



**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF DENMARK**

SEPTEMBER 2023

UNFPA case study

Evaluation of support to gender equality
in Danish development cooperation
(2014-2021)

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List of abbreviations

CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DKK	Danish Kroner
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
KII	Key Informant Interview
MCH	Maternal Child Health
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark
MOPAN	Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network
MSI	Marie Stopes International
RMNCAH	Reproductive, Maternal, New-born, Child and Adolescent Health
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SPA	Strategic Partnership Agreement
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNNY	United Nations in New York
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
USD	United States Dollars
WFP	World Food Programme

Introduction

The purpose of this case study is to explore the strategic relevance and added value of Denmark’s partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The UNFPA was established in 1969 and places the Danish policy priority on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) at the centre of its mission.

UNFPA is a sizeable multilateral organisation receiving significant core and thematic funding from Denmark in both relative and absolute terms and also representing an important advocacy partner. The importance of advocacy aspects of the partnership was clearly evidenced in the 2019 co-hosting by the UNFPA, Kenya and Denmark of the ICPD+25¹ Summit in Nairobi; this was towards the end of the evaluation period.

In the context of the evaluation of support to gender equality in Danish development cooperation (2014-2021), the UNFPA is one of two *medium* case studies. Country case studies of high-priority bilateral programmes in Kenya, Burkina Faso and Mali constitute *major* case studies; the somewhat smaller recipient organisations Green Climate Fund and Marie Stopes International are *minor* case studies.

The medium-size case evaluation case study of the UNFPA summarised in this report begins with an outline of the methodology applied. Findings follow in relation to the overall Danish partnership with the agency and three project deep dives identified for closer scrutiny based on the diversity of scope and purpose, as shown in the overview in Table 1.

Table 1. Overview of UNFPA project deep dives

#	Activity	Theme	Modality	Budget	Status
1	UNFPA Humanitarian Response Strategic Partnership Agreement on Transformative Humanitarian Response	SRHR, gender-based violence (GBV)	Earmarked	DKK 195 million	2014-2021 (Ongoing)
2	UNFPA Innovation Fund Grants for country office application as part of UNFPA Innovation Initiative	Innovation	Earmarked	DKK 90 million	2014-2021 (Discontinued)
3	Maternal Child Health (MCH) Coordinated support by six United Nations (UN) partners in vulnerable regions of Kenya	Maternal child health (MCH), One UN	Multi-Bi	DKK 40 million	2016-2020 (Discontinued)

¹ ICPD = International Conference on Population and Development.

Methodology

Desk study and scoping interviews in May-June 2022 informed the approach to the assessment of the overall partnership and the three project deep dives. The case study triangulates findings from interviews, focus group discussion (FGD) and desk review of documentation. Desk review scope includes Danish organisation strategies for the UNFPA (covering the five-year periods 2014-2018 and 2018-2022 respectively), financial data, progress, and review reports. Project deep dives have comprised evidence from UNFPA-commissioned evaluations as well as MFA review findings.

The 18 key informant interviews (KIIs) were with the MFA policy officer for the UNFPA at the Danish UN Mission in New York and with the MFA departments *Humanitarian Action, Civil Society and Engagement* and *Migration, Stabilisation and Fragility* (Team Equal Opportunities). UNFPA interviews included the Resource Mobilisation Branch and UNFPA humanitarian response branches in New York and Geneva. At the only in-person meeting, the evaluation team was able to meet with the Representative and two colleagues at UNFPA Kenya during a country case visit in October 2022. Finally, an FGD with grant recipients of the UNFPA Innovation Fund from Nicaragua and Benin allowed for inclusion of a beneficiary perspective (virtual).

