data (particularly census data and, to a lesser extent, CRVS through population dynamics, and increasing regional focuses on tools such as national transfer accounts for analysis, and then to the ultimate purpose, which is evidence-based policy-making – population and development). UNFPA does not currently have a UNFPA contribution-specific theory of change data value chain (like the example provided below, in Figure 11), and this has limited how much this evaluation can peg the findings to specific points along the data value chain.²⁰⁷

FIGURE 11: Example of a data value chain



Source: This example comes from: <https://opendatawatch.com/publications/the-data-value-chain-moving-from-production-to-impact/>.

Figure 12 provides a simplistic visualization of data as the foundation for demographic intelligence, which is in turn the foundation for policies. Figure 13 provides a simple visualization of a more cyclical model.

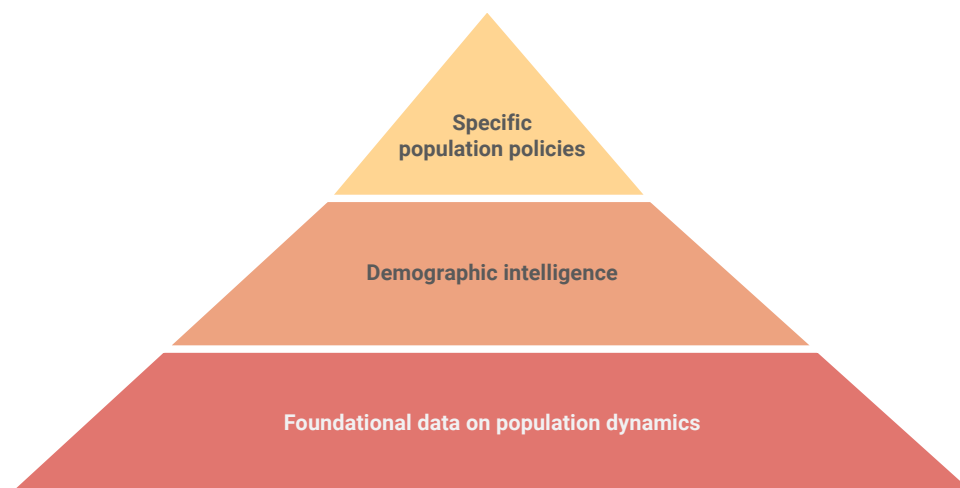
Added to these two simple visualizations is of course, the introduction of: (a) different levels within UNFPA (global, regional and country); and (b) different modes of engagement applied to the different dimensions of data, dynamics and development. Currently UNFPA has strengths across different areas, at different levels, and through different modes of engagement.

206 Sub-questions: 4.1 UNFPA has effectively supported collection of quality disaggregated population data through capacity-building, advocacy and policy dialogue, knowledge management, and service delivery. 4.2 UNFPA has effectively supported analysis of population dynamics/trends through capacity-building, advocacy and policy dialogue, knowledge management, and service delivery. 4.3 UNFPA has effectively supported use of population data and integration of population dynamics for evidence-based development purposes through capacity-building, advocacy and policy dialogue, knowledge management, and service delivery.

207 This will be referenced again in conclusions and recommendations.

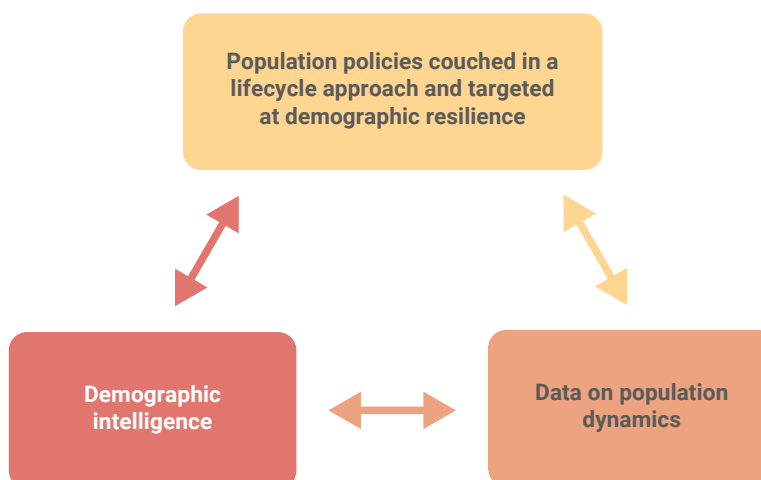
However, population and development is not conceptualized within UNFPA in a way that would maximize the linkages as shown in Figure 13.

FIGURE 12: Simple linear pyramid of population data, dynamics and development



Source: Evaluation team

FIGURE 13: More interlinked view of population data, dynamics and development



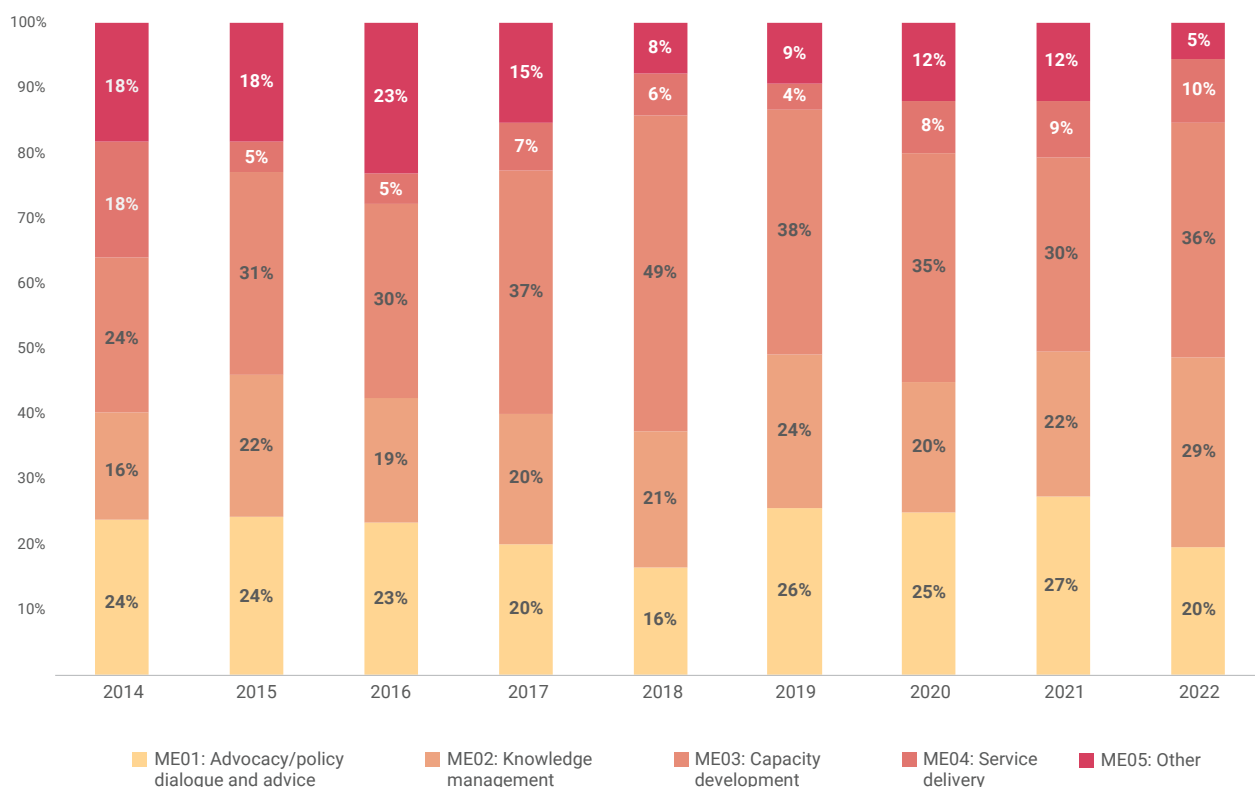
Source: Evaluation team

Finding 10: Capacity-building as a mode of engagement for data collection has traditionally been strong, and remains so, for UNFPA (such as support to national statistics offices for census and, to a lesser extent, CRVS).²⁰⁸

Capacity-building is the single most utilized mode of engagement between 2014 and 2022, comprising between 24 per cent and 49 per cent of overall population and development expenditure.

²⁰⁸ Sources of finding: UNFPA, other UN agency, and academic institution respondents at the global level and UNFPA, other UN agency, academic institution, NGO partner, government, and donor respondents from APRO and EECARO regional case studies and Mexico and Uganda country case studies/cross-referenced with country and regional level UNFPA reports; global level UNFPA and UN reports and strategies. Strength of finding: HIGH.

FIGURE 14: Population and development expenditure per mode of engagement



Source: UNFPA Atlas/GPS data from 2014 to October 2022.

UNFPA is viewed by most stakeholders as being a primary partner of national statistics offices and a strong contributor towards improving data collection for both census and CRVS, although certainly more for census than for CRVS.

The 2014 census evaluation highlighted that (in collaboration with other United Nations agencies and development actors) UNFPA has provided effective support to census operations worldwide, particularly with regard to providing financial and technical support through capacity-building modalities:²⁰⁹

UNFPA makes a real and tangible difference to the countries it supports during census. It strengthens their national capacity to produce quality census data and it helps to maintain international standards. In addition, UNFPA has a credible reputation and is widely perceived as a key census partner with a clear, convening role. It provides technical expertise and brings stakeholders together to help them prepare and conduct their censuses efficiently. Without UNFPA support, it is widely believed that some national censuses would not have been completed. At the country level, the UNFPA role on census is often seen as a flagship of UNFPA support.²¹⁰

Overall, the findings of this 2014 evaluation generally still hold true in 2022, with continued country-level examples of strong support to census preparation and implementation. The UNDESA Statistics Division is responsible for developing the methodological framework for each decadal global round of census and UNFPA is then considered to be the primary United Nations agency partner on the ground to assist countries in implementing the census according to the methodological

209 UNFPA (2015). Evaluation of UNFPA support to population and housing census data to inform decision-making and policy formulation 2005-2014.
210 Ibid.

guidance.²¹¹ At the global level, UNFPA sits within the International Census Coordination Committee²¹² together with the United Nations Statistics Division, the World Bank, and the United States of America Census Bureau (US Census Bureau).

There is strong evidence of regional support to country offices from UNFPA regional offices.

At the regional level, LACRO replicated the global coordination mechanism and created the regional committee of census coordination together with partners.²¹³ The evaluation finds that in the EECA region, the regional office has effectively supported capacity strengthening and enabled collection of quality disaggregated population data in different countries throughout the region, with a stronger emphasis on Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries since the introduction of the CISPop project. This project, framed around “Better Data for Better Policies” is a 2019-2022 regional UNFPA programme supported by the Russian Federation to strengthen population data collection, analysis and utilization for evidence-based policy-making in the CIS region.²¹⁴ This project has provided support to the census in Turkmenistan, and CRVS systems in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.²¹⁵

In the Asia Pacific region, UNFPA maintains effective support to countries for population data, both in terms of supporting census and data collection for census in those countries that require such support, and in terms of increasing the quality of the data generated and the effectiveness of the whole process, including dissemination. This is achieved across the modes of engagement of knowledge management and capacity strengthening.

For census work, UNFPA has partnered with the US Census Bureau, which secured United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funding to produce a series of digestible technical briefs on the United Nations Stats Division Guidance on Census, many of which have been produced in collaboration with UNFPA.²¹⁶ UNFPA APRO and UNFPA LACRO have also worked with the US Census Bureau on hosting regional workshops with national statistics offices on census-related matters. UNFPA is credited with convening the most appropriate countries to participate and designing the workshop according to regional needs.²¹⁷ Country-level collaboration between the US Census Bureau and UNFPA is considered by the US Census Bureau to be effective in the region, with UNFPA typically supporting a census technical assistance position within the national statistics office.²¹⁸

As referenced above, the APRO support to UNFPA country offices in the region relates to support provided at the national level not just for the exercise of collecting data for census, but also for the whole process, including dissemination. A country-level example is UNFPA support and advocacy to the Government of Bangladesh, which resulted in the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics creating public online access to census data for the first time in 2015.²¹⁹ In the Latin America and Caribbean region, UNFPA created a regional census team of experts from the regional office and country offices to provide a wide array of technical assistance in areas related to modern census implementation.

The effectiveness of the UNFPA contribution, particularly through capacity-building, at the country level is well-recognized by government partners and other stakeholders.²²⁰ It is, however, not without its challenges. Some respondents at both global and regional/country levels (and both UNFPA staff and external stakeholders) report that, firstly, UNFPA might be losing its value to a certain extent, given the pivotal shift to SRHR and an external rebranding as an SRHR agency rather than a population data agency. While this point has already been covered under evaluation question 1, it is revisited here as it has had a detrimental impact on effectiveness.

211 Global level UN and other UN agency respondents.

212 UNSTATS. (ND). The International Committee on Census Coordination. Online at: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sources/census/iccc/default.html>, accessed: April 2022.

213 UNFPA LACRO respondents. Partners include ECLAC – the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Inter-American Development Bank.

214 UNFPA. 2020. CISPop. Better Data for Better Policies.

215 Ibid.

216 Government respondents from APRO case study.

217 Ibid.

218 Ibid.

219 UNFPA. 2016. UNFPA Country Programme Document for Bangladesh.

220 Sources of finding: Other UN agency, NGO partner, government and donor respondents from Mexico, Nigeria, and Uganda country case studies and APRO, ASRO and EECARO regional case studies.

For example, in Uganda, while UNFPA support has been welcomed by government partners over the years, particularly due to its contribution to specific issues such as supporting the Uganda Bureau of Statistics with developing national statistical development plans, the ability of UNFPA to support such exercises at scale has diminished over time as a result of the strategic pivot to SRHR. Respondents from across stakeholder groups reported that the capacity of UNFPA to maintain the level of support for population data collection exercises is waning.²²¹ Concern was raised across dimensions of financial support (particularly with regard to UNFPA financial support to the most recent census and the demographic health survey) as well as diminishing UNFPA technical capacity and expertise for UNFPA to continue or expand capacity-building support to data collection, especially at the subnational level.²²²

At the global level, some UNFPA staff have the sense that UNFPA is losing value in this area and can no longer demonstrate the expertise at the corporate level that was demonstrated pre-2014.²²³ COVID-19 also had impact on censuses in general (see Box 5 ²²⁴). It is clear both within and external to UNFPA that one of the significant added-value areas of UNFPA in this regard is inclusion and LNOB (see findings under evaluation question 3, above) but it requires an active and high-level strategy, supported at the most senior level, for this to take hold consistently across regions and countries. This links to capacity and to skillsets, which are discussed further under evaluation question 8, below.

Box 5: COVID-19 impact on censuses

COVID-19 inevitably affected population and development activities worldwide, for UNFPA and beyond. Many 2020 round censuses that were planned have been delayed. UNFPA produced timely guidance, initially right at the beginning of the pandemic, as a technical brief on the implications of COVID-19. This was followed later by more specific guidance on the use of personal protection equipment (PPE) for census operations, in which UNFPA highlights that many censuses were postponed and indeed, the United Nations Statistics Division and UNFPA jointly recommend postponing census where necessary.

In ASRO, for example, COVID-19 in addition to the high level of humanitarian contexts already within the region, made the implementation of the UNFPA programme on population dynamics and data very challenging in recent years. The Evaluation of the United Nations Population Fund Regional Interventions Action Plan for Arab States 2018–2021, published in December 2020, highlighted this point pertinently in relation to planned censuses in the region: “Upcoming censuses are being threatened by the advent of COVID-19 including in the Arab States. UNFPA is being challenged to find innovative ways involving new country-based approaches to population and housing census enumeration Ongoing humanitarian crises and political instability in the region coupled with the advent of COVID-19 have introduced added barriers and challenges in conducting censuses. Participants highlighted these challenges and barriers as a major blow to the plans that UNFPA was putting in place to improve on censuses.”

Measures taken to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic did lead to progress in some areas. For example, for countries in the APRO region, digitalization has been accelerated due to COVID-19 across a number of service-delivery areas (such as SRHR) and this has increased focus on digitalization across all of UNFPA work, including population and development. Also, in Viet Nam, the online health, gender-based violence, and life skills services developed during COVID-19 have contributed to a stronger focus on digitalization as part of the development agenda nationally, which includes population data, dynamics and development.

UNFPA has also worked hard to use population and development expertise to understand the differential impact of COVID-19 on population trends. In EECARO, UNFPA has made efforts to assess gender or the differential impact of COVID-19 on men and women. A recent meeting organized by UNFPA Turkey country office on including gender and reproductive health issues in the education curriculum, was addressed to all levels of the education system. Register-based censuses are the main digitalization-related project for the region, while the needs of the post-COVID-19 returning population point to increased digital modernization and connectivity.

221 Other UN agency, NGO partner, government, and donor respondents from Uganda case study.

222 UNFPA, government, and academic institution respondent from Uganda case study.

223 Global level UNFPA respondents.

224 Sources: UNFPA. Technical Brief on the Implications of COVID-19 on Census. Update No. 1 March 25, 2020. 2020:UNFPA. Technical Guidance Note. Guidance Note on Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) Recommendations for Census. 2020:APRO, ASRO, and EECARO regional case studies.

One issue highlighted at all levels within UNFPA is the issue of population situation analysis (PSA), which used to be a cornerstone of UNFPA programming but is now considered to be in decline as it is an optional exercise for countries rather than a core function of population and development at the country level. As is highlighted under evaluation question 5, out of 20 randomly sampled common country analyses (CCA) reviewed between 2015 and 2021, only two referenced the UNFPA population situation analysis as a source of information.

Secondly, there is an increasing questioning of the traditional capacity-building activities with regard to census: that is, embedding a UNFPA-funded officer within a national statistics office. There is a question as to both the sustainability of this approach long term, and the consistency of quality of support, which of course impacts on effectiveness. The concern is that there is no mechanism to ensure the consistency of technical assistance by chief census advisors who are embedded in national statistics offices around the world. There are no formal quality procedures for technical assistance for capacity-building activities.²²⁵

Census is, generally, more embedded within UNFPA than work on CRVS. Since 2014, UNFPA has been increasing its positioning around CRVS, with fluctuating effectiveness. There has been limited visibility of a CRVS corporate strategic approach, until this year, 2022, when population and development produced a clear CRVS strategy, which explicitly articulates UNFPA added value in the LNOB and inclusion domain.

There are a number of issues that affect the effectiveness of CRVS. Firstly, CRVS is the biggest data system that any country seeks to maintain. It can be viewed from an individual perspective – legal identity as a right, and the linkage between being registered and being counted, and from a national economic perspective – a strong CRVS system allows for a move towards more efficient register-based census data exercises, and also can increase tax revenue by increasing the number of people registered in a country who will pay tax when entering the formal economy.

While UNFPA has traditionally focused on the rights-based approach to CRVS – as is aligned with the well-understood added value of UNFPA in the area of LNOB and HRBA – there has been limited recognition of speaking directly to CRVS and legal identity at the corporate level. There remains a concern that there is not sufficient consistent understanding of CRVS and legal identity and the linkages that need to be explicit across these two domains and HRBA and LNOB within UNFPA, at different levels.²²⁶

Secondly, CRVS is a crowded field. UNICEF has the mandate, as well as the capacity and expertise, to work on birth registration with very high coverage across all low- and middle-income countries. WHO are very engaged on the death registration facet of CRVS. This leaves marriages and divorces for UNFPA, but it is clear that there is also an overarching role for one organization across the full spectrum of births, marriages and deaths with regard to capacity support to national statistics offices and governments for building systems, maintaining systems and ensuring a LNOB approach where the right to legal identity for all people (women, girls, men, boys, all those of ethnic minority status, refugees and migrants etc) is respected.

