



2023 Annual Report on the evaluation function

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2023: A pivotal year for the evolution of the evaluation function

- Building on the vision of the Summit for the Future, the evaluation function embraced a strategic, responsive, and agile approach to provide timely evidence for decision-making.
- Innovative evaluation approaches saw significant progress, including the piloting of responsible and ethical use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in select centralized evaluations and meta-synthesis exercises.
- IEO continued to nurture multi-stakeholder and intergenerational partnerships in evaluation to improve evaluation capacities/systems that can transform global governance.
- An independent peer review of the evaluation function shaped the revision of the evaluation policy, endorsed by the Executive Board in February 2024.

Early action to implement revised Evaluation Policy

- ED sent Memo to all HQ Directors, Regional Directors and CO representatives
- IEO restructured its existing human resources into three specialized teams:
 - Decentralized Evaluation: dedicated to strengthen systems, methodological rigor and capacities for effective decentralized evaluations.
 - Humanitarian Evaluation: dedicated to enhance management of evaluations in complex humanitarian settings.
 - Communication, Knowledge Management & AI: dedicated to improve the relevance, efficiency, and use of evaluation.
- The evaluation quality assessment system revamped, setting stricter standards for quality evaluations, ensuring greater relevance and utility.
- New evaluation handbook launched for improved methodical rigor (focusing on Theory of Change) and utility of country programme evaluations (CPEs).
- New humanitarian evaluation compendium developed to provide specific guidance on evaluating humanitarian action.

Early action to implement revised Evaluation Policy

- Enhanced collaboration and coordination between the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) and the Office of Audit and Investigation Services (OAIS)
- Oversight Compliance Monitoring Committee to monitor implementation of centralized evaluations' Management responses
- Process initiated to revise of the Job Description (JD) and reporting line of regional and country level M&E staff to further safeguard the independence and improve the credibility of decentralized evaluations



Overall performance of the evaluation function

Out of 10 KPIs, 9 are achieved

		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Overall assessment	
Key performance indicator	Description												
1. Financial resources invested in evaluation function	Budget for evaluation as a percentage of total UNFPA programme budget	0.45	0.69	0.91	0.83	0.96	0.98	0.83 0.94*	0.83 0.87*	0.80	0.80	Stable trend	
2. Human resources for monitoring and evaluation	Offices staffed with a monitoring and evaluation focal point or officer	100.0	95.9	99.2	96.7	96.6	96.1	97.0	99.0	100	100	Achieved	
3. Evaluation coverage	Percentage of country offices that have conducted a country programme evaluation once every two cycles	--	--	--	80.0	90.0	97.0	97.3	96.5	95	97.3	Achieved (target of 90 per cent)	
4. Evaluation implementation rate	Percentage of planned evaluations being implemented	--	--	60.0	55.0	92.0	92.7	88.9	94.4	100	100	Achieved (target of 90 per cent)	
5. Quality of evaluations	Percentage of evaluations rated "good" and above	50.0	77.0	92.0	95.0	80.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	96	90	Achieved (target of 90 per cent)	
6. Evaluation reports posted on Evaluation Database	Percentage of completed evaluation reports posted on Evaluation Database	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100	100	Achieved	
7. Management response submission	Percentage of completed evaluation reports submitted with management response	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100	100	Achieved	
8. Implementation of management response	Percentage of management response actions completed	76.5	78.0	78.5	84.4	89.5	84.0	90.0	95.0	95.0	94.0	Achieved (target of 85 per cent)	
9. Use of evaluation in programme development	Percentage of new country programme documents whose design was clearly informed by evaluation	--	--	--	--	79.8	100.0	100.0	100	100	100	Achieved (target of 95 per cent)	
10. Engagement in centralized system-wide and joint evaluations	Percentage of joint and system-wide evaluations out of total centralized evaluations	-	-	-	-	-	54	57	57	61	58	Achieved (target of 50 per cent)	

