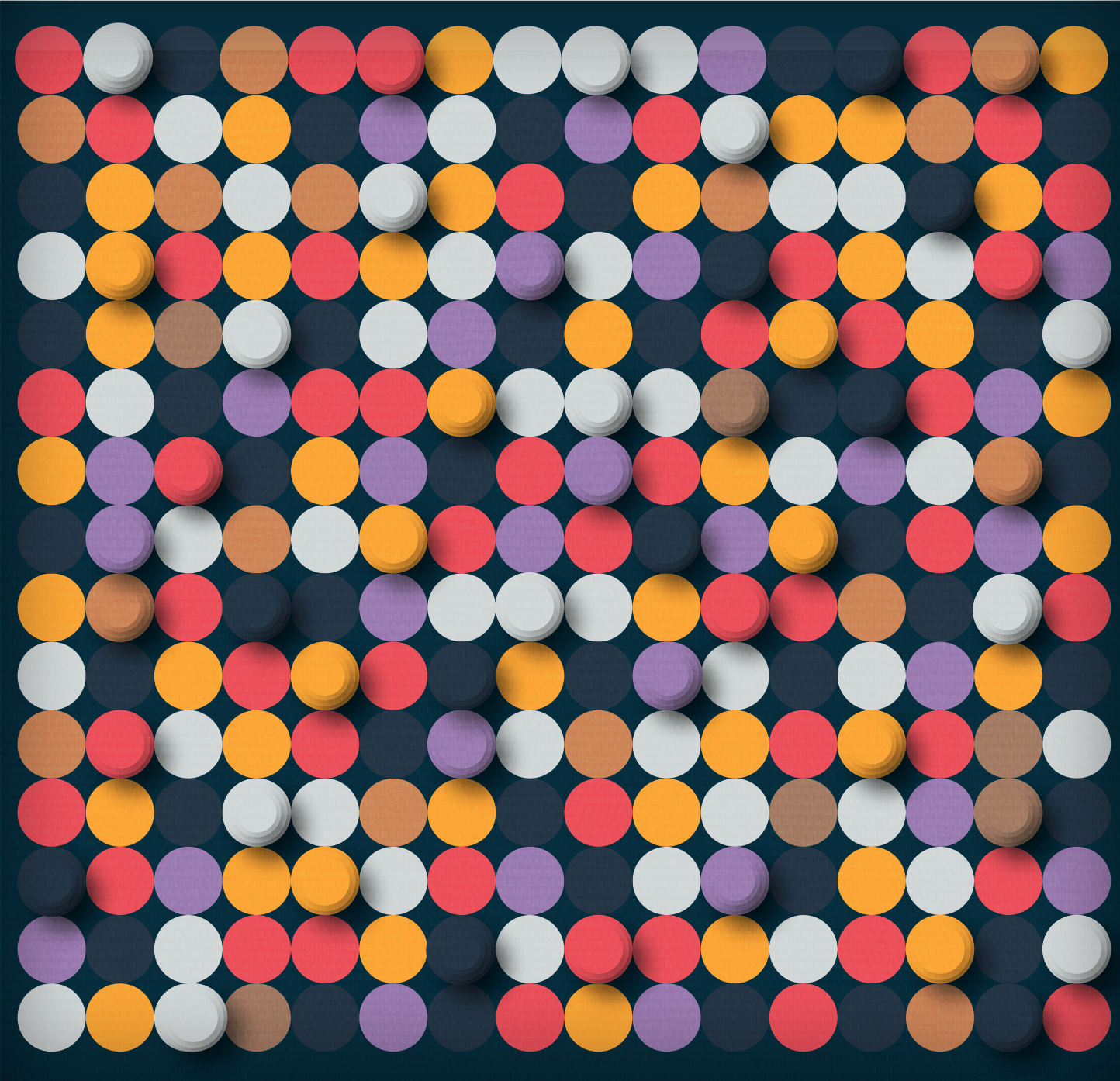


# Costed evaluation plan

Guidance and template



2024



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## Introduction

The [evaluation policy 2024](#) states that the use of evaluative evidence is enhanced by the selection of the appropriate type of evaluation for learning and accountability needs: *“the goal of evaluation is to provide timely, relevant, objective and credible evidence to inform strategic decisions by targeted users”*.