While this is a role that could clearly fit within the UNFPA mandate as the 'population data agency', it is also one that requires a rethinking of partnerships at the country level. While national statistics offices are a traditional entry point for UNFPA, and a longstanding target office for capacity-building – as are ministries of health at the country level for UNFPA – civil registration and legal identity (particularly, for example, the issuance of identity cards) is beyond the health sector and is often spearheaded by other line ministries that currently are not natural partners for UNFPA.

UNFPA has co-convened, with the Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC) three gender and CRVS conferences since 2020 and in 2021 took over the chairing of the Centre of Excellence for CRVS.²²⁷ The conferences are widely agreed to contribute to global understanding and improvement of CRVS across the world.²²⁸

While the rights-based approach to CRVS aligns perfectly with the recognized added value of UNFPA in HRBA and LNOB, there has been some recent exploration, together with other United Nations partners, into rebranding the argument for CRVS to

225 Sources: UNFPA. Technical Brief on the Implications of COVID-19 on Census. Update No. 1 March 25, 2020. 2020:UNFPA. Technical Guidance Note. Guidance Note on Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) Recommendations for Census. 2020:APRO, ASRO, and EECARO regional case studies.

226 Global level UNFPA and other UN agency respondents.

227 UNFPA. (2021). Because Everyone Counts. Online at: <https://www.unfpa.org/events/because-everyone-counts-universal-vital-registration-leave-no-one-behind>, accessed: March 2022.

228 Global level other UN agencies, academic partners, and other respondents.

governments as an economic benefit, rather than just a rights argument. The two positions are not at all mutually exclusive. Much like the demographic resilience concept, which is designed to highlight to governments how taking a rights-based approach to demographic shifts is what is going to bring development progress and economic stability, there is an increasing understanding within UNFPA at different levels that taking an approach to CRVS that speaks to both the right of individuals to have a legal identity and be registered, and the economic benefit to national governments, maximizes effectiveness.²²⁹

A recent WHO blog written for the World Economic Forum was produced with support from UNFPA – and quotes UNFPA – and is an example of a push to rebrand CRVS as both a rights-based issue and an economic growth necessity.²³⁰ This is not captured in the current UNFPA CVRS strategy and it is unclear how much UNFPA has an explicit and consistent position on the economic argument as well as the rights-based argument.

Finding 11: Capacity-building for population dynamics and demographic intelligence has a relatively shorter history within UNFPA but is an increasing area of focus. An issue that is highlighted at all levels is the sustainability of capacity-building activities.²³¹

UNFPA has a strong history of capacity-building, particularly around trainings and supporting workshops for analysis of demographic trends using different modalities, such as national transfer accounts.

There are multiple global and regional examples of capacity-building for population dynamics, based mainly around training workshops. An increasingly popular area for the analytics globally is training on national transfer accounts (NTAs), or the more recently developed national time transfer accounts (NTTAs).

National time transfer accounts include age- and gender-specific data on the production, consumption and transfers of services that are produced through unpaid work and not captured in national accounts. They are crucial to bringing a gender lens to the data analytics produced by NTAs.

UNFPA is the only United Nations agency that promotes NTAs and NTTAs. They are increasingly promoted everywhere as a methodology of data dynamics analyses for countries, primarily through capacity-building training workshops. For example, APRO has supported a series of regional and subregional workshops to develop capacities of countries in the region to advocate for and produce the NTAs.

UNFPA is currently developing internal organizational guidance for the NTA and NTTA,²³² particularly as a reaction to the recognition that the NTA (and sometimes NTTA) training is being provided across different regions, but that not everyone has the same understanding of the methodology, the purpose or the objectives of the training, particularly in terms of how UNFPA can then support the use of the final outputs of the NTA/NTTA process (a report) to inform more rights-based and evidence-based policies. UNFPA can not only provide capacity-building training on the analysis process of the NTA, but it can also use the final report as a basis for advocacy and policy dialogue, and an entry point to perhaps engage with those partners, such as the ministry of finance, that UNFPA has not traditionally partnered with.

The integration of gender into the NTTA process is critical, as it is across all population and development work.

UNFPA can analyse financial expenditure within population and development against a gender marker tag that rates projects from 'no contribution to gender', through 'some contribution', 'significant contribution', and gender equality being a 'primary objective'. As can be seen below, there is limited expenditure tagged against no contribution at all, or against primary objective, with the most common tags being 'some' or 'significant' contributions.

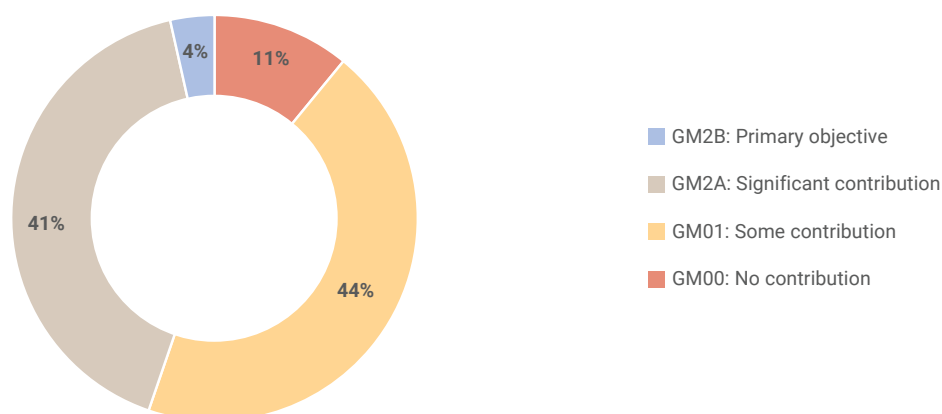
229 UNFPA respondents at global level and from EECARO and APRO regional case studies.

230 World Economic Forum. (2022). Civil Registrations and Vital Statistics. Online at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/10/why-civil-registrations-and-vital-statistics-are-fundamental-to-society/>, accessed: December 2022.

231 Sources of finding: UNFPA, other UN agency and academic institution respondents at the global level and UNFPA, other UN agency, academic institution, NGO partner, government, and donor respondents from APRO and EECARO regional case studies and Mexico and Uganda country case studies/cross-referenced with country and regional level UNFPA reports; global level UNFPA and UN reports and strategies. Strength of finding: HIGH.

232 UNFPA global respondent.

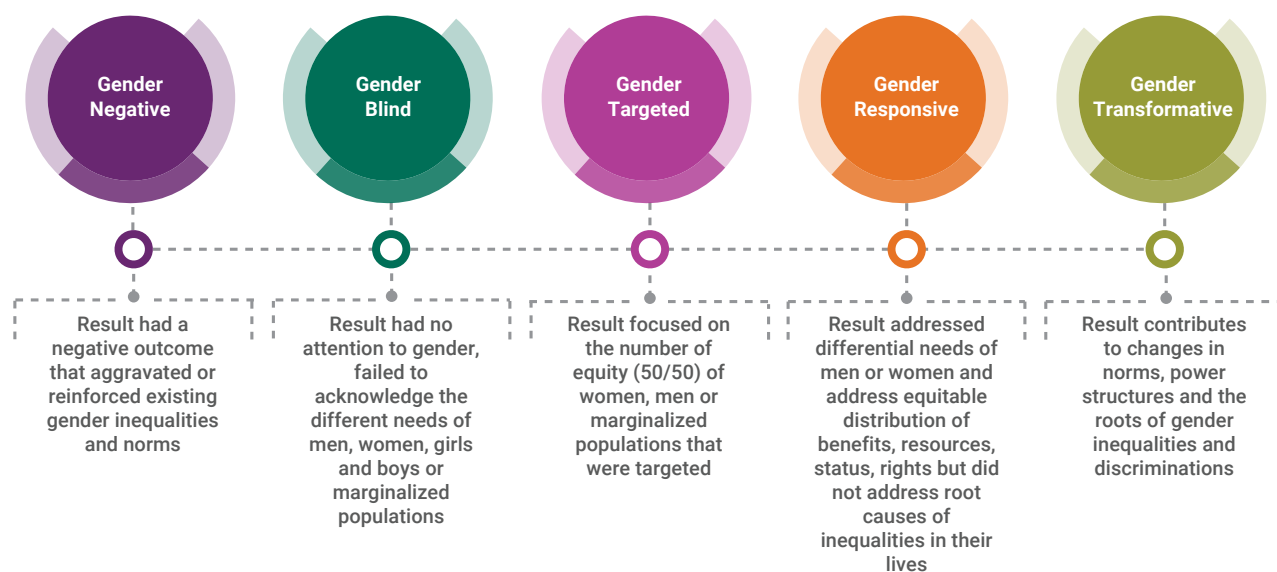
FIGURE 15: Percentage of population and development expenditure by gender marker category, 2014-2022



Source: UNFPA Atlas/GPS data from 2014 to October 2022.

While this shows that UNFPA has been somewhat effective at a basic level with integrating gender priorities into population and development (UNFPA census, and CRVS work is entirely based on gender disaggregation as a means to understand discrimination and inequality for women and girls), the the concept of population dynamics could be more thoughtfully and consistently nuanced across the gender spectrum, including in a more sophisticated manner. What is currently missing is a way of measuring whether and to what extent UNFPA ensures that population dynamics and development work seeks not just to be gender responsive – ensuring women and girls are counted within the current system – but also that it *consistently*, and with a corporate approach, seeks to be gender transformative, that is, to change the underlying social and gender norms that disadvantage women and girls in the first place. Right now, the gender marker scale is not completely synonymous with a gender equality scale that explicitly notes the difference between gender responsive and gender transformative (as per the scale set out in Figure 16). However, in general the GM2B category (gender as the primary objective) is considered to be more transformative, with the GM2A category (significant contribution) being responsive.

FIGURE 16: Gender Result Effectiveness Scale



Source: UNEG. *Guidance on Evaluating Institutional Gender Mainstreaming*. 2018.

Finally, there are many concerns with the sustainability of training for population data and dynamics, both within and external to UNFPA.²³³ For example, one respondent highlighted that:

*What I've observed over the years, there is a sense that it is hit or miss with training. There is someone who wants to do stuff but then they retire. There isn't a clear visible consistent follow through over months or years. I see more anecdotally that people around the world have an increased level of knowledge in general, so it has been anecdotally advantageous. But maybe it could be better.*²³⁴

Another highlighted that:

*Any effort or investment to strengthen capacity: it is not a one-time [one-]off effort. Best case scenario is that initial investment might return something for 2-3 years but over 10, 20 years there is staff turnover and at the end of the day especially, when it comes to population census every 10 years or so, you lose the people [who] had been trained.*²³⁵

This becomes even more problematic when moving from federal to state and subnational level. For example, in Mexico, continuous training is necessary due to the constant turnover of personnel in state and municipal agencies,²³⁶ in addition to the progressive weakening of the State Councils for Population²³⁷ in most states, which makes UNFPA intervention at these levels of government unsustainable. During the 2014-2022 period, UNFPA carried out capacity-building activities with different state governments. However, there has been an institutional weakening of the State Councils for Population, which do not have the necessary financial resources to fulfil their functions, have constant personnel changes, and suffer from increased lack of coordination between agencies.²³⁸ This reality presents important sustainability questions and challenges for UNFPA in relation to its capacity-building efforts and resources.

Finding 12: Knowledge management and policy and advocacy are increasing modes of engagement for UNFPA for population dynamics and population and development. However, with the increasing emphasis on these modes of engagement, there are, as a result, increasing challenges with measuring the impact.²³⁹

As per Figure 14, while capacity-building is the most utilized mode of engagement for population and development, knowledge management and advocacy and policy dialogue are the second and third, respectively, across the years.

At the global level, UNFPA has contributed to population dynamics and development through publication of guidance, reports and technical briefs. A census strategy produced in 2017 that supports UNFPA country offices to support national statistics offices through the 2020 round²⁴⁰ was followed by further technical and operational support documentation.²⁴¹ In 2020, UNFPA produced COVID-19 census guidance.²⁴² These include UNFPA strategies and internal guidance, but the real

233 Sources of finding: UNFPA, other UN agency and academic institution respondents at the global level and APRO and EECARO regional case studies and Mexico country case study.

234 Global level academic institution respondent.

235 Global level other UN agency respondent.

236 UNFPA-México. 2015. UNFPA 2015 Annual Report, 13/01/2016, p. 1.

237 This situation becomes evident when we observe that from 750 COMUPOS (State Council for Population) in 2008 it went to 387 in 2019, that is, the amount of COMUPOS was reduced by 48 per cent (Alfonso Sandoval, Manual para el fortalecimiento de los Consejos Municipales de Población, 2021.

238 UNFPA respondents and UNFPA-Mexico, 2018 Annual Report, 21/02/2019, pp. 2-3.

239 Sources of finding: UNFPA, other UN agency, NGO partner, academic institution, and donor respondents at the global level and UNFPA, other UN agency, NGO partner, academic institution, government, and donor respondents from APRO and EECARO regional case studies and Nigeria and Uganda country case studies. Strength of finding: HIGH.

240 UNFPA. 2017. UNFPA Strategy for the 2020 Round of Population & Housing Censuses (2015-2024).

241 Such as UNFPA. Technical Brief. New Methodology: a hybrid census to generate spatially-disaggregated population estimates. 2017; UNFPA. Measuring disability, migration, and marriage registration – recommended questions for inclusion in censuses. 2019; UNFPA. Technical Guidance Note. The Value of Modelled Population Estimates for Census Planning and Preparation. 2020 and UNFPA. Guidance Note: UNFPA Technical and Operational Support to the 2020 Census Round. 2020.

242 Such as UNFPA. Technical Brief on the Implications of COVID-19 on Census. Update No. 1 March 25, 2020. 2020 and UNFPA. Technical Guidance Note. Guidance Note on Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) Recommendations for Census. 2020.

effectiveness of the global-level knowledge management work is more related to the multitude of reports and technical briefs produced on population data analysis and concepts – particularly rights-based concepts – that can be applied to development processes. These publications have been framed around the concepts of the demographic dividend and ageing and low fertility, which is discussed more in Finding 13, below, under evaluation question 5.

In addition to the contribution to population and development through publications and reports, UNFPA has, in 2022, launched a global knowledge management population data portal. It is too early for this evaluation to assess the effectiveness of this as a knowledge management tool, but respondents to this evaluation at the global level both recognized and appreciated the effort and had high expectations of the utility of the portal.²⁴³

At the country level, there are examples of UNFPA effectiveness through knowledge management. In Uganda, for example, UNFPA produces, and supports the production of, extensive analyses and demographic intelligence on population trends. This has had a material impact on the knowledge base and capacity of government partners to develop national policy, especially in relation to harnessing the demographic dividend in the country. Numerous interviewees commended the contributions of UNFPA to the evolution of policy regarding the harnessing of the demographic dividend in Uganda.²⁴⁴

A critical issue with UNFPA effectiveness through knowledge management is the lack of any robust and comprehensive quality assurance check mechanisms within UNFPA. Any country or region can produce population data reports without there being an internal corporate mechanism to check the quality. This has been reported by many internal UNFPA respondents as being a critical – and increasingly dangerous – gap for the organization, particularly as UNFPA is still, as it always has been, the ‘population data agency’. It is of fundamental importance that population data produced by UNFPA and released into the public domain is accurate, and there is a strong perception that without a clear mechanism to ensure consistent quality of population data this is not always the case.²⁴⁵ This is not something raised by any external stakeholder engaged with this evaluation but, nonetheless, it is a valid concern within UNFPA.

There has been momentum building for data quality assurance within UNFPA. For the development of the current Strategic Plan 2022-2025, UNFPA appointed a data task team which, with reflections and inputs from across the organization, has proposed a new Data Unit, with a Director-level (D1) Chief Statistician.²⁴⁶ This proposal highlights that UNFPA is one of the only United Nations programmatic agencies that currently does not have either a robust governance structure or a dedicated responsible unit for quality assurance for published data. The analysis of UNFPA capacity for, and effectiveness in, knowledge management for data within this proposal is quite damning:

Currently, UNFPA country offices are uneven at best, and inadequate in the majority, when it comes to data scientist staffing and competencies; many COs are unable to make use of available census, registry or survey data for routine descriptive statistics, for generating data-driven programmatic analyses, or for overseeing commissioned research activities (operational, social or other).²⁴⁷

When it comes to advocacy and policy dialogue, at the global level this is mainly achieved implicitly through the knowledge management work of publications and through high-level dialogues and support to conferences. At the global and regional levels, there is a lot of interesting work (discussed in more depth in Finding 13, under evaluation question 5). Country-level examples are varied. For example, in Lao People’s Democratic Republic, UNFPA has been working with UNDP on a national financing framework to highlight the different types of financing that are relevant to fund the national agenda and SDG achievement.²⁴⁸ In Nepal the 2017 evaluation concluded that UNFPA population data and analysis capacity-building and advocacy initiatives “have influenced major policy documents, strategy papers and plans, including at the highest level”. This includes the newly developed Constitution (2-15) and the 2015 National Population Policy.²⁴⁹

243 Global level NGO partner, other UN agency, academic institution, and donor respondents.

244 UNFPA, other UN agency, NGO partner, and government respondents from the Uganda case study.

245 Global, regional and country level UNFPA respondents.

246 UNFPA. 2022. Technical Division. Proposition for a UNFPA Data Unit. August 2022.

247 Ibid.

248 UNFPA respondents from the APRO case study.

249 UNFPA 2017. UNFPA Nepal Country Programme Evaluation 2013-2016. Final Evaluation Report, 2017.

In Nigeria, advocacy is considered to be the main mode of engagement to ensure the generation of quality population data and its use in policy planning. Key achievements credited to UNFPA advocacy and policy dialogue work are: the progress towards the next census, now scheduled for 2023; the demographic health survey conducted regularly every five years; and the revision of the National Population Policy.

This last example highlights specifically that advocacy and policy dialogue often have to come before the capacity-building (that is, advocacy for a census, rather than more straight-forward capacity-building for a census, and then advocacy for integration of the results into development policies). Throughout this evaluation, the overall sense has been that the data-dynamics-development continuum operates in a straight line: the quality, disaggregated data are necessary in order to analyse trends (dynamics), which are in turn necessary as a foundation for evidence-based development policies and frameworks (development). However, this is not necessarily as one-way as it seems. UNFPA does not currently have a conceptual framework that highlights how these different dimensions of population data, dynamics and development co-exist, interact, and complement and impact on each other at different levels (country, regional and global). Likewise, there is no existing matrix that maps the three different component dimensions of: (1) level – global, regional and country; (2) population and development dimension – data, dynamics and development; and (3) mode of engagement – capacity-building, knowledge management, and advocacy and policy dialogue.²⁵⁰

Table 3 is a simplified mapping of the effectiveness of UNFPA support across the three main modes of engagement (capacity-building, knowledge management and convening, and advocacy and policy dialogue), at global, regional and country levels, and across the dimensions of population data, population dynamics, and population and development. It is based on the above assessment of effectiveness across these different elements and dimensions, and the intent of the visualization is to highlight where UNFPA is considered by respondents to this evaluation (internal and external) to currently have strengths and weaknesses. Its purpose is to help UNFPA reflect, together with the recommendations in this report, as to the direction of focus areas of UNFPA moving forward and where skillsets (see evaluation question 8) exist and where other skillsets are required.