KPI 1: Financial resources

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total UNFPA programme budget expenditure*	820.2	798.6	763.5	752.9	872.3	933.8	1 027.9	1 086.4	1 218.3	1 295.7
Total expenditure of the evaluation function	3.69	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
<i>Independent Evaluation Office</i>	2.38	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
<i>Decentralized evaluation function</i>	1.31**	2.89	3.23	2.94	4.17***	5.23	5.33	5.15	5.4	5.5
Total expenditure of the evaluation function as a percentage of UNFPA programme budget expenditures	0.45%	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%

Centralized evaluations

Implementation rate of centralized evaluations during 2023-2024 is **100%** (58% interagency or joint)

#	Title	Status	Management response issued	Presentation to Executive Board/ steering committees
1	Evaluation of UNFPA support to adolescents and youth	Completed	Yes	Presented to the Executive Board at the 2023 annual regular session
2	Evaluation of UNFPA support to population dynamics and data	Completed	Yes	Presented to the Executive Board at the 2023 annual regular session
3	Formative evaluation of the organizational resilience of UNFPA in light of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic	Completed	Yes	Presented to the Executive Board at the 2024 annual regular session
4	<u>Joint</u> evaluation of integration of HIV into primary health care	Completed	Not yet	To be presented to the UNAIDS Board in December 2024 along with other evaluation items.
5	<u>Joint</u> evaluation of UNICEF-UNFPA Programme to End Child Marriage	Completed	Yes	Presented to the Joint Programme Steering Committee in 2023
6	<u>Interagency</u> meta-synthesis of evidence of SDG – Partnership pillar	Completed	No*	Presented at side-event of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (July 2023) and the SDG Summit (September 2023)
7	<u>Interagency</u> meta-synthesis to support the implementation of the United Nations Youth Strategy (part 2 on peace and resilience building)	Completed	No*	Presented at the ECOSOC Youth Forum 2023
8	<u>Interagency meta</u> -synthesis on SDG 5	Completed	No*	To be presented to the interagency launch event in 2024
9	<u>Interagency</u> evaluation of Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being (SDG 3)	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2024
10	Evaluation of UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025	On Track	Not yet	To be presented to the Executive Board at the 2025 first regular session
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

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

Innovation in evaluation approaches

1. Leveraging ethical and responsible use of AI to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, timeliness, and utility of evaluations

- IEO developed and rolled out a first-of-its-kind strategy for a generative AI-powered evaluation function
- IEO piloted AI use in
 - Desk review of the evaluation of the UNFPA strategic plan 2022-2025
 - The third interagency meta-synthesis supporting the UN Youth Strategy
- IEO took leadership by convening the first UNEG working group on data and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

2. Innovative, participatory, inclusive and utility-focused approaches

- The evaluation of UNFPA support to adolescents and youth (presented to the Executive Board in 2023) actively and meaningfully involved young people throughout the evaluation processes.
- Documented lessons learned in the publication, *“Meaningful youth engagement in evaluation: Multiplying the transformative power of evaluation, Lessons from UNFPA experience”* expected to guide other UN agencies and partners.
- Initiated an evaluation on UNFPA's integration of "Leave No One Behind" and "Reaching the Furthest Behind" principles, the approach prioritizes social inclusion, gender equality, and amplifying marginalized voices.

Decentralized evaluation system

Decentralized evaluation system

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

- Multi-year costed evaluation plans (reviewed by IEO) accompanied all new country programme documents (CPDs)
- Ring-fencing mechanism continued to safeguard sustainable financing for implementation of CPEs.
- Cross-Regional Workshop: IEO, in collaboration with regional offices and PSD, hosted the first-ever cross-regional evaluation capacity-building workshop in Türkiye, equipping 30 regional and country M&E staff with the competencies to effectively manage evaluations.
- Adaptive Evaluation Webinars: Supplemented by a guidance note on adaptive evaluation for practical methods and tools, IEO delivered webinars on adaptive approaches to evaluation, attended by 120 M&E staff.
- Regional Learning Events: Regional offices, with IEO support, facilitated regional learning events and webinars to boost the decentralized evaluation function, reaching over 100 staff with different responsibilities.
- Customized Solutions: IEO provided customized technical support to further strengthen evaluation capacity, with special attention to offices with capacity gaps.
- Evidence from evaluations drive positive changes: Country Programme Evaluations yield valuable insights, leading to positive programmatic and operational changes.



