

Adapting evaluation questions to the COVID-19 pandemic

UNFPA Evaluation Office

February 2021



What is this guidance about?

This guidance will **help evaluation managers and evaluators** to better assess the extent to which UNFPA has adapted its interventions to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure an **equitable and sustainable recovery**

What is this guidance about?

It provides guidance on how to adapt areas of inquiry to assess the **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and coordination**, and **sustainability** of country programmes and other interventions

Why is this guidance important?

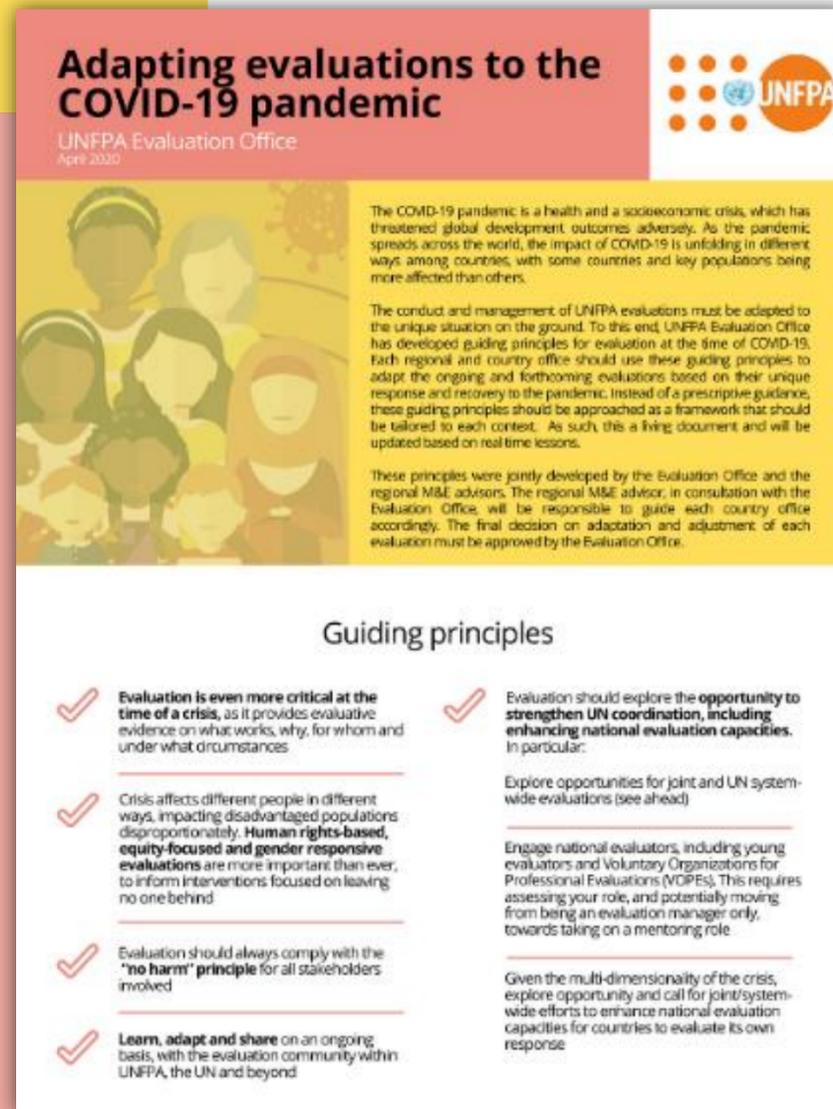
UNFPA programmes have been considerably adjusted to respond to the complex COVID-19 crisis

To better align evaluations to the changing programmatic focus, evaluators must **adjust and fine tune evaluation questions to ensure continued relevance, rigour and quality of evaluations**

Companion Guide

Read this resource together with the guidance on how to adapt evaluations to the COVID-19 pandemic (2020)

It details how to adjust the conduct and management of evaluations during the pandemic, in line with the local context



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The COVID-19 pandemic is a health and a socioeconomic crisis, which has threatened global development outcomes adversely. As the pandemic spreads across the world, the impact of COVID-19 is unfolding in different ways among countries, with some countries and key populations being more affected than others.

The conduct and management of UNFPA evaluations must be adapted to the unique situation on the ground. To this end, UNFPA Evaluation Office has developed guiding principles for evaluation at the time of COVID-19. Each regional and country office should use these guiding principles to adapt the ongoing and forthcoming evaluations based on their unique response and recovery to the pandemic. Instead of a prescriptive guidance, these guiding principles should be approached as a framework that should be tailored to each context. As such, this a living document and will be updated based on real time lessons.

These principles were jointly developed by the Evaluation Office and the regional M&E advisors. The regional M&E advisor, in consultation with the Evaluation Office, will be responsible to guide each country office accordingly. The final decision on adaptation and adjustment of each evaluation must be approved by the Evaluation Office.