TABLE 3: Current assessment of UNFPA modes of engagement at different levels by the evaluation team²⁵¹

Level	Dimension	Modes of engagement		
		Capacity-building	Knowledge management/ convening	Advocacy and policy dialogue
Global level	Data	Medium	Strong	Medium
	Dynamics	Medium	Strong	Strong
	Development	Weak	Medium	Medium
Regional level	Data	Strong	Medium	Weak
	Dynamics	Strong	Strong	Strong
	Development	Weak	Medium	Medium
Country level	Data	Strong	Medium	Medium
	Dynamics	Medium	Weak	Medium
	Development	Strong	Medium	Weak

Source: Evaluation team

250 This evaluation has discounted service delivery as a mode of engagement for population and development. Excluding 2014 (which had a high, 15 per cent expenditure through service delivery modalities), between 2015-2022 UNFPA spent an average of only 6.75 per cent of population and development funds through service delivery (see Figure 14). Therefore the other 3 modes of engagement account for over 90 per cent of all expenditure.

251 In this figure, green is strong; orange is medium; and red is weak.

3.5 EFFECTIVENESS AT THE POLICY LEVEL

Evaluation question 5: To what extent has UNFPA support been successful in strategically positioning and mainstreaming population dynamics, including demographic resilience and demographic dividend, within development policies and programmes?²⁵²

Finding 13: At the level of global and regional dialogue, UNFPA has been adding value by supporting the concept of the demographic dividend for development goals for a long time. More recently within certain regions, UNFPA consistently supports development based on ageing and low fertility realities. Umbrella concepts, such as demographic resilience, are being increasingly used to bring together different demographic shifts anchored in a rights-based and inclusive framing.²⁵³

UNFPA has produced, at global and regional levels, a multitude of reports and technical briefs on population data analysis and concepts – particularly rights-based concepts – that feature applied learning. These knowledge management publications have been framed around the concepts of the demographic dividend and ageing and low fertility.

For example, with regard to the demographic dividend, in addition to the UNFPA demographic dividend value proposition,²⁵⁴ UNFPA has, together with the African Union and the German Cooperation and Development Agency produced a series of dialogues on demographic diversity and dividends, including topics such as data for demographic dividends, food security and nutrition for demographic dividends, education and skills development for demographic dividends, adolescent SRHR for demographic dividends, and urbanization and climate change for demographic dividends.²⁵⁵

For ageing and low fertility, UNFPA has produced a number of reports, both at global and at regional levels. At the global level UNFPA has produced a series of working papers on low fertility, reviewing and analysing current policy responses, and determinants of low fertility.²⁵⁶ Together with UNDP, UNFPA produced a report on depopulation as a policy challenge for the Human Development Series.²⁵⁷

APRO has produced various publications on ageing in the region, such as a social policies catalogue.²⁵⁸ In eastern Europe and central Asia, UNFPA has produced a number of documents on low fertility and ageing, and this is where the demographic resilience concept and programme was first launched.²⁵⁹ LACRO has also produced a number of reports on population dynamics generally in the region, and ageing and low fertility specifically.²⁶⁰

Policy and advocacy have also been used at the regional level to embed population and development within regional-level frameworks. For EECARO, policy advice and influence are recognized as the main and most significant contribution of UNFPA population and development work in the region, with the Demographic Resilience Programme enabling the UNFPA mandate to gain a new lease of life. While this was considered quite challenging because of conservative trends, regional

252 Sub-questions: 5.1 UNFPA has supported the integration of population dynamics, demographic resilience and demographic dividends in national policies and frameworks. 5.2 UNFPA has supported the integration of population dynamics, demographic resilience and demographic dividends in regional and global policies and frameworks. 5.3 UNFPA has supported the integration and provided evidence-based analysis on population dynamics, demographic resilience and demographic dividends in UN-wide planning processes such as the CCAs, UNSDCFs and CPDs.

253 Sources of finding: UNFPA and other UN agency respondents and the global level and UNFPA, other UN agency, NGO partner, government, academic institution respondents from ASRO and EECARO case studies/cross-referenced with country and regional level UNFPA reports; global level UNFPA and UN reports and strategies. Strength of finding: MEDIUM.

254 UNFPA. A Value Proposition for the Demographic Dividend.

255 German Cooperation and Development Agency (BMZ). (2021). Demographic Diversity and Dividends Dialogue. Online at: <https://health.bmz.de/events/the4dseries-demographic-diversity-dividends-dialogues/>, accessed: December 2022. UNFPA, African Union, and German Cooperation. The4Dseries. Dialogue #1: Data for demographic dividends. 2021, UNFPA, African Union, and German Cooperation. The4Dseries. Dialogue #2: Food security and nutrition for demographic dividend(s). 2021 etc.

256 UNFPA. 2019. UNFPA Working Paper No.1. Policy responses to low fertility: How effective are they? and UNFPA. 2019. UNFPA Working Paper No.2. Low fertility: A review of the determinants.

257 Wolfgang Lutz and Nicholas Gailey. UNFPA and UNDP. Human Development Series. Depopulation as a Policy Challenge in the Context of Demographic Trends. 2020.

258 UNFPA. 2020. Social Policies Catalogue on Population Ageing. A rapid scoping review.

259 UNFPA. Shrinking populations in Eastern Europe. Q&As for policymakers and advocates. No date and UNFPA. Demographic Resilience Programme for Europe and Central Asia. Pathways for societies to thrive in a world of rapid demographic change. No date.

260 UNFPA LACRO. 2021. Reflections to broaden the strategic perspective of UNFPA: rediscovering the population and its dynamics and UNFPA LACRO. 2021. Population and Development: from Community of Practice to a new Regional Technical Assistance Model and UNFPA LACRO. 2021. Guidance Note. UNFPA Strategic Direction for Addressing Low Fertility, Aging and Old Age in Latin America and the Caribbean.

diversity and earlier experience focused on advising high-fertility countries, with the launch of the Demographic Resilience Programme in 2018, supported by enhanced regional political dialogue competencies, the UNFPA mandate gained a new lease of life with a focus on low fertility and ageing and remains fully in line with ICPD.²⁶¹

Throughout the evaluation period UNFPA has contributed to the availability and accessibility of disaggregated data to support policymaking, for example, on gender and on ageing. The International Advisory Panel on Population and Development (IAPPD) was inaugurated in 2016. It advises UNFPA and governments on policy and strategy directions for tackling key concerns in population and development. It also contributes to strengthening the UNFPA position and creating enabling conditions for upstream advocacy and stronger political dialogue.²⁶²

APRO has supported numerous ageing initiatives for advocacy and policy dialogue, such as the Titchfield City Group on Ageing; WHO/UNFPA Ageing Platform; and the Global Programme on Ageing and Low Fertility (with KOSTAT support). These have all contributed towards a new narrative framework with a new set of possible, holistic solutions to ageing and low fertility.

In the Asia Pacific region, UNFPA provides support through the modes of engagement of knowledge management (including acting as a convener of expertise at the regional level) and advocacy and policy dialogue. From 2014 onwards, APRO has reported a variety of results related to population and development in the annual reports. In 2014, UNFPA collaborated with HelpAge International on a report on elderly community care. UNFPA also supported the UNESCAP workshop on social integration and rights of older people.²⁶³ In 2015, UNFPA reported producing evidence on ageing and human rights. This evidence included data and policy mapping, which contributed to guidance on good practice on the development of rights-based policies aimed at older persons.²⁶⁴

UNFPA supported the three-yearly Asian Population Association (APA) Conference, both technically and with funding, and by providing expertise through leading certain sessions. For example, in 2018 APRO organized a special session at the Fourth Asian Population Association Conference on the criticality of integrating population dynamics into development processes.²⁶⁵ Other respondents highlighted the importance of UNFPA sessions at the APA conference, particularly on the national transfer account work.²⁶⁶

At the regional level, since 2014, UNFPA APRO has consistently made steady progress on regional frameworks and policy dialogue. The achievements include examples such as the UNESCAP Asia Pacific intergovernmental meetings and the Ministers' Consultation on Strengthening Climate Change Resilience through reproductive, maternal, child and adolescent health, which included discussions on relevant population data, dynamics and development.²⁶⁷ In 2019, APRO hosted the international workshop, coordinated by the regional office and UNFPA headquarters, to develop both the regional and global strategy for population ageing, which included WHO, the International Labour Organization, UNESCAP, HelpAge International, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as well as governments of the region.²⁶⁸

Through ASRO, UNFPA has been successful in strategically positioning and mainstreaming the ICPD agenda. Numerous interviewees highlighted the UNFPA role as the 'champion' of the ICPD agenda in the Arab State region and the advocacy and practical support that ASRO has provided to countries.²⁶⁹ ASRO is recognized as being one of the earliest proponents of the need to establish and develop foundational data systems that capture key demographic characteristics that can be used to inform national policymaking. As one interviewee put it, ASRO is the "godparent of ICPD" in the region.²⁷⁰

In more recent years, UNFPA ASRO's activities have extended beyond advocacy for the ICPD agenda, through to the development of tools designed to facilitate and track implementation of key provisions at the national level. The Population

261 UNFPA. 2018. UNFPA 2018 Annual Report - EECA Regional Office.

262 UNFPA. 2016. Revised Regional Intervention Action Plan for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 2014–2017.

263 UNFPA. 2015. UNFPA 2014 Annual Report – Asia and the Pacific Regional Office.

264 UNFPA. 2016. UNFPA 2015 Annual Report – Asia and the Pacific Regional Office.

265 UNFPA. 2019. UNFPA 2018 Annual Report – Asia and the Pacific Regional Office.

266 UNFPA APRO, NGO, and academic institution respondents.

267 UNFPA APRO 2014 and 2016 Annual Reports.

268 UNFPA. 2021. UNFPA 2019 Annual Report – Asia and the Pacific Regional Office.

269 UNFPA, other UN agencies, academic institutions, and government respondents (ASRO case study).

270 Academic institution respondent (ASRO case study).

Development Composite Index (2020) produced by ASRO is a key example of this shift.²⁷¹ The index allows countries to track progress against 39 rights-based indicators linked to ICPD targets and categorized into five dimensions, comprising: dignity, sexual and reproductive health, mobility, governance and sustainability. As the document states in its introduction, it “reflects an overall metric for achieving the ICPD Programme of Action in the context of a people-centred SDG approach”.²⁷² Countries are “urged to use this new index for the purpose of benchmarking, monitoring and evaluating progress of SDGs from a population lens”.²⁷³

While UNFPA has worked to strategically position the demographic dividend in the Arab State region, it has responded to changing regional and country needs by focusing more on ageing in recent years. Several respondents commended the substantial amount of advocacy and strategic work²⁷⁴ that contributed to the Heads of State of the League of Arab States adopting the Arab Region Strategy on Ageing 2019-2029 (2019).²⁷⁵ Moreover, interviewees also highlighted the role of ASRO in mainstreaming and cascading the regional strategy at the national level, and its work with HelpAge International to develop guidelines for national level implementation. Further, UNFPA ASRO has supported Egypt, Jordan and a number of Gulf countries to develop their own national-level ageing strategies, building on the regional strategy.²⁷⁶

Demographic resilience

With regard to the concept of demographic resilience, there are mixed responses across regions as to how quickly the idea is being adopted. The EECARO region led the way on conceptualizing and developing the framework of demographic resilience in 2018, including a potentially seminal conference in Sofia in 2021 on this concept. This Ministerial Conference, which took a hybrid online/in-person forum, aimed to “contribute to strengthening the capacity of countries in Europe and central Asia to respond to the profound demographic shifts the region is experiencing”.²⁷⁷ It reflects the contribution EECARO has been making towards regional- and national-level frameworks, increasingly founded upon the concept of demographic resilience in the region.

The purpose of demographic resilience, as a concept that more and more national and regional attitudes are being framed around, attempts to shift the concerns around low fertility and ageing from security focuses to a more resilient, and rights-based focus. It supports governments in moving away from viewing demographic change as a threat and towards viewing demographic change as an opportunity for people and nations to thrive.²⁷⁸

EECARO covers 17 countries, with a diverse demographic landscape, including both countries on the brink of harnessing a demographic dividend (mostly central Asian countries) and countries struggling with both ageing and decreasing populations due to low fertility and/or migration (mostly eastern European countries).

However, some respondents to this evaluation highlighted that, while UNFPA has been making efforts to introduce the concept of demographic resilience into national development strategies and policies, except for a pocket of cases, there has been minimal tangible results apart from the 2021 Sofia conference.²⁷⁹ Others feel that the Sofia conference was a strong launch of the concept within the region and that this regional framework will be key in shifting the narrative from demographic change being deterministic and catastrophic to a more rights-based and positive way of addressing demographic shifts.²⁸⁰

In other regions there has been a very mixed response to this evaluation with regard to the concept of demographic resilience: not with regard to the utility of the concept itself, but more with regard to how understood, or utilized, it currently is.

271 UNFPA ASRO. 2020. Population Development Composite Index.

272 Ibid.

273 Ibid.

274 UNFPA, other UN agency, and NGO partner respondents (ASRO case study).

275 LAS. 2019. Arab Region Strategy on Ageing 2019-2029.

276 UNFPA, other UN Agency and government respondents (EECARO case study).

277 UNFPA EECA (2021). Shaping Europe’s demographic future. Online at: <https://eeca.unfpa.org/en/shaping-europes-demographic-future>, accessed: March 2022.

278 UNFPA respondents (EECARO case study).

279 UNFPA and government respondents (EECARO case study).

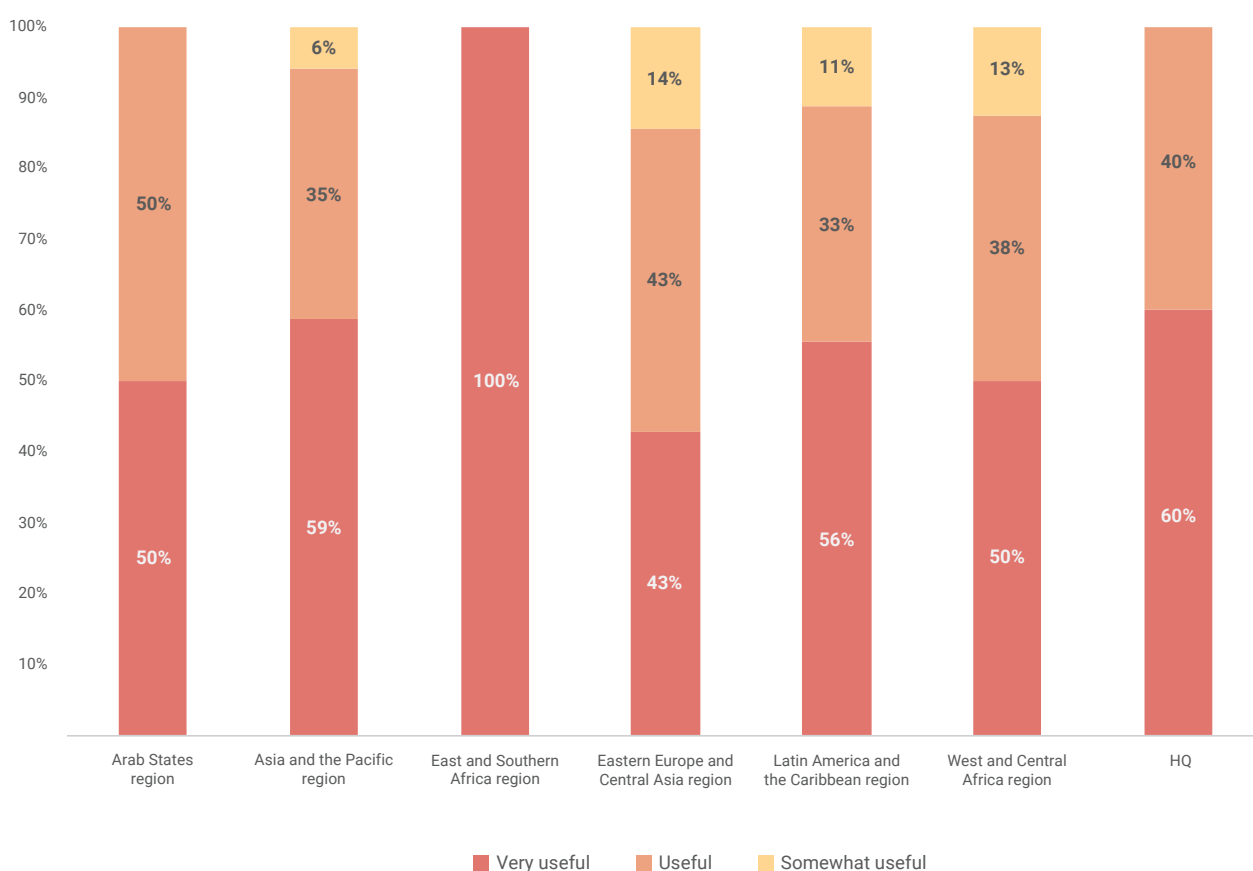
280 UNFPA and academic institute respondents (EECARO case study).

In APRO, respondents at the regional office report a strong disagreement with the concept and believe strongly that the concept ‘resilience’ is not applicable owing to the different context of population concern in the region.²⁸¹ This somewhat contradicts the APRO survey responses from country offices in the region that the concept of demographic resilience is understood and considered useful. UNFPA interviewee respondents report that the term is “catchy and attractive”, but they still do not necessarily know fully what it means, or how to operationalize the concept. They report that it is still “new terminology” in the region and that it will take time for it to be fully “digested” and understood. Out of the ten external stakeholders interviewed for this evaluation in the Asia Pacific region, none had heard the term ‘demographic resilience’.

In Mexico, the concept of demographic resilience is not used by academics or public officials. Within UNFPA, the staff questioned the nature, clarity and usefulness of the concept itself. In UNFPA Mexico, the concepts of ageing and low fertility are preferred. Nevertheless, some opinions nuanced the position by highlighting that the issue is with the “title” and not with the concept of demographic resilience itself and its proposed assumptions and holistic approach. Some furthermore highlighted that the storytelling is important and needs to respond to the diverse cultural contexts and realities. Further analysis on the applicability of the demographic resilience concept in the region is expected to provide clarity and a more solid base for decision-making.

Demographic resilience is not being concretely used yet in Nigeria, but it is regarded as an emerging notion that is beginning to dominate the discussions on population interventions. It does not appear in the latest common country analysis; but it was reported that it will be incorporated into the ninth country programme document. However, from the survey sent to UNFPA staff working on population and development for this evaluation, there were significantly more positive responses, overall.

