

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Facts about the organisation

Mandate and direction of operations

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, works on following up the programme adopted in connection with the UN International Conference on Population and Development, ICPD, in Cairo in 1994. Like all UN organisations in the field of development, UNFPA is working to contribute to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. From the UNFPA perspective, this includes working for universal access to services in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights and for universal primary education and equal access to education for girls and boys, reduced maternal and child mortality, increased life expectancy and lower HIV infection rates. UNFPA does this by using culturally sensitive approaches, focusing on particularly vulnerable groups like young people and women, promoting human rights and gender equality, ensuring access to products needed to promote reproductive health and contributing to crisis and reconstruction assistance. Particular emphasis is placed on dialogue at government level.

Governance, organisation and Swedish participation

The framework of UNFPA operations as well as the organisation's priorities and budget are decided in the Executive Board of UNFPA and UNDP. To a large extent, the rotation system for the Board reflects the relative size of donors. Sweden holds a seat on the Board for 11 out of the coming 15 years. The Board meets 3 times a year – in January, June and September. The organisation is led by Thoraya Obaid, whose mandate expires on 31 December 2008.

In addition to its headquarters in New York, UNFPA has 112 field offices. It has a total of 1786 employees, 1476 of whom are in the field.

Financial information

UNFPA receives contributions from 181 countries, which is the highest number of donors among all UN funds and programmes. Income for 2007 was in excess of USD 700 million.

Since 2005 Sweden has been the second largest donor after the Netherlands. Sweden's contribution in 2007 was SEK 405 million. The United States withdrew its support in 2002 for political reasons.

Background to the Swedish assessments

In April 2007 Sweden adopted its first strategy for multilateral development cooperation. One of the strategy's recommendations is to make regular structured assessments of the multilateral organisations receiving Swedish support. The strategy's key concepts – relevance and effectiveness – are intended to guide the assessment of each organisation.

In spring 2008 assessments of multilateral organisations were conducted jointly by the Government Offices, Sida and Swedish embassies in developing countries. These assessments will be used as one of several inputs for budget decisions, the preparation of organisation strategies and policy dialogues. The main intention is for them to increase knowledge of the individual organisations and form a basis for following the development of each organisation. However, the assessments do not claim to be comprehensive. Nor should comparisons be made between organisations on the basis of this information. The forms for these assessments are being developed and routines for what information is to be gathered, assessed and reported are still being tested.



However, other members have intervened to cover the shortfall successively.

Swedish contributions	2005	2006	2007
Total paid in Swedish contributions, SEK million	436	443	457
- of which contributions from the Government Offices, SEK million	355	400	405
- of which multilateral/bilateral support from Sida SEK million	81	43	52

Assessment

Relevance in relation to Swedish development objectives

The overall assessment is that UNFPA's mandate, aims and concrete operations make the organisation a very relevant partner in relation to Sweden's development objectives. Two of Sweden's main priorities – gender equality and the promotion of human rights – make up the core of the organisation's work and run through virtually all its activities. In its work on sexual and reproductive health and rights – which are two of UNFPA's main issues – these two priority issues are combined in a clear manner. UNFPA plays an important role with regard to some of the Millennium Development Goals that are the most difficult to achieve and are in some respects more controversial. These are the goals of greater gender equality, reduced infant mortality, reduced maternal mortality and preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. UNFPA was also very active in work to include a new target on Universal access to reproductive health, which was adopted in 2006. In addition, UNFPA has an important role to play in the humanitarian field, even though its ability to take action varies from country to country and its operational capacity could be increased generally.

Internal effectiveness

UNFPA's internal effectiveness is assessed as good. The organisation has succeeded in establishing a solid and robust system of results-based management that builds clearly on its new Strategic Plan for 2008–2011. The priorities and goals of the Strategic Plan are reflected very well in all parts of the organisation through a number of carefully considered tools for results-based management. These tools are used both to make staff at all levels responsible for delivering on the strategic

plan and as a system of reporting to the Council on implementation and results achieved.