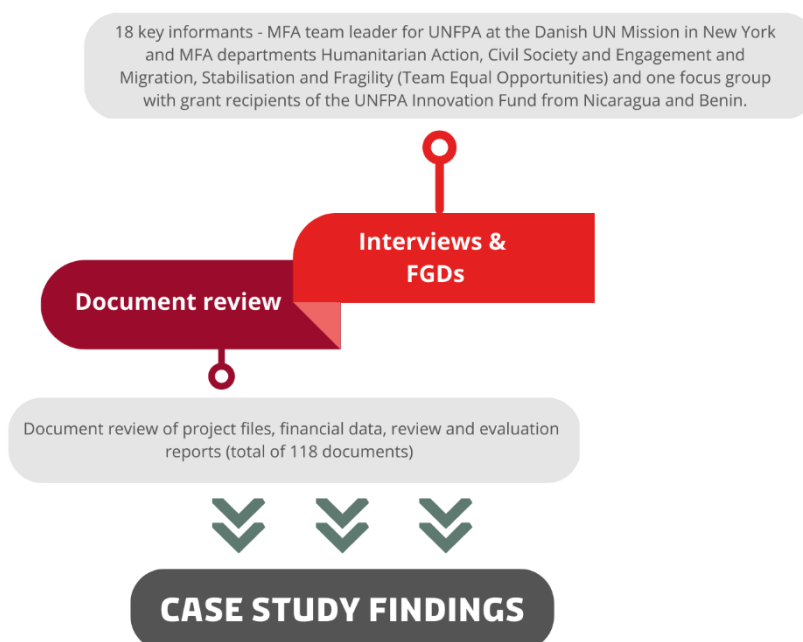


Figure 1. Case study methodology

Danish UNFPA partnership findings

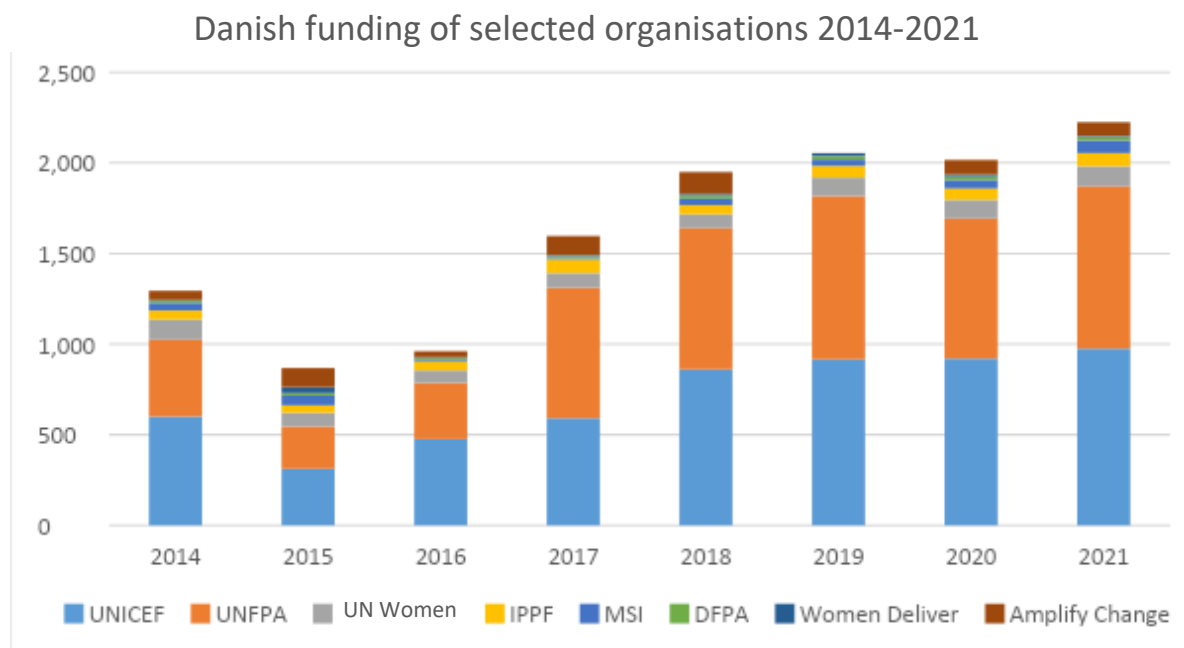
Denmark's partnership with the UNFPA is a remarkably close one, with multi-faceted tracks including substantial funding levels and a long-standing track record of high-level joint advocacy and secondment of professional staff at both junior and senior levels. Findings of this evaluation point to high levels of appreciation of the partnership by both sides, who perceive the relationship to be characterised by mutual trust and shared intentions, even where these are not shared by the rest of the world but rather unfold in a policy context of global divergence throughout the evaluation period.

Key trends of gender budgetary allocations

EQ 1: What have been the development and key trends of gender budgetary allocations in bilateral and multilateral programmes over the period 2014-2021?

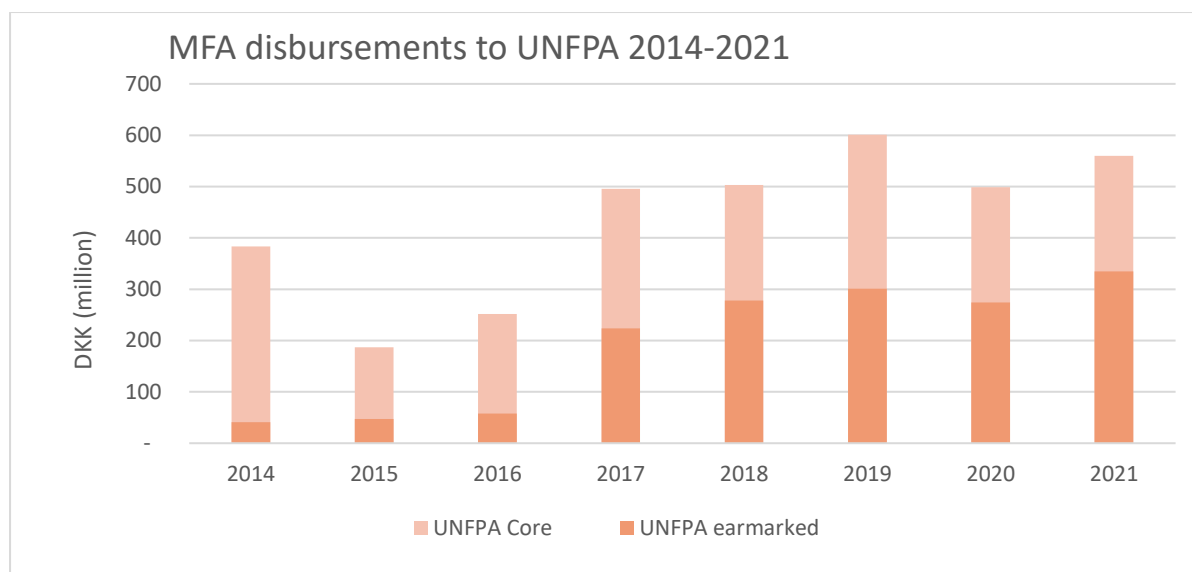
Danish budgetary allocations to the UNFPA are substantial in absolute terms, and Denmark has ranked consistently among the top five contributors of core funding to the agency throughout the evaluation period. As can be seen in Figure 2, the scope of contributions shows an increasing trend, and the UNFPA also ranks among the top recipients of Danish support, along with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), with a much larger share of funding than other Danish gender equality partners, such as the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and Marie Stopes International (MSI).

Figure 2. Context of Danish contributions to the UNFPA



Actual allocations have been above budget indications in the organisation strategies for the UNFPA and have increased during the evaluation period. The UNFPA is among the top recipients of Danish funding. Just over half of Denmark’s contribution to the UNFPA is provided as core support, with the aim of contributing to realisation of SRHR globally. As of 2022, Denmark is the seventh-largest contributor to the UNFPA and the fourth-largest donor to the UNFPA Supplies Partnership.