FIGURE 17: How useful is the concept of demographic resilience within programme and development work, disaggregated by region



Source: Evaluation team

281 UNFPA APRO respondents.

The respondents to the survey who answered from somewhat useful to very useful were asked to provide examples of how the application of demographic resilience had been useful in their area of work. Of the respondents, 47 answered, and many of the examples provided linked the use of demographic resilience to the support to policymakers for evidence-based advocacy and policy development, connecting both the demographic dividend work and the ageing and low fertility work of UNFPA.²⁸²

Finding 14: At the country level, there is consistent evidence of a strong UNFPA contribution to national population policies. The evidence highlights less consistency in UNFPA contribution of population and development into common United Nations planning processes, such as common country analyses.²⁸³

Contribution to national policies and frameworks

There is strong evidence across the three case study countries and beyond that UNFPA has consistently across the years advocated for and supported the inclusion of population data and dynamics within national policies at the country level. It is not completely clear to what extent the findings from the three country case studies are more broadly true of UNFPA work within national policies at the country level, but they can nonetheless be treated as indicative, given the countries were selected for being typical of the broader set of implementation countries and are furthermore spread across three regions thus also reflecting regional variation.²⁸⁴

Over the years this has shifted from advocating for national population policies to more alignment with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, but the focus on ensuring policies are founded on population data-driven evidence has not changed. What has changed though, is an increasing focus on bringing issues of inclusion to the table. While this has probably always been there to a degree, the evidence shows that from 2018 onwards there is a more visible and vocal effort on behalf of UNFPA at the country level to embed inclusion issues and LNOB in all national frameworks, driven by the population data and analysis available.

In Mexico, since the previous federal administration (2012-2018), UNFPA, together with other actors, has sought to position the importance of reforming or formulating a new General Population Law. This was achieved in 2020, with the approval of a new law to replace the 1974 law.²⁸⁵ In the formulation of this initiative, UNFPA played a fundamental role both in facilitating political dialogue with congressmen and in providing technical assistance.²⁸⁶

In Nigeria, UNFPA supported the Nigerian Government to integrate population dynamics into the National Population Policy, into sectoral and state-level action plans, and into its commitments taken at the ICPD. UNFPA is seen as a strategic technical partner for the Nigerian Government, able to use its expertise in population and development to influence government policies, plans and commitments with relevant data to make them more responsive to needs.²⁸⁷ UNFPA was reported to be the main driver of the revision of the National Policy on Population for Sustainable Development (NPP) launched in 2021.²⁸⁸ In 2017 it advocated for and participated in the revision of the 2004 NPP, and in 2018 it advocated for the approval of the revised NPP by the President.²⁸⁹

282 See Annex VIII for a full overview of the survey.

283 Sources of finding: Global review/randomized scan of CCAs and UNFPA, government, and academic institutions from Mexico and Nigeria case studies. Strength of finding: HIGH.

284 This evaluation was designed specifically around three country-level case studies, three regional case studies, and additional global and regional data collection. For this specific finding under this specific EQ, the evidence is necessarily drawn from the three case studies, which were selected in collaboration between the evaluation team and the evaluation reference group for their utility in showcasing UNFPA work.

285 This initiative is still under review by the Senate.

286 UNFPA Mexico, 2020 Annual Report, 29/01/2021.

287 UNFPA, government and academia institution respondents (Nigeria case study).

288 UNFPA and academic institution respondents (Nigeria case study).

289 UNFPA. 2019. UNFPA 2017 Annual Report - Nigeria. 2018; UNFPA. 2018 Annual Report - Nigeria.

In Uganda, UNFPA has helped to mainstream the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development in Africa, and this agenda has been used to inform national policy. UNFPA has been extremely successful in helping the Government of Uganda evolve and implement its population policies, especially in relation to efforts to harness the demographic dividend at national and subnational levels. The *Harnessing the Demographic Dividend (2014)*²⁹⁰ report was noted by several interviewees as being instrumental in setting the scene for population policy in Uganda, including capturing the attention and focus of the President. The follow-up report of the same name published in 2018 further consolidated the agenda within policy, as reflected in the *Demographic Dividend Road Map (2018)*²⁹¹ and *Demographic Dividend Compliance Tool (2018)*.²⁹² The maturity of the demographic dividend agenda in Uganda is reflected in the National Planning Authority's Third National Development Plan, 2020/21–2024/25,²⁹³ which recognizes both the opportunity and challenge presented by having a youth bulge.²⁹⁴

For UNFPA across the world, embedding inclusion within national frameworks has not been without challenges. As an example, in Mexico from 2018 onwards, UNFPA sought to take advantage of the opportunity of a new federal Government to position demographic trends and dynamics in the national plans and programmes. While this work had limited success overall, UNFPA did manage to help put the issue of forced internal displacement onto the agenda. In Mexico, the main planning instrument is the National Development Plan (NDP). Providing data inputs and positioning specific topics for the NDP was a fundamental goal for UNFPA, such as mobility and territorial distribution of the population, international migration, sexual and reproductive rights, internal forced displacement and population ageing. As part of this effort, UNFPA participated in ten consultation meetings providing technical assistance for the 2019-2024 National Development Effort.²⁹⁵ This effort had limited results in that the 2019-2024 National Development Plan resulted in a general position document rather than a programmatic one. UNFPA also provided support to the National Population Council to formulate the National Population Programme,²⁹⁶ however, this programme was never published, and for the first time since 1978, Mexico does not have a governing document for population policy.²⁹⁷

Contribution to common United Nations planning processes at the country level

Based on a global scan of common country analysis documents, there is much room for improvement with regard to integrating population dynamics into common United Nations planning processes, specifically common country analyses as the main joint planning tool at the country level.

A random sample of 20 common country analyses from 2015 to 2022 shows that only six (30 per cent) have very clear UNFPA-attributed population dynamics analysis within them. Only two (10 per cent) specifically reference UNFPA population situation analyses (PSAs) as a reference source. A further four provide a deep analysis of demographic shifts but with limited or no reference to UNFPA as the source of data. Ten more have limited analysis of demographic shifts and no reference to UNFPA as a contributing source of analysis.

Regionally, countries covered by APRO lead in terms of incorporation of population dynamics into common country analyses, with all four of the Asia Pacific countries being coded green in Table 4 from 2015 onwards. For ASRO, EECARO, ESARO and WCARO, there was a more mixed set of results, while for LACRO, all three random common country analyses reviewed were coded red.

290 UNFPA 2014. UNFPA Uganda. *Harnessing the Demographic Dividend*.

291 UNFPA 2018. UNFPA Uganda. *Demographic Dividend Road Map*.

292 UNFPA 2018. UNFPA Uganda. *Demographic Dividend Compliance Tool*.

293 Government of Uganda. 2020. *Third National Development Plan, 2020/2021–2024/2025*.

294 Ibid.

295 UNFPA-Mexico, 2019 Annual Report, 22/01/2020, p. 2.

296 Ibid.

297 Academic institution respondent (Mexico case study). The first population policy document in Mexico is *Política demográfica nacional y regional: objetivos y metas 1978-1982*, and it was published by CONAPO in 1978.

TABLE 4: Review of sample common country analyses for demographic analysis with attribution to UNFPA²⁹⁸

Year	Country and status of incorporating demographic analysis in common country analyses	Status
2022	Occupied Palestine Territories	Strong
	Dominican Republic	Weak
2021	Zambia	Medium
	Honduras	Weak
2020	Pacific Islands	Strong
	Cameroon	Weak
	Uganda	Medium
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Weak
2019	Uzbekistan	Weak
	Colombia	Weak
2018	Bhutan	Strong
	Liberia	Weak
	Libya	Weak
2017	India	Strong
	Jordan	Medium
2016	Eritrea	Weak
	Pakistan	Strong
	Nigeria	Medium
2015	Viet Nam	Strong
	The Gambia	Weak

Source: Evaluation team

Despite the new guidance that was produced by the United Nations system as a whole in 2019 on common country analyses,²⁹⁹ and the UNFPA contribution to this guidance with regard to population data, there is no clear pattern of improved common country analyses post-2019 compared to pre-2019.

298 Colour-coding key: Countries are colour-coded green when the CCA has a deep and meaningful reference to population dynamics (population trends, demographic transition, demographic shifts, demographic dividend etc.) AND there is clear and explicit reference to UNFPA as the source of information. Countries are colour-coded orange where there is some reference to population dynamics (population trends, demographic transition, demographic shifts, demographic dividend etc.) BUT there is very limited, or no reference to UNFPA as the source of demographic population information. Countries are colour-coded red where there is extremely limited reference to population dynamics (i.e. no reference to demographic shifts as mega-trends, but rather just a basic overview of population data taken from the last census or demographic health survey, with no back-up analysis) AND no reference to UNFPA as the source of demographic population information.

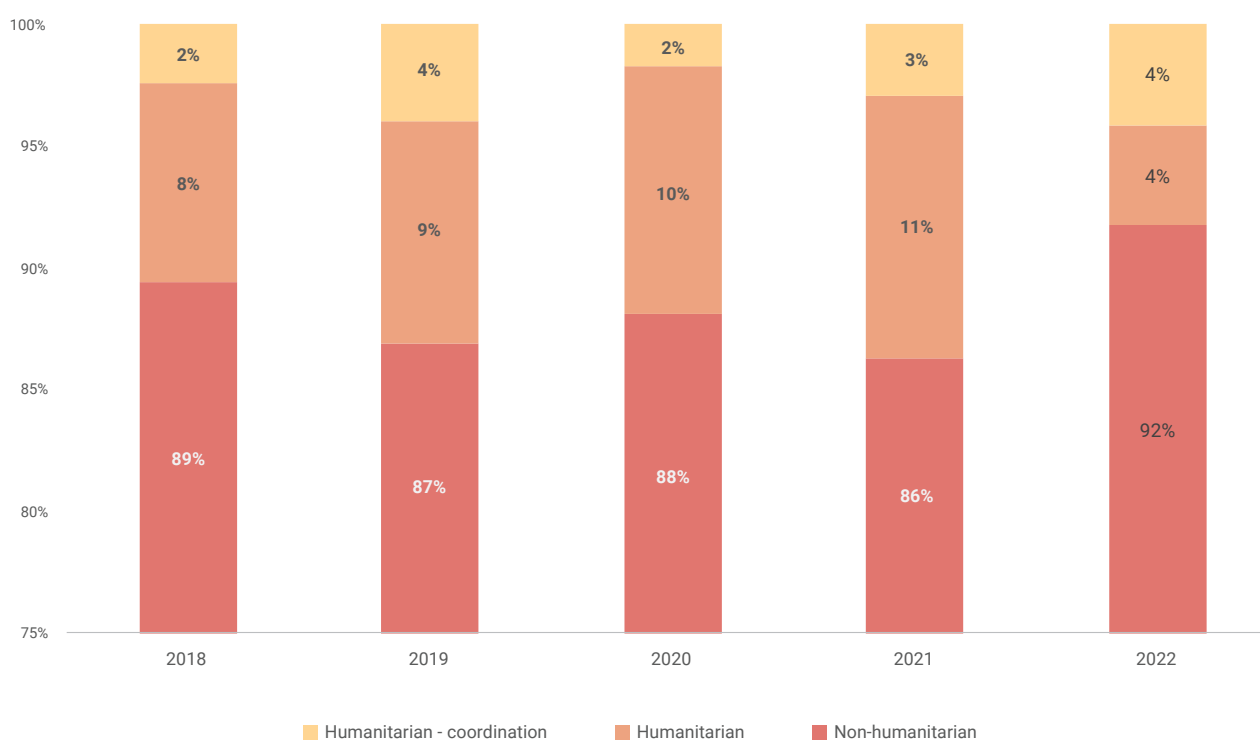
299 UNSDG. (2019). (Consolidated Annexes to the Cooperation Framework Guidance). Online at: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/consolidated-annexes-cooperation-framework-guidance>, accessed: April 2023.

3.6 HUMANITARIAN DATA AND COORDINATION

Evaluation question 6: To what extent has UNFPA successfully collected, collated and disseminated population data within humanitarian contexts?³⁰⁰

Finding 15: UNFPA makes a significant contribution to population data in humanitarian settings through the common operational datasets (CODs) framework (specifically, COD-PS), and this is considered a development contribution to humanitarian preparedness and response. Importantly, there is an inconsistent understanding across UNFPA as to the structure and differentiation between population data in humanitarian settings and humanitarian data, which continues to cause some degree of confusion.³⁰¹

FIGURE 18: Humanitarian spend within population and development, 2018-2022³⁰²



Source: UNFPA Atlas data

The evaluation notes that the field of population data is the longest-standing core expertise of UNFPA, while humanitarian data, and population data in humanitarian preparedness and response, are much newer areas of expertise. As such, the degree of confusion is understandable at this point in time, and is likely to naturally resolve as UNFPA humanitarian response continues to evolve and grow as it has done over the past ten years.

Population and development expenditures tagged as humanitarian expenditures have accounted for between 8 per cent and 14 per cent of total population and development expenditures between 2018 and 2022 (up until September 2022)

300 Sub-questions: 6.1 UNFPA has effectively utilized population dynamics and data expertise within humanitarian and fragile contexts for the provision of population data sets for planning purposes across national and UN-wide humanitarian response. 6.2 UNFPA has effectively coordinated with other humanitarian data actors such as OCHA for ensuring complementarity between population data within humanitarian contexts and humanitarian data.

301 Sources of finding: UNFPA, other UN agency, and NGO partner respondents at the global level and UNFPA, and other UN agency from APRO and ASRO regional case studies/cross-referenced with country and regional level UNFPA reports; global level UNFPA and UN reports and strategies. Strength of finding: MEDIUM.

302 Source: UNFPA Atlas/GPS data from 2018 to September 2022.

across direct spend and coordination costs.³⁰³ From the Population and Development Branch, these expenditures have been predominantly on UNFPA support to common operational datasets (CODs).

As per the box below, common operational datasets have been in use since 2008 to try and ensure consistency of baseline information/datasets for all humanitarian actors responding to a humanitarian crisis.³⁰⁴ Common operational datasets are overall managed by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); however, different agencies input to different types of common operational datasets and UNFPA has had a longstanding role contributing to COD-PS – population statistics. This is a specific dataset that provides underlying population data in humanitarian contexts and it is not the same thing as humanitarian data, which is much broader and can mean different things to different people and thus risks causing confusion within UNFPA (see Box 6 below).

There is a clear understanding among humanitarian actors, including OCHA, that UNFPA contribution specifically to COD-PS is effective and impactful for planning for a humanitarian response.

In 2022, OCHA provided a ‘deep dive’ overview of the UNFPA contribution in the annual State of Open Humanitarian Data report³⁰⁵ where OCHA highlighted that UNFPA became the official lead agency for COD-PS in 2021 (although even prior to this, UNFPA provided an ongoing contribution). In late 2020, UNFPA started sharing COD-PS data on the OCHA Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX).³⁰⁶ OCHA furthermore highlighted that UNFPA “combine(s) demographic expertise with working relationships with national statistical agencies to identify, validate and, if necessary, project the best available statistics”.³⁰⁷ In 2021, the UNFPA data on HDX was downloaded over 7,000 times.³⁰⁸

Box 6: Common operational datasets (CODs)

Common operational datasets were introduced to the global humanitarian system in 2008, and revised in 2010. In 2011, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Information Management Task Force developed guidelines on the Humanitarian Profile Common Operational Dataset to address many of the gaps and confusion around the existence and terminology of humanitarian data. In 2016, IASC produced additional guidance on humanitarian figures, which was further complemented by the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) Guidance in 2017.

Common operational datasets are now the primary reference dataset used in humanitarian operations for all humanitarian actors to work from the same data. The last updated reference document (‘Common Operational Datasets: Humanitarian Response Intelligence’ OCHA Field Information Section, September 2021) confirms the three core CODs that are in use today:

- COD-AB – administrative boundaries
- COD-PS – population statistics
- COD-HP – humanitarian profile

At the global level, UNFPA work on COD-PS is led by the Population and Development Branch in Technical Division, which maintains an ongoing relationship with OCHA for COD-PS contribution. UNFPA has recently, in 2022, secured further United States Foreign Disaster Assistance funding to continue this work.³⁰⁹

At regional levels, UNFPA coordinates with OCHA in the region for common operational datasets. In APRO, for example, respondents reported that for the regional office, COD-PS is the main coordination link between UNFPA and humanitarian actors.³¹⁰ There is a clear understanding within UNFPA that increased linkages will be required, particularly as migration

303 Between 2014 and 2017 no population and development expenditure was tagged as humanitarian in the Atlas/GPS management system.

304 OCHA. (ND). Common Operational Datasets. Online at: <https://cod.unocha.org>, accessed: December 2022.

305 OCHA HDX. The State of Open Humanitarian Data 2022: Assessing data availability across humanitarian crises. 2022.

306 OCHA Services. (ND). The Humanitarian Data Exchange. Online at: <https://data.humdata.org>, accessed: June 2022

307 OCHA HDX. The State of Open Humanitarian Data 2022: Assessing data availability across humanitarian crises. 2022.

308 Ibid.

309 UNFPA global level respondents.

310 UNFPA and other UN agency respondents (APRO regional case study).

becomes an ever-increasing issue (globally and in the region), as migration is currently considered to be the “weakest link in the demographic balancing equation in terms of quality of data”.³¹¹ Respondents to this evaluation reported that this weakness is increasingly being recognized, acknowledged and discussed at the government level in the region: “it is surprising how many Ministries raise the issue of migration”.³¹² There are agencies with clear migration and displacement mandates (UNHCR and IOM specifically) and so work on this area requires strong collaboration with these lead agencies.

While COD-PS work is generally considered to be a strong contribution of UNFPA to humanitarian data, this is not without challenges. These challenges are predominantly two-fold. Firstly, both internally and externally, there is some doubt as to the utility of underlying population data in fast-paced rapid onset/rapidly changing situations (such as, for example, conflict in Ukraine) where there is constant population movement. In more long-term humanitarian crises, such as in Yemen, there is some doubt as to whether any underlying population data – based on previous censuses and whatever CRVS data exists – remains relevant to the current population. Humanitarian response requires data at a much lower level.³¹³

For example, in the ASRO region, UNFPA plays an active role within the United Nations system to coordinate humanitarian responses, but there are mixed views as to the utility of its contributions to common operational datasets. Some respondents reported that common operational datasets were identified as being useful for capturing the demographic characteristics of a population at the outset of an emergency.³¹⁴ For others, their shortcomings outweighed their utility. It was noted that common operational datasets do not contain enough granularity to be useful in humanitarian response at the localized level and that this is often due to intentional denial of data access for political reasons, particularly in contexts where the government is party to a conflict. Further, population data in fast-changing humanitarian contexts can quickly become outdated.³¹⁵

Secondly, there is an internal confusion with structure and the concept of population data in humanitarian settings, and humanitarian data. While there are many staff within the Humanitarian Response Division and within Technical Division and Policy and Strategy Division who do understand specific roles, there are many others who do not or who have an understanding of their role and the difference between population data in humanitarian settings and humanitarian data that does not align with the understanding held by others.³¹⁶

Box 7: How does the UNFPA Humanitarian Response Division define humanitarian data?

UNFPA provides COD-PS: population data for (some) humanitarian crises contexts.

However, in addition to this, UNFPA Humanitarian Resource Division maintain an internal humanitarian data tool that is updated twice a year, referred to as the Humanitarian Master Sheet. Information in this sheet comes from UNFPA country offices and passes through regional offices and is then entered into the online text database (Google sheets). It contains information on the following areas:

- Projected humanitarian needs
- Estimated population targeted (disaggregated by demographic, ethnic and vulnerability characteristics)
- Humanitarian funding required and received
- Snapshot of results achieved.

