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STRENGTHENING EVALUATION FOR IMPROVED PROGRAMMING: UNFPA Evaluation Quality Assessment

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Evaluation Report
Number 21

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NOTE: The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations Population Fund.

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DECEMBER 2005

Foreword

Evaluation is an important management tool that enables us to make informed decisions based on learning. It is a key element of Results-Based Management and is well integrated in UNFPA's programming and strategic planning processes. As UNFPA works in an ever-changing environment, not only within the UN system but also in the broader environment of development aid and national context, it is important that the Fund uses this tool effectively so that it remains relevant and meaningful. Evaluation can tell us if we are doing the right thing in the right way, and how we can improve our work to ensure that UNFPA's activities and programmes have greater impact. Thus, evaluation helps us to develop a stronger evidence base to support UNFPA's work. It also helps the organization to be more accountable for results; this contributes to empowering our ultimate beneficiaries.

In 2005, UNFPA commissioned the first-ever meta evaluation – evaluation of evaluations. We wanted to have a hard look at the quality of our evaluation work, using recognized international standards as a benchmark. We also wanted to determine what kinds of improvements were needed.

The Evaluation Quality Assessment tells us clearly that UNFPA needs to improve the quality of its evaluations. It is increasingly important to pay greater attention to using standard evaluation criteria, such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, and to ensure that all evaluations provide an assessment of the organization's interventions from a gender mainstreaming and human rights perspective.

This meta evaluation has provided a number of valuable recommendations for action; we have included a detailed management response. As we move forward with our follow-up to the report's findings and recommendations, UNFPA will strengthen its evaluation capacity as well as practices. We further plan to conduct a second meta evaluation in 2010 in order to determine whether our new measures have brought about any measurable improvements.

I am confident that our renewed efforts to improve the quality of evaluation will lead to better use of evaluation findings and recommendations and, ultimately, to improving the lives of people we serve.

Thoraya Ahmed Obaid
Executive Director
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

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Acknowledgements

We are particularly grateful to **Olivier Brasseur** (Director, Division for Oversight Services) and **Linda Sherry-Cloonan** (formerly Deputy Chief of the Office of Oversight and Evaluation, currently Deputy Director Division for Human Resources) for their extensive input and support.

The Reference Group established as a guide and sounding board should be thanked for strategic contributions throughout: **Esteban Caballero, Jacqueline Desbarats, Garimela Giridhar, Patricia Guzman, Nobuko Horibe, Janet Jackson, Nicola Jones, Steven Kraus, Petra Lantz, Ian Mcfarlane, Kemal Mustafa, Brendan O'Brien, Diego Palacios, Daniel Sala-Diakanda, Aminata Toure, and Mieko Yabuta.**

A large number of UNFPA staff at HQ and in Country Offices and CSTs, as well as UNFPA counterparts, submitted to interviews. We would like to thank in particular the **Country Office staff** who arranged our missions so efficiently and pleasantly **in Ghana, Lebanon, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Sri Lanka, and Viet Nam; CST staff in Addis Ababa, Bangkok and Mexico; and all beneficiaries, Government and NGO staff who participated.**

Colleagues at UNDP and UNICEF also provided key inputs. **Magalye Mars-Mompoint** provided competent administrative support.

Thanks to all.

Acronyms

AI	Appreciative Inquiry
ALNAP	Active Learning Network on Accountability and Participation
CO	Country Office
COAR	Country Office Annual Report
CP	Country Programme
CST	Country Support Team
DALY	Disability Adjusted Life Year
DOS	Division for Oversight Services
EQA	Evaluation Quality Assessment
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
KAP	Knowledge, Attitude and Practice
MTR	Mid Term Review
MYFF	Multi-Year Funding Framework
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
OVI	Objectively Verifiable Indicators
PM&E	Planning, monitoring and evaluation
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RBM	Results based management
RH	Reproductive Health
SWAps	Sector Wide Approaches
TSD	Technical Support Division
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group