Country and regional offices must develop a costed evaluation plan (CEP) as part of their country or regional programme document. The CEP is multi-year and aligned with the programme cycle; it is annexed to the programme document submitted for Executive Board approval.

The planned evaluations should be strategic, feasible, prioritized and cost-effective with a view to generating useful evaluative evidence for UNFPA and its partners. The CEP should result from a careful analysis of the areas in which further knowledge is required to support the achievement of the priorities of the country/regional programme towards the acceleration of the UNFPA transformative results.

The CEP is also used to monitor the implementation of evaluation activities and is a tool to allocate sufficient funds to allow high quality and credible evaluations.

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), as a custodian of the evaluation function, oversees and reports on the implementation of country and regional evaluation plans to UNFPA senior management and the Executive Board.

The present guidance outlines the respective roles and responsibilities of the country offices, regional offices, and the IEO in the development, monitoring and revision of CEPs. It includes the CEP core components, budget considerations, and effective management practices, as well as a template.

# 1. Process for developing a costed evaluation plan

The development of the CEP involves a careful process starting with the identification of evidence gaps and knowledge needs through a consultative process with country office (CO) staff and relevant stakeholders.

**UNFPA applies the UNEG definition of an evaluation:**

“An evaluation is an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyzes the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders.”

As a result, only the following evaluation activities should be included in the CEP:

- Country programme evaluation (CPE)
- Multi-country programme evaluation (MCPE)
- Regional programme evaluation (RPE)
- Projects and programme evaluation
- Thematic evaluation
- Humanitarian evaluation
- Developmental evaluation
- Joint, inter-agency and system-wide evaluation
- United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Evaluation (UNSDCF)
- Evaluability assessment
- Meta-synthesis/Meta-analysis of evaluation
- Evaluation of public national policies, strategies and action plans (UNFPA supported evaluation)

**Important:** Monitoring and research activities such as reviews, baseline/endline surveys or any other surveys, annual and country programme reviews, assessments, census, studies, etc., must be presented in a separate monitoring plan.

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

The **CO representative** or head of office leads and approves the development of the CEP and is accountable for its implementation.

The monitoring and evaluation (**M&E**) **officer** or focal point in consultation with the **CO programme team** and other **key stakeholders** identifies the evidence gaps and knowledge needs, as a preamble to inform the selection of the most relevant evaluations. This process should also include a reflection on the timing, purpose, cost and funding.

The **regional monitoring and evaluation advisor (RMEA)** reviews the CEP prior to the submission of the country programme document (CPD) to which the CEP is annexed to the **Peer Review Committee (PRC)**. The CEP lists and budgets all evaluation activities and therefore must be prepared regardless of whether the country office plans to conduct a country programme evaluation in the new cycle.

The **IEO** is the member of the PRC tasked with assessing the draft CEP against a standard checklist (see below on page 7). If clarifications or changes are required, the PRC secretariat requests the CEP to be revised by the concerned CO.

Once finalized and endorsed by the **PRC**, the CEP is annexed to the country programme document (CPD) submitted to the Executive Board.

The **IEO**, in collaboration with the regional monitoring and evaluation advisors, will track the CEPs implementation progress in real-time over the course of the country programme cycle.

## 3. Steps for evaluation planning

The CEP presents important information related to the country (or regional) programme and related evaluation activities, including country programme outcome, evidence gaps analysis informing the CEP, title and purpose of individual evaluations, their timeframes, and the budget allocated.

## Step 1: Consider the mandatory minimum coverage norm

- UNFPA **evaluation policy** spells out that country and regional offices are “encouraged to conduct CPEs/RPEs every programme cycle, and, as a minimum, every two cycles”.
- In the event that an evaluation is *not* mandatory, you are however strongly **encouraged to consider planning an CPE/RPE** if:
  - the **quality** of the previous evaluation is unsatisfactory or fair (ref. [EQA](#))
  - significant **changes** in the context have occurred and have led to important modifications in the programme (e.g., surge of humanitarian interventions) as compared to the previous (evaluated) programme
  - the evaluated programme cycle has been subject to **extension(s)** for a number of years which were not captured by the evaluation.