It should be noted that all of this is humanitarian data, and none of it is population data in humanitarian contexts. Even the estimated population targeted is not an overall population dataset: it is a needs-based dataset. Humanitarian response as a whole has a number of needs-based population figures – ‘people in need’ (PiN)/people targeted etc. and these are all subsets of the overall population data that is required at the beginning of a crisis at the most

311 UNFPA and other UN agency respondents (APRO regional case study).

312 Ibid.

313 UNFPA, other UN agencies, and NGO partners at the global level.

314 ASRO UNFPA and Other UN agency respondents.

315 UNFPA, other UN agency, and donor respondents at the global level and ASRO regional case study.

316 Global level UNFPA respondents.

localized level possible in order to then estimate population in need, and population targeted – either overall, or for specific interventions such as SRHR interventions, which is where the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) calculator can come into play.

Source: UNFPA. 2021. Baseline & Evaluability Assessment on Generation, Provision and Utilization of Data in Humanitarian Assistance: Final Report.

It is noted that the Humanitarian Response Division, which recently changed its name from the Humanitarian Office, is now perhaps more appropriately named with regard to the data-function of that office, which is more aligned with response rather than pre-crisis data collation, which is essentially what the COD-PS offers as underlying population data for humanitarian contexts, rather than humanitarian data.

Still, this evaluation finds that there is currently not complete clarity across all divisions of UNFPA, outside of the Humanitarian Response Division, as to how humanitarian data differs from population data in humanitarian settings nor clarity as to the full role of UNFPA in this area.

The confusion perhaps lies in referencing population data in humanitarian contexts as humanitarian data.³¹⁷ Regardless, there are tangible consequences for UNFPA stemming from this lack of clarity. At the global level this impacts on partnerships. Contributing to population data in humanitarian settings, through Technical Division, requires Technical Division to have ongoing partnerships with humanitarian actors such as OCHA, and sit within humanitarian working groups, such as the Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics (EGRIS). These are actors for whom the primary relationship with UNFPA is with the Humanitarian Response Division. While the OCHA section dealing with common operational datasets is not the humanitarian response section of OCHA, and therefore the relationship between Technical Division and the COD-section of OCHA can be maintained quite unilaterally, UNFPA Humanitarian Response Division retains overall responsibility for the relationship with OCHA. Further, with only one staff member in the Population and Development Branch allocated to this population data in humanitarian settings issue, there is some sense from other actors that UNFPA does not have the capacity to fully engage as much as would be desired, such as for example, in EGRIS work.³¹⁸

At the country level, this results in inconsistent performance. In 2020, a global UNFPA evaluation of UNFPA humanitarian capacity found that UNFPA inconsistently leverages population data for informing overall humanitarian responses.³¹⁹

This highlights a significant missed opportunity. Respondents to this evaluation have highlighted the humanitarian credibility that UNFPA can gain through the use of COD-PS at the country level and positioning on the humanitarian country team at the beginning of a crisis, such as in Ukraine currently. While UNFPA has become increasingly recognized as an important gender-based violence and SRHR humanitarian actor in recent years – and this credibility has been well supported by the establishment of a Humanitarian Office (now Humanitarian Resource Division) in Geneva in 2019 – this thematic cluster-level authority is a different level from a data-level authority stemming from leadership of population data in humanitarian settings. The data has downstream implications for a whole system-wide response, not just UNFPA mandate areas, which leadership in the areas of gender-based violence and SRHR do not.

Those Representatives who have positioned COD-PS and humanitarian country teams have mobilised around it: they have positioned UNFPA quite differently. It provides strong credibility.³²⁰

Finally, the current set-up within UNFPA – being the conceptualization, terminology, structure and internal coordination with regard to population data, dynamics and development in humanitarian settings – has not been maximized for full impact across all areas. There is limited work on census or CRVS within protracted humanitarian settings. The 2017 UNFPA census strategy highlights that humanitarian conditions can “compromise the coverage of a population and housing census” and references new digitalized and innovative modelling approaches that can be used,³²¹ but this evaluation found minimal interest

317 UNFPA respondents at global level and ASRO and APRO regional case studies.

318 Global level other UN agency respondents.

319 UNFPA. 2020. Evaluation of the UNFPA capacity in humanitarian action (2012-2019).

320 Global UNFPA respondent.

321 UNFPA. 2017. UNFPA Strategy for the 2020 Round of Population & Housing Censuses (2015-2024).

in becoming a lead agency in census or CRVS work in protracted humanitarian settings. There is limited thought (globally, not just within UNFPA) as to how national transfer accounts could be adapted to more humanitarian settings. This is not humanitarian response work, and is not under the purview of the Humanitarian Response Division's new terms of reference, but neither does the Population and Development Branch have the capacity or expertise to dedicate to this.

There is limited conceptualization of population data, dynamics and development across the triple nexus spectrum – humanitarian response, longer-term development and peace. The UNFPA humanitarian budget has been consistently increasing since 2014 and there are clear linkages with population dynamics such as the demographic dividend: these linkages have been made in an ad hoc manner (such as the WCARO reports on demography, peace and security in the Sahel)³²² but these have been regional initiatives and do not adhere to any overarching corporate framework related to population data and dynamics and peace and security – as one does not exist.

3.7 PARTNERSHIPS

Evaluation question 7: To what extent has UNFPA leveraged partnerships to further the effective role of population dynamics and data for monitoring SDGs, shifting from funding to financing, and tracking progress on the three transformative results and the ICPD Programme of Action?³²³

Finding 16: At a regional level, UNFPA has strong traditional partnerships with economic and social affairs commissions and has also developed strong and thoughtful partnerships with academic institutions. At the country level there are multiple examples of innovative partnerships, particularly South-South cooperation (SSC) and public-private partnerships within population and development work.³²⁴

The multisectoral nature of population data, dynamics and development means that partnerships are crucial, and this is well recognized by UNFPA at all levels. This is specifically true for working on the demographic dividend and ageing and low fertility, where the multidimensional nature of the issues requires strategic and innovative partnerships. At the global and regional levels, UNFPA has a number of partnerships across sister United Nations agencies on population data, which necessarily covers mandate areas of different agencies. Various guidance and strategies for UNFPA population data, dynamics and development work highlight both the necessity of partnerships, and the strategy to achieve and maintain them.

The draft 2021/2022 CRVS strategy highlights that in 2014 the World Bank and WHO outlined a scaling-up strategy for CRVS that would be based on better partnerships and coordination, framed as “improved knowledge sharing and support to the CRVS community of practice.”³²⁵ In 2021, UNFPA took over the leadership of the global CRVS Centre of Excellence, which functions as a community of practice.

UNFPA is also a key member of the SDG 3 GAP partnership, which was established in 2019 and works to improve collaboration and accelerate progress on SDG 3, with one of the key contributions of UNFPA being to improve data systems.³²⁶

The strategy highlights the partnerships UNFPA maintains with different regional economic commissions for CRVS and the global-level partnerships with different bodies, such as the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda Task Force and the Global

322 UNFPA WCARO. 2020. Demography, peace and security in the Sahel.

323 Sub-questions: 7.1 UNFPA has leveraged partnerships with traditional partners for effective population dynamics and data interventions. 7.2 UNFPA has leveraged innovative partnerships with new partners employing different modalities (such as South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC)) for effective population dynamics and data interventions. 7.3 In line with the focus of Strategic Plan 2022-2025, UNFPA has started to consider how to shift from the funding of UNFPA interventions to the financing of transformative change in national policies and programmes, through catalysing and leveraging partnerships.

324 Sources of finding: UNFPA, other UN agency and NGO partner respondents at the global level and UNFPA, other UN agency, academic institution, government, and NGO partner respondents from APRO, ASRO, EECARO, Mexico, Nigeria, and Uganda case studies/cross-referenced with country and regional level UNFPA reports; global level UNFPA and UN reports and strategies. Strength of finding: HIGH.

325 UNFPA. 2021. UNFPA CRVS Strategy, 2021-2025 DRAFT.

326 World Health Organization. (ND). SDG GAP Joint Commitments. Online at: <https://www.who.int/initiatives/sdg3-global-action-plan/commitment-page>, accessed: September 2022.

CRVS Group, as well as bilateral partnerships with United Nations agencies, global financial institutions, and other regional organizations.³²⁷

In EECARO, UNFPA has a diverse range of partnerships that appear thoughtful and well-considered across population data, dynamics and development, and across both traditional and more innovative partnerships. However, coordination among United Nations agencies is reported to not always be optimum. UNFPA EECARO has a range of partnerships including academic institutions across the region³²⁸ together with regional parliamentary bodies such as the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, and the European Parliamentary Forum, and other regional bodies such as the Interstate Statistical Committee of the CIS. These partnerships have often been long-term multi-year partnerships.³²⁹ Partnerships with policymakers and donors are strong.

UNFPA EECARO created the International Advisory Panel on Population and Development (IAPPD), This is a mechanism to bring together various institutions (policymakers and academics) to engage in matters of population and development. It was initially focused within Moldova but has expanded to other countries in the region – Georgia and Kyrgyzstan – and acts both to bring together high-level expertise on population and development matters and to highlight UNFPA work in this area.³³⁰

UNFPA EECARO's partnerships with other United Nations agencies are relatively strong. While there are many reports from respondents to this evaluation of lack of coordination across the United Nations system at the regional level, there are also good practice examples of good collaboration within the United Nations system for population and development issues. There is a sense that there are overlapping roles, particularly between UNFPA and WHO on issue of mortality, and UNFPA and UNICEF on issues of birth registration. However, there are, as referenced above, also examples of good practice. UNFPA and WHO have partnered on the Decade of Healthy Ageing, and on the Madrid Plan of Action.³³¹

UNFPA APRO has a strong partnership with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).³³² For example, during COVID-19 UNESCAP organized a number of online seminars regarding how to manage data collection during the pandemic, and respondents reported that UNFPA was “always there in this work.”³³³ Further, there is strong coordination on CRVS in the region that UNESCAP leads and that UNFPA supports. With regard to other agencies, there are sufficient partnerships for population data and dynamics but they are not without challenges. For example, UNFPA was part of a working group with UN-Habitat and IOM on population issues, but respondents reported that limited real or impactful activities came from it.³³⁴ Consistent and structured coordination with other United Nations agencies has been challenging due to the difficulties of finding commonalities of interest in data points across different United Nations agency mandate areas and areas of focus. There is a regional working group on SDG data that UNFPA co-leads with UNESCAP but respondents report that this working group has struggled to find clear focus over the years, due to the numerous interests of different agencies across the different SDG focus areas.³³⁵

At the regional level UNFPA works well with HelpAge International on issues of ageing. There is a regional working group on ageing that UNESCAP and HelpAge co-host. UNFPA is considered by respondents to be a committed and respected member of this group.³³⁶ Also at the regional level, UNFPA has a strong partnership with the Asia Population Association.

Finally, APRO has strong partnerships with academic institutions for work on national transfer accounts in the region. This is a strong focus of the UNFPA APRO population dynamics portfolio and the partnerships are commended in both the United Nations and the academic institutions.³³⁷ It has also supported a series of regional and subregional workshops to develop capacities of countries in the region to advocate for and produce the national transfer accounts. The partnerships, particularly

327 World Health Organization. (ND). SDG GAP Joint Commitments. Online at: <https://www.who.int/initiatives/sdg3-global-action-plan/commitment-page>, accessed: September 2022.

328 Such as Hacettepe University in Turkey, the Moscow Higher School of Economics (MHSE) and Charles University in Czechia.

329 Multiple EECARO UNFPA-IP AWP's 2014-2021.

330 UNFPA Eastern Europe and Central Asia. 2017. Independent Evaluation of UNFPA's Regional Intervention Action Plan 2014-2017.

331 UNFPA respondents (EECARO case study).

332 UNFPA and other UN agency respondents (APRO case study).

333 Other UN agency respondent (APRO case study).

334 Ibid.

335 UNFPA, other UN agency, and NGO respondents (APRO case study).

336 Other UN agency respondents (APRO case study).

337 UNFPA, other UN agency, government, and academic institution respondents (APRO case study).

with the University of Hawaii, are truly complementary in that the academic institution brings the intellectual expertise on national transfer accounts to the table and UNFPA brings the convening power and the government relationships. This allows for a clear articulation of the rationale and benefit of the national transfer account process that governments can understand and that create the necessary buy-in.³³⁸

There are also other examples of partnership in other regions. In Latin America and the Caribbean, UNFPA and UNECLAC partnered to provide joint integral technical assistance to countries conducting census. In the Arab States, the Arab Parliamentarians Forum project that was supported by ASRO brought together parliamentarians from across the Arab States to discuss key demographic and gender issues. It was cited as an example of UNFPA ability to foster innovative partnerships aimed at catalysing change over time on key priorities within the organization's mandate.³³⁹

At the country level, the 2017 Census Strategy confirms the necessity of multi-partner support, both financial and technical, that is required for a successful census.³⁴⁰ UNFPA is widely considered to have extremely strong relationships with national statistics offices and for many partners, this is one of the primary added-value strengths of UNFPA in the area of population data.³⁴¹

Across the three case studies, there are multiple examples of strong partnerships with national bodies at federal and subnational levels. These partnerships are with the main national statistics bodies and with other institutions. For example, in Mexico, UNFPA partners with the National Geriatrics Institute and the Elderly People Institute. Other partnerships at the country level include those with academic institutions, such as in Nigeria with the University of Ibadan, and with other line ministries, such as in Uganda with the Ministry of Gender.³⁴²

While the 'bread and butter' traditional partnerships for UNFPA population and development work appear strong across country case studies for this evaluation, what is perhaps more interesting is the emerging innovative partnerships, particularly around the dimensions of South-South cooperation, South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC) and private-sector partnerships.

For SSTC, a 2019 global evaluation found that:

*UNFPA has strong and solid population dynamics SSC programming, primarily for census activities, while ageing is a promising area for future SSC. Survey respondents highlighted population dynamics' SSC initiatives as the second highest (after SRHR SSC initiatives), with 42 per cent reporting implementing SSC programming in this area. Centres of Reference are a primary modality of SSC for population dynamics.*³⁴³

There were multiple examples of partnership on census highlighted: a strengthening capacity project between India and other countries in both Asia and Africa; the Egyptian Central Agency for Mobilization and Statistics support to other countries; and Brazil sharing technological innovations from the 2010 round with other countries. The SSTC partnership between UNFPA and Brazil evolved into supporting Centres of Reference in Africa, which offer census training to other countries. All these examples have been supported by UNFPA. It was noted in the 2018 evaluation that in many respects, census might be a more attractive alternative to a South-South cooperation modality given the requirement for concrete technical expertise: it is more technical, it is more concrete, it is solid.³⁴⁴

338 UNFPA, other UN agency, government, and academic institution respondents (APRO case study).

339 UNFPA respondent (ASRO case study).

340 UNFPA. 2017. UNFPA Strategy for the 2020 Round of Population & Housing Censuses (2015-2024).

341 Sources of finding: Other UN agency, NGO partner, academic institution, and government respondents at the global level and from APRO, ASRO and EECARO regional case studies and Mexico, Nigeria and Uganda country case studies.

342 UNFPA, other UN agency, NGO partner, academic institution and government respondents from Mexico, Nigeria and Uganda case studies.

343 UNFPA. Formative evaluation of UNFPA approach to South-South and triangular cooperation. 2020.

344 Ibid.

In Mexico, a key partner in pursuing innovative South-South cooperation has been the National Institute of Statistics and Geography. The vision has been to position the National Institute as the leader institution in population dynamics and development in the Latin America and the Caribbean region. Alliances with the private sector are also considered innovative partnerships that could be relevant, especially in advancing key issues such as ageing.

In the Philippines, UNFPA has SSTC initiatives with regard to promoting the demographic dividend.³⁴⁵

For private sector partnerships, there are also increasing trends. In Viet Nam, UNFPA has conducted a business forum for elderly care with the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and is currently discussing potential collaboration with insurance companies with regard to working with adolescents and youth on healthy ageing and financial planning and preparation for the future.³⁴⁶ In Thailand UNFPA has included private partnerships within their life-cycle work. In 2019 UNFPA worked with a real estate company for investment in youth.³⁴⁷ In Mexico, several pensions and insurance companies have expressed interest in developing projects related to ageing and the “silver economy”.³⁴⁸

In Nigeria, UNFPA is moving towards engaging with the private sector as an innovative strategic partner especially for resource mobilization towards young people and the demographic dividend: the private sector is seen as an opportunity to drive youth employment, necessary to harness the demographic dividend.³⁴⁹ The engagement with the private sector is considered to be an innovative partnership that could potentially lead to a shift from funding to financing.³⁵⁰ In 2018, UNFPA organized the first private sector conference on the demographic dividend.³⁵¹ This is in line with what was recommended by the evaluation of the Eighth Country Programme, which reported the need for UNFPA to broaden its partnership network, including with the private sector, academia, foundations, non-traditional donors and strategic ministries, as well as exploring cost sharing with partners (as in the Government Cash Counterpart Contribution approach).³⁵² However, the internal process to approve new private partners, that must come from UNFPA headquarters and regional offices in order to go through necessary checks, was perceived as a constraint in establishing new partnerships in a timely manner.³⁵³

Finding 17: There is an increasing understanding of the case for shifting from funding to financing within UNFPA, but only within certain areas or roles. Where this understanding exists, evidence suggests that there is clarity as to what is required to achieve such a shift, and what the role of UNFPA should be in that shift. However, outside of particular areas or roles, UNFPA staff are aware of the concept, but unaware of how to implement it.³⁵⁴

From the survey results, UNFPA staff were broadly in agreement that UNFPA has leveraged traditional and innovative partnerships to shift from funding to financing and has started to really consider how best to do this overall since the launch of the new Strategic Plan 2022-2025.

345 APRO UNFPA. 2018. UNFPA Country Programme Document for the Philippines.

346 UNFPA respondents (APRO case study).

347 APRO UNFPA. Evaluation of the UNFPA eleventh country Programme of Assistance to the Royal Thai Government CP11 (2017-21). 2021.

348 UNFPA respondents (Mexico case study).

349 UNFPA respondents (Nigeria case study).

350 Ibid.

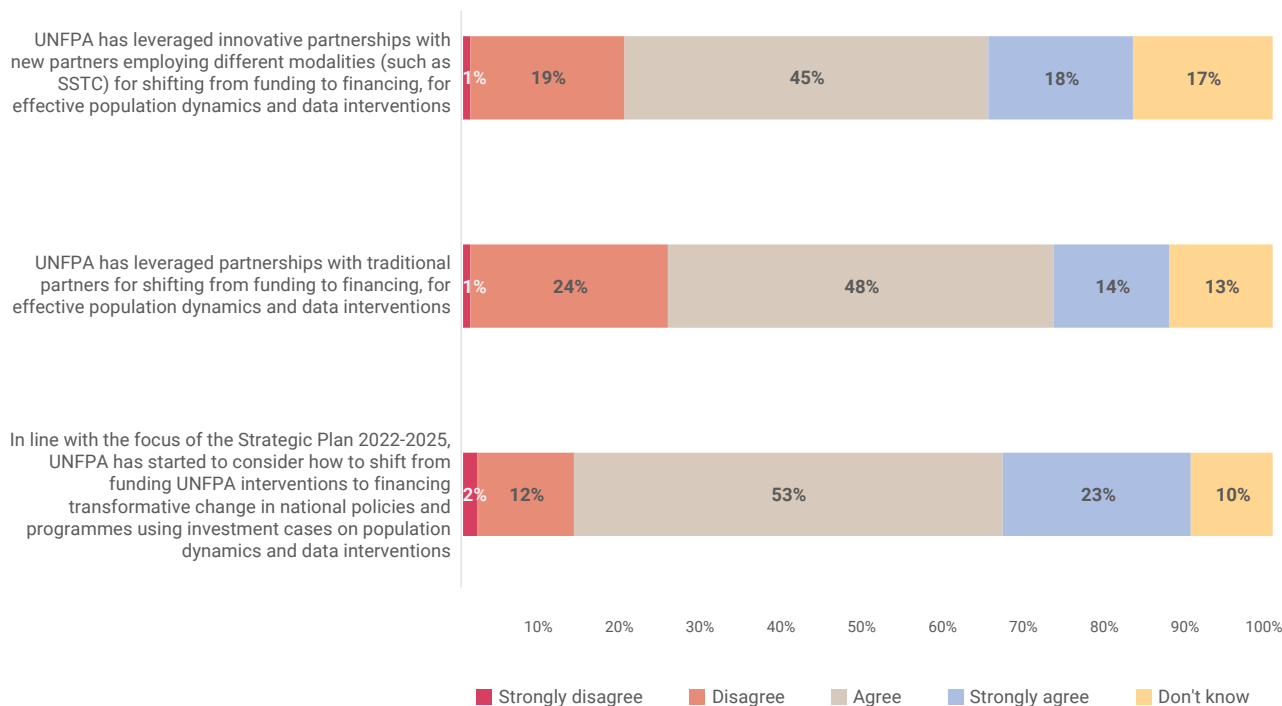
351 UNFPA. 2019. UNFPA 2018 Annual Report - Nigeria.

