



Statement by Marco Segone
Director, Independent Evaluation Office
United Nations Population Fund
on
Item on evaluation

2023 Annual Report on Evaluation

UNFPA/UNDP/UNOPS Executive Board

Annual Session 2024

5 June 2024

Mr. President,

Distinguished Members of the Executive Board,

It is my pleasure to present the 2023 annual report on the evaluation function. The annual report presents the performance of the evaluation function at centralized and decentralized levels, the contribution to coherence among evaluation functions across the United Nations, and to national evaluation capacity development.

The report also presents the Independent Evaluation Office's 2024 programme of work and budget.

Mr. President, and distinguished delegates,

Please allow me to begin with a few words on the positioning of the evaluation function as a catalyst for accelerating the delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UNFPA strategic plan. Guided by the vision of the Summit for the Future, the evaluation function embraced a strategic, responsive and agile approach to provide more relevant and timely evidence for informed decision-making, adaptation and action.

To enhance organizational decision-making and learning within a complex and dynamic environment, the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) has embraced innovative methods, utilizing participatory, inclusive, and utility-focused approaches.

IEO is pioneering the ethical use of generative artificial intelligence to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, timeliness, and utility of evaluations. To that end, IEO developed and rolled out a strategy for a generative AI-powered evaluation to advance the leverage the use of ethical and responsible generative artificial intelligence while minimizing risks. In addition, IEO is already taking practical actions by, for example, piloting the responsible use of artificial intelligence in the evaluation of UNFPA strategic plan, as well as in the third interagency meta-synthesis supporting the implementation of the United Nations Youth Strategy.

In support of transforming global governance, the IEO continued to nurture multi-stakeholder and intergenerational partnerships in evaluation through evaluation capacities and systems strengthening initiatives. To amplify young voices and foster their

leadership potential in evaluation, IEO played a vital role in setting global benchmarks for the meaningful youth engagement in evaluation.

Mr. President and distinguished delegates,

To jumpstart the implementation of the revised evaluation policy endorsed by the Executive Board 4 months ago, IEO already took several concrete steps. To optimize effectiveness and efficiency, the existing human resources were restructured by creating dedicated and specialized teams focused on a) decentralized evaluations; b) humanitarian evaluations, and c) communication, knowledge management, and artificial intelligence.

Another key development is the rebranding of the Evaluation Office to Independent Evaluation Office. This strategic decision reinforces the office's independent position, strengthening the credibility of the entire evaluation function.

To ensure the delivery of high-quality evaluations, IEO revamped the evaluation quality assurance and assessment system, setting stricter standards to increase the relevance and utility of evaluations. IEO also released a new evaluation handbook, guidance on humanitarian evaluation, and guidance on adaptive evaluation, providing practical tools to effectively manage evaluations in different contexts. In parallel, in collaboration with regional offices and Programme Division, IEO conducted cross-regional and region-specific workshops on key evaluation themes, strengthening evaluation capabilities at the decentralized level.

Mr. President and distinguished delegates,

I will now present a summary of the status of the performance of the evaluation function measured across ten key performance indicators.

I am pleased to report that the results for 2023 continue demonstrating a strong positive trajectory, with nine out of ten indicators achieving or surpassing targets.

In relation to investment on the evaluation function, evaluation spending reached 0.80% of total programme expenditure, continuing a stable trend towards the revised evaluation policy's minimum target. This showcases UNFPA's continued commitment to strengthening the evaluation function.

Monitoring and evaluation staffing remained stable with all offices staffed with either a monitoring and evaluation officer or focal point.

Regarding evaluation coverage, 97% of offices conducted at least one country programme evaluation within two cycles. While completed country programme evaluations have decreased compared to 2022, this is due to natural variations in country programme cycles and does not indicate a decline in commitment.

Regarding quality of evaluation reports, 90% of evaluations were quality-assessed as 'good' or higher, showcasing effective quality assurance. Significant improvement has also been seen in the extent to which evaluations are gender and disability responsive.

