



**Executive Board of the
United Nations Development
Programme, the United Nations
Population Fund and the United
Nations Office for Project Services**

Distr.: General
13 April 2021

Original: English

Annual session 2021

7 to 11 June 2021, New York

Item 13 of the provisional agenda

UNFPA – Evaluation

United Nations Population Fund

Annual report on the evaluation function, 2020

Report of the Director, Evaluation Office

Summary

This document provides information on the performance of the evaluation function at centralized and decentralized levels, reports on the adaptation of the evaluation function to the COVID-19 pandemic, and details the contribution of UNFPA to coherence among evaluation functions across the United Nations, as well as national evaluation capacity development. In addition, the report presents the 2021 programme of work and budget for the Evaluation Office.

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to: (a) take note of the present report on the evaluation function, and of the programme of work and budget of the Evaluation Office in 2021; (b) welcome the efforts made by UNFPA and the progress achieved in strengthening the evaluation function, in actively adapting the evaluation function to the COVID-19 crisis, in contributing to United Nations system-wide evaluation efforts, and in fostering national evaluation capacity development; (c) reaffirm the role played by the evaluation function and underscore the importance of high-quality, independent evaluative evidence in the context of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2018-2021, and its contribution to the development of the new UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025, and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and (d) encourage UNFPA to continue to increase investments towards an allocation of at least 1.4 per cent and up to 3 per cent of its total programme expenditure to the evaluation function, as articulated in the UNFPA Evaluation Policy of 2019.

Note: The present document was processed in its entirety by UNFPA



I. Introduction

Evaluation as an accelerator to recover from the COVID-19 crisis and deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

1. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic unleashed an unprecedented global health, human development and socio-economic crisis. While the pandemic affected the lives and livelihoods of millions of people, marginalized women, girls and other vulnerable populations have been disproportionately affected. The road to an equitable and sustainable recovery requires that decisions, now more than ever, are guided by reliable evidence. In this context, evaluation plays a crucial role in the immediate response and long-term recovery, by providing decision-makers with evidence and lessons learned on what works and what does not work, why, and whether interventions are reaching those furthest behind.
2. The Evaluation Office (EO) quickly adapted its centralized evaluations, and guided country offices in adapting their own country programme evaluations (CPEs), to generate relevant and timely evidence to inform COVID-19 response; enhanced its contribution to the United Nations reform and national evaluation capacity development; and continued to implement the strategy to enhance evaluation use, including by informing the design of the strategic plan for 2022-2025.
3. In 2021, the EO will continue to play its full part in contributing evaluative evidence for an informed recovery from the pandemic and an evidence-based strategic plan for 2022-2025, including delivering on its commitment to the United Nations reform process and co-leading the Eval4Action campaign for stronger national evaluation capacities.

A. Adapting evaluations to the COVID-19 pandemic

4. To continue to ensure high-quality and relevant evaluative evidence during the COVID-19 pandemic, the EO developed the guidance, 'Adapting evaluations to the COVID-19 pandemic: guiding principles and their practical implications'.¹ These guiding principles recognize the unique local response to COVID-19 and encourage evaluation managers to adapt evaluations as appropriate to their context. As the impact of COVID-19 unfolds, this framework continues to be updated based on real-time lessons from the field. In early 2021, additional guidance on adapting evaluation questions was rolled out to allow deeper analysis on the degree of adaption and response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. All ongoing centralized evaluations adapted the evaluation process by utilizing virtual communication technologies for remote data collection and calibrating the scope, areas of inquiry, and methodology to deliver timely evaluations while maintaining their rigor and quality. Regular technical support was also provided to decentralized evaluations. For example, the regional programme evaluations for the Arab States, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, East and Southern Africa, and West and Central Africa and the county programme evaluations (CPEs) in Algeria, Albania, Gambia, Libya, Mozambique, Somalia and Zimbabwe, among others, adopted a remote-data-collection approach, in line with EO guidance. In West and Central Africa, in-depth feasibility assessments were undertaken before local consultants conducted physical interviews to ensure there was no harm to the populations and the evaluation team. Other regions also made adaptations to their respective evaluations, in line with the changing needs and unique circumstances of the countries.
6. Starting the last quarter of 2020, all forthcoming UNFPA evaluations include a focus on how UNFPA has adapted and responded to the COVID-19 crisis. In addition, a centralized evaluation on UNFPA response to the COVID-19 pandemic will be undertaken.
7. The EO provided timely evidence to inform the global response to the pandemic. The Office partnered with the COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition, which includes evaluation units from Member States, multilateral institutions and United Nations agencies, including to develop 'lessons from evaluation on gender equality'² that provide insights to inform COVID-19 response and recovery. The Office also supported and widely disseminated the ALNAP (Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance) learning paper on the COVID-19 response, 'Responding to COVID-19: guidance for humanitarian agencies'.

¹ <https://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/adapting-evaluations-covid-19-pandemic>

² <http://www.covid19-evaluation-coalition.org/documents/Lesson-from-evaluation-issue-5.pdf>

8. The EO is a member of the UNEG Working Group on COVID-19 to support system-wide coordination and exchange of good practices on adaptation of the evaluation functions to the pandemic. In addition, the Office is also supporting the United Nations system-wide evaluative exercises on the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan and the Multi Partner Trust Fund.

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

9. In alignment with the United Nations' Decade of Action, EO, EvalYouth and the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation (GPFE) rolled out the 'Decade of Evaluation for Action', also known as the Eval4Action campaign,³ a global advocacy campaign that seeks to enhance the role of evaluation in accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda and the response and recovery from COVID-19.
10. In its initial phase, the campaign focused on mobilization and engagement of partners. A virtual high-level launch of the campaign by UNFPA Executive Director and the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth took place during the "Global Marathon of Engagement". The event brought together the global evaluation community in an unprecedented way, with some 70 key evaluation stakeholders declaring their motivation to engage with the campaign.⁴ In addition, a twitter chat on evaluation, COVID-19 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) took place with 27 global evaluation leaders and young evaluators. About 7,100 Twitter users engaged with the Chat across 44 countries, resulting in 23 million impressions,⁵ and worldwide visibility for the campaign.
11. Following a highly inclusive and participatory approach, these mobilization efforts led to 116 partners⁶ joining the campaign in the nine months since its launch. While core partners drive the campaign at the global level with key strategic advocacy interventions, the regional and national partners are leading local mobilization, dialogue and action on influential evaluation. Central to the campaign are young and emerging evaluators around the world that are co-leading and driving the campaign at global, regional and national levels. For example, following the global launch of the campaign, six regional consultations took place in Africa, Asia Pacific, Eurasia, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean.
12. This high engagement in the campaign was steered towards generating institutional and individual commitment to action for influential evaluation. The Eval4Action digital commitment drive resulted in 125 commitments⁷ from a diverse group of people, institutions and networks across the world, including parliamentarians, governments, the United Nations, evaluation associations, the private sector, academia and young evaluators.
13. In 2021, the campaign will follow up on the delivery of the commitments to action and support the development and roll-out of regional evaluation action plans to strengthen national evaluation capacities and accelerate the achievement of the SDGs.