352 UNFPA. 2022. Nigeria Eighth Country Programme (2018–2022) Final Evaluation Report. Volume 1: Main Report. 7 April 2022.

353 UNFPA respondents (Nigeria case study).

354 Sources of finding: UNFPA and other UN respondents at the global level and UNFPA, other UN agency, and NGO partner respondents from APRO and EECARO/cross-referenced with country and regional level UNFPA reports; global level UNFPA and UN reports and strategies. Strength of finding: LOW.

FIGURE 19: Survey respondents: perceptions of leveraging partnerships to shift from funding to financing



Source: Evaluation team

Some survey respondents also provided practical examples of UNFPA work to date on the shift from funding to financing, for instance mobilizing domestic and private resources in Moldova to support the EECARO Demographic Resilience Programme, and Government funding in Kazakhstan for the Generations and Gender Survey.³⁵⁵

However, other survey respondents did report that even although some progress has been made, UNFPA organizational culture has not altered sufficiently for the concept of funding to financing to be consistently impactful. There is a sense that a clearly articulated strategy has not been developed, despite the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 reference to shifting from funding to financing. Survey respondents report that there is no common understanding of what shifting from funding to financing means in practice. For the three survey statements above, 37 per cent of respondents, 38 per cent of respondents, and 24 per cent of respondents respectively did not agree or did not know whether UNFPA has leveraged innovative partnerships, traditional partnerships, or, in general, made progress with the funding to financing agenda.

In UNFPA, the funding to financing agenda is not a population and development function, it is a cross-divisional workstream. However, in order to motivate and mobilize the resources necessary from the financing sources (domestic revenue and private sector) that are envisioned within the funding to financing agenda, investment cases based on robust population data and analytics is a critical and foundational component. This suggests the requirement for a significant and strong internal collaboration between the population and development and Partnerships branches, for which there is limited evidence.

UNFPA recognizes that the funding to financing agenda is still in its infancy, particularly given that UNFPA has only put a strong spotlight on this, corporately, within Strategic Plan 2022-2025. This is based on different exercises over previous years, such as the three zero costing conducted for the Nairobi ICPD Summit in 2019.³⁵⁶ The funding to financing agenda has now moved onto country-level costing but there are a number of bottlenecks, which are primarily:

1. Lack of health economist expertise within UNFPA. The methodology for costing is not complex, but it does require a statistician expertise that UNFPA does not have at all country and regional levels

355 Generations and Gender Programme. (ND). A Social Science Infrastructure on Populations and Family Dynamics. Online at: <https://www.ggp-i.org>, accessed: June 2022.

356 ICPD25. (ND). The Nairobi Summit. Online at: <https://www.nairobisummiticpd.org>, accessed: September 2022

2. Once an investment case is made, it needs to be presented to the national government. UNFPA does not consistently, across all countries, have the necessary country-level relationships with the relevant ministries. The ministries required are not the traditional UNFPA partners of national statistics offices or ministries of health, but rather must be ministries of finance or ministries of planning etc. While UNFPA has strong relationships with national statistics offices, which sit under ministries of finance or planning, that direct relationship does not always translate into a relationship to engage more at the financing level than the technical statistics level
3. Linked to the above point, UNFPA does not have the relationships or, in many countries, the senior management skillsets to present and advocate investment cases at the highest government levels, or understand the implicit linkages between different current budget lines that will impact on investment cases.³⁵⁷

There is a general sense within UNFPA – for those who do work on this agenda – that while the funding to financing agenda properly started across the United Nations in 2015, many agencies – such as, for example, UNICEF – started working on public finance much earlier than this and UNFPA is, to a certain extent, still catching up.³⁵⁸

While in general there is a lack of common understanding of how to progress within the funding to financing agenda, it is clear that where the right skillsets are in place, UNFPA is making progress. In LACRO, for example, UNFPA has conducted a series of studies on adolescent pregnancies (MILENA studies) and the impact of these pregnancies on economic growth.³⁵⁹ This study has estimated that adolescent pregnancy costs a loss in growth of approximately 0.35 per cent of gross domestic product per year – this equates to approximately USD 1.242 billion dollars per year.³⁶⁰

In the Asia Pacific region, UNFPA has been investing in strengthening evidence for compelling arguments for assisting public and private partners to recognize the value of contributing to overall financing of population data and dynamics for use in development processes under the broad umbrella of the funding to financing agenda. This has been achieved by having a specific health economist position (under SRHR rather than the population and development portfolio) and is not an area of work that is well understood across UNFPA or partners at regional or country levels.

The UNFPA APRO health economist working under the SRHR portfolio has a clear focus on the funding to financing agenda and strengthening evidence-based economic arguments for the case for investment.³⁶¹ This means that within the region there is clear expertise and knowledge on the funding to financing agenda and a clear strategy and workplan for the steps UNFPA needs to take to move that agenda forward. There is a clear understanding within the region that this agenda necessarily requires a shifting of partnership thinking. Particularly, respondents to this evaluation report that UNFPA does not traditionally have strong and ongoing political relationships with ministries of planning, or ministries of finance specifically with regard to population data at the country level.³⁶² While there are strong relationships of course with national statistics offices, these offices are not political bodies. This needs to be reconsidered with regard to how to place and advocate for the economic return on investment arguments that UNFPA is developing.³⁶³

One example from the Asia and the Pacific region is in Laos People's Democratic Republic, where UNFPA has been actively partnering with UNDP on the national financing framework.³⁶⁴

In 2022, UNFPA APRO produced a report on Financing for Development and had a number of key messages for shifting from funding to financing, including the fact that the financial investment needed to achieve the three transformative results is approximately USD 26 billion per year (compared to the overall UNFPA budget of approximately 1.5 billion), of which almost half is required in the Asia Pacific region. Crucially, the investment should lead to a return on investment estimated at between USD 9-31 billion per USD 1 billion invested.³⁶⁵

357 Global level UNFPA respondents.

358 Global level UNFPA and other UN respondents, and UNFPA respondents (APRO case study).

359 UNFPA LACRO. Socioeconomic consequences of adolescent pregnancy in Latin American countries. Implementation of the Milena Methodology in Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and Paraguay. Online at: https://lac.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/eng_-_informe_consecuencias_socioeconomicas_del_embarazo_en_la_adolescencia_en_seis_paises_de_america_latina_y_el_caribe._vf.pdf.

360 Ibid.

361 UNFPA respondents (APRO case study).

362 Sources of finding: Global level UNFPA respondents and APRO, ASRO and EECARO regional case studies and Uganda and Nigeria case studies.

363 Ibid.

364 Ibid.

365 UNFPA APRO. 2022. Financing for Development and the ICPD Agenda.

In the EECARO region, there is some limited evidence on shifting from funding to financing, with a key question emerging from the region being one of political will rather than effective mechanisms. UNFPA reports investing more in highlighting return on investments in population data systems and incorporating demographic analysis into development policies: this links to building the argument for shifting from funding to financing but UNFPA EECARO also acknowledges that there is an opportunity to focus more on this area.³⁶⁶ Countries in the EECARO region are generally not low-income countries, and therefore there are regional discussions on shifting to a more financing-based modality for a number of areas, including for example contraceptive commodity security as well as demographic intelligence needs. However, respondents report that where the financing modality incorporates higher national contributions there is some pushback, based more on political rather than fiscal motivations.³⁶⁷

3.8 EFFICIENCY

Evaluation question 8: To what extent has UNFPA human and financial resources supported the ambition and priorities set out in the strategic plan(s) in relation to population change and data?³⁶⁸

Finding 18: At all levels, UNFPA population and development capacity is considered to be understaffed, with a need for mapping the skillsets required and a capacity planning framework for the future UNFPA leadership and expertise in this area. This is particularly relevant in light of the increasingly pressing need for UNFPA to apply such cross-cutting skills to evolving population and development population and development priorities including emerging megatrends (for example, population ageing, digitization, climate change and migration).³⁶⁹

Global level

For technical expertise, there is a general sense from respondents that this is limited in terms of numbers within UNFPA. Partners report that the headquarters team is overworked. External stakeholders to this evaluation report that UNFPA has the appropriate skillsets at headquarters level for current partnerships and work (census, CRVS, national transfer accounts, common operational datasets etc) but that the limited number of UNFPA staff means that UNFPA does not engage as consistently or as deeply as other agencies would like.³⁷⁰ There are so many areas of interest for UNFPA to engage with, and only limited capacity with the current staffing structure to do so. For example: UNFPA does not have a full-time position in population and development to work on common operational datasets, or refugee and migration issues such as engagement with EGRIS.

Currently, UNFPA does not have a full-time climate change position, although there is a proposal for expanding the work being done in this area spearheaded by UNESARO (see evaluation question 2) with a proposed global full-time climate change coordinator position.³⁷¹

The increasing focus on demographic shifts as megatrends, and the current UNFPA vocal leadership on this,³⁷² has not yet been based on the necessary mapping and a strategic resourcing plan to ensure that the right skillsets in the right quantity and within the right structures, are put in place. This is applicable both at the global level and at regional and country levels.

366 UNFPA respondents (EECARO case study).

367 UNFPA, other UN agency, and NGO partner respondents (EECARO case study).

368 Sub-questions: 8.1 UNFPA has the required in-house technical expertise at global, regional and country levels to provide thought leadership and expertise on population dynamics and data, including use of geospatial analysis and georeferenced data. 8.2 UNFPA investment in modernized internal data systems has increased accessibility and efficiencies. 8.3 UNFPA has ensured adequate financial resources for achieving the outcome as articulated in successive strategic plans. 8.4 UNFPA has ensured innovation and digitalization to further population and development based on identified population trends.

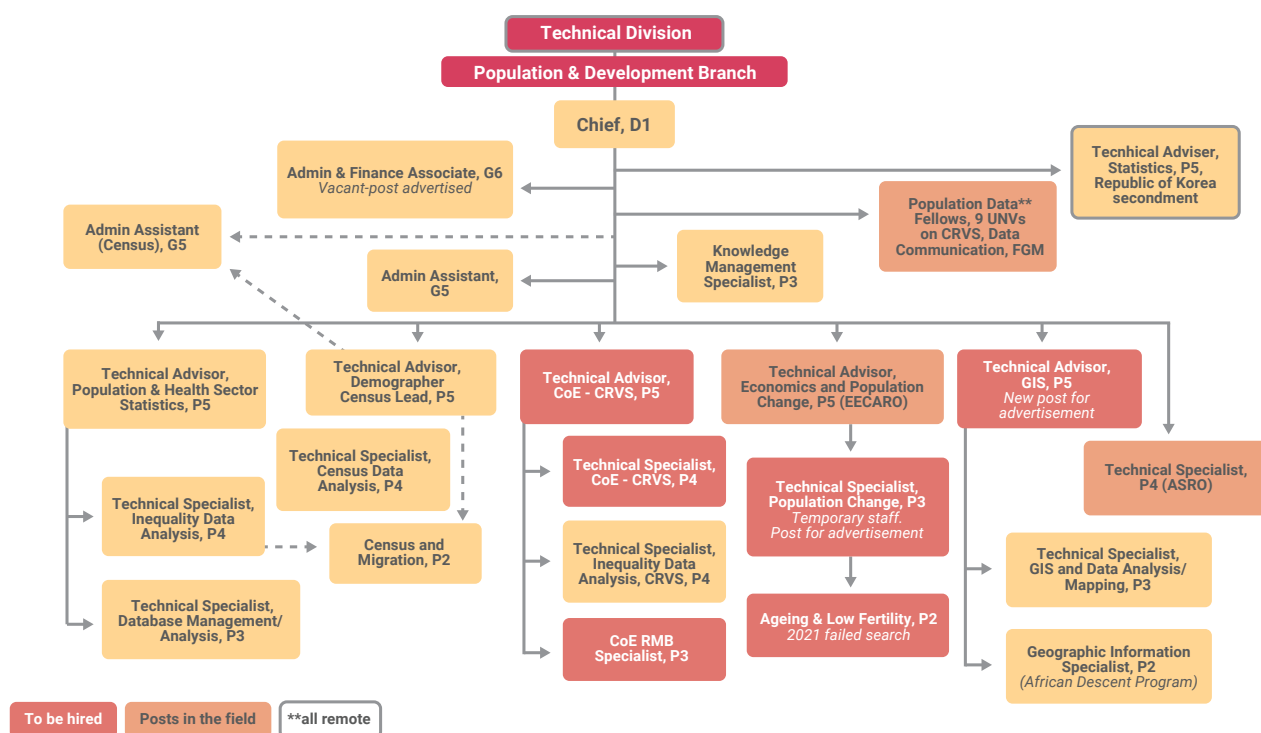
369 Sources of finding: UNFPA, other UN agency, NGO partner, academic institution respondents at the global level and UNFPA, other UN agency, NGO partner, academic institution respondents APRO, ASRO, EECARO, Mexico, Nigeria, and Uganda case studies/cross-referenced with country and regional level UNFPA reports; global level UNFPA and UN reports and strategies. Strength of finding: HIGH.

370 Global level other UN agency respondents.

371 UNFPA CC organogram 11 November 2022 final.

372 See, for example, UNFPA. 2022. The UNFPA Statement of the Executive-Director to the Second Regular Session of the Executive Board 2022.

FIGURE 20: Current organigram of Population and Development Branch, February 2022



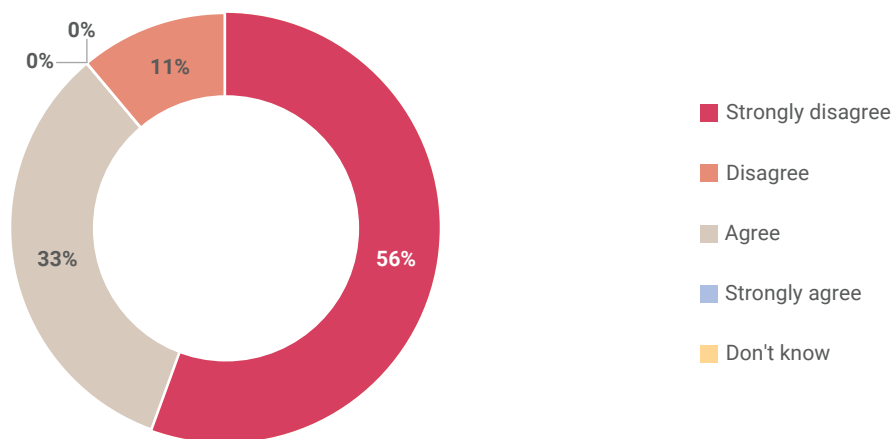
Source: UNFPA Population and Development Branch.

Regional level

At the regional level, UNFPA population and development staffing capacity is not considered adequate, with a further caveat that increasing support to upstream population and development in middle-income countries with an associated decreasing service-delivery portfolio means strengthening population and development at this level is increasingly required.

Indeed, from survey respondents, 89 per cent of respondents at the regional level disagreed, or strongly disagreed that staffing was adequate.

FIGURE 21: Adequacy of staffing: regional survey respondents



Source: Evaluation team

An example of a relatively well-resourced regional-level population and development function is APRO. APRO has developed a strong regional population and development team with expertise that is relevant to the region. While there have been some gaps between 2014 and now, the APRO team currently consists of three population and development advisors: a technical adviser on population and development (census and data); a technical specialist on population & development; and a regional adviser on population and sustainable development. There is, in addition, a health economist position under the SRHR portfolio that contributes to population and development work, specifically around the funding to financing agenda. APRO respondents report that this is considered to be a sufficient team at the regional level: while there is also more work that can be done across different areas, this is a strong team with expertise across population data, dynamics and development, and a clear staffing focus on the areas of ageing and low fertility.³⁷³

Box 8: LACRO good practice for regionalization of population and development technical support to country offices

LACRO developed a very good practice with regard to addressing population and development issues with limited staffing capacity within the region. LACRO has evolved a community of practice into a regional technical assistance model. This identified six regional priority areas: ageing, climate change, census, CRVS, human mobility and population situation analyses and formed working groups around these areas, identifying different capacities across all the countries in the region, and inviting population and development and other staff into these working groups. When regional requests come in from countries for support, the working group on that area responds as a group. The technical assistance through this group is still under the overall leadership of the regional office, to ensure quality. This initiative has to some extent mitigated the lack of staffing at different levels.

The regional responses on human resources capacity and competencies echo the issues raised globally: the question of a strategic pivot towards SRHR by UNFPA since 2014³⁷⁴ and away from overall demographics towards a focus on data for the three transformative results is reported as having both pros and cons by UNFPA and other respondents. An additional component in APRO is the very clear sense of staffing with competencies related to the contextual direction of the region: and for APRO, that is moving towards the development end of the scale, with competencies as much around communicating the data and trend analysis as collecting the data and doing the analysis.³⁷⁵

Country level

At the country level, there is very clear and unanimous agreement that population and development staffing capacity is insufficient and at too low a level. Of the survey respondents, 67 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed that staffing was adequate: while this percentage was less than the regional office respondents, at the global level within UNFPA and for external stakeholders, the focus of understaffing was firmly at the country level, where not every country has a full-time population and development officer position.³⁷⁶

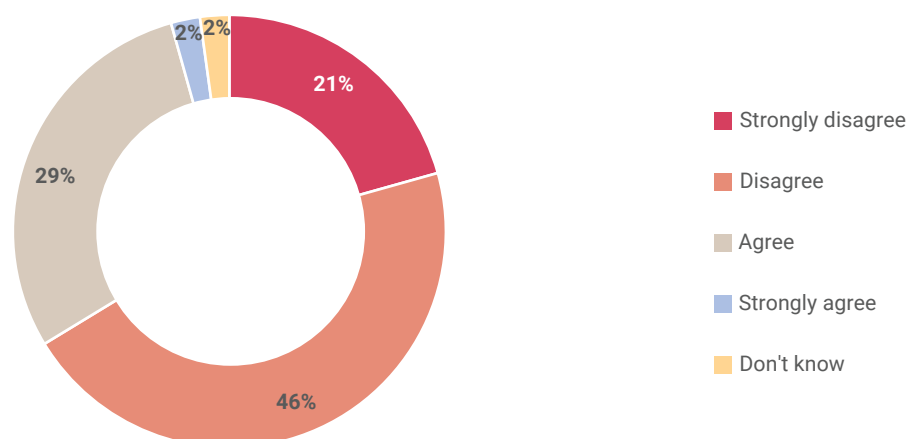
373 See, for example, UNFPA. 2022. The UNFPA Statement of the Executive-Director to the Second Regular Session of the Executive Board 2022.

