2024 Annual Report
on the evaluation function

Executive Board Informal Meeting

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# Pact for the Future guiding UNFPA evaluation function

- In line with the Pact for the Future and the 2024 QCPR, <u>the evaluation function adopted a strategic, responsive, dynamic and forward-looking approach</u>.

- Aligned to the Global Digital Compact, <u>IEO provided thought leadership in the ethical and responsible use of AI in evaluation</u> by rolling out the strategy for a GenAI-powered evaluation function.

- <u>IEO continued to nurture multi-stakeholder and intergenerational partnerships in evaluation</u> to improve evaluation capacities/systems that can transform global governance.

The first year of implementation of the 2024 Evaluation Policy

- Rebranded the Evaluation Office as the 'Independent Evaluation Office' (IEO), elevating the positioning and visibility of the office.

- Implemented key initiatives to enhance the independence, quality and coverage of decentralized evaluations:

  - Revised job descriptions and reporting line of regional and country-level M&E staff.

  - Developed an approach to gradually integrate project-level evaluations into the evaluation quality assurance and assessment system.

  - Created a new tracking tool to enable progress monitoring of all types of decentralized evaluations and support their timely completion.

The first year of implementing the 2024 Evaluation Policy

- Expanded <u>humanitarian evaluation capacity</u> at centralized level:

  - Recruited a <u>new Humanitarian Evaluation Specialist</u> (P4)
  - Provided <u>quality assurance to all ongoing CPEs with a humanitarian component</u> and selected humanitarian project evaluations.
  - <u>Centrally managed</u> the first CPE in a protracted crisis context (Yemen).

- Contributed to the <u>revision of the ToR for the Oversight Compliance and Monitoring Committee.</u>

UNFPA
EVALUATION POLICY
2024

Driving evidence-based actions
Delivering rights and choices for all
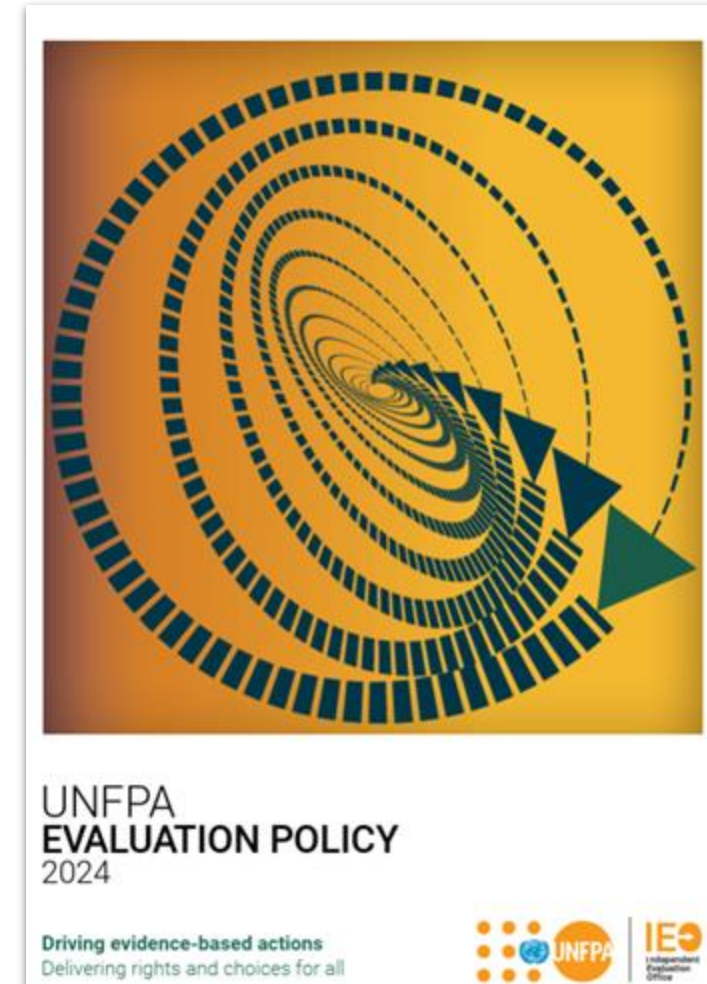
Mitigating risks related to the relocation to Nairobi

- At least 60% of IEO staff (including Director and 3 out of 4 senior P5s) will not relocate to Nairobi.

