



# UNFPA EVALUATION STRATEGY 2022-2025

**Accountability | Adaptation | Acceleration**  
Delivering rights and choices for all



# Preface



Evaluation is a priority for UNFPA and a key element of organizational learning, accountability and evidence-based decision-making. Evaluation provides important evidence of our impact on the ground, where it counts, and gives us insight into what we need to do better. This is vital to improving UNFPA's efforts to deliver on the priorities and commitments outlined in our strategic plan, 2022-2025.

Indeed, quality evaluation can help us accelerate progress towards the Plan's heightened commitment to achieve three transformative results: zero unmet need for family planning; zero preventable maternal deaths; and zero gender-based violence and harmful practices – all crucial to fulfilling the promises of the ICPD Programme of Action and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Evaluation also informs and guides our efforts to respond more effectively and efficiently to complex mega-trends and development challenges. It is especially relevant within the context of 'building forward better' from the COVID-19 pandemic; accelerating sustainable solutions in the SDG Decade of Action; and addressing the priorities emerging from the ongoing implementation of UN reform.

The Evaluation Strategy 2022-2025 provides a clear opportunity to enhance the evaluation function within the new strategic plan. I am confident that the implementation of the concrete measures articulated in the evaluation strategy will make UNFPA more evidence-informed, while ensuring that our work remains relevant to the rapidly changing development and humanitarian context.

All of us stand ready to support the rollout of our evaluation strategy and are prepared to put in place the capacities, systems, resources and leadership needed to ensure its successful operationalization.

**Dr. Natalia Kanem**

Executive Director, UNFPA



# Foreword

Evaluation is a central function in UNFPA. It ensures the organization's accountability for results and learning into the development of new policies, strategies, country programmes and initiatives.

In order to make the UNFPA evaluation function more robust, responsive, flexible, and purposeful, UNFPA has developed this evaluation strategy. The strategy outlines the priorities, key actions and targets of the UNFPA evaluation function within the timeline of its strategic plan, 2022-2025.

The objectives and expected results of the evaluation strategy are aligned with the stated commitments of the strategic plan. The thrust of the evaluation strategy is to nurture an organizational culture that constantly strives to deliver quality evidence in order to support the three transformative results of UNFPA: zero unmet need for family planning; zero preventable maternal deaths; and zero gender-based violence and harmful practices. The evaluation strategy ultimately seeks to provide evidence to reach and address the needs of those people left furthest behind.

The strategy places great emphasis on strengthening the use and utility of evaluations as well as on enhancing evaluation quality and evaluation capacities at different levels. Achieving these aims depends greatly on the capability of managers to demand and use evaluation as well as the capability of evaluation specialists and UNFPA monitoring and evaluation personnel to supply high quality evaluative evidence for improving the quality of interventions. Similarly, the strategy seeks to promote greater coherence across United Nations evaluation functions through joint and system-wide evaluations and strengthen the capacities of national partners in the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, guided by country-led evaluative evidence.

The development of the evaluation strategy has benefitted from a broad consultation process. The draft strategy was discussed at the first ever global evaluation retreat in late 2021, including consultations with Evaluation Office staff; regional monitoring and evaluation advisors and country-level monitoring and evaluation specialists and focal points; and senior management. These consultations helped shape the focus and priorities of the evaluation function for the next four years.