374 There is a sense from some global respondents that this strategic pivot away from population and development and towards SRHR started before 2014, from ICPD in 1994 onwards. However, this evaluation timeline starts from 2014 and in APRO, the shift is very much pegged to the introduction of the bullseye in Strategic Plan 2014-2017.

375 Ibid.

376 Sources of finding: Global UNFPA and other UN agency, NGO partners, and academic institution respondents and APRO, ASRO, EECARO, Mexico, Nigeria and Uganda case studies.

FIGURE 22: Adequacy of resourcing: country-level survey respondents



Source: Evaluation team

In Mexico, the position of the population and development manager is that of an associate. UNFPA Mexico's annual reports from 2018 and 2019 emphasize the need for training the country office personnel on data analysis and the use of statistical information for the formulation of evidence-based arguments for advocacy and project proposals. The reports also mention the need for enhanced capacities in the use of geographic information systems and spatial analysis to generate the information needed for advocacy and policy dialogue and the preparation of programmes and projects. Advocacy skills and competencies to work with subnational entities are considered key. In Nigeria, while UNFPA has the required in-house expertise on population dynamics and data in terms of knowledge and capacity, the number of skilled staff is too limited compared to the population and development branch tasks and UNFPA ambition to be the lead agency in population dynamics and data. The Nigeria country office currently has two population and development staff: a head of the population and development unit; and a national programme analyst (data for development) as well as a (consultant) chief technical adviser on census.³⁷⁷

Skillsets

With regard to skillsets required (at all levels): UNFPA staff report that since 2014 staffing profiles have shifted from demographic statisticians to health economists, in line with the shift of focus from the 'P' in UNFPA to SRHR (see findings under evaluation question 1) and that this has brought both pros and cons to the technical credibility of UNFPA.

In terms of expertise required for population and development work, the top three skills with which most survey respondents identified (in terms of current skillset) were:

1. Expertise in demographic, population and development data with a focus on census, demographic and health surveys, administrative data, vital statistics (CRVS), surveys, data portals and big data (72 per cent)
2. Expertise in population data analysis and research to facilitate stronger data-driven programming and rights-based policies and strategies (64 per cent)
3. Expertise in population and development and particularly in research on complex population relationships and data (53 per cent).

Many comments were linked to the need for capacity-building of UNFPA staff in different domains. Respondents raised the need to develop internal capacity on advocacy and policy analysis. Sampled country offices experience a gap in specific areas in population and development and therefore a need to develop skills in population and development to link population dynamics with national development. It was suggested that this could be done through training, for instance in georeferenced

³⁷⁷ UNFPA Global Directory and stakeholders list.

data, as well as in other tools, such as NTA/NTTA, small area estimation, projections and geospatial data analysis in the management of indicators. Other comments highlighted the need for technical assistance within the organization so that the UNFPA offices at different levels are clear in their role to support the implementation of population and development issues.³⁷⁸

From other respondents to this evaluation, both internal and external to UNFPA, there is a very clear idea that UNFPA has not, from a corporate perspective, reviewed current and necessary future staffing skillsets at different levels on the basis of a clear map of their projections for the next 5-10 years and the impact that demographic shifts will have on global trends (including increasing numbers of countries with ageing populations and low fertility concerns, climate change, migration, and increasing technological and digital solutions to estimating and counting populations).³⁷⁹ This includes not just the technical expertise to cover how these trends will impact UNFPA population data and dynamics work, but also the communication skillsets necessary to translate understanding of data and dynamics into messaging that policymakers understand; to embrace and foster relationships with government ministries such as ministries of finance; to foster private sector partnerships; and to link economic arguments with rights-based arguments for making investment cases and accelerating the funding to financing agenda.

There is a general sense that over recent years (particularly since 2014, but even before that), skillsets in population and development in UNFPA have shifted from demography or statistician profiles towards health economist profiles, as per the strategic shift towards SRHR. This has strengthened the understanding of data for SRHR, but there needs to be a balance in order for UNFPA to provide strong leadership across population and development, by having the appropriate expertise to do all the things listed in the previous paragraph.

Finally, an understanding of the skillsets required for the future of UNFPA in this area automatically raises a question of structure and where population and development sits within UNFPA. As referenced under Finding 12, above, there is a proposal for the creation of a Data Unit in UNFPA, which would need to link to, replace, or subsume the population and development work.³⁸⁰

Finding 19: The resourcing of population and development provides a complex picture: while population and development is always less well-resourced than other thematic areas, there are clear differences in resource requirements across different mandate areas of UNFPA. Apart from capacity-building support to census (which is highly resource-intensive) other areas of capacity-building and upstream knowledge management and advocacy work are less resource-intensive than service delivery and capacity-building interventions for SRHR, gender equality and adolescents and youth.³⁸¹

Overall, population and development has amounted to generally less than 10 per cent of total UNFPA programme expenses between 2014 and 2021.³⁸² Such a low percentage of spend compared to the other UNFPA thematic areas is explained by the fact that the population and development thematic area does not have a service delivery component and therefore is less resource-intensive, although a highly resource-intensive population and development activity is capacity-building support to census.

Population and development expenditure is very close to budget year on year,³⁸³ and ranges from between USD 160 million (budget) and USD 140 million (expenditure) in 2014 to USD 85 million (budget) and USD 77 million (expenditure) as a low in 2020.³⁸⁴ There has been a general decline in absolute numbers since 2014.

378 UNFPA Global Directory and stakeholders list.

379 Global UNFPA and other UN agency, NGO partners, and academic institution respondents and APRO, ASRO, EECARO, Mexico, Nigeria and Uganda case studies.

380 UNFPA. 2022. UNFPA Technical Division. Proposition for a UNFPA Data Unit. August 2022.

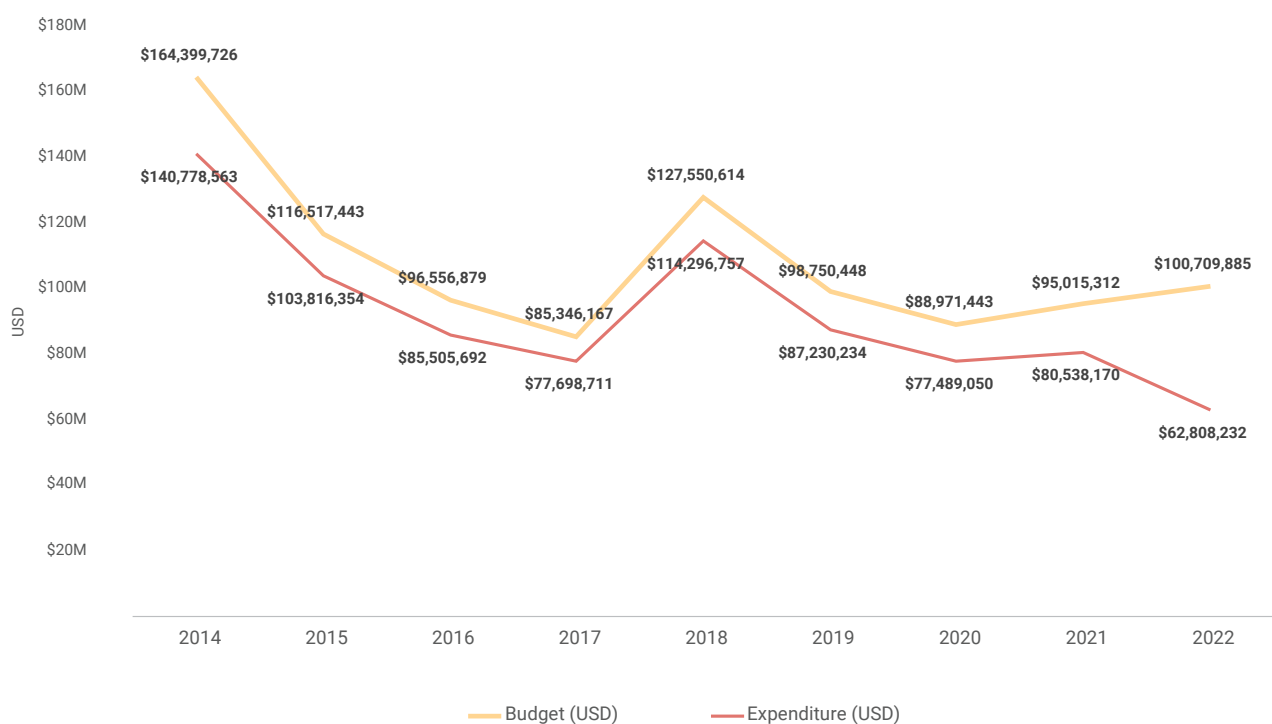
381 Sources of finding: UNFPA, other UN agency, NGO partner, academic institution respondents at the global level and UNFPA, other UN agency, NGO partner, academic institution respondents APRO, ASRO, EECARO, Mexico, Nigeria, and Uganda case studies/cross-referenced with Atlas financial data. Strength of finding: HIGH.

382 UNFPA. (ND). UNFPA Transparency Portal. Online at: <https://www.unfpa.org/data/transparency-portal>, accessed: December 2022. Overall percentage spend on population and development 2014 to 2021 was, respectively, 8.3 per cent; 6.4 per cent; 4.9 per cent; 9.8 per cent; 12.8 per cent; 9.3 per cent; 7.4 per cent; and 7.4 per cent.

383 2022 data is up until September 2022 and not complete, hence the discrepancy between budget and expenditure for this year.

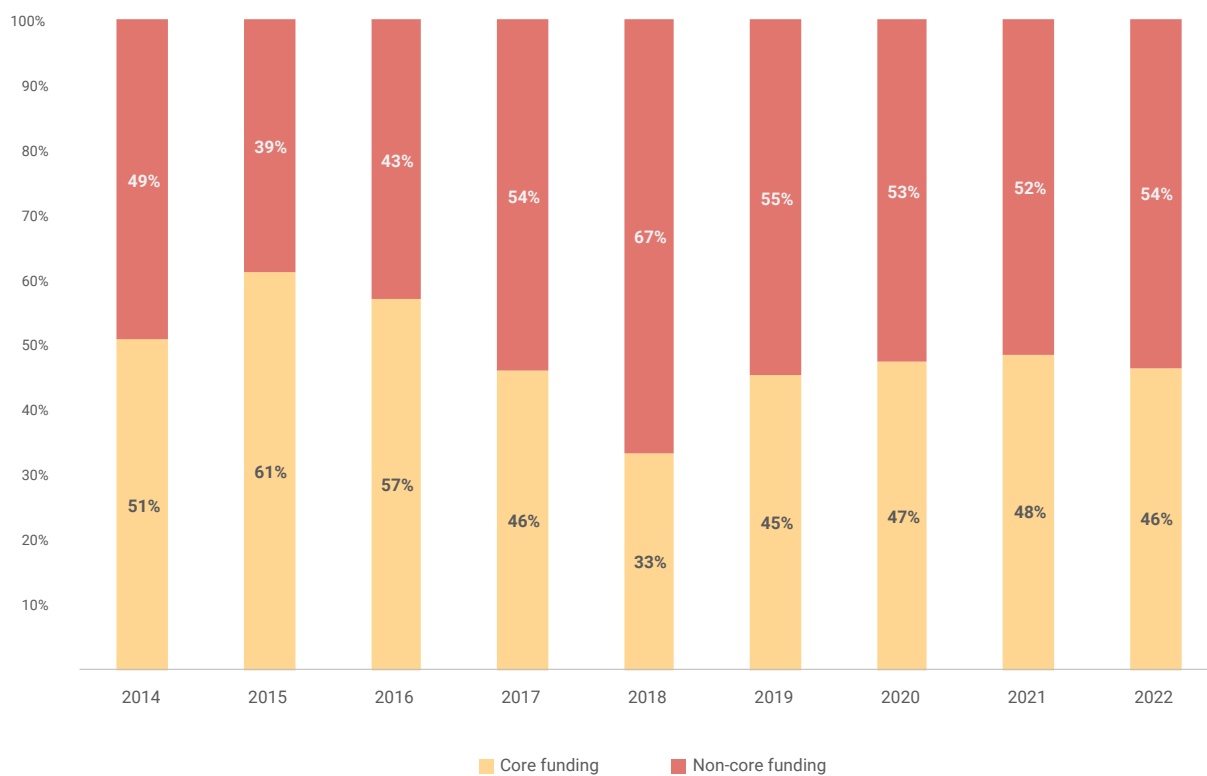
384 Not counting 2022 data, which is not complete.

FIGURE 23: Budget and expenditure on population and development, 2014-2022



Source: UNFPA Atlas/GPS data from 2014 to October 2022.

FIGURE 24: Core versus non-core funds for population and development work, 2014-2022



Source: UNFPA Atlas/GPS data from 2014 to October 2022.

An overall perspective from external stakeholders is that UNFPA struggles to ensure adequate funds for all activities. For a long time, financial support to census was considered to be a significant proportion of the overall population and development budget. UNFPA only added a census tag in Atlas data in 2020, and for 2020 and 2021 (there is no data yet for 2022) the UNFPA spend on census was 8 per cent and 22 per cent respectively, across those two years.³⁸⁵ Therefore even if this were a significant proportion of the overall population and development expenditure in previous years, it is not so anymore.

There is an overall sense from UNFPA respondents that population and development is a difficult area for which to raise non-core funds.³⁸⁶ However, this is not borne out by the financial analysis, which highlights that in fact on average 52 per cent (between 39 per cent and 67 per cent) of population and development funding is from non-core sources.

Box 9: Investment in systems: the Population Development Portal (PDP)

UNFPA has heavily invested in data systems: particularly the PDP launched in 2022. This has been very welcome but there is a question with regard to the sustainability of the portal, and continued funding, in order to maximise the most effective return.

PDP was a huge UNFPA investment and so far (it was only launched in April 2022) it is an investment that is paying off. It is not possible, given the overlapping time frames of the launch of PDP and this evaluation, for this evaluation to give a coherent assessment as to whether the investment was an efficient use of resources. However, despite the short period of time that PDP has been operational, many external stakeholders to this evaluation referenced it and felt it was a very worthwhile investment by UNFPA. UNFPA HQ are currently in the middle of a roll-out plan, to ensure that UNFPA at regional and country level are all aware of the PDP system and its inter-operability with other data systems.

However, like any system, PDP requires an ongoing funding commitment. It costs approximately 350,000 USD per year to run. Ideally, it would be supported by a proper internal roll-out to get the best return on investment (by ensuring that countries are using it properly inputting datasets regularly) and this would require additional funding for PDP support personnel at the regional level: there is no clarity right now as to whether this will be supported, corporately, by UNFPA.

UNFPA does in fact raise funds for different activities at all levels: the issue perhaps therefore is not the lack of funds but more the multitude of different activities across population data (census, and now, to an increasing extent, CRVS), population dynamics (with the use of such tools as NTA/NTTA) and population and development, with overarching frameworks such as demographic resilience, which incorporates the demographic dividend and ageing and low fertility work, and the lack of a prioritization funding plan or coordinated organizational approach for these different activities, linked to the need for a mapping of human resource needs as referenced in Finding 18 above. The assessment of external stakeholders is that UNFPA is consistently and chronically underfunded in the area of population and development. This is because it does not have a prioritization plan or the necessary level of future casting, which it does perform at the country level as a programmatic tool, but does not perform at the global level in order to assess the future direction of UNFPA population and development leadership. Nor does it have the funding, staffing and structure needed to realize this. Yet Figure 22, highlights that population and development is in fact successful at raising non-core resources. Population and development has recently won a USD 2 million grant from the US Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance for continued work on common operational datasets.³⁸⁷

Some regional offices have also been successful in raising funds for regional initiatives. In APRO region, while funding for population and development remains a low proportion of the overall budget, it is higher than the global average.³⁸⁸ As UNFPA has moved away from a strong focus on population data (supporting census for example, which is very expensive) and towards analysis and advocacy for integrating demographic trends and intelligence into development policies, the cost

385 UNFPA. 2022. UNFPA financial analysis of Atlas data, conducted November 2022.

386 Sources of finding: Global UNFPA and other UN agency, NGO partners, and academic institution respondents and APRO, ASRO, EECARO, Mexico, Nigeria and Uganda case studies.

387 Global level UNFPA respondents.

388 See Volume III, APRO regional case study.

of population and development outside of staffing costs reduces significantly. EECARO has successfully raised funds for the Demographic Resilience Programme, despite the perception that financing population and development work remains a challenge.³⁸⁹

However, where there is still a need for funding for foundational data work, particularly census, there has been a decline in funds. In Uganda, for example, funding for UNFPA support to key government-led data collection exercises is increasingly reliant on non-core funds mobilization; this has reduced the organization's capacity to strategically leverage and position traditional data collection exercises alongside potentially innovative ones. The Uganda case study highlighted that, while additional non-core funding is welcome as it grows as a proportion of programmatic resourcing, it results in additional risks and pressures on UNFPA. This includes potentially strategic priorities being diluted as a result of increased donor-driven project-specific funding models.³⁹⁰ More importantly, the lack of consistent – expected and reliable – core funding to cover census activities means that it becomes harder for UNFPA at the country level to strategically position its support for traditional data collection exercises such as the census or more innovative exercises, as it is the funding support that provides the credibility UNFPA requires to be a leader at the country level.³⁹¹

389 See EECARO regional case study.

390 Ibid.

391 See Uganda case study.



© UNFPA Somalia.

An older woman in Raama Cadey camp for internally displaced people from the drought in the Horn of Africa.

4

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 1: Overall, UNFPA has provided relevant and timely support to population data, population dynamics, and population and development across the time period 2014 to 2022. This is despite a view that UNFPA reframed the centrality of population dynamics from 2014 with the introduction of the bullseye. There is a clear consensus that the area of population data and dynamics is gaining increasing prominence within UNFPA, ensuring its alignment with, and relevance to, the current global issues related to demographic shifts.

Links to evaluation question 1

In general, there is consensus that UNFPA remains a strong and relevant player in population data, particularly with regard to population and housing census. Beyond census and support to CRVS and other data collection exercises such as demographic health surveys, UNFPA has increased investment in data systems, particularly the population data portal, which has been relevant to needs across a range of internal and external stakeholders. Support to census in particular has remained a relevant strength and focus of UNFPA across the time period of this evaluation (2014-2022).

This has continued even as the organization has articulated a focus on the three zeros, all grounded in data and evidence. Some feel that the introduction of the bullseye with Strategic Plan 2014-2017 was a critical moment in downplaying population and development, as it literally put SRHR front and centre with population dynamics one of three supporting concentric areas. However, there was never a substantive move away from the foundational population data work of UNFPA (particularly census). In terms of population and development, it was more of a rebranding exercise that has resulted, for many external stakeholders, in UNFPA being seen more as the 'SRHR agency' than the 'population data agency'.

