

Navigating the “New Normal”: First-Ever Virtual Inter-Country GPS Training for Staff

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed our modes of operation, including staff capacity building initiatives, which were previously mainly undertaken through face-face interactions. In order to ensure country-level compliance in the application of policies, procedures and systems related to workplan and programme resource management, the UNFPA Nigeria and Zambia Country Offices undertook their first-ever joint virtual training in the application of the Global Programming System (GPS).

With 84 staff members in attendance, the five-day hands-on training leveraged inter-regional and South-South collaboration between country offices, while utilizing existing technical expertise at HQ, and in both East and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) and West and Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO), using innovative and cost-effective approaches to strengthen staff capacity.

Coordinated by the Zambia Country Office Deputy Representative, Leonard Kamugisha, with technical leadership of the Nigeria Country Office International Operations Manager, Mark Hutchinson, and supported by technical staff from HQ, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Zambia Country Offices, the training exceeded the anticipated outcome and staff expectations by far.

Speaking during the opening session of the training, Nigeria and Zambia Country Representatives Ms. Ulla Mueller and Ms. Gift Malunga appreciated the extensive opportunities provided by HQ and respective regional offices towards ongoing investments in CO staff capacities for effective programme delivery and operational excellence. Both representatives further underscored that UNFPA, as part of the UN system, continues to operate within a resource-constrained environment. As such, there was need to improve efficiencies so as to achieve more with less, especially amidst the COVID-19 “new normal.” mode of operation. At the end of the five-day training, general feedback from participants demonstrated evidence on staff and office-wide adaptability to the “new normal” mode of operation, and in particular new and effective modalities for training, sharing experiences, challenges and lessons learned through inter-office collaboration.