- Smooth transition without major disruption to the 2024/25 workplan thanks to:
  - staggered transition
  - creation of rosters
  - enhanced IEO organizational 'memory' through enhanced knowledge management system and staff 'overlap'.

- Of the 60% of IEO staff who are not relocating, 40% have already been replaced while 60% are under recruitment.

- By the end of August 2025, the new IEO will be ready to continue delivering in Nairobi.

Overall performance
of the evaluation function

Out of 10 KPIs, 8 are achieved

Key performance indicator	Description	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Overall assessment
1. Financial resources invested in evaluation function	Expenditures for evaluation as a percentage of total programme expenditures	0.69	0.91	0.83	0.96	0.98	0.83 0.94*	0.83 0.87**	0.80	0.80	0.79	Stable trend (target of 1.0 - 1.6 per cent)
2. Human resources for monitoring and evaluation	Percentage of country offices staffed with a monitoring and evaluation focal point or officer	95.9	99.2	96.7	96.6	96.1	97.0	99.0	100	100	98.0	Achieved (target of 95 per cent)
3. Evaluation coverage	Percentage of country offices that conducted a country programme evaluation once every two cycles	--	--	80.0	90.0	97.0	97.3	96.5	95.0	97.3	95.8	Achieved (target of 90 per cent)
4. Evaluation implementation rate	Percentage of programme-level evaluations implemented as planned	--	60.0	55.0	92.0	92.7	88.9	94.4	100	100	100	Achieved (target of 90 per cent)
5. Quality of evaluations	Percentage of programme-level evaluations rated at least 'satisfactory'	77.0	92.0	95.0	80.0	100	100	100	96.0	90.0	90.9	Achieved (target of 90 per cent)
6. Evaluation reports posted on evaluation database	Percentage of completed evaluation reports posted on evaluation database	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	Achieved (target of 100 per cent)
7. Management response submission	Percentage of completed evaluation reports with management response submitted	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	88.9	Not achieved (target of 100 per cent)
8. Implementation of management response	Percentage of management response actions completed	78.0	78.5	84.4	89.5	84.0	90.0	95.0	95.0	94.0	98.0	Achieved (target of 90 per cent)
9. Use of evaluation in programme development	Percentage of new country programme documents whose design was clearly informed by evaluative evidence	--	--	--	79.8	100	100	100	100	100	100	Achieved (target of 95 per cent)
10. Engagement in centralized joint and interagency evaluations	Percentage of joint and interagency evaluations out of total centralized evaluations	-	-	-	-	54.0	57.0	57.0	61.0	58.0	58.8	Achieved (target of 50 per cent)

*Original budgeted allocation for the evaluation function (at central and decentralized level) against the total UNFPA programme expenditure for 2020.

** Original budgeted allocation for the evaluation function (at central and decentralized level) against the total UNFPA programme expenditure for 2021.

KPI 1: Financial resources

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total UNFPA programme budget expenditure*	798.6	763.5	752.9	872.3	933.8	1 027.9	1 086.4	1 218.3	1 295.7	1 274.7
Total expenditure of the evaluation function	5.52	6.94	6.30	8.40	9.13	8.53[a] 9.64[b]	9.03[a] 9.48[b]	9.7	9.8	10.04
Independent Evaluation Office	2.63	3.71	3.36	4.23	3.9	3.2[a] 4.31[b]	3.88[a] 4.33[b]	4.3	4.3	4.46
Decentralized evaluation function	2.89	3.23	2.94	4.17**	5.23	5.33	5.15	5.4	5.5	5.58
Total expenditure of the evaluation function as a percentage of UNFPA programme budget expenditures	*0.69%*	*0.91%*	*0.83%*	*0.96%*	*0.98%*	*0.83%[a] 0.94%[b]*	*0.83%[a] 0.87%[b]*	*0.80%*	*0.80%*	*0.79%*

* Total UNFPA programme budget expenditure is generated from UNFPA statistical and financial reviews. IEO budget is derived from the UNFPA financial system, while the budget for the decentralized function includes the budget for decentralized evaluations, internal and national evaluation capacity development activities, and staffing costs.