Despite good progress some important challenges still have to be addressed to establish a fully fledged system – more results-focused evaluation and reporting and the link between results and budget allocations. Even though there are clear intentions concerning evaluation and reporting, the 'results culture' in these areas needs to be taken on board and achieve an impact. In many cases it is clear that active use is made of information from evaluations in further planning, but this can be reinforced even more. Reporting should also be even more results-focused instead of being input-focused and neutral, i.e. less 'self-reporting'. The Strategic Plan for 2008–2011 will potentially make these areas much stronger. For instance, the format of the annual report will be aligned with the Strategic Plan. In terms of its budget (allocations, etc.) UNFPA is increasingly moving from an 'input-based budget' to a 'results-based budget'. Apart from this, it can be noted that several central functions such as the Executive Council, executive management, human resources policy and the new organisational structure are functioning well. Transparency is good, as are the routines for audit and procurement.

External effectiveness

UNFPA's external effectiveness is assessed as relatively good. Moreover, in a short space of time, the prospects have improved for external effectiveness and, in particular, for the possibilities of increasing the capacity to deliver at country level. Three important factors – which have, however, still to be put into practice – form this foundation: 1) the Strategic Plan for 2008–2011 which, as a result of the system of results-based management, improves the conditions for focused planning and monitoring of what is actually happening at country level; 2) the regionalisation process, which will, by definition, strengthen capacity at country level, thereby enhancing the possibilities of pressing issues effectively in relation to national governments and other UN agencies; and 3) 'One UN', the UN reform process for coherence at country level, along with other initiatives for greater coordination at country level. So far, a greater team spirit among UN organisations has shown clearly positive results with regard to the integration of UNFPA issues (especially the ICPD Cairo Agenda) in all UN work in a country. This aspect should not be underestimated in the assessment of the ability of UNFPA to act effectively at country level.

In the past, capacity at country level has been highlighted as UNFPA's relative weakness. The assessment this year is that external effectiveness shows an improvement. The explanation is that the structural

conditions for enhanced external effectiveness have been improved substantially in a short space of time. However, UNFPA's capacity to deliver at country level is likely to remain limited. Nor should it be forgotten that the organisation is a relatively small actor in the system, in relation to what it has actually succeeded in achieving in an area some of which is controversial.

In general, UNFPA is good at policy dialogue with governments and other actors, even though this varies from country to country. Its relatively clear mandate also makes it easier for UNFPA to focus on what it is best at. There are some indications that UNFPA has not always been good at aligning its aid efforts with national strategies, but the general picture is still that it is getting better and better at doing so. The picture is positive but not uniform.

Several conclusions of evaluations carried out by MOPAN (Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network) and by the United Kingdom and Denmark in 2005–2007 are in line with the present assessment. They emphasise UNFPA's good reputation in the system, its strength in dialogue at government level on 'difficult' issues, the responsiveness and flexibility of its executive management, the continuous improvement of its systems for results-based management and the clear involvement of UNFPA in the UN reform process. As regards UNFPA's capacity at country level, the three evaluations have largely reached the same conclusion: effectiveness at country level is hampered by a limited field presence. However, these evaluations were carried out before the three major changes adopted in the organisation: the Strategic Plan for 2008–2011, the regionalisation of operations and the positive development concerning the reform process at country level.

Trends

UNFPA is on the way to becoming an increasingly effective and results-managed organisation, both internally and externally. Its move towards having more of a 'results-based budget' than of an 'input-based budget' is commendable, but the question is how far the organisation can go, in view of the decentralised allocation criteria for its funds and programmes. One challenge is likely to be to revise these criteria, if possible, in relation to the results achieved in individual countries. As in all situations when new systems are put in place, the implementation phase is also a major challenge for UNFPA. Structures for thinking in terms of results at all levels of the organisation are well on the way to being implemented in UNFPA, but everyone involved also has to adapt to the new working culture.

The prospects for an improvement in external effectiveness have become much brighter in a short space of time, especially as regards greater capacity to deliver at country level. The combination of stronger country capacity and major progress in results-based management will give UNFPA the potential to move forward. However, its ability to act cannot be decoupled from the political realities concerning the issues that UNFPA works with. These are and will remain more or less controversial, and both cultural and religious reasons are deployed against them. The ICPD Cairo Agenda is always being called into question to a greater or lesser extent.

The Executive Director Thoraya Obaid, who enjoys a great deal of confidence among donors, will reach the end of her term on 31 December 2008. It may be possible to extend her mandate, but otherwise there is a risk of a loss of tempo for UNFPA, both organisationally and in terms of substance.



REGERINGSKANSLIET

Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Sweden