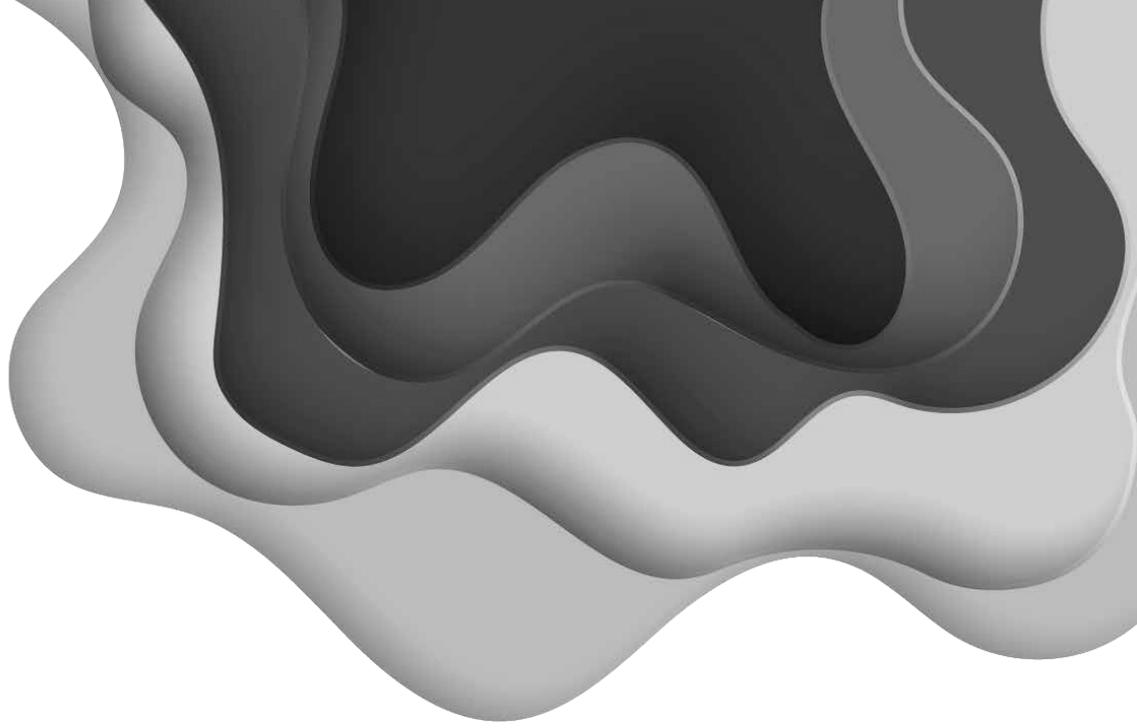
I invite you to drive the implementation of the strategy with the aim of helping UNFPA make evaluation culture central to fast-track progress towards the realization of the three transformative results and beyond.

**Marco Segone**

Director, UNFPA Evaluation Office

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**1**

# **Introduction**



This document presents a strategy to strengthen the evaluation function within UNFPA. It constitutes, for 2022-2025, the second of three iterations up to 2030. The strategy reflects a view of the evaluation function as a system that is integrated into UNFPA at all levels and is complementary to other oversight mechanisms and functions in the organization.

The strategy is framed by both the UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025, and the broader set of directions adopted by the United Nations system. It sets out the priorities and key actions required to strengthen the evaluation function, to establish a common vision on intended outcomes, and to provide a basis for assessing and adjusting the evaluation function's direction in response to a fast-changing environment.

It is expected that the implementation of this strategy will enhance a strong foundation that nurtures an organizational culture that is constantly seeking evidence to better manage and deliver quality results and to achieve better organizational effectiveness in order to achieve the three transformative results:



By positioning evaluation as an accelerator of the implementation of the strategic plan, 2022-2025, the strategy seeks to promote learning, adaptation, accountability and informed decision making by delivering increasingly responsive, flexible, diversified, and innovative evaluation processes and products.

## 1.1 Overview

As UNFPA embarks on its second strategic plan, 2022-2025, a robust, purposeful, credible, and responsive evaluation function is vital to help the organization deliver on its mandate and accelerate progress towards its commitment to deliver the three transformative results. Within this context, a strong evaluation function that supports accountability, learning, and adaptation is indispensable for improving programming effectiveness, for accountability for learning for results, and for strengthening the evidence-base for decision-making.

The UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025, commits the organization to *“pursue evaluation designs that maximize organizational learning and strengthen its capacity in human rights-based, gender-responsive, and disability-inclusive evaluations”*. The strategic plan further emphasizes high quality data and evidence as critical levers to accelerate the achievement of the three transformative results. To this end, UNFPA requires the best available evidence on what works to deliver the three transformative results, why, in what contexts, and for whom, offering opportunities to identify enabling and constraining factors, as well as further strengthening accountability for results and adaptive management. Even more so than usual, COVID-19 has made evidence from evaluations more essential to catalyse decisions towards building more equitable and resilient societies in the post COVID-19 era.

To support this goal and in line with the commitments of the strategic plan, the Evaluation Office has realigned its work to better support the implementation of the strategic directions of UNFPA and to deliver timely and relevant evaluation evidence to strengthen its commitment towards achieving the three transformative results.

This document presents a strategy to strengthen the evaluation function even further and it constitutes, for 2022-2025, the second of three iterations up to 2030. The strategy reflects a view of the evaluation function as a system that is integrated into UNFPA at all levels and is complementary to other oversight mechanisms and functions in the organization, while enhancing national evaluation capacities, with a specific focus on youth.

Guided by the fundamental principles and requirements of the UNFPA evaluation policy, the strategy provides a common understanding of the evaluation function in UNFPA, its priorities over the 2022-2025 period, and how these translate into intended outcomes in important areas of evaluation work.

In addition to responding to the dynamic and fast-changing development contexts such as emerging mega-trends,<sup>1</sup> the COVID-19 pandemic, and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Decade of Action (2030 Agenda), the strategy is equally driven by the 2020 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR)<sup>2</sup> and ongoing implementation of the repositioning the United Nations development system (UNDS). These global development accords demand constant learning and adaptation, which means evaluative thinking should be embedded into strategic dialogues and decisions on programming and positioning in order to respond more effectively and efficiently to complex development challenges, and to deliver on the commitments of the strategic plan.

The strategy will be adjusted as necessary to cover issues that emerge in the course of the implementation of the strategic plan, and as internal and external frameworks develop and change.

This document has five sections. Ahead in section one, the document outlines the purpose of the strategy and the strategy development process. Section two addresses the strategic context and provides a snapshot of the evaluation function in UNFPA, detailing the main areas of evaluation work. Sections three to five constitute the strategy proper, its priorities, a theory of change, and the areas of work with their intended outcomes.

## 1.2 Purpose

Leveraging the gains achieved in the recent past,<sup>3</sup> the strategy aims to support UNFPA to strengthen its evaluation function as an accountability and learning mechanism in order to accelerate progress towards realizing the interconnected, transformative, and people-centred outcomes of the strategic plan.

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1 These include climate change, demographic shifts, inequalities, migration and digitalization.

2 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of United Nations system operational activities (QCPR) resolution [A/RES/75/233], 21 December 2020.

3 UNFPA evaluation strategy, 2018-2021.

The strategy sets out the priorities and key actions required to strengthen evaluation operations, to establish a common vision on intended outcomes, and to provide a basis for assessing and adjusting the evaluation function's direction in response to a fast-changing environment.

The strategy specifically aims to: better position the UNFPA evaluation function relative to other functions; strengthen internal evaluation capacity development; improve internal and external coherence of UNFPA evaluation-related activities; strengthen collaboration and coordination within the United Nations system through system-wide, joint and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) evaluations – while meeting accountability standards and learning needs of UNFPA; and contribute to national evaluation capacity development. Systematic integration of a human rights-based and gender and disability-inclusive approach ensuring the principle of “leave no one behind” and an emphasis on reaching the furthest behind first, as well as social and environmental standards, all combine to form the centrepiece of the strategy.

The ultimate intent of the strategy is to nurture an organizational culture that is constantly seeking evidence to better manage and deliver quality results and to achieve better organizational effectiveness.