C. Using evidence from evaluations to inform design of the strategic plan for 2022-2025

14. The EO continued to generate evaluative evidence across UNFPA strategic plan outcome areas and organizational effectiveness and efficiency priorities, as framed by the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan. The thematic evaluations continued to provide in-depth insights on results and performance of UNFPA to a given outcome of the strategic plan. In addition, the EO biennially conducts strategic evaluations in critical areas of relevance to the entire strategic plan. For example, in 2018, the EO completed the evaluation of the architecture supporting the operationalization of the strategic plan, and in 2020, the evaluation of the UNFPA capacity in humanitarian action was released. Together, the thematic and strategic evaluations have provided strategic-level evaluative evidence and insights into the design the strategic plan for 2022-2025.

³ <https://www.eval4action.org/>

⁴ Motivational statements by Eval4Action partners delivered at the Global Marathon of Engagement are available at <https://www.eval4action.org/globalmarathonofengagement>.

⁵ Impressions are the number of times a tweet appears in a user's timeline or search results.

⁶ Eval4Action partners can be viewed at <https://www.eval4action.org/partners>.

⁷ Commitments for action towards influential evaluations are available at <https://www.eval4action.org/commitment-drive>.

D. Implementation of the strategy to enhance evaluation use

15. The strategy to enhance evaluation use through communications and knowledge management continued to inform effective communication of all centralized evaluations and increase uptake of evaluative evidence. A diversified minimum communications package targeting internal and external audiences continued to be developed for each centralized evaluation. Each evaluation report was accompanied by an executive summary, a one-page evaluation brief (translated into various languages), a presentation, a feature on the EO website and community of practice, a newsflash email announcement, a video capturing the evaluation highlights and a social media package. In addition, an animation film detailing the evaluation function at UNFPA was released in 2020. In all, 11 evaluation-focused videos were released.⁸
16. Following the results framework accompanying the strategy, the Office continues to track the relevance, quality, facilitation of use and effectiveness of communication efforts. The webpage views increased nearly threefold since 2018. Further, the number of followers on twitter increased by 93 per cent. Altogether, the tweets generated nearly 18 million impressions,⁹ a twentyfold increase since 2019.
17. Following the strategy, increased communication efforts and stakeholder engagement enhanced the use of centralized evaluations. For example, in order to capture the use of midterm evaluation of the UNFPA supplies programme (2013-2020) at global, regional and national levels, and to further facilitate the use of the evaluation, a five-part video series¹⁰ was released on World Contraception Day 2020, which marked the two-year anniversary of the evaluation.

II. Performance of the evaluation function

18. To ensure transparency and clarity in reporting, key indicators capturing the performance of the evaluation function over time are presented below.

Table 1
Trends in key performance indicators, 2014-2020

<i>Key performance indicator (%)</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>Overall assessment</i>
1. Financial resources invested in evaluation function	Budget for evaluation as a percentage of total UNFPA programme budget	<i>0.45</i>	<i>0.69</i>	<i>0.91</i>	<i>0.83</i>	<i>0.96</i>	<i>0.98</i>	<i>0.83</i> <i>0.94</i> ¹¹	Potential positive trend with room for improvement
2. Human resources for monitoring and evaluation	Percentage of country offices staffed with either a monitoring and evaluation focal point or officer	<i>100</i>	<i>95.9</i>	<i>99.2</i>	<i>96.7</i>	<i>96.6</i>	<i>96.1</i>	<i>97.0</i>	Almost achieved
3. Evaluation coverage*	Percentage of country offices that have conducted a country programme evaluation once every two cycles	-	-	-	<i>80.0</i>	<i>90.0</i>	<i>97.0</i>	<i>97.3</i>	Almost achieved
4. Evaluation implementation rate	Percentage of programme-level evaluations implemented as planned	-	-	<i>60.0</i>	<i>55.0</i>	<i>92.0</i>	<i>92.7</i>	<i>88.9</i>	Despite a slight reduction due to the COVID-19 pandemic,

⁸ The videos developed by UNFPA Evaluation Office are available on its YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9xt6qYVvKVLdQVow4glrw/videos>.

⁹ Impressions are the number of times a tweet appears in a user's timeline or search results.

¹⁰ https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLglD_xYujzeyu2MNfiFLjDF0ndKuwk4AD.

¹¹ Original budgeted allocation for the evaluation function (at central and decentralized level) against the total UNFPA programme expenditure for 2020.

									the target of 80 per cent has been achieved ¹²
5. Quality of evaluations	Percentage of programme-level evaluations rated 'good' or 'very good'	50.0	77.0	92.0	95.0	80.0	100	100	Achieved
6. Evaluation reports posted on evaluation database	Percentage of completed programme-level evaluation reports posted on evaluation database	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	Achieved
7. Management response submission	Percentage of completed programme-level evaluation reports with management response submitted	100	100	100	100	100	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	The target of 85 per cent has been achieved ¹³
9. Use of evaluation in programme development**	Percentage of new country programme documents whose design was clearly informed by evaluation	-	-	-	-	79.8	100	100	Achieved

Source: Evaluation Office and the Policy and Strategy Division (PSD)

19. Despite the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, all key performance indicators, except one, have been achieved or almost achieved. In addition, there was a marked increase on the overall expenditure on evaluation, from 0.45 per cent of total UNFPA programme expenditure in 2014 to 0.83 per cent in 2020, with a decrease in 2020 due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. However, without the COVID-19 related reduction, the total budgeted allocation for the evaluation function (at central and decentralized levels) accounted for 0.94 per cent of UNFPA programme expenditure for 2020. Investment in human resources for evaluation remained strong: as in previous years, nearly all country offices were staffed with a monitoring and evaluation officer or focal point.
20. The evaluation coverage as by the evaluation policy has almost been achieved, with 97.3 per cent of offices having conducted at least one CPE within two cycles. The implementation of programme-level evaluations decreased only slightly (from 92.7 per cent in 2019 to 88.9 per cent in 2020). The real-time adaption and adjustment was key to this achievement given the COVID-19 pandemic. The quality of evaluation reports has stabilized and, for the second year in a row, all evaluations were quality-assessed as 'good' or higher.
21. The submission rate of management responses continued to be 100 per cent. The annual implementation rate of management responses demonstrates a positive trend, reaching 90 per cent implementation in 2020, the highest in six years. Encouragingly, for a second year in a row, all country programme documents submitted to the Executive Board in 2020 were clearly informed by evaluation.
22. Overall, eight out of the nine key performance indicators retained overall strong performance in 2020. However, in view of the continued global pandemic, ongoing guidance and support is required to maintain the high level of coverage and implementation of programme-level evaluations. There is also scope for improvement in the implementation rate of management responses at the centralized evaluations.

Key performance indicator 1: financial resources

23. Overall, the expenditure for the evaluation function was 8.53 million, with 3.2 million spent at the centralized level and 5.33 million spent at the decentralized level, including both human and financial resources (see table 2). In absolute terms, investment in evaluation more than doubled from 2014 to 2020. In relative terms, this represents 0.83 per cent of the total UNFPA programme expenditure. The decrease in the ratio of evaluation expenditure (0.83 in 2020 compared to 0.98 in 2019) was due to the increased total UNFPA programme

¹² OEE 1.7, UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2018-2021.