** The majority of the increase (from $2.94 million in 2017 to $4.17 million in 2018) can be attributed to improved costing methods, which more accurately capture the full scope of investment in decentralized evaluations.

[a] with COVID-19-related reduction.

[b] without COVID-19-related reduction.

Centralized evaluations

Implementation rate of centralized evaluations during 2024-2025 is 100%

#	Title	Status	Management response issued	Presentation to Executive Board / steering committees
1	Independent evaluation of UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025	Completed	Yes	Presented to the Executive Board at the 2025 First Regular Session
2	Independent Yemen country programme evaluation (2023-2024)	Completed	Yes	Presented to the evaluation reference group in September 2024
3	Review of UNAIDS Joint Programme evaluation and assessments (Phase 1)	Completed	No*	Presented to the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board in December 2024
4	Joint evaluation of the Global Action Plan for Health Lives and Well-Being (SDG 3)	Completed	Yes	Presented to the United Nations Principals of the Global Action Plan signatory agencies in December 2024
5	Inter-agency meta-synthesis to support the implementation of the United Nations Youth Strategy (part 3 on education and employment)	Completed	No*	To be presented at the 2025 ECOSOC Youth Forum
6	Joint synthesis of United Nations system evaluations of SDG 5	Completed	No*	Presented at a Digital Launch Event in May 2024
7	Global SDG Synthesis Coalition: synthesis of evidence on SDG 16 – Peace Pillar	Completed	No*	Presented at the SDG Summit of the Future in September 2024
8	System-wide QCPR evidence summaries	Completed	No*	Shared with Member States during a briefing by the SWEO in September 2024
9	System-wide final evaluation of the Spotlight Initiative	Completed	Not yet	To be presented in 2025
10	Independent evaluation of UNFPA support to the integration of the principles of 'leaving no one behind' and 'reaching those left furthest behind first'	On track	Not yet	To be presented to the Executive Board at the 2026 First Regular Session

* Management responses are only issued for evaluations, and not reviews, meta-analyses and evaluability assessments.

Implementation rate of centralized evaluations during 2024-2025

#	Title	Status	Management response issued	Presentation to Executive Board / steering committees
11	Mid-term evaluation of the UNFPA Supplies Partnership Programme (2022-2030)	On track	Not yet	To be presented to the Supplies Partnership steering committee in 2025
12	Independent evaluation of UNFPA's support to the 2020 round of population and housing censuses	On track	Not yet	To be present to the Executive Board at the 2026 First Regular Session
13	Independent evaluation of the UNFPA capacities in humanitarian action (2019-2024)	On track	Not yet	To be presented to the Executive Board at the 2026 Annual Session
14	Independent evaluation of the UNFPA humanitarian response in Sudan (2023-2024)	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2025
15	Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the response to the humanitarian crisis in Somalia	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2025
16	Synthesis of inter-agency humanitarian evaluations	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2025
17	System-wide evaluation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2025

* Management responses are only issued for evaluations, and not reviews, meta-analyses and evaluability assessments.

Innovation: Ethical and responsible approaches for AI use in evaluation to enhance efficiency, effectiveness and timeliness of evaluations while mitigating potential risks

- IEO continued to pilot AI use in evaluations, including the evaluation of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and the inter-agency meta-synthesis of the United Nations Youth Strategy.

- IEO shaped global discourse on ethical and responsible AI use in evaluation by:

  - Co-convening the UNEG working group on data and AI

  - Contributing to the UNEG paper on ethical principles for AI use in evaluation

  - Engaging in over 25 sessions, panels and consultations on AI use in evaluation

Innovation: Inclusive and utility-focused approaches

The evaluation of UNFPA support to the integration of the principles of 'leaving no one behind' guided by <u>a steering committee composed of members of left-behind populations</u> (persons with disabilities, indigenous populations, refugees, and young people).

Evaluation use to foster change

Independent evaluation of the UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025 provided critical and timely evidence to inform the development of the new Strategic Plan 2026-2029:

- Informed senior management consultations, together with the concurrent regional programme evaluations (RPEs).

- Paved the way for inclusion of a fourth transformative result on demographic resilience in the upcoming Strategic Plan.