Figure 3. UNFPA – Danish contributions 2014-2021 (core and earmarked)



As can be seen in Figure 3, both the total scope and the share of earmarked contributions (represented in grey) have increased over the evaluation period. Softly earmarked contributions for UNFPA Supplies (about 28% of Danish contributions) support the UNFPA in helping countries build health systems and widen access to a reliable supply of contraceptives and life-saving medicines for maternal health and survivors of GBV.

Denmark contributes a considerable amount of earmarked funding for the UNFPA’s humanitarian engagement, with a significant increase from 11% of total contributions in 2014 to 60% in 2021, as described in ‘SRHR in humanitarian engagements’ in this report. Finally, with a modest scope but as a reflection of the proximity of the partnership, an annual amount of DKK 6 million has been allocated for staff secondments from Denmark to the UNFPA.² Finally, and coinciding with the evaluation period, Denmark has also provided a total amount of DKK 90 million in support for the UNFPA Innovation Fund.

Key drivers of Danish support priorities

EQ 2: What have been the main drivers behind these priorities? What are the main factors behind the shifts in funding to these organisations?

The main driver behind these budgetary allocations is Danish strategic priority to gender equality and women’s and girls’ rights. The mandate and programming of the UNFPA address consistent Danish policy priorities throughout the evaluation

² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark: Strategy for Denmark’s Engagement with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) 2018-2022, p. 18.

period. Gender equality priorities enshrined in *The Right to a Better Life* (2012) were unfolded in the *Strategic Framework for Gender Equality, Rights and Diversity* (2014).

The impression of strong policy alignment, not least around SRHR, was confirmed by the development strategy that was adapted at the end of the evaluation period: *The World We Share* (2021). While some unclarity was noted by the evaluation on the status of the 2014 framework, it features particularly prominently in strategies and grant agreements justifying Danish support for the UNFPA.³

A striking trend is increasing Danish allocations for the UNFPA's humanitarian engagement. This is driven by the Danish policy commitment to “create hope and help more people where it is hardest”⁴ that has gained ground during the evaluation period. This commitment, shared by like-minded partners, is driven by the surge during the past decade of people globally who are affected by emergencies and displacement and has caused the UNFPA to increase its humanitarian engagement significantly.

Substance of this compatibility is summarised by a vision of three zeros: (i) ending preventable maternal deaths, (ii) ending the unmet need for family planning, and (iii) ending GBV and harmful practices. Figure 4 illustrates the relationship between this strategic vision and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a focus on humanitarian settings. This relationship evolved during the evaluation period, partly due to policy dialogue and earmarked funding from Denmark and other partners, particularly with regards to the role of the UNFPA in emergency response.⁵ Inclusion of stronger UNFPA engagement in SDG13 on climate action stands out as a particularly relevant strategy pointer for Denmark's future partnership with the UNFPA.

³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark: Strategy for Denmark's Engagement with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) 2018-2022, pp. 8-9.

⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark: 'The World We Share' (2021), pp. 5-6.

⁵ UNFPA: Strategic Plan 2022-2025 – Executive Board submission of 14 July 2021, p. 4.

Figure 4. Updated bull's eye with the UNFPA strategic vision and alignment to the Sustainable Development Goals



In its most recent assessment (2017-2018), the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) points to the challenges the UNFPA faces when implementing its mandate. Global controversy over SRHR has led to recurrent funding gaps and challenges in mitigating contextual risks and organisational inefficiencies. MOPAN also highlights key UNFPA strengths, notably a focused and results-oriented strategy aligned with global frameworks, strong human resource expertise and a track record of translating expertise into accessible communications and advocacy in often contested policy areas.⁶

Outcome of global dialogue

EQ 4: What has been the outcome and effectiveness of Danish engagement in global dialogue on support to gender equality?

- *On what issues does Denmark regularly engage in global dialogue on gender equality with case study partners?*
- *How (through what mechanisms/fora) does Denmark engage in this dialogue?*

⁶ Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) 2017-18 Assessments UNFPA. <https://www.mopanonline.org/assessments/unfpa2017-18/UNFPA%20Report.pdf>

Throughout the evaluation period, Danish engagement with the UNFPA has unfolded in a context of high levels of overall alignment combined with strategic priorities where Denmark has used policy dialogue mechanisms and earmarked funding to influence UNFPA. Priorities have been captured by two strategies for engagement for UNFPA⁷ representing considerable continuity over time:

- a. advance **SRHR** in the context of global pushback;
- b. engage actively in **humanitarian emergencies** and take leadership in leaving no one behind; and
- c. enhance **organisational effectiveness** and contribute to UN reform leveraging innovation.

Denmark has been represented at the Executive Board of the UNFPA in 2015, 2017 and 2020-2021, and records of policy dialogue with the UNFPA at Board level and high-level consultations bear evidence of an active role by the MFA in pursuing the stated priorities of the two organisation strategies covering the evaluation period. This is confirmed by evaluation consultations across the various MFA stakeholders engaged in UNFPA support. The MFA contact group is led by the Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nations in New York (UNNY) and comprises MFA departments *Humanitarian Action, Civil Society and Engagement* and *Migration, Stabilisation and Fragility* (Team Equal Opportunities).

The UNNY summarises the strongest argument for support to the UNFPA as “policy alignment with Danish priorities on SRHR with UNFPA as one of our top priorities in pursuing this agenda. Our impression of UNFPA is they are very solid and deliver results. We need to push for UNFPA to emphasise the normative elements and cover the full picture of SRHR rather than shy away from conflict, realising UNFPA needs to navigate the risk of being caught in the blame-game on sensitive issues such as abortion and comprehensive sexuality education and find compromise in a context of international controversy.”