### **1.3 Evaluation strategy development process**

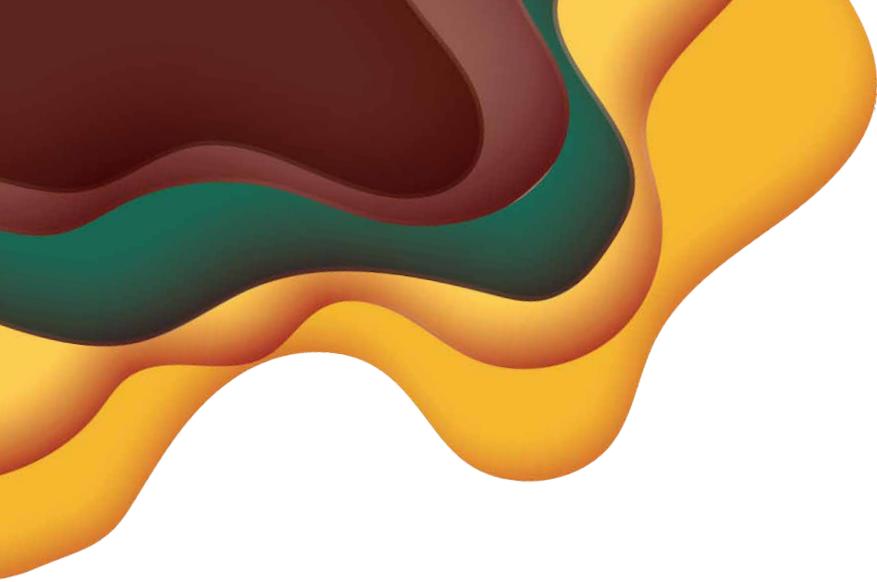
In addition to a review of key documents, the strategy benefitted from a consultative process with Evaluation Office staff; regional monitoring and evaluation advisors and country-level monitoring and evaluation specialists/focal points; and senior management. A wide range of perspectives were gathered during the first virtual global evaluation retreat, which was held in December 2021 under the aegis of the Evaluation Office. An online survey was also commissioned by the Evaluation Office in the last quarter of 2021.

To maintain the alignment of this strategy with the strategic direction of UNFPA and with contextual evolutions within and outside the United Nations, UNFPA may review the strategy for evaluation at regular intervals and revise it as needed – that is to say, the strategy is adaptive and a “living document”.

# 2

## **Evaluation function at UNFPA**





## 2.1 Strategic context

### 2.1.1 Evaluation policy

UNFPA evaluation policy (DP/FPA/2019/1), approved by the Executive Board in 2019, provides the normative framework for the evaluation function. The evaluation policy sets out the purpose and use of evaluation, provides definitions, principles and norms, and outlines roles and responsibilities for the evaluation function. It guides staff and partners regarding the organization's requirements for the conduct and use of evaluations.

The policy supports the development of a culture of evaluation for better performance, continuous learning, and strengthened accountability.

### 2.1.2 Conceptual frame of reference

The conceptual frame of reference of the evaluation function draws on the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards for evaluation.<sup>4</sup> In it, evaluation is considered an essential attribute that can inform planning, programming, budgeting, implementation and reporting and can contribute to evidence-based policymaking, development effectiveness and organizational effectiveness.

The strategy is premised on the fact that strengthening evaluation function is not a goal in itself, but a means to provide evidence for informed decision-making, enhanced accountability, improved efficiency and supporting strategic policy development.

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<sup>4</sup> UNEG Norms and standards for evaluation, UNEG, June 2016.

Evaluation capacity development involves three interdependent dimensions: individual capacity, organizational capacity, and an enabling environment. These dimensions of the evaluation capacity interact to determine the demand, supply and use of evaluation. They include the ability to effectively commission and manage evaluation processes and demand and use evaluation results to influence policy and programme decisions.