Decentralized evaluation system

Systems to improve the quality, capacity, credibility and use of decentralized evaluations

- Updated Quality assessment system, costed evaluation plan guidance and new tracking tool to support the integration of project-level evaluations into the quality assurance and assessment system.

- Ring-fencing mechanism continued to safeguard sustainable financing for implementation of CPEs.

- Cross-regional evaluation capacity development workshop and regional learning events to boost the decentralized evaluation function, reaching over 200 staff.

Enhancing coherence in the United Nations system evaluation functions

Enhancing coherence in the UN system's evaluation functions

- UNEG: Vice Chair, Co-coordinator of 2 WGs, member in 6 WGs

- IAHE: Active member

- Support for System-Wide Evaluation Office (SWEO):

  - IEO extended the loan of an evaluation advisor (P5) to manage the evaluation of i) Spotlight Initiative and ii) UN Disability Inclusion Strategy

  - IEO engaged in the management group for the development of evidence summaries and evidence gap maps for the 2024 QCPR

  - IEO provided substantial input in the formulation of the SWEO evaluation policy.

Enhancing coherence in the UN system's evaluation functions

- Interagency and joint evaluations:

  - UNFPA exceeded Funding Compact target, with 59% of centralized evaluations either joint or inter-agency.

  - UNFPA country offices actively engaged in and provided support to UNSDCF and joint evaluations

- UN SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator: For the sixth consecutive year, UNFPA "exceeded requirements" of the UN SWAP evaluation performance indicator (composite score of 10.0).

Multi-stakeholder partnerships for national evaluation capacity development

Advocating for influential evaluation during the Decade of Action (Eval4Action campaign)

IEO continued to co-lead the Eval4Action campaign at the global level, together with EvalYouth and Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation, with ROs supporting regional mobilization.

- 170 global partners, 1200 Youth in Evaluation manifesto signatories

- Second virtual 'Youth in Evaluation' week 2024: 50 events, 9 languages, 6 regions

- 45 organizations, including 17 UN agencies, completed self-assessments on the Youth in Evaluation standards

- Recognition of 6 "Youth in Evaluation Super Champions", at the first Youth in Evaluation Awards

Multi-stakeholder partnerships for
national evaluation capacity development

- <u>Commitment to United Nations Resolutions</u>: UNFPA aligns with General Assembly resolutions and its own evaluation policy to strengthen national evaluation capacities in partnership with major stakeholders, including United Nations entities.

- <u>Global Evaluation Coalitions</u>: IEO actively participated in:
  - EvalPartners Executive Committee (with WHO and UNAIDS)
  - EvalGender+ Management Group (with UN Women)
  - Global Evaluation Initiative Implementation Committee (led by World Bank)
  - Global Evaluation Forum organizing committee

- IEO supported strategic initiatives and events to mobilize a range of stakeholders on strengthening <u>inclusive national evaluation systems</u>.

- IEO continued to <u>support Global EvalYouth strategic priorities</u>, expanded the engagement of young evaluators in decentralized evaluations (14 CPEs and 4 RPEs).

Conclusions

Evaluation progress and successes
- Sustained significant improvement in evaluation systems, processes, and capacities, including innovative approaches.
- Phased expansion of quality assurance and assessment to project-level evaluations.
- Greater efficiency through the use of individual consultants and responsible AI in centralized evaluations.
- Evaluation quality remained robust despite a more rigorous assessment system.
- Success driven by IEO restructuring, collaboration with PD and ROs,, capacity development, enhanced guidance, quality assurance, technical support, and digital innovation.

Challenges and limitations
- Lack of dedicated M&E staff and appropriate professional levels in several country offices.
- Limited capacity of regional offices to provide quality assurance for all types of decentralized evaluations.
- Scarcity of national expertise combining evaluation skills and UNFPA technical knowledge.
- Challenges in humanitarian contexts and need for increased humanitarian evaluation capacity.
- CPEs are not always completed in a timely manner.

Future direction

- <u>Consolidate</u> internal and external achievements.

- <u>Adapt</u> to respond to the changing environment and continue to remain relevant.

- <u>Leverage</u> efficiencies (including AI) and strategic partnerships.

My last Executive Board meeting

Thanks to the Executive Board for its rigorous and consistent support to the independence of the evaluation function at UNFPA, and to IEO's initiatives throughout my tenure as the Director.

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