## Step 2: Identify the country programme evidence needs or gaps (learning) and donor requests (accountability)

- Consider the areas covered by the country programme and undertake a **mapping of evidence needs**. Ensure that the identified needs have not yet been addressed by already existing (completed or on-going) evaluations (at country, regional and [centralized level](#)).
- Identify and prioritize evaluation activities based on their **usefulness and alignment with country programme focus areas**. Determine the purpose of each evaluation and its intended use.
- Refer to the [evaluation policy](#)'s **eight parameters for prioritizing evaluations** (see annex 1), notably: (a) significant investment in relation to the portfolio of activities of the country programme; (b) formal commitments to stakeholders (donor requirements in co-financing agreements or through partner countries requesting the evaluation to inform national programmes); (c) new UNFPA engagements requiring learning for replication and scaling-up.
- Determine the **timing and sequence of evaluations** to minimize duplication of efforts and burdening stakeholders. In addition to joint programmes, country offices should also prioritize conducting joint evaluation exercises for programmes with overlapping focus (e.g., national programmes and UNFPA programmes on relevant mandate areas).
- Assess the **appropriate duration** for each evaluation exercise to ensure there is sufficient time to complete all phases of evaluations against UNFPA established evaluation standards. For example, a CPE requires [approximately 11 months](#). An inadequate timeline hinders the ability to deliver good quality evaluations.



### Step 3: Determine the appropriate budget for each evaluation

The CEP must be fully-costed. Financial resources must be set aside for each planned evaluation in line with the evaluation policy emphasis on UNFPA's commitment to allocate sufficient resources for evaluations (see [evaluation policy](#), page. 17 section B. Financial resources):

- Provide a **realistic cost estimate** of each evaluation based on the country office budget envelope, the country context, the scope of the evaluand, and the required expertise to conduct the evaluation. For each evaluation, indicate the funding sources (eg., regular resources, non-core resources, or combined, if applicable).
- Factor in the costs associated with communication and dissemination of evaluation results.

For guidance on how to determine the budget of the country programme evaluation and project evaluations, see section 4 below.

#### Box 1: Checklist for drafting a good quality CPE

- Clear articulation of the evidence needs and knowledge gaps
- Specific **categorization** (e.g., formative, summative, mid-term etc.) **and prioritization** of evaluations to offer balanced and meaningful insights for decision-making
- Selection of **strategic subjects** for evaluation (key programme priorities, emerging areas, potential scaling-up, and cross-cutting issues)
- Inclusion of all **mandatory evaluations** as per the coverage norm (see [evaluation policy](#), including: country programme evaluations, humanitarian evaluations, cooperation framework evaluations, donor/cost-sharing agreement evaluations etc.)
- Adequacy of estimated cost and **securing the required budget** for each evaluation against the project budget, the scope and complexity of the context
- Appropriate **sequencing** and adequacy of expected **duration** of each evaluation
- **Timeliness** of the evaluation or evaluation exercise to inform programming (or other purposes).

## Step 4: Review and update the evaluation plan on an annual basis

- The CEP is a **rolling plan that must undergo annual revision** to reflect emerging priorities, learning needs and special requests to ensure the continued relevance and validity of the plan. Other national counterparts may be consulted as needed during the review of the CEP.
- The CEP **can be revised** based on the extension of projects or country programme; security, political and humanitarian crisis; new evaluations to meet donor requirements or partner requests; considerations for cluster evaluations (projects with overlapping focus or possibility of subsuming project evaluations into broader exercises such as CPEs) etc.
- Provide clear justification and rationale for postponing or canceling an evaluation. The regional M&E advisor reviews and approves changes to the CEP; with the exception of CPEs which must be approved by the IEO.
- The country office shares the updated plan with the **RMEA and IEO** on an annual basis explaining the changes to the original plan. All changes are documented for transparent oversight, quality assurance support and reporting.