Denmark provides a substantive amount of core contributions to the UNFPA, and while the expectation is a continuation of relatively large grants of core support which is crucial for the organisation to deliver on its key mandate, a substantial and growing share is provided as softly earmarked or fully earmarked support, seen as an instrument in influencing organisational priorities. The UNFPA’s increasing role as a humanitarian actor bears evidence of Danish contributions to this strategic priority and the funding for UNFPA Supplies as an instrument to ensure that SRHR service delivery elements such as contraception are kept high on the agenda for family planning, maternal health, and safe abortion.

This assessment of the context of global dialogue and its outcome resonates to a large extent with that of the UNFPA. The clear preference of the UNFPA, as is the case for most funding recipients, is for core contributions that allow

⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark: Strategy for Denmark’s Engagement with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) 2014-2018 & 2018-2022.

organisations to prioritise as independently as possible. However, funding from Denmark is generally praised for its flexibility, and the case examples of earmarking assessed by the evaluation were recognised by UNFPA interlocutors as having produced outcomes in humanitarian engagement and promotion of a culture of innovation that are not only in line with UNFPA priorities but are sometimes also helpful in bringing these to fruition.

Interestingly, although the UNFPA praises Denmark for high levels of predictable funding and a pragmatic approach of refraining from administrative micro-management and focusing Board interventions and informal dialogue on the normative issues on SRHR, comprehensive sexuality education and sexual rights, observations are also shared on how Denmark stands out from other Nordic countries. As per UNFPA KIs, Denmark is seen as: “entirely aligned with UNFPA when it comes to the SRHR mandate and approach but has less of a solid layer with development and technical capacity, compared to Norway and particularly Sweden. You can tell the Danish MFA has fewer technical specialists and less direct bilateral engagement than it used to have. Swedish Sida will have a range of experts on maternal child health, comprehensive sexuality education and family planning where the dialogue is directly with technical staff and reflective of Swedish sectoral programmes at field level. Denmark has less of that today and is focused more on the normative role, especially on SRHR but also on issues such as comprehensive sexuality education.”

Joint advocacy is praised in unison as an example of a significant outcome with mutual benefits. Looking at the evaluation period 2014-2021, examples of advocacy initiatives and events are in plentiful supply and have been a high-profile aspect of the Danish partnership with the UNFPA, involving goodwill ambassadors, ministers for development cooperation, Members of Parliament, civil servants and civil society. HRH Crown Princess Mary of Denmark has been the UNFPA patron since 2010, and this has involved a series of advocacy and public diplomacy engagements, which she is usually accompanied by the Danish Minister for Development Cooperation. Obviously, advocacy does not have to involve ministers, let alone Crown Princesses, but UNFPA experience in engaging with politically led entities such as the MFA is that high-level involvement tends to mobilise organisations more broadly, open doors and enable public profiling of SRHR and other priority issues. Patron engagements have included:

- SRHR events at the MFA, the Danish Parliament, and UN City in Copenhagen;
- multiple field visits with media coverage, including Burkina Faso and Kenya; and
- participation at numerous UN conferences, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and side events.

A central normative framework driving the work of the UNFPA is the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action adopted in Cairo in 1994. Towards the end of the evaluation period, Denmark cooperated with the UNFPA and the Government of Kenya to prepare and co-host the Nairobi Summit to mark the 25th Anniversary of the ICPD (ICPD+25) in 2019. In conjunction with the meeting, an ICPD+25 High-Level Commission was established to ensure follow-up to the more than 1300 commitments made by governments and civil society organisations at the Nairobi Summit. HRH Crown Princess Mary of Denmark was appointed as one of the Commissioners.

The Nairobi Summit brought thousands of stakeholders together with the goal of accelerating progress and was reported to have reinvigorated the ICPD agenda and secured support from global leaders. The impact of this event can be difficult to measure, but Kenyan stakeholders emphasised the commitment shown by the Kenyan government as a means of maintaining momentum on the SRHR agenda in Kenya and the wider East African region.

The *UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025* presents itself as a call to action, building on the momentum of ICPD+25 in 2019 to achieve the transformative results of ending (a) the unmet need for family planning, (b) preventable maternal deaths, and (c) GBV and all harmful practices, including female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage.⁸

Case project findings

Assessment of the UNFPA involved closer scrutiny of three selected deep dives that vary considerably in financial scope and programming approach: (1) SRHR in humanitarian engagements – a relatively recent and growing priority, with Denmark high on the list of partners pushing for this; (2) the UNFPA Innovation Initiative – a priority first included in the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2014-2017 and funded by Denmark until 2021; and (3) MCH – an investment framework by UNFPA Kenya, funded as a development engagement under the Denmark Kenya Country Programme 2016-2020.

The following three sections provide responses to three deep dives and are assessed in response to these EQs:

EQ 4: What has been the outcome and effectiveness of Danish engagement in global dialogue on support to gender equality?

EQ 5: What kind of interventions, approaches or strategies in multilateral programmes have been well suited to supporting transformational gender changes and what lessons can be drawn?

⁸ UNFPA: Strategic Plan 2022-2025 – Executive Board submission of 14 July 2021, pp. 1-7.

EQ 6B: What is the added value of partnerships with multilateral and international organisations with regard to advancing gender equality?

SRHR in humanitarian engagements

UNFPA engagement in humanitarian contexts represents a priority driven by several factors, including Danish policy dialogue and earmarked funding, that have intensified during the period of evaluation. Conflict levels and the rise in internally displaced populations have caused the UNFPA to reorient from a primary focus on long-term development to a stronger humanitarian role. Denmark is seen by the UNFPA as a constructive partner in this transition. The UNFPA sees Denmark as one of the six or seven key political players on humanitarian engagements; it has made a consistent push for decades.

When a dedicated Humanitarian Fund was established by the UNFPA, Denmark was one of the first donors engaging with funding but was also a strong technical role on governance. Denmark was seen by the UNFPA as a pioneer, both on advocacy and on early funding of the UNFPA's humanitarian engagement. In turn, Denmark saw the UNFPA as a partner for SRHR and systemic change in the humanitarian sector.

