

**DELIVERING THE 2030 AGENDA: THE ROLE OF THE UN
DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM
IN MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES**

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Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Introduction

It is my great pleasure to participate in this important consultation and to share UNFPA experiences and perspectives on the role of the UN development system in middle-income countries—an important group of countries for UNFPA's mandate.

UNFPA has taken concrete measures to adapt strategies to serve the diversified needs and priorities of middle-income countries.

We are committed to support middle-income countries in implementing the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014 and the 2030 Agenda. This includes completing the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Consistent position and continuous adjustment

UNFPA's strategic plan 2014-2017 recognizes the multidimensional nature of developmental challenges in our classification of countries. As such UNFPA has been a pioneer within the UN development system in introducing a differentiated approach to programming as its business model. The model accounts for a set of characteristics, including income inequality. The strategic plan calls for reaching those furthest behind, especially marginalized women and adolescent girls.

As a result, we feel that UNFPA is well equipped to support middle-income countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

Thematic focus

Sexual and reproductive health and rights are at the heart of the UNFPA mandate. Investment in sexual and reproductive health is one of the most cost-efficient and therefore high-priority healthcare expenditures. For example, fully satisfying women's modern contraceptive needs would make health care investments more affordable overall. Every additional dollar invested in contraception reduces the cost of pregnancy-related care (including HIV care for women and newborns) by \$1.47.

We also strongly believe that the normative role of the UN—with a focus on human rights, including reproductive rights—is important in middle-income countries for ensuring that *no one is left behind*.

Shifting demographics in many middle-income and other countries with the largest-ever generation of young working-age populations can accelerate economic

growth and improve the quality of life for all generations. UNFPA supports countries' efforts aiming at harnessing this demographic dividend by encouraging greater investments in health, including sexual and reproductive health, and high-quality education for young people, adolescent girls in particular.

Differentiation and prioritization: UNFPA business model

Treating middle-income countries as a single, broad category masks important specificities. That is why the UNFPA business model adopted a more refined classification of programme countries. There are six indicators that are central to the Fund's mandate, which form the basis of this classification. They include the following:

- Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel for the poorest quintile of the population.
- Maternal mortality ratio.
- Adolescent birth rate.
- Proportion of demand for modern contraception satisfied.
- HIV prevalence, aged 15-24.
- Gender Inequality Index.

The two supplemental indicators are the risk of humanitarian crises (assessed through the OCHA Global Focus Model) and income inequality.

Indicators are then used to classify countries in quadrants. Per capita gross national income is utilized as a proxy indicator for a country's ability to assume or share the financial responsibility for development investments.

UNFPA offers countries with the highest needs and lowest capacity to finance development interventions—especially the least developed ones—a full range of programming modalities. These include both “downstream” modes of engagement (such as service delivery and capacity development) and “upstream” ones—associated with the *delivery of thinking, not things*.

In countries positioned further along the development spectrum—especially the high-income and upper middle-income countries with relatively lower needs—UNFPA prioritizes upstream engagement in the form of knowledge management, advocacy and policy dialogue/advice. The focus on upstream work in these contexts has allowed for more proactive, coherent, and inclusive approaches to development and for achieving greater development effect by building on national frameworks, mechanisms and processes. Upstream work has also enabled scaling up development interventions through their institutionalization as well as through greater national ownership and broader partnerships.

Conclusion

Mr. President,

Our partnership with middle-income countries is evolving, and UNFPA seeks greater cooperation and closer integration with our UN sister organizations in our joint support of countries at different points on the development continuum.

Given, on one hand, the scale of the challenge of implementing the 2030 Agenda and the outcomes of other major UN conferences, and on the other, the wide-ranging proposals on the future and functioning of the UN development system, the dialogue on the evolving role of the UNDS in MICs must continue so as to enable an effective and cost-efficient engagement.

As Member States continue debating these issues in follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda negotiations as well as the ECOSOC long-term funding dialogue and discussions about the forthcoming QCPR, we look forward to Member States' guidance on our role in middle-income countries. As we do so, we would like to pose some related questions that may be useful for the UN system going forward:

- What considerations are critical in order to structure UNDS upstream engagement (in terms of attaining a proper mix of advocacy and policy dialogue/advice and knowledge management) so that it is attuned with countries' development needs?
- How can such an engagement modality be achieved in a context of limited financial and technical resources and UNDS technical expertise and taking into account the modalities of in-country presence and non-resident engagement?
- What provisions should be in-built to ensure that the business model continues to meet the evolving demands and addresses the specific needs of MICs?
- How to build the broadest and deepest partnership strategies in MICS to underpin action towards major national priorities?

Thank you.