### **Box 2: Process in case of postponement or cancellation of a CPE**

As indicated, a CO can revise its CEP based on a number of considerations, such as: security, political and/or humanitarian crisis, the extension of the CP etc. If one or a number of these conditions are met, and a CO opts for and can justify the cancellation or postponement of a planned CPE, **a formal procedure must be observed:**

1. The CO Representative must submit a **note to the file "Revision of the costed evaluation plan"** for the review and approval of the RMEA
2. The note to the file must clearly list the **reasons and considerations on which the decision** to postpone or cancel the CPE **is based**
3. The note must clearly indicate the **status of the CO in regard to UNFPA evaluation policy** (i.e., the previous CP was subject to an CPE; the EQA scoring of the CPE report should also be indicated)
4. The **revised CO CEP** must be annexed to the note
5. The **RMEA must submit the note to the file to the IEO** for final approval. In a cover email, the RMEA must **make a recommendation to the IEO** (whether the IEO should grant the request or not)
6. The **IEO makes the final decision** based upon the Note to the file and the RMEA's recommendation.



## Step 5: Track and report on the status of implementation of the CEP

- The **M&E officer** or focal point updates the status of each evaluation listed in the CEP database on a quarterly basis.
- The **RMEA** monitors the status of implementation quarterly and follows up with the M&E officer or focal point as necessary. The IEO decentralized evaluation team ensures oversight on progress of implementation.
- The **IEO** reports on the status of CEPs periodically to the UNFPA Executive Committee and annually to the Executive Board through its annual report on the evaluation function. Therefore, the timely updating of the status of each evaluation in the database/repository is important to ensure accurate reporting and effective accountability.

## 4. Funding evaluations

### Funding mechanism for country and regional programme evaluations

The CPE should be funded through **regular resources and its budget ring-fenced** into the annual ceiling of the country programme. Therefore, the funds set aside for the CPE cannot be deployed for other activities unless formally approved by the regional director in consultation with the IEO.

The budget allocation for the CPE should be commensurate with, and reflective of the programme country contexts (e.g., humanitarian vs. development setting), the scope and complexity of interventions, the availability of professional national or regional evaluators, and the extent of UNFPA investments. Therefore, the determination of the cost of the CPE should be: (i) guided by the UNFPA classification of programme countries into three tiers (see Table 1 below); and (ii) should be subject to a detailed cost analysis (by the CO M&E officer with support from RO and IEO).

**Table 1: Recommended minimum budget for the country programme and regional programme evaluations (in US\$)**

<b>Core resources</b>	<b>Minimum budget <u>recommended</u> for CPEs</b>
<b>Tier 1</b> countries	<b>&gt;\$100k-150k</b> depending on the complexity of the size of the portfolio and context in which it is implemented
<b>Tier 2</b> countries	<b>&gt;\$80k-120k</b> depending on the complexity of the size of the portfolio and context in which it is implemented
<b>Tier 3</b> countries	<b>≤\$50k-90k</b> depending on the complexity of the context and size of the portfolio and context in which it is implemented
Multi-country programmes (MCPs)- Pacific and the Caribbean	<b>\$100k-160k</b> depending on the number of country case studies and the overall size of the sub-regional portfolio
Regional programme evaluations	<b>\$100k-160k</b> depending on the number of country case studies and the overall size of the regional programme

**Important:** UNFPA strategic plan 2022-2025 - paragraph 82, page 18 - outlines a classification system for programme countries, dividing them into three tiers based on whether they reach or exceed certain thresholds related to three transformative results.

## Evaluations of non-core/OR funded projects and related funding mechanism

As of April 2024, evaluations of projects at and above US\$ 5 million must be included (with their respective budget) in the costed evaluation plan. As of 2026, the costed evaluation plan must also include evaluations (and their respective budget) foreseen for projects below US\$ 5 million.

As of April 2024, donor funding agreements at and above US\$ 5 million will include, *on a voluntary basis*, a budget line for evaluation. The dedicated funds will be managed by the country office. Regional and country managers must ensure that, as agreements for OR-funded projects are formalized, a discussion with the concerned donor(s) takes place to advocate for the inclusion of an evaluation budget line.