¹³ OEE 1.9, UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2018-2021.

expenditure on the one side, and the decrease in the Evaluation Office's expenditures due to the COVID-19 induced travel restrictions for data collection and evaluation capacity development initiatives on the other side.

24. UNFPA commitment to incrementally provide sufficient resource for the evaluation function is reflected in the steady increase in its budget allocation over the years. Overall, without the COVID-19 related reduction, the budgeted original allocation for the evaluation function (at central and decentralized levels) was 9.64 million, representing 0.94 per cent of the total UNFPA programme expenditure for 2020.

Table 2
Budget invested in the evaluation function, 2014-2020

(in millions of \$)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total UNFPA programme budget expenditure*	820.2	798.6	763.5	752.9	872.3	933.8	1 027.9
Total expenditure of the evaluation function	3.69	5.52	6.94	6.30	8.40	9.13	8.53 (a) 9.64 (b)
<i>Evaluation Office</i>	2.38	2.63	3.71	3.36	4.23	3.9	3.2 (a) 4.31 (b)
<i>Decentralized evaluation function</i>	1.31**	2.89	3.23	2.94	4.17***	5.23	5.33
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)

* Total UNFPA programme budget expenditure is generated from UNFPA statistical and financial reviews. The Evaluation Office 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.

** Decentralized staffing costs are not available for 2014; the figure (\$1.31 million) therefore reflects only the budget for evaluations.

*** The majority increase from \$2.94 million in 2017 to \$4.17 million in 2018 is mainly due to the enhancement in better capturing the totality of investment in decentralized evaluation.

(a) with Covid19-related reduction

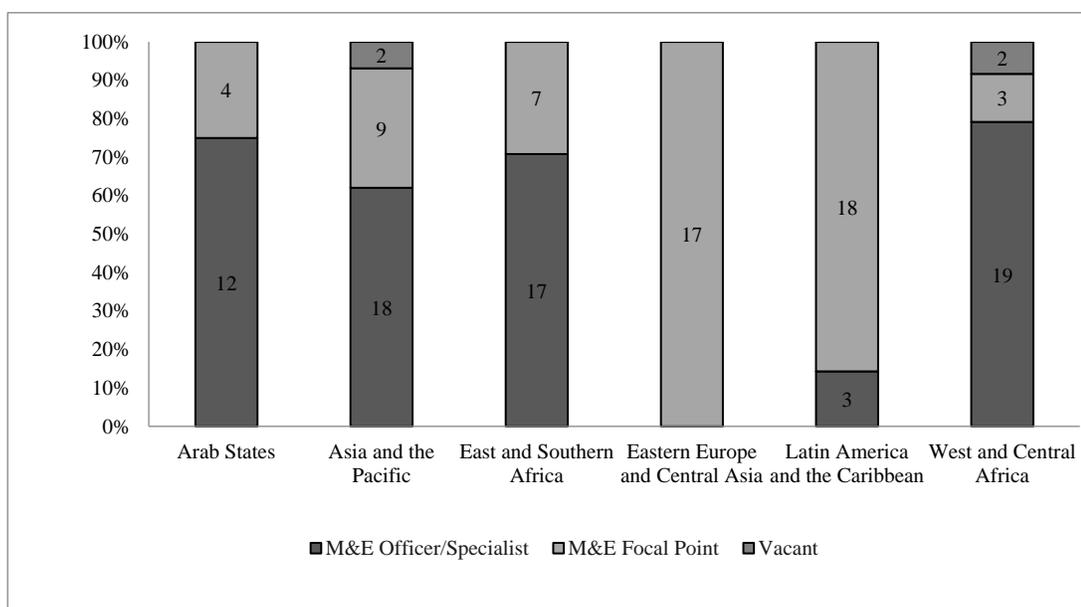
(b) without Covid19-related reduction

Key performance indicator 2: human resources

25. In 2020, the EO had ten approved posts: one at general service level, eight at professional level and one at director level. In addition, two Youth UN Volunteers joined the EO.
26. At the decentralized level, the staffing profile remained roughly the same as in previous years. UNFPA has six regional monitoring and evaluation advisors at P5 level. On aggregate, 97 per cent of country offices¹⁴ were staffed with either a monitoring and evaluation officer (54 per cent) or a monitoring and evaluation focal point (45 per cent). There is a slight increase in the percentage of dedicated monitoring and evaluation officer posts from last year. As in previous years, the regional spread of monitoring and evaluation profiles varied. Dedicated monitoring and evaluation officers continued to be concentrated in regions with larger country offices, while focal points were found primarily in regions where country offices had relatively smaller budgets.

¹⁴ Vacancies were registered in two country offices in West and Central Africa and in two country offices in Asia and the Pacific, with recruitment underway for positions.

Figure 1
Human resources for monitoring and evaluation, 2020, by region



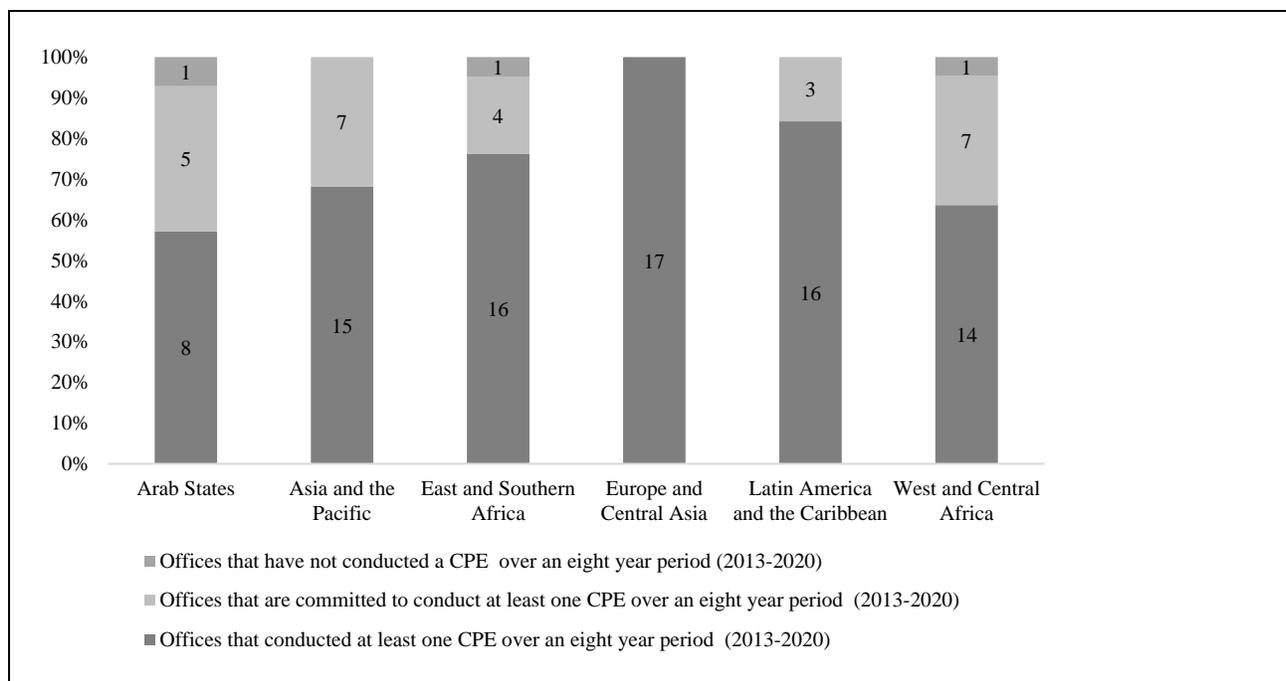
Source: Evaluation Office

Abbreviation: M&E: monitoring and evaluation

Key performance indicator 3: coverage of decentralized programme level evaluations

27. In order to ensure a robust base of evaluative evidence to inform programming, the Evaluation Policy calls for country offices to conduct a CPE at least once every two programme cycles.
28. Some 97.3 per cent of country offices completed or are scheduled to complete at least one CPE over the last eight-year period (the typical length of two country programme cycles). Collective efforts by PSD and the EO to improve compliance with the Evaluation Policy – including a joint communication sent to country offices planning a CPE, underscoring the importance of implementation and efforts to strengthen evaluation culture – continued to encourage improved coverage.