Enhancing coherence in the UN system evaluation functions

Enhancing coherence in the UN system's evaluation functions

- Commitment to UN Reform: IEO actively engaged with other UN agencies, through joint and inter-agency evaluations, UNEG, Inter-agency Humanitarian Evaluation Group, and the UNAIDS co-sponsor evaluation group.
 - Member of the Global SDG Synthesis Coalition by participating in three of the five active evaluation synthesis 'pillars' – on partnerships, people and peace
 - The IEO, alongside the UNICEF Evaluation Office, co-led an inter-agency meta-synthesis on Priority 5 on peace and resilience building of the UN Youth Strategy
- Support for System-Wide Evaluation Office (SWEO)
 - IEO provided critical support by seconding a P5 senior evaluation advisor during the Office's transition to core budget in 2025.
- Interagency and joint evaluations: UNFPA exceeded Funding Compact target, with 58% of centralized evaluations being joint or inter-agency.
- IEO amplified its role in UNEG with increasing leadership positions: holds UNEG vice-chairship and co-chairs three working groups (Data & AI, Young/Emerging Evaluators, and Meta-Synthesis)
- UNFPA offices actively engaged in and provided support to UNSDCF and joint evaluations at the country level

United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

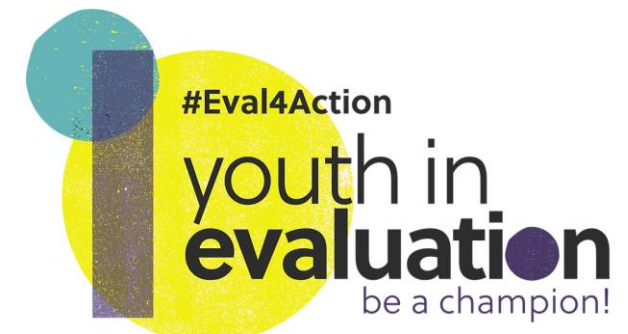
- UN SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator: For the fifth consecutive year, UNFPA "exceeded requirements" of the UN SWAP evaluation performance indicator (composite score of 10.7).
- Disability Inclusion: While there's variation in how disability is addressed, all evaluations completed in 2023 included some analysis of how programmes consider persons with disabilities.

**Multi-stakeholder partnerships
for national evaluation capacity
development**

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

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

- 170 global partners
- 1,000 signatories to the Youth manifesto
- Youth in Evaluation standards to implement Youth manifesto launched at the inaugural Youth in Evaluation Week
- First virtual Youth in Evaluation Week included 50 worldwide events, drawing over 1,700 participants.
- The campaign championed youth leadership in evaluation and amplified youth voices in evaluation processes.



Multi-stakeholder partnerships for national evaluation capacity development

- Commitment to UN Resolutions: UNFPA aligns with General Assembly resolutions and its own evaluation policy to strengthen national evaluation capacities in partnership with major stakeholders, including UN entities.
- Global Evaluation Coalitions: IEO actively participated in:
 - EvalPartners Executive Committee (with WHO)
 - 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 and share good practices and lessons learned on strengthening inclusive national evaluation systems.
- IEO continued to support Global EvalYouth strategic priorities

Conclusions

Evaluation progress and successes

- Sustained significant improvement in UNFPA evaluation systems, processes, and capacities, including use of innovative approaches.
- Notable gains across all key performance indicators, several exceeding targets.
- Success driven by collaboration, capacity development, guidance, quality assurance, and technical support.

Challenges and limitations


- Inconsistent evaluation practices in decentralized units, often due to capacity constraints.
- Lack of dedicated M&E staff and appropriate professional levels in some country offices.
- Scarcity of national expertise combining evaluation skills and UNFPA technical knowledge.
- Challenges in humanitarian contexts and need for increased humanitarian evaluation capacity.

Future direction

- The 2024 evaluation policy will ensure that the evaluation function is even more fit for purpose, thereby accelerating the delivery of UNFPA strategic plans.
- Phased approach to ensure quality assurance and assessment for all decentralized evaluations.

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