Denmark has provided earmarked funding for humanitarian programming since 2014. Funding has been provided as part of a Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) and is seen as “flexible, fair and successful”, even if the UNFPA has sometimes been struggling to spend the funding. SPA scope was increased from DKK 15 million (from 2014 to 2018) to DKK 40 million annually (from 2019 to 2021); this was divided into DKK 25 million for ‘Transformative Humanitarian Funding’ and DKK 15 million for UNFPA humanitarian response, allocated on an annual basis to five or six emergencies in dialogue between the UNFPA and the MFA and considered to offer an ideal combination of predictability of funding for UNFPA and flexibility for the MFA of being able to allocate for unforeseen emergencies.

Box 1: Transformative humanitarian funding

Danish earmarked funding for humanitarian engagement by UNFPA was labelled ‘transformative’ in the most recent agreement covering 2019-2021. According to the workplan and indicative budget this comprised:

- cash-based programming models;
- Humanitarian Action Thematic Fund;
- integrated sexual and reproductive health (SRH)-GBV Regional Roving Teams;
- strengthened GBV information management; and
- embedded GBV Advisor in HC infrastructure.

Source: Transformative Humanitarian Funding 2019-2021, pp. 8-10.

UNFPA generally refers to its vision of the three zeros as ‘transformative’ but does not refer to ‘transformative humanitarian funding’ for funding agreements other than the Danish one.

The SPA contributions are exceeded by contributions to acute and protracted humanitarian crises, with varying amounts from DKK 60 million in 2019 to DKK 56 million in 2021, all managed by the MFA (HCE).

The UNFPA has evolved during the past decade and is today much more of a humanitarian actor than it used to be. This transition creates new requirements when it comes to staffing and stakeholder management. The UNFPA recently established a separate division for humanitarian engagement in Geneva; 33% of UNFPA co-financing revenue is humanitarian capacity. The stronger emphasis on humanitarian action was seen by MFA interlocutors as justified by the context of conflict and increase in numbers of displaced persons in the world but was seen in a somewhat more critical way as posing bottlenecks and related challenges for UNFPA staff management, as evidenced in the MOPAN assessment of UNFPA in 2017-2018 (Box 2).

Emphasis on humanitarian programming has not made long-term impact and sustainability simpler, but in its partnership with Denmark UNFPA reports to have learned the lesson that there are clear benefits from integrating SRHR and GBV services in emergencies:⁹ “We see signs of humanitarian actors more broadly having moved and taken SRHR, GBV and other gender issues much more seriously now than just a decade ago. We like to think of this as something UNFPA has contributed to”.

Box 2: Matching the right staff to a stronger humanitarian role

In 2017-2018 MOPAN assessed the UNFPA’s organisational effectiveness (strategic, operational, relationship and performance aspects) and the results it achieved against its objectives. MOPAN found the UNFPA to be a well-performing organisation with a clear, results-oriented strategy and a positive trajectory. Leadership on SRHR in humanitarian settings is highlighted. The UNFPA has made significant advances by further mainstreaming GBV concerns into broader humanitarian programming. The agency has become a respected and significant humanitarian actor, not only through its leadership on GBV under the Global Protection Cluster but also by offering population data analytics to support interventions. However, the UNFPA’s systems and administrative processes were not fully suited to the rapid response needed in humanitarian contexts. The UNFPA has made efforts to address this issue, including by relocating some humanitarian operations to Geneva and identifying bottlenecks to agile implementation, but there is still room for improvement.

Source: www.mopanonline.org/assessments/unfpa2017-18/UNFPA%20Report.pdf

⁹ UNFPA: Innovations to Eliminate Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Contexts (2019), pp. 4-12.

The UNFPA sees Denmark as a trusted humanitarian partner. Flexibility is seen to allow UNFPA to respond quickly and independently. For instance, “other donors willing to support regional GBV advisers will specify in which countries. Denmark will say: we will fund two advisers, but you tell us where they are required. This is in essence how our partnership with Denmark is distinct. We are presented with thematic priorities but left with flexibility to decide how we go about implementation”.

Flexibility also means that the UNFPA can reallocate between supplies and training or deployment. Denmark is highlighted as an open-minded partner willing to take a calculated risk and test new ideas before going to scale. Cash vouchers used to be a small programme piloted without mitigative measures, but now the UNFPA sees itself as leading on cash assistance, and this is attributed, in part, to the inherent trust and flexibility found to characterise the UNFPA’s humanitarian partnership with Denmark.

UNFPA Innovation Initiative

Danish support for the UNFPA Innovation Fund is dwarfed by the total earmarked contributions for humanitarian engagements but is quite considerable in the context of UNFPA’s Innovation Initiative. Corporate approaches to innovation were first included in the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2014-2017, highlighting the need for the agency to develop a “strong culture of experimenting with new ideas, failing, learning lessons, and trying again”.¹⁰

In June 2014, Denmark signed its first agreement for two-year support to the Fund set up by the UNFPA to take this strategic priority forward. Funding was earmarked with an annual amount of DKK 12 million, and this level was maintained until 2021 (except for 2016, when the contribution was DKK 6 million), bringing total contributions to DKK 90 million. From 2014 to 2018, contributions were also received from Finland, but funding remained restricted to these two sources. Underspending and accumulation of funds have been reported over the years, mainly due to low levels of budget execution in the first years and interruptions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As of April 2021, USD 3.3 million remained unused. However, a review conducted by the MFA in 2021 found that innovation has gained a strong position within the UNFPA since 2014, and the Innovation Fund has successfully catalysed a culture of innovation across the organisation. In response to these findings, the review team saw no need for continued earmarking, and Danish support was terminated in 2022 as the team saw the project as accomplished.¹¹ The funding was instead shifted to UN Supplies, meaning that the funding to UNFPA Supplies in 2022 was increased by DKK 12 million (from DKK 113 million to DKK 125 million).