Figure 2
Evaluation coverage by region, 2013-2020 (*)



(*) Note: Methodologically, the EO assumed four years as the average length of a country programme. However, programme cycles vary in duration, and can be extended. As such, the EO reached out to country offices that, following the initial analysis, appeared to not have conducted a CPE once during two programme cycles, to confirm. Nine country offices confirmed that, while outside this eight-year timeframe, they will conduct a CPE within two of their programme cycles (which were longer in length). These are captured in the ‘committed to conduct’ category.

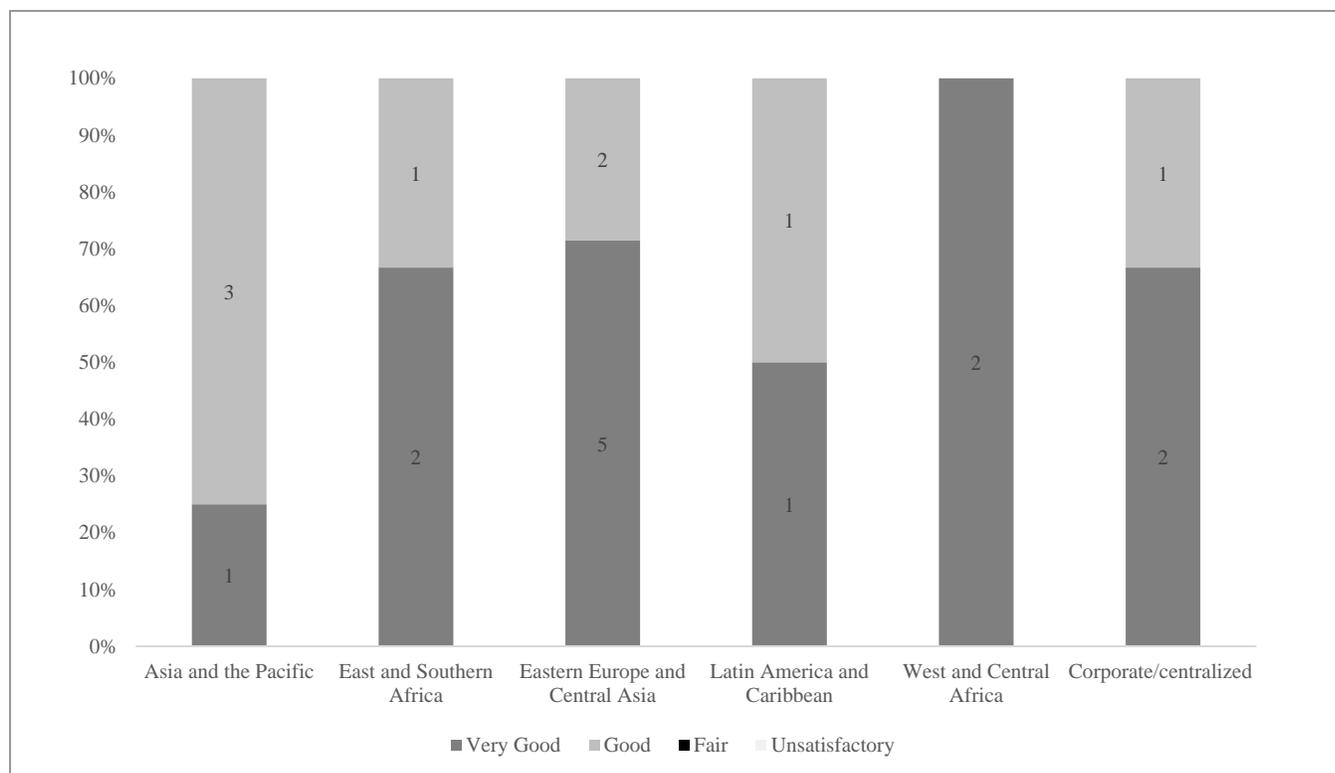
Key performance indicator 4: implementation rate of planned decentralized evaluations

29. Despite operating in the context of a global pandemic, 88.9 per cent of decentralized programme-level evaluations were implemented as planned. Influenced by external events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and security situations, three CPEs were cancelled. These country offices reported that existing evidence generated by previous evaluations will be used to inform their next country programme documents. Although the implementation rate has registered a slight decrease of 3.8 percentage points, as compared to 2019, the timely guidance provided to country offices to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on evaluations has helped the timely implementation of the majority of planned evaluations.

Key performance indicator 5: quality of evaluation reports

30. For a second year in a row, 100 per cent of reports assessed were rated ‘good’ or higher, reaching the desired target. Some 62 per cent of evaluations received a rating of ‘very good’, a significant improvement from six per cent in 2014. The strong performance across regions is likely attributable to the multi-layered quality-assurance processes, rigor in vetting consultants, availability of guidance on how to conduct CPEs and other internal capacity-development initiatives.

Figure 3
Quality of evaluations, by region, 2020



Source: Quality assessment conducted by an external consulting firm

Key performance indicator 6: rate of completed evaluation reports posted on the UNFPA evaluation database

31. As in previous years, all completed centralized and decentralized programme-level evaluations were made publicly available on the EO database. Centralized evaluations are also featured on the EO website and, to further facilitate its use, shared with all staff and the wider evaluation community, including UNEG members.