## For projects above US\$ 5 million

In order to determine the suitable budget for a project of US\$ 5 million and above, M&E officers may refer to the Table 2 below. Note that the table does not amount to a “rule of thumb” guidance to devote a set percentage of a program’s budget to evaluation, as it would prove too simplistic. Instead, the table provides estimates that must be used to define the appropriate budget for the project evaluation. In conversation with the representative/head of office and project manager and with the support of the RMEA, the CO M&E officer must position the evaluation as:

- a smart investment for learning and improving the project; investing in valuable evidence gathering will help the project serve right-holders more efficiently and effectively.
- a strategic investment to be more competitive for limited financial resources by demonstrating to the donor(s) that the project works or how it can be improved.

**Table 2: Recommended evaluation budget for OR-funded projects above US\$ 5 million**

Agreement’s budget	Estimated evaluation cost
\$5M	\$75,000
\$5M - 10M	\$75,001 to 119,999
\$10M - 15M	\$120,000 to 159,999
\$15M - 20M	\$160,000 to 194,999
\$20M - 25M	\$195,000 to 214,999
\$25M - 30M	\$215,000 to 224,999
\$30M - 35M	\$225,000 to 229,999
\$35M and above	\$230,000

Based upon the estimates in Table 2, it is important to ensure that the evaluation budget:

- Reflects the expectations of stakeholders, particularly in terms of scope, duration, and level of rigor of the evaluation (“What will the evaluation include?”)
- Is appropriate for the methodology used and the key questions (their scope and depth) the evaluation will seek to answer (certain evaluation methods or techniques, like primary data collection, cost more to implement than others). (“How will the evaluation be conducted?”; “Will it involve new/expanded data collection?” etc.)
- Reflects the required expertise necessary to conduct the evaluation (consultants or a firm) and check whether it can be found locally or must be resourced internationally. (“Who will conduct the evaluation?”)
- Is of sufficient size to ensure that the project evaluation will be high quality and rigorous (ref. [EQA](#)).

In sum, given the current state of evaluation methods as presented in the [Evaluation Handbook](#), it is not possible to conduct a rigorous evaluation on a shoestring budget. In order to target a high level of evidence, it is necessary to determine the adequate investment for conducting a robust and useful project evaluation.

## For projects at or below US\$ 5 million

In 2024 and 2025 (transition years), only those evaluations resulting from a donor request must be included in the CEP. The M&E officer, with support from the country representative/head of office and in collaboration with the RMEA, must ensure these are adequately funded based upon the guidance provided above (“What will the evaluation include?” ; “How will the evaluation be conducted?”; “Will it involve new/expanded data collection?” ; “Who will conduct the evaluation?”).

**Note:** Two UNFPA platforms contain databases on donor agreements for projects that may require an evaluation and, should, as a result, be included in the CEP:

**Donor Agreement Report Tracking System (DARTS):** available on myUNFPA, lists current donor agreements per business unit. Regional M&E Advisors and CO M&E staff/focal points may use DARTS (and check its exhaustiveness) to identify those projects that are subject to an evaluation (based on donor agreements) in a particular programme cycle and ensure these project evaluations are included in the CEP.

**Customer Relationship Management (CRM):** a Resource Mobilization Branch platform for pipeline funding opportunities that can help identify those agreements being negotiated at CO level. Not appropriate to track signed donor agreements, the CRM is nonetheless a useful source of information

on project proposals currently being prepared and submitted to specific donors. Obtaining timely information on those projects is useful for RMEAs/CO M&E officers to advise (programme officers and resource mobilization staff) on the appropriate evaluation budget line to be included in the donor agreements.

## 5. Costed evaluation plan template

[Access the editable template](#)

Costed Evaluation Plan [Indicate name of country or regional office]	
Programme Cycle	United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) [name of country] [cycle of assistance: number]th Country Programme ([programme period: year-year])
Gap mapping/analysis of relevant evaluative evidence and knowledge gaps that are strategically important to inform the design and implementation of the upcoming country programme	<p>Provide a rationale (evidence gap analysis) to support the list of evaluations provided in the CEP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the areas covered by the new country programme and undertake a careful analysis of the areas in which further knowledge is required to support the achievement of the priorities of the country programme towards the acceleration of the UNFPA transformative results.</li> <li>• Take into consideration all evidence available stemming from evaluations at country, regional and <a href="#">centralized level</a>) and other assessments.</li> <li>• Explain how the evaluations proposed in the CEP contribute to the learning and accountability needs of UNFPA, and how they provide sufficient and balanced coverage of the country programme outcome areas.</li> </ul>
Country Programme priority areas	Detail areas of coverage of the country programme