¹⁰ UNFPA: ‘Formative evaluation of the UNFPA Innovation Initiative’ – Volume 1, June 2017, p. 13.

¹¹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark: ‘Review of earmarked support to UNFPA Innovation Fund 2014-2021’ (2021), p. 30.

The UNFPA refers to the innovation funding as an example of the ‘thought leadership’ and constructive partnership with Denmark, including strong commitment at political leadership level. A formative evaluation commissioned by the UNFPA goes so far as to state that the “innovation initiative began in 2014 with a financial agreement with the Danish Government and the drafting of a UNFPA Innovation concept paper”.¹² The evaluation points to the initiative having contributed to (a) a drive to innovate, (b) more mixed performance in its ambitions to nurture a *culture* of innovation in the organisation, and (c) impetus to take up innovations, but also notes (d) hindering factors linked to “limited numbers of staff being fully committed to innovation”.¹³

The observation on staff resonates to some extent with the consultations of the evaluation team with the UNFPA. Interlocutors at the UNFPA Country Office in Kenya, interviewed on a different case example of the partnership with Denmark, volunteered the feedback to the evaluation team that the office had benefited from a grant from the Innovation Fund some years ago that had been partly successful but that had caused colleagues to reflect on whether innovation processes were essentially part of the core business of UNFPA or whether relevant and successful innovation requires different staff competencies than those typically found at the UNFPA.

However, Innovation Fund managers at HQ see things differently and point to the value of what funding was able to create, both in terms of process and impact innovations but also in the culture of being prepared to consider new ways of doing things. In the words of the Head of Innovation Unit: “UNFPA is not aiming to produce innovation, but we have a Human Rights Based Approach that can give useful direction to innovation, including in dialogue with the Tech Ambassador of Denmark whom we have linked up with. We see our role as piloting together and co-creating certain products, but it all must graduate and be taken over by other actors, governments or private sector”.

Recipients of grants from the Innovation Fund were gathered for a small FGD by the evaluation team and referred to the role of dedicated innovation support as follows: “It allows us to tap into existing innovations and establish new links with external partners. I see our role here not as inventors but rather as a broker for innovation. UNFPA does not and should not consist of technology or innovation experts, but we can connect important dots and inspire as a broker”.

¹² UNFPA: ‘Formative evaluation of the UNFPA Innovation Initiative’ – Volume 1, June 2017, p. XI.

¹³ UNFPA: ‘Formative evaluation of the UNFPA Innovation Initiative’ – Volume 1, June 2017, pp. 59-64.

Case examples of Innovation Fund-supported projects in Nicaragua and Benin can be found in Box 3 and Box 4 in this section. Some activities aim to promote a culture of innovation at the offices of the UNFPA and have involved partners and stakeholders in youth-led ‘hackathons’, where ideas are developed, and prototypes are tested. Technology is a strong feature of many supported projects, as evidenced by the numerous case examples of apps to empower youths with information on SRHR, build capacity of health workers on appropriate use of drugs for family planning or survivors of GBV, and promote comprehensive sexuality education targeting young people in remote areas. The UNFPA was successful in attracting grant applications from across the world, with a slight bias towards Eastern and Southern Africa.¹⁴

Box 3: Innovation in Benin – Tech4Youth across West Africa

UNFPA Benin teamed up with the country offices in Burkina Faso, Togo, Nigeria and Ghana to apply for a grant of USD 250,000 from the Innovation Fund for a regional initiative called *Tech4Youth*. Using innovative technological solutions, Tech4Youth aims to give target groups of young people in the five countries access to 37 lessons, 26 video clips and two digital simulations, with basic information and opportunities for interaction on issues related to SRHR. Despite challenges of language versions and coordination between the five countries, Tech4Youth reports success in having reached 2.6 million youths.

Source: UNFPA Benin - End of Project Report 2020

The formative evaluation commissioned by the UNFPA recommended a stronger focus on selected themes and programmatic bottlenecks, stronger strategic focus on innovation and more human resources allocated to innovation. With the no-cost extension of funding from Denmark running out in 2022, innovation funding from the UNFPA’s own budget looks set to remain limited. The UNFPA may invest more in innovation, but not for activities. Staffing of the Innovation Unit is now limited to a head and two JPOs sponsored by the Governments of Sweden and the Netherlands. Denmark has asked why the UNFPA is not using more core funding for innovation now. However, the UNFPA does not see itself in a position to take too much risk with core funding. Taking risks is tricky for the UNFPA, as donors expect predictable results for their funding. High-failure risk is rarely accepted by donors.

Funding available for the ‘Equalizer Accelerator Fund’, which recently replaced the Innovation Fund, is at considerably lower levels. The fund targets female-led tech companies engaged in innovation.

¹⁴ UNFPA: ‘Formative evaluation of the UNFPA Innovation Initiative’ – Volume 1, June 2017, p. 21.

Box 4: Innovation in Nicaragua – App for maternal child health

In 2020, the country office of the UNFPA in Nicaragua applied for a small grant from the Innovation Fund, inspired by earlier results from use of mobile phones to bring about a drop of 30% in reported cases of GBV. 90% of Nicaraguans have mobile phone access to the Internet, and a grant of USD 67,000 was provided for an initial sprint. Part of the grant was access to the World Food Programme's (WFP's) 'Innovation Accelerator' to fine-tune the concept. The result was 'Appsistencia', an opportunity for women to access antenatal tele-consultations. Buy-in from government proved more demanding than anticipated but the app is used across the region and made services more accessible for the 1,500 beneficiaries. Tele-consultations take less time and require neither means of transport nor physical infrastructure.