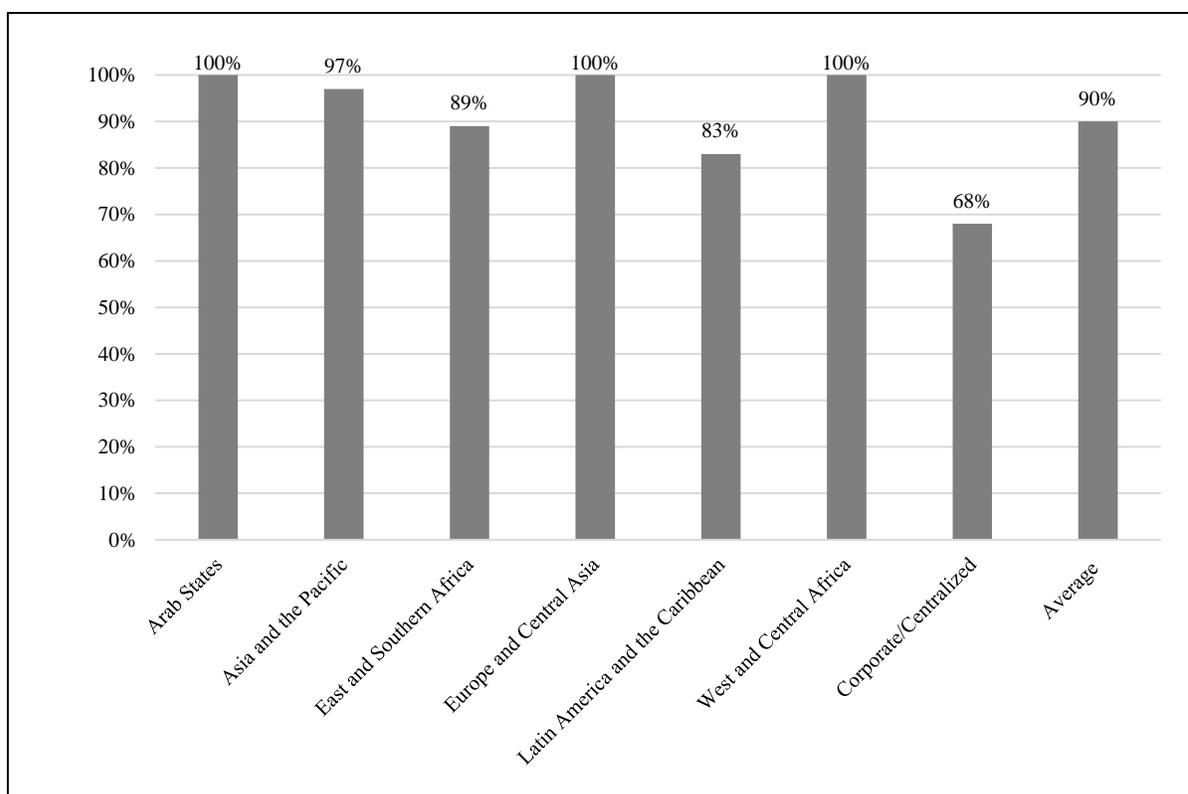
Key performance indicator 7: evaluations with management responses

32. As in previous years, all completed centralized and decentralized programme-level evaluations were accompanied by management responses.

Key performance indicator 8: implementation of management responses

33. With the aim to improve the quality of management responses and frequency of reporting, the PSD put in place additional measures, including (a) addition of two evaluation follow-up indicators to the corporate dashboard (myDashboard); (b) strengthened corporate guidance; and (c) a more individualized year-end follow-up approach.
34. As a result, this indicator reached 90 per cent, six percentage points higher than in 2019, and the highest in six years. To keep the momentum, PSD is exploring possibilities for automatic upload of evaluation actions into the concerned business units' annual workplans in the future enterprise resource planning (ERP) system.
35. The implementation rate of centralized recommendations, which tends to lag behind organizational average, improved by nine percentage points. However, despite this important improvement, this indicator (68 per cent) remains well below the target of 85 per cent.

Figure 4
Implementation of evaluation management response/key actions, 2020



Source: UNFPA management response tracking systems

Key performance indicator 9: Use of evaluation in programme development

36. The EO, in close collaboration with the PSD, has taken steps to promote learning as part of a concerted effort to increase the influence and uptake of evaluation results. Over the years, this has led to an increase in the uptake of evaluative evidence to inform development of new programmes. As reported by the Programme Review Committee secretariat, all 16 new country programme documents (100 per cent) submitted to the Executive Board for approval were clearly informed by evaluative evidence. This marks a significant improvement from 2018, when 78.9 per cent of country programme documents met this requirement.

A. Centralized evaluations

37. To further strengthen the relevance, quality and use of centralized evaluations, the EO continued to ensure evaluations: (a) were responsive to users' demands and needs; (b) adapted to the external environment, including the COVID-19 pandemic; (c) embraced innovation in approaches and practices to respond to this dynamic environment; and (d) were implemented in a timely manner.

Innovation in evaluation approaches

38. The EO continued to diversify and adapt its evaluation approaches and methods to the changing needs and priorities of UNFPA. Notwithstanding the unprecedented circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the EO acted quickly by adapting its evaluation approach and data collection methods. This includes, inter-alia, enhanced use of virtual collaborative technologies, ensuring consistent and efficient remote data collection, and increased use of national experts while upholding the principle of 'do no harm'. Such real-time adaptation has maintained the relevance of the evaluation function and the delivery of high-quality evaluations.

39. Following the positive experience of the first phase (led exclusively by EO) of the first-ever developmental evaluation managed in UNFPA,¹⁵ the second phase was launched with the scope of transitioning the responsibility of the exercise from EO to PSD and DHR, aiming at supporting the development of a learning and adaptive-management framework, guided and informed by evaluative inquiries and pilots. The second phase continues to employ a utilization-focused approach to offer real-time feedback and pursue a co-creative process involving headquarters, regional and country offices. In addition, the Eastern Europe and Central Asia regional office, with the support of the EO, decided to use the innovative developmental approach for its regional programme evaluation.
40. Centralized evaluations continued to innovate in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE). For example, the evaluation of UNFPA support to GEWE, for the first time, involved an assessment of the extent to which GEWE is mainstreamed in all thematic areas, in addition to assessing the performance of the dedicated GEWE outcome of the strategic plan.
41. Further, in order to leverage evaluative evidence, the EO, jointly with the evaluation office of UNICEF, launched a system-wide meta-synthesis to inform the implementation of the United Nations Youth Strategy. By extracting and aggregating good practices and lessons learned from existing evaluations produced by United Nations agencies as well as civil society and youth organizations, the synthesis aims to produce knowledge to enhance the effectiveness of youth programming across the United Nations system.

Full and timely implementation of centralized evaluations

42. In accordance with the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, the EO undertook a wide range of evaluations to deliver timely and relevant evaluative evidence to inform the implementation of the current strategic plan and the design of the future one. Confirming the EO active commitment to enhance evaluation coherence within the United Nations system, 57 per cent (8 out of 14) of centralized evaluations are either joint or system-wide.
43. As of December 2020, the implementation rate of centralized evaluations was 100 per cent, with all evaluations completed or on-track per schedule (as presented in table 3 below).

¹⁵ Developmental evaluation of results-based management approaches, 2020.