Evaluations							
Evaluation title	Goal and main objectives of the evaluation	<b>Type of evaluation</b> (formative, summative, mid-term evaluation, project, programme, joint evaluation, meta-synthesis etc)	Start and end date (Month, Year)  <b>Note:</b> The final CPE report should be available in time to inform the strategic dialogue white paper or well in advance to inform formulation of the draft country programme document (CPD) <sup>1</sup>	Country programme or specific programme or project budget  <b>Note:</b> Provide the overall budget for the country programme (in the case of CPE) and the project budget (in the case of project evaluations)	Evaluation estimated cost in US\$ <sup>2</sup>	Source of Funding  <b>Note:</b> Indicate source of funding from regular and other resources. Pls note owing to their nature, CPEs should be funded from regular resources	In case of joint evaluation, indicate partners

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<sup>1</sup>As indicated, the average duration of a CPE is about 11 months; any deviation from this standard should be clearly justified (reduced scope, etc.). Please see [Evaluation Handbook](#).

<sup>2</sup> Refer to the funding mechanism or recommended scales to determine the budget for strategic evaluations (CPEs) and OR-funded project evaluations. In case of significant deviation, a justification should be provided.



## Annex 1: Evaluation planning (criteria for selecting and prioritizing evaluation), [UNFPA evaluation policy 2024](#)

Criteria	Key questions
Clarity of intended use for strategic decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Will the evaluation cover issues of strategic significance that contribute to the achievement of the strategic plan/regional/country programme?</li> <li>● Is the subject of the evaluation a priority?</li> <li>● Has the external/internal environment changed significantly?</li> <li>● Is the subject related to a humanitarian response or a protracted crisis?</li> </ul>
Risk associated with the subject, including periodicity of efforts to avoid extended periods without evaluative attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Are there humanitarian, political, economic, funding, structural or organizational factors that present a potentially substantial risk for the non-achievement of results or for which further evidence is needed for decision-making by management?</li> </ul>
Potential for system-wide, inter-agency or joint evaluation or strategic contribution/synergy with United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Does the evaluation present an opportunity to evaluate jointly with other partners (United Nations country teams, national governments, donors, among others) or contribute to a United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework evaluation to avoid duplication and promote coordination?</li> <li>● Do complementarities with evaluation plans of other United Nations agencies and partners exist?</li> </ul>
Significant investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Is the subject a significant investment in relation to the portfolio of activities of UNFPA? Is a donor requesting it?</li> </ul>

<p>Feasibility for implementing the evaluation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the evaluability of the intervention sufficient to conduct an in-depth assessment that can provide sound findings, recommendations and lessons learned?</li> <li>• Does the commissioning office have the resources available to conduct or manage a high-quality evaluation within the period indicated?</li> <li>• In a humanitarian situation, is there sufficient time and access to conduct an evaluation?</li> </ul>
<p>Knowledge gap</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will the evaluation help to fill a vital knowledge gap in relation to the UNFPA thematic focus or organizational effectiveness?</li> </ul>
<p>Formal commitments to stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are stakeholders requesting the evaluation (for example, through donor requirements in co-financing arrangements or through partner countries requesting the evaluation to inform national programmes)?</li> <li>• Can the request for the evaluation be satisfied through an evaluation that is already planned or a clustered evaluation? <sup>3</sup></li> </ul>
<p>Innovation with potential for replication and scaling-up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would an evaluation provide the evidence necessary to identify the factors required for the success of an innovative intervention and determine the feasibility of its replication or scaling-up? Is the intervention a pilot or an innovative initiative?</li> </ul>

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<sup>3</sup> A clustered evaluation consists of a group of programme or project evaluations combined into one single evaluation. Clustered programmes or projects should share one or more of the following characteristics: thematic area, geographic area of intervention, resource partner, type of crisis, among others. Besides potential efficiency gains, clustered evaluations allow for the analysis of the commonalities and differences of similar projects or programmes, which can help identify critical success factors and potential risks associated with future and ongoing interventions.



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