Like previous years, management response implementation remained very high, with an annual implementation rate of actions reaching 94%. Furthermore, all country programme documents developed in 2023 were informed by evaluative evidence, demonstrating increased utility.

Overall, performance across all key indicators was strong. This was achieved through collaboration with relevant business units and regional offices, capacity development, targeted guidance, quality assurance, and technical support.

However, further efforts are needed to address capacity limitations in several offices, including addressing gaps in national evaluation capacities. The growing humanitarian portfolio necessitate increased capacity for managing and conducting humanitarian evaluations. Additionally, while the quality of Country Programme Evaluations has improved, further efforts are needed to refine their strategic framing to ensure they better inform strategic direction and priorities.

Mr. President, and distinguished delegates,

Regarding centralized evaluations, I am pleased to report that 100% centralized evaluations scheduled for 2023-2024 are either completed or on track.

As part of its commitment to United Nations development system reform, UNFPA is actively enhancing coherence within the United Nations development system's evaluation functions through meaningful involvement in joint and inter-agency evaluations. In alignment with the QCPR Framework, 58% of centralized evaluations are either joint or system-wide, surpassing the recommended commitment.

In 2023, IEO co-led an inter-agency meta-synthesis with UNICEF on the United Nations Youth Strategy, and actively participates in the Global SDG Synthesis Coalition established by UNDP. As a member of the management group, IEO participated in three of the five evaluation synthesis ‘pillars’ – on partnerships, people and peace. The syntheses are aimed at offering evidence and lessons to accelerate progress towards the SDG.

Recognizing the strategic importance of the United Nations System-wide Evaluation Office, IEO provided crucial support to the Office through the secondment of a P5 senior evaluation advisor.

IEO also holds various leadership roles at the United Nations Evaluation Group, including its vice-chairship and co-chairs three working groups: on data and artificial intelligence; on young and emerging evaluators; and on meta-synthesis.

Mr. President, and distinguished delegates,

Now please allow me to say a few words on the evaluation function’s work on supporting national evaluation capacity development and multi-stakeholder engagement, a central pillar of the evaluation policy.

IEO continued to be a member of global evaluation coalitions, including the EvalPartners Executive Committee representing the United Nations system together with WHO; the EvalGender+ Management Group, representing the United Nations system together with UN Women; the Global Evaluation Initiative Implementation Committee, led by the World Bank and UNDP; and the Global Evaluation Forum organizing committee.

IEO continued to co-lead the Eval4Action campaign at the global and regional levels; supported strategic initiatives and events such as the inaugural Youth in Evaluation week; and mobilized a range of stakeholders, including parliamentarians, to strengthen inclusive national evaluation systems.

IEO continued to advance the meaningful participation of youth in evaluation and build the professional capacity of young evaluators. In particular, IEO together with Eval4Action partners supported the development and launch of standards for the meaningful engagement of youth in evaluation.

Mr. President,

As UNFPA deliberates on the mid-term review of the strategic plan, evaluation plays a pivotal role in ensuring the organization meets its strategic priorities. The revised evaluation policy comes at a crucial moment, equipping UNFPA to deliver credible evidence about the effectiveness of its action and accountability for results within a rapidly changing landscape.

A major step forward in 2024, as reflected in the revised policy, is the gradual inclusion of all decentralized evaluation categories (including project-level and humanitarian) in the enhanced quality assurance and assessment system. This will incrementally increase the volume of evaluations undergoing rigorous quality control.

Maintaining the momentum across the key performance indicators therefore requires the adaptability of the evaluation function and enhanced capacities at both regional and country levels, particularly in humanitarian evaluation. As already informed, UNFPA will implement a phased approach to ensure quality assurance and assessment for all decentralized evaluations.

Going forward, IEO programme of work will continue to generate learning and knowledge, especially in areas where evaluation evidence is essential to accelerate the delivery of the strategic plan.

Mr. President, this concludes my presentation. I thank the Executive Board for its continued support and guidance.