Table 3
Implementation status of planned centralized evaluations and other evaluative studies, 2020-2021

#	Title	Status	Management response issued	Presentation to Executive Board/ steering committees
1	Developmental evaluation of UNFPA results-based management approaches	Completed	Yes	Presented to the Executive Board at the first regular session 2020
2	Evaluation of the UNFPA capacity to respond to humanitarian crisis	Completed	Yes	Presented to the Executive Board at the annual session 2020
3	System-wide Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of United Nations system response to the drought crisis in Ethiopia	Completed	Yes	Presented to IASC Operational Policy and Advocacy Group, and to the Ethiopia Humanitarian Coordination Team
4	Evaluation of UNFPA support to the HIV/AIDS response	Completed	Yes	Presented to UNAIDS and to the Executive Board at the 2021 joint segment of the first regular session ¹⁶
5	COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition meta synthesis on Gender equality	Completed	No*	Informed the 2020 Meeting of the OECD Council at the Ministerial Level
6	Joint UNFPA-UNDP-UNICEF-UN Women baseline study and evaluability assessment of the common chapter of strategic plans	Completed	No*	Jointly presented to the Executive Board at the informal annual session 2020
7	System-wide midterm evaluation of the UNAIDS 2016-2021 unified budget, results and accountability framework (UBRAF)	Completed	Not yet	Presented to UNAIDS and to the Executive Board at the 2021 joint segment of the first regular session ¹⁷
8	System-wide Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of United Nations response to empowering women and girls in humanitarian crisis	Completed	Not yet	To be presented to IASC in 2021
9	Formative evaluation of UNFPA approach to South-South and Triangular Cooperation	Completed	Yes	Presented to the Executive Board at the first regular session 2021
10	Evaluation of UNFPA support to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	On Track	Not yet	To be presented to the Executive Board at the annual session 2021
11	Baseline study and evaluability assessment of the UNFPA support to the generation, provision and utilization of data in humanitarian assistance	On Track	No*	To be completed in 2021
12	System-wide meta-synthesis to Support the Implementation of the UN Youth Strategy	On Track	No*	To be completed in 2021
13	System-wide evaluation of UNAIDS work on preventing and responding to gender-based violence	On Track	Not yet	To be completed in 2021
14	Joint evaluation of the phase III of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the abandonment of FGM	On Track	Not yet	To be completed in 2021

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

B. Use of centralized evaluations to foster change

44. In addition to reporting on implementation of agreed-upon actions to evaluations' recommendations, the EO reports on uptake of lessons and recommendations generated by centralized evaluations completed two years earlier. This reporting provides a more holistic view of the strategic use of centralized evaluations.

¹⁶ Within the "Report on the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Programme Coordinating Board of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS".

¹⁷ Within the "Report on the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Programme Coordinating Board of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS".

Evaluation of UNFPA support to the prevention, response to and elimination of gender-based violence and harmful practices, 2019

45. This evaluation has contributed to several key internal strategic discussions on the positioning of UNFPA work in this programmatic area. In response to the recommendation for clear guidance on the UNFPA gender-based violence work, UNFPA has published in 2019 the Gender Equality Strategy, which focuses on empowering women and adolescent girls, with a strong emphasis on gender-based violence and harmful practices, based on the leaving-no-one-behind principle: women and girls with disabilities, ethnic minorities, refugees and migrant women.
46. The evaluation has likewise encouraged UNFPA to better position itself within the United Nations system, particularly in the data front, to effectively support national administrative gender-based violence data systems. Strengthening the technical and financial capacity of UNFPA to support the development of national administrative gender-based violence data systems, in line with reporting toward SDG-related targets and indicators, is now taken as a priority for the organization.
47. Informed by a recommendation to mainstream the organizational practice of cluster coordination as an inter-agency function, the recently established Humanitarian Office has invested in strengthening gender-based violence inter-agency coordination and cluster-leading capacities in addition to supporting UNFPA staff structures at global, regional and country levels.

Evaluation of the UNFPA response to the Syria crisis, 2019

48. Based on this evaluation, UNFPA has strengthened its humanitarian response both in the subregion and elsewhere. In particular, following the recommendation to set up a comprehensive monitoring system that covers outcome-level results, the Arab States regional office has: (a) set up a data management system (Wiz Monitor) for the processing and use of outcome-level quantitative data, and (b) systematized its impact assessments, which are now conducted on an annual basis, and with an expanded scope, covering Syria and cross-border operations in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq. In response to the recommendation to review the functions of the Syria regional response hub, the terms of reference of the hub have also been updated, with the addition of a knowledge management component and the extension of its geographical remit to all humanitarian operations in the Arab States region.

C. Decentralized evaluation system

49. In 2020, 86 per cent of all evaluations were managed by country or regional offices. This ensures the right balance between centralized evaluations that inform global policies, strategies and initiatives, and decentralized evaluations that generate country-specific evidence relevant to country programme development and implementation. However, this also underscores the challenge of ensuring the timely delivery of high-quality decentralized evaluations. To address this challenge, the EO, PSD and regional offices continued to work together to implement systems to enhance decentralized evaluations, as explained below.

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

50. To ensure appropriate financing of programme-level evaluations facing funding shortfalls, the EO, PSD and the Division of Management Services (DMS) established a financial ring-fencing mechanism in 2018 to support the implementation of CPEs. In response, UNFPA agreed to set aside \$500,000 annually through the Resource Allocation System (RAS) to support the ring-fence mechanism. In 2020, six country offices benefitted from ring-fenced funds, for a total of \$255,000, contributing to continued improvement in the implementation rate of decentralized programme-level evaluations and their quality. In addition, to ensure proper evaluation planning, costed evaluation plans continued to be reviewed by the EO, and were presented to the Programme Review Committee.
51. The evaluation quality assurance and assessment (EQAA) system continued to support the quality and credibility of evaluations. The evaluation quality assessment grid and guidance note have been updated to integrate disability inclusion and to address issues that were identified over the course of its implementation in the last few years. Targeted feedback continued to be provided to country offices to enhance the quality of decentralized evaluations.

Internal evaluation capacity development

52. To increase the likelihood that CPEs unfold following their planned schedule and in accordance with the methodological guidance provided in the evaluation handbook, the EO produced a CPE management kit providing ready-to-use resources tools to help monitoring and evaluation officers to respond to challenges associated with drafting-quality terms-of-reference and recruiting qualified consultants.
53. At decentralized level, regional offices continued to provide oversight and technical support across the regions. The Asia and the Pacific Regional Office, as a member of the UN Evaluation Development Group for Asia and the Pacific (UNEDAP), co-facilitated a three-day training. In addition, in collaboration with WFP and ILO, the office also supported the development of an online training, to be rolled out in 2021. The East and Southern Africa Regional Office convened an annual planning, monitoring and evaluation session. The Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office organized a workshop on country programme development, with a dedicated session on CPEs. In Arab States region, the UNFPA Jordan country office, in collaboration with the Egypt and Yemen country offices, held a webinar on results-based management that covered data collection methods and approaches as well as data-quality reviews.

Disability Guidance

54. In response to the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, the EO has taken steps to further incorporate dimensions of disability-inclusion, including the development of a new guidance note on disability inclusion in all types of evaluations, a companion piece to the evaluation handbook, and an update of the evaluation quality assessment system.

III. **Enhancing coherence in the United Nations system's evaluation functions**

55. As part of its commitment to United Nations development system reform, the EO is enhancing coherence among the evaluation functions across the United Nations system by actively engaging and collaborating with other agencies through joint and system-wide evaluations, and the UNEG network.