Guiding principles

- ✓ **Evaluation is even more critical at the time of a crisis**, as it provides evaluative evidence on what works, why, for whom and under what circumstances
- ✓ Crisis affects different people in different ways, impacting disadvantaged populations disproportionately. **Human rights-based, equity-focused and gender responsive evaluations** are more important than ever, to inform interventions focused on leaving no one behind
- ✓ Evaluation should always comply with the **"no harm" principle** for all stakeholders involved
- ✓ **Learn, adapt and share** on an ongoing basis, with the evaluation community within UNFPA, the UN and beyond

- ✓ Evaluation should explore the **opportunity to strengthen UN coordination, including enhancing national evaluation capacities**. In particular:
 - Explore opportunities for joint and UN system-wide evaluations (see ahead)
 - Engage national evaluators, including young evaluators and Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluations (VOPEs). This requires assessing your role, and potentially moving from being an evaluation manager only, towards taking on a mentoring role.
 - Given the multi-dimensionality of the crisis, explore opportunity and call for joint/system-wide efforts to enhance national evaluation capacities for countries to evaluate its own response

Examples of evaluation questions

The guidance presents evaluation questions under various evaluation criteria, that integrate COVID-19 realities

☒ **Relevance**

☒ **Effectiveness**

☒ **Efficiency**

☒ **Coordination and coherence**

☒ **Sustainability**

These questions are not an exhaustive list. They are meant to stimulate further reflection on meaningful evaluation questions that consider COVID-19 implications in the local context

The equity principle should remain paramount among all evaluation questions

Examples of evaluation questions

Relevance



To what extent has the country office been able to respond to changes in **national needs and priorities**, including those of **vulnerable or marginalized groups**, entailed by the crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic?



To what extent have UNFPA programmes ensured a flexible and adaptive approach to ensure access to a continuum of comprehensive life-saving sexual and reproductive health and GBV prevention and protection services as part of the COVID-19 response and recovery efforts?



To what extent were the short-term requests for COVID-19 response balanced against mid-term recovery needs?



To what extent have UNFPA programmes ensured addressing the changing needs of beneficiaries as part of the COVID-19 response and recovery efforts?



To what extent do the UNFPA COVID-19 response and recovery efforts conform to the principle of leaving no one behind and reaching those furthest behind first?

Examples of evaluation questions

Effectiveness



To what extent were the UNFPA country programme intended **results achieved**, taking into account potential changes made to the initial results framework due to the COVID-19 crisis?



To what extent and in what ways has UNFPA been able to ensure continuity of sexual and reproductive health services and interventions (including ensuring the supply of modern contraceptives and reproductive health commodity), and addressing GBV and harmful practices as part of the COVID-19 crisis response and recovery efforts?



To what extent has UNFPA ensured vulnerable and marginalized groups (such as young women and girls, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, etc.) have the information they need, are protected against violence and have access to life-saving services?



To what extent has UNFPA systematically incorporated and implemented data-driven, gender responsive and human rights-based interventions to maintain essential services, including quality sexual reproductive health and GBV prevention and protection services (including mental health and psychosocial support), within the framework of the COVID-19 response and recovery efforts?

Examples of evaluation questions

Efficiency



To what extent was the mix of resources, **procedures and implementation modalities** used by the country office adapted to the COVID-19 context?



To what extent was the country office able to adapt the level and the allocation of its resources with a view to mitigating the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis?



To what extent did UNFPA systems, processes and procedures (particularly in terms of finance, partnerships, logistics, procurement and human resources) foster or, on the contrary, impede the adaptation of the country programme to changes triggered by the COVID-19 crisis?



To what extent has UNFPA appropriately used innovative technologies to respond to the COVID-19 crisis and mitigate its effects?

Examples of evaluation questions

Coordination and coherence

- ✓ To what extent have issues pertaining to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, been adequately integrated and addressed in joint COVID-19 response and recovery programming?
- ✓ To what extent has the UNFPA country office provided leadership in GBV and SRHR coordination and contributed to effective coordination and complementarity within the framework of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) collective response to the COVID-19 crisis?

Examples of evaluation questions

Sustainability

- ✓ To what extent has UNFPA been successful in managing the threats to the sustainability of results caused by the COVID-19 crisis?
- ✓ To what extent have UNFPA COVID-19 response and recovery efforts contributed to strengthening national capacities and systems in the fields of SRHR, GBV prevention and protection and data?

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Background

At an early stage in the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Evaluation Office developed a guidance note on 'Adapting evaluations to the COVID-19 pandemic: Guiding principles and their practical implications'. The guidance sought to help UNFPA country offices to adjust and provide alternative approaches, methods and considerations to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on evaluations. Encouragingly, the evaluations conducted since then have made notable efforts in reflecting and applying those guiding principles in the contextual analysis, methods, and data collection schemes.

However, owing to the protracted nature of the COVID-19 crisis, the environment in which UNFPA programmes are implemented has changed significantly. The increasingly complex and dynamic contexts have led UNFPA offices to revisit, redesign, and repurpose programmatic focus, priorities, and modes of engagement. Correspondingly, resources have been reallocated and new programmes and activities have been implemented to respond to emerging needs and to ensure an equitable and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, across development, humanitarian, and fragile contexts.

This calls for adapting the evaluation questions in order to assess the extent to which UNFPA has adapted its interventions to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure an equitable and sustainable recovery.



COVID-19 related results indicators by strategic priorities

Strategic priority	Indicators
Continuity of sexual and reproductive health services and interventions, including protection of the health workforce	Proportion of countries where pre COVID-19 levels of institutional deliveries are maintained Number of women and young people who have utilized integrated sexual and reproductive health services in COVID-19 affected countries
Addressing gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices	Number of women and girls, including women and girls with disabilities, subject to violence who have accessed essential GBV services in COVID-19 affected countries Number of countries that have included in their preparedness, response and recovery plans for COVID-19 measures to address GBV
Ensuring the supply of modern contraceptives and other reproductive health commodities	Proportion of COVID-19 affected countries that reported no contraceptive stock-outs Total couple-years of protection for contraceptives procured by UNFPA, including condoms

Source: UNFPA COVID-19 Global Response Plan, June 2020

Additional evaluation questions are available in the guidance note

Access it at

unfpa.org/evaluation



Contact UNFPA Evaluation Office



evaluation.office@unfpa.org



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