Source: nicaragua.unfpa.org/es/publications/appsistencia-materna-embarazadas

Maternal child health in Kenya

As part of the bilateral Country Programme in Kenya (2016-2020), Denmark provided funding to the scope of DKK 40 million for a joint MCH intervention by six UN agencies. The title of the engagement was 'Reproductive, Maternal, New-born, Child and Adolescent Health' (RMNCAH), and the UNFPA coordinated a group of agencies also comprising UNICEF, UN Women, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the World Health Organization and the World Bank.

The joint multi-agency RMNCAH engagement aimed to integrate programming principles and approaches of leaving no one behind, human rights, gender equality and community resilience. More specifically, the engagement focused on six high-burden counties of Kenya with vulnerabilities in maternal, new-born, child and adolescent health.¹⁵ The goal was to contribute to reduction of maternal child mortality by improving access to and demand for quality reproductive MCH, HIV and GBV services. Strengthening the institutional capacity at county and national level for planning, budgeting and coordination was an important instrument in producing these changes.¹⁶

Danish support for this engagement was justified, in part, by a desire to see improvements in how the partners involved coordinated efforts among themselves to avoid the duplication of efforts that was evident across the country. At the time, different agencies and stakeholders would disseminate related communication materials and equipment to the same counties, and advisers were recruited for health priorities that were seen to be interlinked rather than meriting separate recruitment of advisers by different agencies for the same geographies. Motivating multilateral partners to work together was seen to resonate with Danish priorities on UN Delivering as One.

¹⁵ Mandera, Marsabit, Wajir, Isiolo, Lamu, Migori.

¹⁶ UNFPA: End Term Evaluation Report: 2015-2020 UN H6 Joint Programme on Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescence Health' – November 2020.

Evidence on results of the ambitions for RMNCAH support to improve UN coordination presents a mixed picture. On the one hand, MFA informants point to consistent challenges of the UN partners working as one at capital level. Requests for updates on progress of implementation indicated that coordination was limited, and each agency seemed to operate with their budget share in a silo. However, a field visit conducted by UNFPA Kenya to one of the six counties of implementation gave evidence of better coordination and meaningful joint activities at county level.

Box 5: UN delivering as one in vulnerable regions – lessons learned

The Danish bilateral development Country Programme in Kenya included support to six UN agencies' promotion of MCH in six particularly vulnerable regions. An end-term evaluation report in 2020 summarised six lessons learned:

- capacity building of health workers and communities is essential contributes to sustaining service delivery, even during Covid-19;
- flexibility of programme design is critical for implementation in dynamic and varied county contexts;
- partnerships with stakeholders in government, civil society and private sector help leverage financial resources and expertise;
- baseline data allows for identification of needs and prioritisation of limited resources;
- integration of MCH, HIV and GBV programmes is important for optimisation of available resources;
- demand-side interventions such as transport vouchers, Mama Kits and creative male involvement strategies can be effective.

Source: UNFPA End-Term Evaluation Report RMNCAH, 2020

Observations on challenges of UN coordination resonated at evaluation consultations with UNFPA Kenya, but involvement of the different areas of UN expertise was also highlighted as one of the keys to success. While inter-agency coordination in Nairobi may have held potential for improvement, seven important contributions were highlighted by the UNFPA Country Team:

- a) improved access to quality MCH services, community health units, volunteers, and outreach;
- b) provision of equipment, care labs, safe delivery and motherhood based on local needs;
- c) GBV response – upgrade of clinical case management at county level;
- d) strengthened baseline and monitoring data – RMNCAH Dashboard to monitor progress;

- e) advocacy engagement in counties – including male involvement in the campaign ‘*He for She*’;
- f) model for public–private partnerships – involvement of partners such as Philips; and
- g) pilot testing of innovations, e.g., tele-medicine in Lamu.

RMNCAH is also credited by UNFPA Kenya for having produced one of the many important UNFPA innovations that never went through the formal innovation system – ‘Development Impact Bonds’, assessed by UNFPA Kenya to have come about because of the RMNCAH experience.

Development Impact Bonds in the UNFPA variety is described as an innovative financing mechanism involving three to four actors, including a social investor – typically a foundation or a development finance institution that have funding for innovations that give a return on investment. An example of such bonds, referenced by UNFPA Kenya, is USD 7 million sourced as a joint SDG Fund for adolescent health in collaboration between WHO, UNAIDS and the UNFPA. The idea is to reach counties in disadvantaged areas to minimise adolescent girl pregnancies using an app whereby quality of services is rated by users. The process pursued involves three initial steps:

- a) high-level results are defined;
- b) instead of giving a funding grant, a social investor makes funding available for a result; and
- c) outcome funding is then commissioned.

The Danish embassy in Nairobi was not impressed with monitoring of progress and responsiveness of UNFPA Kenya at the time, as per KIs: “Tracking of results did not live up to our expectations. In one particular case, getting UNFPA as the fund-recipient coordinator to provide data on outcomes and outputs for a midterm review, was almost impossible. The sense was that each of the six UN partners felt responsible for their own share of funding only which seemed to us to go rather against the rationale of the project. However, while UN coordination in Nairobi to us was less than impressive, we were encouraged to note some evidence of improved coordination between UN agencies involved in implementation of MCH, HIV and GBV initiatives at county level“.

The process of preparing for the next phase of the bilateral Kenya Country Programme from 2021 to 2025 involved a public tender to select implementing partners for the engagement on SRHR. However, the UNFPA did not submit a proposal for this tender, and the policy priority is currently pursued by a consortium of partners in an engagement entitled ‘Accelerate’.

Conclusions

This case study documents multiple facets of a remarkably close Danish partnership with the UNFPA. High levels of funding in both relative and absolute terms are found to be justified by policy alignment on gender equality and SRHR priorities and strong performance on programming as well as advocacy, despite a challenging context of evolving global divergence throughout the evaluation period.