A. **System-wide evaluation**

56. The EO continued to be fully committed and engaged in supporting the independent system-wide evaluation mechanisms as a member of the UNEG. In particular, within the UNEG working group on system-wide evaluation, the EO contributed to the drafting of the system-wide evaluation policy. The EO also took part in several system-wide initiatives related to the response to COVID-19 pandemic. These include participation in: the UNEG working group on COVID-19; the Global COVID-19 Evaluation Coalition; and support to the upcoming evaluations of the Multi-Partner Trust Fund and the Global Humanitarian Response Fund.
57. In line with the Funding Compact commitment to increase accessibility of strategic evaluation results, the EO continued to make 100 per cent of corporate evaluations available on the UNEG website. Regarding collaborating in at least one joint or system-wide evaluation, UNFPA continued to significantly exceed this commitment, as 57 per cent (8 out of 14) of centralized evaluations managed by the Office in 2020-2021 are either joint or system-wide.
58. The EO Director continued to be the UNEG representative in the UNAIDS Evaluation Expert Advisory Committee. The committee advises the Director of Evaluation and the Executive Director of UNAIDS on the implementation of UNAIDS evaluation policy and the development and implementation of UNAIDS evaluation plan to enhance the use of evaluations, organizational learning and alignment with UNAIDS strategy, the Unified Budget Results and Accountability Framework, as well as UNEG norms and standards for evaluation. The committee has a critical role in providing guidance and advice on the evaluation function and ensuring its independence at UNAIDS.
59. Under the leadership of UNAIDS, the EO co-managed, with the executive offices of UNICEF, UNDP and WHO, the midterm evaluation of the results and accountability framework (UBRAF) of the UNAIDS unified budget, 2016-2021. This was the first system-wide evaluation initiated by the UNAIDS Cosponsor Evaluation Group, which brings together the evaluation offices of UNAIDS Cosponsors and its secretariat. The evaluation results will feed into the development of the next UNAIDS global strategy and a new 'results, resource allocation and accountability framework' for the UNAIDS Joint Programme.

B. **The United Nations Evaluation Group**

60. The EO continued to be an active member of the UNEG, contributing to the UNEG general assembly and evaluation week. As a co-convener of the interest group on joint evaluations, the EO provided leadership and facilitated a dedicated and collective space for sharing lessons learned and good practices on managing and conducting joint evaluations. Together with UNICEF and WFP, the Office has also organized a virtual session on joint evaluations. Furthermore, the Office has been active on the methods working group, decentralized evaluation interest group, and the system-wide evaluation group.
61. In 2020, the Director of the Office chaired the UNEG/OECD peer review of the WFP evaluation function, together with representatives from UNHCR, the World Bank, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, the German Institute for Development Evaluation, and the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation. The panel will present the findings and recommendations at the WFP Executive Board and the WFP Evaluation Function Steering Committee in 2021.

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

62. For a second year in a row, UNFPA ‘exceeded requirements’ of the evaluation performance indicator (EPI), with a composite score of 10.1. On aggregate, the evaluation reports assessed this year ‘met the requirements’ of the EPI. In addition, the EO completion of the last phases of its centralized evaluation of UNFPA support to gender equality and women’s empowerment, placed the Office in the ‘exceeded requirements’ category.

D. **Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation**

63. The EO continued to actively participate in the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) steering group. The EO took part in the management group of the IAHE on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls evaluation, which assessed the progress on the operationalization of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls agenda since 2017.
64. The EO also continued to take part in the activities of the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP). As part of the EO commitment to prioritize joint and system-wide efforts, the Office supported and widely disseminated ALNAP learning paper on the COVID-19 response, ‘Responding to COVID-19: Guidance for humanitarian agencies’.¹⁸

E. **Joint evaluations**

65. UNFPA continued to engage in various types of joint evaluations with United Nations agencies. In 2020, the EOs of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women finalized a joint evaluability assessment of the common chapter to their respective strategic plans. UNFPA and UNICEF also jointly launched the evaluation of phase III of the joint programme on the abandonment of female genital mutilation, under the leadership of the UNFPA executive office.
66. Similar to the centralized level, UNFPA managed and contributed to several joint evaluations at the regional and country levels. For example, in Yemen, UNFPA participated in an interagency joint humanitarian evaluation. In Sri Lanka, UNFPA supported a joint evaluation on ‘Participation of Youth and Women in Peacebuilding Process’, a joint project implemented by UNFPA, UN-Women and United Nations Volunteers.
67. To further support coherence and organizational learning among United Nations agencies, the executive offices of UNFPA and UNICEF, together with FAO, ILO, IOM, Office of the Youth Envoy, the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), DESA, UNIDO, UNDP, the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations, and EvalYouth, have launched a system-wide meta-synthesis to inform the current implementation of the United Nations Youth Strategy. The exercise will contribute to strengthening collaboration among the United Nations agencies by informing the work of the United Nations on youth issues in a coordinated, coherent and holistic manner.

¹⁸ <https://www.alnap.org/help-library/responding-to-covid-19-guidance-for-humanitarian-agencies>

F. United Nations regional evaluation groups and UNSDCF evaluations

68. UNFPA, in collaboration with other agencies and regional mechanisms, actively supported the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) evaluations by providing technical and financial support in all regions. Countries that received support include Argentina, Bangladesh, Caribbean multi country office, El Salvador, Honduras, Laos, Mongolia, Morocco, Peru, Sierra Leone, Uruguay and Vietnam.
69. To foster efficiency and coherence while minimizing the burden on stakeholders, the EO and the Asia and the Pacific Regional Office, together with WFP, the Resident Coordinator Office and UNDP, co-facilitated a coordinated approach to country programme and UNSDCF evaluations in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, as a pilot to inform similar experiences in other countries.
70. In addition, UNFPA continues to co-lead or actively contribute to the United Nations Regional Evaluation Group (IRENAS) in the Arab States region, the United Nations Evaluation Development Group for Asia and the Pacific (UNEDAP), the Regional Inter-agency Working Group on monitoring and evaluation in Latin America and Caribbean, and the United Nations Evaluation Group in the East and Southern Africa region. Within Eastern Europe and Central Asia, UNFPA contributed to an informal regional evaluation group comprising of monitoring and evaluation advisors from UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women.

IV. Multi-stakeholder partnerships for national evaluation capacity development

71. In 2020, UNFPA continued to strengthen national evaluation capacities, together with major stakeholders, including United Nations entities. This is in line with General Assembly resolutions 69/237 (building capacity for evaluation of development activities at country level), 70/1 (endorsing the 2030 Agenda) and 71/243 (QCPR), as well as the UNFPA Evaluation Policy.
72. In addition, and complementary to co-leading the Eval4Action campaign at global level, UNFPA is also an active partner at regional level. In Asia and the Pacific, the EO and the regional office supported the Asia Pacific Evaluation Association, EvalYouth Asia and the Asian Parliamentarians Forum for Development Evaluation in developing the first-ever regional evaluation strategy as a follow-up to the Eval4Action regional consultation. One of the first actions implemented was the development of guidance on the use of evaluation for monitoring and reporting on the SDGs, as well as the facilitation of a South-South experience exchange on developing national evaluation policies and systems.
73. The EO and the regional offices in the Arab States and the Latin America and the Caribbean supported the organization of the respective Eval4Action regional consultations. The Arab States Regional Office and the EvalYouth chapter in the Middle East and North Africa are developing a strategy to promote evaluation in support of the SDGs. In Latin America and the Caribbean, a regional stakeholder working group is being put together to develop the regional evaluation agenda.
74. In Africa, Eurasia and Europe, UNFPA is supporting Eval4Action partners in leading a multi-stakeholder process to increase action towards influential evaluation. For example, following the Africa consultation, two subregional consultations will be organized in West and Central Africa and East and Southern Africa to further define subregional action plans. As a follow up to the Eurasia consultation, the development of an action plan has been initiated, together with members of the Eurasian Alliance of National Evaluation Associations.
75. The EO also continued to be a member of (a) the EvalPartners Executive Committee representing the United Nations system together with WFP, and (b) the EvalGender+ Management Group, together with UN-Women.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships to enhance meaningful participation of youth in evaluation