In reality, population data and SRHR are not delinked and increasingly all overarching demographic shifts – high fertility, the demographic dividend potential, the second demographic dividend, and low fertility as a contributory factor in ageing societies – link to SRHR. A recent increase in focus on demographic shifts (the Secretary-General has identified such shifts as a key megatrend of the 21st century and the global population has recently reached 8 billion) has opened up the opportunity for UNFPA to enhance further its data work. This has been articulated well in the current strategic plan where data and evidence are accelerators towards the three transformative results. However, this is not yet currently supported by population and development capacity.

Conclusion 2: UNFPA has shown effectiveness for strengthening national and subnational data systems, particularly capacity-building support to national statistics offices for census and, to a lesser extent, CRVS. Capacity-building on population dynamics and demographic intelligence has a relatively shorter history within UNFPA but is an area of increasing focus.

Links to evaluation question 4

Regardless of any consideration of UNFPA being seen more as the 'SRHR agency' than the 'population data agency', the continued UNFPA support to population data, population dynamics, and population and development is considered effective and valuable by external stakeholders. There is a clear evolution of increased support up the 'data chain' from data, to dynamics, to development, without any loss of concrete support to foundational data (census, CRVS, and other population datasets) where it is still required. This has evolved naturally as more countries move into the middle-income category and require less financial and direct support in collecting data and more sophisticated technical assistance on interpreting and using population data. It has also evolved despite the setback of the COVID-19 pandemic, which delayed censuses around the world and slowed down planned maturation from data to demographic intelligence in some contexts.

However, related to this is the question of whether the decreasing support to national statistics offices for census in contexts where such support is not required as much anymore, potentially decreases the legitimacy of UNFPA for engaging in other issues, and in particular the inclusion / leaving no-one behind agenda, which is viewed by many as a core added value of UNFPA.

UNFPA does not currently have a data value chain that conceptually links population data (work on census, and increasingly on CRVS), population dynamics (analytics such as national transfer accounts) and population and development (using overarching umbrella frameworks such as demographic resilience to ensure that population data and dynamics are incorporated into development policies through a clear, rights-based, gendered, and inclusion lens). On the one hand, as other data value chains show, there is a clear one-way flow from collection of (quality, disaggregated) data through to analysis (dynamics) and towards utilization (development). On the other hand, there is a more complex way of understanding the various relationship and linkages between population data, dynamics and development, including the cyclical relationship (utilization of data further informs data needs, and so the cycle continues). There is an increasing focus on demographic shifts and the understood impact that these shifts will have on all people, everywhere, throughout the coming decades. UNFPA needs to consider clearly, and with a view to the future, its level of population and development expertise in the world. One issue highlighted at all levels within UNFPA is that of the population situation analysis, which used to be a cornerstone of UNFPA programming but is now considered to be in decline as it is an optional exercise for countries rather than a core function of population and development at the country level.

Conclusion 3: UNFPA has integrated people-centred cross-cutting issues consistently and strongly in all population and development activities, from design to implementation. With regard to other megatrends such as migration and climate change, the approach or pattern of response is less coherent.

Links to evaluation question 2

UNFPA has been successful in capitalizing on the rights-based and inclusive added value that UNFPA brings to development issues, including within the framing of population and development. UNFPA is well respected for a human rights-based, inclusive and gendered approach to population and development. There is a clear and visible rights and gender lens in many aspects of UNFPA population and development work, including across ageing and low fertility and the demographic dividend; and there is a clearly emerging focus on other aspects such as CVRS and national transfer accounts. More recent approaches, such as demographic resilience, have been entirely conceptualized based on rights-based arguments. Internal and external stakeholders perceive this to be a strong and significant added value of UNFPA to the area of population data, dynamics and development. Nonetheless, in order to fully exploit the expertise and credibility UNFPA has in this area, there is more scope for UNFPA to meaningfully participate in conversations with regard to issues of exclusion relating to migration and displacement, which is increasingly climate driven as much as conflict driven, in matters of population data, dynamics and development.

UNFPA has started, in different areas and at different levels, to shift focus from funding to funding and financing, marrying the rights-based argument with the economic argument. This has strong potential for UNFPA to ensure that effective policy and advocacy support is firmly grounded upon the notion that this is both the right thing to do and the smart thing to do. However, UNFPA currently faces challenges in terms of both ensuring staff capacity and having enough economists on the staff to make and communicate these married economic and rights arguments at different levels. The demographic resilience approach is a clear move in this direction, as it is focused on how to ensure UNFPA can support governments to address demographic shifts in a rights-based manner. The life-cycle approach is similar in substance, but the approach is more from an individual rights perspective rather than an overarching societal economic resilience perspective. Understanding that the two approaches are mirror images of each other from either an individual or a societal perspective would be helpful for strengthening both and ensuring that demographic resilience continues to become a more global corporate UNFPA approach.

Conclusion 4: UNFPA has been relatively successful at strategically positioning and mainstreaming dialogue on population dynamics at different levels. At the global and regional levels, UNFPA has been adding value by advancing the demographic dividend concept and, more recently within certain regions, contributing significantly to the ageing and low fertility conversation. Concepts such as demographic resilience are being increasingly used to bring together different demographic shifts anchored in a rights-based and inclusive framing.

Links to evaluation question 5.

UNFPA has been forward looking and effective with regard to positioning the organization as a leader in understanding and responding to demographic shifts. This has been achieved thoughtfully and is likely to see positive and significant returns in the future.

On the demographic dividend, UNFPA is well positioned and has a solid history of working in this area. There are obvious and intuitive linkages between the demographic dividend work with other mandate areas of UNFPA work, across SRHR, gender, and adolescents and youth in particular. The success of the value proposition notwithstanding, there is a clear understanding that the pool of countries for which the demographic dividend potential is relevant is decreasing on a yearly basis.

With regard to ageing and low fertility, UNFPA contributions to this demographic shift are not as visibly long-standing as the demographic dividend work, although there has long been an understanding of the need to address demographic diversity, including the concept of the 'double dividend'. Although ageing and low fertility issues have become increasingly incorporated into the UNFPA remit, there is a gap within the organization's theory of change on how ageing and low fertility link to the three transformative results. Notwithstanding this, UNFPA currently undertakes a variety of initiatives that help, in practice, to bridge the gap in the theory of change. They do this by partially aligning the ageing and low fertility agendas to the three transformative results, even if the initiatives are not necessarily part of a strategically deliberate and coherent approach, and some possibilities have remained unexplored.

There is a clear linkage for UNFPA to low fertility, particularly around supporting rights-based approaches to policies that address low fertility rather than policies that restrict access to family planning and promote/encourage women to have more children than is practical given the social and economic barriers that women face, and that will, ultimately, jeopardize the realization of the three zeros. There is also a very clear linkage between low fertility and the second transformative result (ending unmet need for family planning), underpinning the shift from a focus on an unmet need for family planning (applicable to high fertility settings) to a focus on reproductive choices for all, which is applicable across all contexts, including low fertility contexts. This leads toward an expanded definition of an 'unmet need for family planning' in countries where women and men have fewer, rather than more, children than they want to have. This is not a new idea for UNFPA: the 2018 State of the World's Population report highlights that if all people, in all locations, in all income categories are not having the number of children that they ideally want, then reproductive rights have been compromised and "commitments to universality remain unfulfilled".³⁹² This has yet to become a clear, well-understood and consistent message across all UNFPA offices at all levels.

392 UNFPA. 2018. UNFPA 2018 State of the World Population Report. The Power of Choice. Reproductive Rights and the Demographic Transition.

While low fertility is more naturally connected to the transformative results, the growing relevance of the ageing agenda is not connected to the bullseye strategic vision, although it is aligned with the ICPD. On one hand, this highlights the importance of the nuanced relevance of each issue – ageing versus low fertility – that can be missed when both issues are referenced together and as interdependent. On the other hand, it reflects the need for greater clarity on the role of UNFPA in relation to ageing under the current strategic framework and priorities. Overall, while becoming more significant, efforts to implement the ageing agenda throughout different UNFPA modes of engagement have been diverse and have not reflected a coherent and consistent underlying logic, including what UNFPA should be doing in this area (that is, supporting the data and the dynamics through knowledge management solutions) and what is outside the scope of UNFPA in this area (that is, practical programming solutions for supporting older people, pensions etc).

While in general UNFPA is progressively embracing the ageing and low fertility agenda, weak inclusion of ageing in the common country analysis, the main United Nations joint planning tool at the country level, shows that mainstreaming ageing is not fully institutionalized. This implies an opportunity for UNFPA to strengthen its contributions by connecting its approaches and responses to a larger strategic vision that retains a flexible responsiveness to the demographic shifts, while addressing current explicit and implicit age biases in the formulation, assumptions and implementation of the three transformative results.

Conclusion 5: There are solid and concrete examples of close and thoughtful collaboration between population and development and SRHR and gender at different levels within UNFPA (global, regional and country levels), particularly with regard to population data. However, these collaborations are not as systematized as they could be and tend to be more ad hoc and project-based with inconsistency across levels (global, regional and country).

Links to evaluation question 3

Across the three strategic plans that have driven UNFPA activities since 2014, there has consistently been a strong understanding within UNFPA across global, regional and country levels of how essential the area of population data and dynamics is for the implementation of ICPD Programme of Action and the achievement of the three transformative results and the SDGs. But the conceptual linkages in strategic frameworks do not always automatically mean sustained and consistent linkages in practice. This is easier in some areas (such as the demographic dividend and adolescents and youth) than it is in other areas (such as ageing and low fertility). Overall, this confirms that internally, the will to collaborate between population and development and other branches is strong, as is the understanding of the benefit of collaboration. However, there remain barriers at different levels for consistent and systematic collaboration that goes beyond specific projects or programmes. Quite different perceptions about the degree of existing integration between each mandate area and population and development highlight the absence of a shared understanding of what integration implies and what should be expected.

Conclusion 6: UNFPA provides a significant contribution to population data in humanitarian settings through the COD-PS, which is viewed as a development contribution to humanitarian preparedness and response, managed by the Technical Division. However, there is not a consistent understanding across UNFPA with regard to population data in humanitarian settings and humanitarian data.

Links to evaluation question 6.

UNFPA has provided a solid service to humanitarian actors through the leadership of managing the population statistics component of the common operational datasets. There is a clear understanding among humanitarian actors that the UNFPA contribution specifically to COD-PS is effective and impactful for planning for a humanitarian response. However, there is an inconsistent understanding across UNFPA as to the structure and difference between population data in humanitarian settings and humanitarian data, which continues to cause some degree of confusion. The renaming of the Humanitarian Office to the Humanitarian Response Division is helpful, or at least will be, once there is clarity across the organization of the purpose and focus of this division, which there is not at the moment. The new name highlights clearly that the Humanitarian Response Division role is in humanitarian response and that humanitarian data within this is not the same as population data within humanitarian contexts. Once this division of ‘data’ is more widely and consistently understood in UNFPA, there is

the potential to craft a clear strategy on UNFPA positioning across the triple nexus of humanitarian, development and peace dimensions and expanding UNFPA work across this triple nexus to include not only COD-PS, but also how COD-PS applies to the demographic dividend, ageing and low fertility, migration and climate change and how national transfer accounts can be adapted and utilized in protracted crises etc. Again, it is now much clearer for most UNFPA staff that this work does not sit under the Humanitarian Response Division of UNFPA, although of course clear linkages and collaboration channels should be kept with the Humanitarian Response Division.

Conclusion 7: UNFPA has leveraged partnerships at different levels to further the effective use of population data and dynamics for development purposes. There is an understanding that a range of partnerships across population data, dynamics and development areas – both traditional and more innovative – are critical to achieve development objectives, such as the SDGs.

Links to evaluation question 7

The multisectoral nature of population data, dynamics and development means that partnerships are crucial, and this is well-recognized by UNFPA at all levels. This is specifically true for work on the demographic dividend and ageing and low fertility, where the multidimensional nature of the issues requires strategic and innovative partnerships. UNFPA has developed a strong network of partners across the areas of population data, dynamics and development, and is beginning to explore important opportunities for innovative partnerships, including with the private sector. Opportunities with the private sector have not been fully explored, yet some encouraging examples and potential opportunities exist. Enhanced clarity on the specific role and focus of UNFPA in relation to emerging demographic shifts, such as ageing, in connection with the three transformative results will most likely better inform coordination, enhance strategic value and guide future partnerships.

Conclusion 8: UNFPA has a relatively small staff body stretched across a varied, complex and demanding mandate. Within this context, UNFPA staffing capacity in population and development at all levels is considered to be inadequate, with a need for mapping of the skillsets required and a capacity planning framework for the future thought leadership of UNFPA expertise in the area. The financial resourcing of population and development provides a more complex picture: while the area of population and development is always less well-resourced than other thematic areas, there are clear differences in resource requirements across different mandate areas of UNFPA. Apart from capacity-building support to census (which is highly resource-intensive) other areas of capacity-building and upstream knowledge management and advocacy work are less resource-intensive than service delivery and capacity-building interventions for SRHR, gender equality, and adolescents and youth.

Links to evaluation question 8

The current structure and capacity of population and development are not adequate for ensuring that UNFPA is maximally positioned as a population data agency. While there are some offices that have a relatively well-resourced population and development function, this is the exception rather than the norm. There is clear evidence from this evaluation that, both internally and externally, stakeholders feel that UNFPA has somewhat lost its leadership capabilities in data. This is not permanently lost and UNFPA has retained a significant expertise across global, regional and country levels for population and development, but in order for UNFPA to take advantage of current focuses on demographic shifts and bring population and development back to the front and centre of UNFPA work, investment will be required. Further, UNFPA does not have an overarching data quality assurance unit. In addition, current UNFPA leadership on demographic shifts requires both a mapping and a strategic resourcing plan to ensure that the right skillsets, in the right quantity, are available at different levels. There are clear examples of good practice and innovative thinking around utilizing existing expertise within UNFPA in creative ways: for example, the LACRO regional technical assistance models highlight the flexibility and creativity of staff within UNFPA to maximize resources (in terms of staffing) available.



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Women stand holding their children on an embankment in Sindh Province, Pakistan.

5

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Develop a bold population and development strategy reconceptualized around the data, dynamics and development continuum, and including demographic dividends, resilience and policy

Links to conclusions: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7

Targeted at: Technical Division/Population and Development Branch

Priority Level: High

UNFPA should develop a bold population and development strategy for the next decade that builds upon the current strengths and provides an umbrella strategic framework. This should include working across the humanitarian, development and peace continuum, and across the dimensions of population data, dynamics and development that is fit for purpose to achieve the three transformative results within the context of climate change and migration as increasing mega-trends. This strategy should include:

- 1.1.** A data value chain across population data, dynamics and development, at global, regional and country levels and through different modes of engagement
- 1.2.** A clear statement on the UNFPA added-value areas of HRBA, inclusion, and a gender scale monitoring framework for all aspects of population and development across negative, blind, neutral, responsive and transformative results
- 1.3.** Linking of all demographic concepts to UNFPA mandate areas, including the demographic dividend linked to adolescents and youth (already strong); healthy ageing linked to adolescents and youth (also already strong through the life-cycle approach) but also strongly linking ageing to gender-based violence and SRHR needs for older women; and low fertility to the second transformative result through a more comprehensive understanding of family planning around reproductive choices
- 1.4.** A cross-unit proposal for how UNFPA offices and divisions can expand work on population data, dynamics and development from COD-PS to census work, CRVS, national transfer accounts, the demographic dividend, demographic resilience, among others, in chronic and protracted situations.

Recommendation 2: Enhance programming priorities and linkages for internal clarity and external positioning**Links to conclusions:** 1, 3, 5**Targeted at:** Technical Division/Population and Development Branch and regional population and development advisors**Priority Level:** Medium

UNFPA should develop an internal capacity-building and learning priority workplan to increase the common understanding of demographic dividends, resilience and policy, and the role of UNFPA, and how these all link to the three transformative results. This internal clarification should then be used to ensure a common and consistent messaging from all UNFPA headquarters and regional and country offices, with a view to coherently positioning UNFPA at the forefront of demographic shifts and demographic diversity. This workplan should include:

- 2.1.** Implementing a strategy to boost the global appropriation and implementation of the demographic dividends, resilience and policy framework to accelerate a common vision, taking into account context particularities and adaptation needs. This strategy should include contextual, adaptive and operational guidelines to address different realities
- 2.2.** Developing and disseminating information papers and associated learning webinars on demographic dividends, resilience and policy, explaining what it is, what it means, how it mirrors the life-cycle approach bringing in an economic societal argument to add strength to the rights-based, individual perspective of the life-cycle approach. This would include good practice and impactful activities
- 2.3.** Developing and disseminating information papers and associated learning webinars specifically on ageing and low fertility, explaining the role of UNFPA and its niche area in connection with the three transformative results
- 2.4.** Developing and implementing a common advocacy messaging platform on demographic diversity and the role of UNFPA, under the mandate of the ICPD Programme of Action, as a thought leader in this area.

Recommendation 3: Invest corporately in signature data products**Links to conclusions:** 2, 4, 8**Targeted at:** Technical Division and senior management**Priority Level:** High

For UNFPA to maintain its leadership position and credibility with regard to population data, dynamics and development, the organization should ensure continued investment in signature data products that have been invested in to date. This should include:

- 3.1.** Continued corporate financial support for the continued administration, maintenance and updating of the population data portal
- 3.2.** Continued support to UNFPA products (including the population data portal), that showcase specifically UNFPA expertise and its added value in data and visibility in LNOB factors.

Recommendation 4: Improve data and analytics across UNFPA**Links to conclusions:** 1, 4, 5**Targeted at:** Technical Division/Population and Development Branch, in collaboration with Division of Human Resources**Priority Level:** Medium

UNFPA should use the Secretary-General's data strategy as a basis for developing a UNFPA-specific understanding of what being data literate means for UNFPA. This should include:

- 4.1.** Developing a UNFPA data strategy together with roll-out of a dissemination plan. Within this data strategy UNFPA should ensure:
 - 4.1.1.** Defining what data literacy means for UNFPA, and how to measure it. This should be done in general in the first instance and then specifically for the areas of SRHR, gender, and adolescents and youth
 - 4.1.2.** Designing and conducting an internal survey to estimate the current percentage of data-literate staff, as per the UNFPA definition, and create a plan to fill the gap through internal training (design of online courses, communities of practice etc) and by revising job profiles for external recruitment to ensure that the UNFPA definition of 'data literate' is included in all relevant job profiles.
- 4.2.** Investing in a data quality assurance capacity that oversees not just population data but all published UNFPA data. The quality assurance unit should identify what it should cover and where it should sit within the organization.

Recommendation 5: Enhance human and technical resourcing of population and development**Links to conclusions:** 4, 8**Targeted at:** Technical Division/Population and Development Branch and Division of Human Resources**Priority Level:** Medium

UNFPA should re-assess the current human and technical capacity of population and development at different levels, in light of the increasingly visible leadership statements of UNFPA regarding demographic shifts as a megatrend. This reassessment should include:

- 5.1.** Mapping all current skillsets within UNFPA and cross-referencing that mapping with dimensions of data, dynamics and development at the different levels. The mapping should also include new skillsets around: digitalization and geospatial technologies; economic future casting; population registers; and communicating arguments founded equally in economic and rights-arguments with different partnerships, including ministries of finance or planning, and private sector
- 5.2.** Development of a three-to-five-year resourcing and recruitment plan for the skillset gaps that are identified in point 1, both through internal training and capacity development and through external recruitment, including enhancing and leveraging young professionals.



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