Joint advocacy efforts were found to be a high-level priority throughout, culminating with the co-hosting of the Nairobi Summit on ICPD+25 in 2019. Considering the global controversy over the mandate, the UNFPA preparing and executing this event with a long-standing partner country in sub-Saharan Africa was a significant outcome, and the evaluation found that the embassy in Denmark has been able to continue building on this in its SRHR advocacy efforts in Kenya and the wider region.

Along with two other 'deep dives' within this UNFPA case study, support to UNFPA Kenya as part of a multi-agency drive for MCH in vulnerable counties was subjected to closer scrutiny, and a mixed picture was found. On one hand, ambitions to use multi-bi funding in the context of a bilateral Country Programme to promote UN coordination mechanisms at field level was not successful. UN agencies delivering as one was widely recognised as a remaining challenge, particularly at Headquarter level. On the other hand, support was also found to have improved coordination at county level and produced important progress in integrated MCH and service delivery for HIV and survivors of GBV.

Levels of Danish funding for the UNFPA have not only grown from 2014 to 2021 but have also evolved from being almost exclusively provided as core funding to including a much larger share of earmarking. The case study involved two deep dives of earmarked support to humanitarian response and innovation. Humanitarian engagement was found to have increased in scope over the evaluation period and to have been provided in a support modality offering degrees of flexibility appreciated by both sides, even if the UNFPA has at times struggled to spend disbursed contributions and adapt to the changing staffing needs that the role as a stronger humanitarian actor entails.

Earmarking represents an opportunity for partners such as Denmark to influence the priorities of the UNFPA. While this is legitimate, it also needs to be exercised with caution. If the increases in earmarking noted over this evaluation period were to continue in similar proportions over the next decade, the effects on the UNFPA's ability to prioritise and implement its core mandate could be severe. Danish funding for UNFPA Supplies aims to ensure that service delivery elements such as contraception are kept high on the agenda for family planning, maternal health and safe abortion.

Even though UNFPA respondents expressed a preference for substantial levels of core funding from Denmark, the evaluation also noted appreciation of Danish

earmarking having made a difference to the UNFPA that was not entirely distorting or detrimental but rather had helped the UNFPA respond to the need for taking a stronger humanitarian role and adapting a culture of innovation. The case of support for innovation shows the relevance of using earmarking as a temporary policy dialogue instrument. Important as innovation may be for the UNFPA, it is well justified to expect a partner to allocate its core funding resources to declared strategic priorities like innovation. For Denmark as a strategic partner of the UNFPA, the notion of earmarking as a temporary rather than a permanent measure raises the issue of future priorities for earmarking. The UNFPA's inclusion of SRHR in climate action would seem to offer an interesting opportunity for Denmark to pursue.

Recommendations

EQ 12: What strategic and practical considerations might Denmark engage in in association with UNFPA/UNICEF to gain a leading role in supporting gender equality and women's and girls' rights?

What institutional barriers might Denmark address in association with UNFPA/UNICEF to gain a leading role in supporting gender equality and women's and girls' rights?

Three potential recommendations emerge from the case study of the UNFPA:

#1 Sustain significant levels of long-term predictable and predominantly core funding for the UNFPA in the context of the policy priority of SRHR under global pressure.

#2 Explore the opportunity of providing long-term predictable earmarked funding for stronger integration of gender equality and SRHR in SDG13 on climate action.

#3 Maintain dialogue with the UNFPA on innovation potential to deliver on the mandate in new and more efficient ways, including through the Danish Tech embassy and other innovation stakeholders.

Annex A: People consulted

	Name	Sex	Designation	Organisation	Location
1	Pernille Brix	F	Team leader, Governance	RDE Nairobi (2016-2020)	Kenya
2	Henrik Larsen	M	Head of Cooperation	RDE Nairobi (2016-2020)	Kenya
3	Anders Thomsen	M	Representative	UNFPA	Kenya
4	Caroline NN	F	Gender Advisor	UNFPA	Kenya
5	Kegan NN	M	Programme Officer	UNFPA	Kenya
6	Andrew Billo	M	Humanitarian Financing and Partnerships Specialist	UNFPA HQ	United States
7	Nadine Cornier	F	Head of the humanitarian office's response and technical support unit	UNFPA HQ	Switzerland
8	Dr Nigina Muntean	F	Head of Innovation Unit	UNFPA HQ	United States
9	Axelander D'Allessandro	M	JPO (Sweden), Innovation Unit	UNFPA HQ	United States
10	Emma Hietaniemi	F	JPO (Finland), Innovation Unit	UNFPA HQ	United States
11	Axelander D'Allessandro	M	JPO (Sweden), Innovation Unit	UNFPA Nicaragua (formerly)	Nicaragua
12	Anne-Sophie Stockmarr Becker	F	Policy Advisor, Permanent Mission of Denmark to the UN in New York	Permanent Mission of Denmark to the UN	United States
13	Klaus Simoni Pedersen	M	Chief of Resource Mobilisation	UNFPA HQ	United States
14	Aasa Dahlvik	F	Resource Mobilisation Specialist	UNFPA HQ	United States
15	Christina Wix-Wagner	F	Policy Adviser	UNFPA HQ	United States
16	Mette Tygesen	F	Head of Department	MFA	Denmark
17	Jacqueline Bryld	F	Chief Adviser for SRHR in Humanitarian Engagement	MFA	Denmark
18	Natascha Skjaldgaard	F	Head of Section	MFA	Denmark
19	Wilfried Rouamba	M	Programme Officer	UNFPA	Benin
20	Helwise BOYA	M	Programme Officer	UNFPA	Benin
21	Celine Mewissen	F	Programme Officer	UNFPA	Benin
22	Ib Petersen	M	Deputy Executive Director	UNFPA	HQ

Annex B: Literature list

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