76. The EO continued to promote the participation of young people in evaluation, and build professional capacity of young and emerging evaluators, as articulated in the Evaluation Policy. In this regard, UNFPA continued to support EvalYouth strategic priorities, including (a) rollout of the third phase of the EvalYouth Global Mentoring Programme, (b) the annual EvalYouth Virtual Conference on 'Evaluation for Transformation and Social Change' that brought together 170 participants, and (c) development of a toolkit for Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs) on how to increase engagement of young and emerging evaluators in VOPE activities, governance structures and leadership.

77. UNFPA also supported several EvalYouth regional and national chapters. EvalYouth national chapters in Afghanistan, Colombia, Ecuador and India were launched; EvalYouth Peru developed a digital platform to collate resources on monitoring and evaluation to build capacity of young and emerging evaluators; EvalYouth Kenya launched a virtual training course for enhancing professional knowledge of young and emerging evaluators; EvalYouth Asia initiated a public awareness campaign on evaluation and SDGs; EvalYouth Togo sensitized 100 Togolese youth through three webinars and digital outreach on the Togolese National Development Plan, SDGs and the African Union Agenda 2063.
78. In partnership with the European Evaluation Society, the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS) and EvalYouth, the Office supported the ‘Peer-to-peer career advisory sessions for emerging evaluators’. The Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office forged a partnership with the European Evaluation Society to sponsor young and emerging evaluators to join its biennial conference. In addition, UNFPA engaged young evaluators in the reference groups of CPEs in Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and North Macedonia. In the Arab States and the West and Central Africa regions, young and emerging evaluators were included as member of the evaluation team in the regional programme evaluation of the Arab States and CPEs of Morocco, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea Bissau and the Gambia.
79. In Asia and the Pacific, the regional office supported the development of a competency framework for evaluators, especially targeting young and emerging evaluators. A model was also developed to frame a mentoring programme to strengthen competencies and networking opportunities of young and emerging evaluators in the region. The regional office also supported virtual awareness sessions for regional VOPEs on the professionalization of evaluation and on the use of the competency framework. A 4-hour training module on career development in monitoring and evaluation and a guide for mentors was also developed by VOPEs, following support from the Asia and the Pacific Regional Office.
80. The Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office partnered with the regional EvalYouth chapter to organize a webinar on gender equality and human rights-responsive evaluations, and the video presenting the UNFPA guidelines on adapting evaluations to the COVID-19 crisis was disseminated by EvalYouth regional chapter.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships to enhance the demand for and use of country-led evaluation by national policy-makers

81. In addition to the partnership with the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation (GPFE) to co-lead the Eval4Action campaign, the EO continued to support the Forum in its outreach to parliamentarians, to strengthen the capacity of individual parliamentarians, regional parliamentary fora and parliamentary staff on use of evaluation for evidence-based decision-making. The Forum also coordinated and supported the participation of parliamentarians in the Eval4Action regional consultations.
82. UNFPA also supported active participation of parliamentarians in evaluation conferences, such as the Indian EvalFestival, the annual EvalMENA conference and the Asian Evaluation Week. In partnership with the EO, the GPFE conducted a panel on ‘Strengthening use of evaluative evidence for policy making: Lessons from Parliaments’ at the Asian Evaluation Week, where parliamentarians from Sri Lanka, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Uganda highlighted processes that led to institutionalizing evaluation in their parliaments.

Multi-stakeholder initiatives and events to bring together demand and supply of country-led evaluations

83. UNFPA continued to support strategic initiatives and events in order to mobilize a range of stakeholders and share good practices and lessons learned on how to strengthen inclusive national evaluation systems.
84. In the Latin America and the Caribbean, the development of a National Evaluation Capacities Index was advanced at the regional level, together with other United Nations agencies, the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization (ReLAC), and the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval).
85. In Asia, in partnership with the Global Environmental Facility, Green Climate Fund, International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie), CLEAR-South Asia and the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE), UNFPA supported EvalFest 2020, organized by the Evaluation Community of India (ECOI) in collaboration with NITI Aayog-Government of India, themed ‘Evidence-building for achieving the SDGs: digital development and inclusion’. In partnership with WFP, UNFPA supported the Asian Evaluation Week,

organized by the People's Republic of China and the Asian Development Bank, themed 'Evaluation for a better future'. UNFPA was the lead presenter at a panel, co-organized with WFP, on 'How can evaluation provide strategic direction? Experiences from United Nations agencies'.

86. In the Middle East and North Africa, UNFPA supported the eighth EvalMENA Conference, themed 'Evaluation for sustainability and change'. UNFPA also attended the panel, 'Follow up to the Colombo Declaration and EvalColombo2018: Progress towards regional commitments', where parliamentarians from Ghana, Jordan and Palestine emphasized the importance of national evaluation policies and systems and shared good practices from their countries.

V. **The Evaluation Office programme of work in 2021**

87. In 2021, the EO will continue its work in the following four key results areas, ensuring full adaptation of evaluations to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

A. **Centralized evaluations**

88. As detailed in the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, the Office will manage 12 evaluations in 2021/22, with five to be completed in 2021 and seven in 2022.

B. **Decentralized evaluation system**

89. The EO will continue supporting the strengthening of the decentralized evaluation system, by delivering technical support, managing the evaluation quality assessment and assurance system and, together with the regional offices, develop capacities in evaluation, including those of young and emerging evaluators. The Office will roll out the e-learning programme on evaluation, reinforce implementation of the guidance on disability inclusion in evaluations and provide guidance on alternative approaches, methods and considerations to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on evaluations. To strengthen the knowledge management system, a new user-friendly evaluation database will be launched. The Office will also continue to strengthen the internal community of practice and will continue maintaining the roster of evaluation consultants.

C. **Enhancing coherence in the United Nations system evaluation functions**

90. The Office will continue to actively engage in United Nations development system reform, the UNEG, and other joint and system-wide evaluation initiatives. It will also continue to engage with the IAHE steering group and ALNAP. To enhance coherence and minimize overlaps and avoid overburdening stakeholders, the Office will seek opportunities for collaboration and coordination of CPEs among UNEG members, when appropriate and feasible.

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

91. The EO will continue to co-lead the Eval4Action campaign, including by supporting the roll-out of regional evaluation action plans and strategies to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs through evaluation. In addition, it will continue its engagement in multi-stakeholder partnerships for national evaluation capacity development, including with EvalPartners and EvalYouth

E. **Budget for the 2021 workplan**

92. The total EO budget for 2021 is \$4,332,513. The budget comprises two funding categories: (a) institutional budget (\$3,926,630) and (b) non-core resources (\$405,883).