### **2.1.3 External contexts and changes that shape the evaluation function**

The development landscape in which UNFPA operates continually evolves. Similarly, the context in which evaluations are conducted has been transformed by wide-ranging global frameworks, including those on sustainable development (2030 Agenda); the United Nations resolution 'Building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level',<sup>5</sup> the QCPR, the United Nations reform agenda, the COVID-19 pandemic and, within UNFPA, the recently endorsed strategic plan, 2022-2025.

The recent megatrends and the unprecedented increase in the scale and intensity of humanitarian emergencies all reinforce the need for high quality evaluative evidence on the performance of UNFPA and its adaptation to changing needs and expectations. The multifaceted aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic further prompted evaluations to adapt to changing conditions. This consequently triggered demand for evidence on the degree to which UNFPA has been shaping its interventions and responses to the pandemic and on its ability to recover in the post-crisis context. Evaluative evidence is also needed to assess whether UNFPA policies and programmes are contributing to the commitment towards leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first.

Taken together, these contextual issues represent both opportunities and challenges for the evaluation function, including placing ever-greater demands on accountability, learning and adaptation and for delivering tangible results. Consequently, the evaluation function needs to continue to adapt and innovate, so that evaluations, both at centralized and decentralized levels, can generate

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<sup>5</sup> UNGA Resolution A/RES/69/237. Capacity building for the development activities at the country level, January 2015.

important knowledge, insights and recommendations to drive transformative change and organizational effectiveness and efficiency.

#### **2.1.4 Evolving changes within UNFPA and the United Nations development system**

##### **UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025**

UNFPA aims to achieve the three transformative results by 2030 through three successive four-year strategic plan cycles. The second cycle, covering strategic plan, 2022-2025, approved in 2021 (DP/FPA/2021/8), charts an ambitious course to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the three transformative results. As part of, and in parallel with the urgent call for action, the strategic plan identified six accelerators: (i) human rights-based and gender-transformative approaches; (ii) innovation and digitization; (iii) leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind; (iv) partnership, South-South and triangular; (v) data and evidence; and (vi) resilience and adaptation, and complementarity among development and humanitarian action and peace-responsive efforts.

As such, the strategic plan recognizes that data and evidence are needed across many relevant sectors and for a range of critical policy and programme decisions. The strategic plan is also explicit on the need for tracking and assessing the progress made towards achieving the three transformative results, learning from successes and failures in the process, including performance against the strategic plan on innovative and enduring solutions for accelerating the progress.

The strategic plan stated that UNFPA will support joint monitoring and evaluation approaches and efforts with partner United Nations organizations with whom it shares collective outcome-level and impact-level indicators. For example, nearly 56 per cent of the strategic plan outcome and impact indicators in the integrated results and resources framework (IRRF) are common indicators while around 73 per cent of the output-level indicators are common or complementary indicators.

The QCPR and UNDS repositioning provided a further boost for more coherence, coordination and joint programming as well as system-wide and joint evaluations. As part of their commitment to the UNDS reform, the United Nations system organizations are seeking to jointly evaluate their combined efforts, in particular

in the context of joint programmes or system-wide goals. The Evaluation Office will increase efforts to strategically engage in joint or system-wide evaluation initiatives.

Today, development organizations such as UNFPA face complex contexts and dynamic landscapes. UNFPA therefore needs evaluations that are responsive, context-adapted and flexible to its needs in order to drive lasting and transformative change in the lives of all women and girls and to ensure that no one is left behind.

## 2.2 Snapshot of the evaluation function at UNFPA

### 2.2.1 Brief historical perspective

In June 2009, following approval by the Executive Board in decision 2009/18, UNFPA created its evaluation function as part of the Oversight Division and adopted its first evaluation policy (DP/FPA/2009/4). Building on the 2013 evaluation policy and informed by an external independent review of the evaluation function,<sup>6</sup> the Executive Board of UNFPA approved in 2019 a revised evaluation policy, which reflected the internal and external environment in which UNFPA operates.

A broad range of actions undertaken since then have strengthened the systems, capacities, and tools to build a robust and effective evaluation function. There has been a progressive increase in human resources for monitoring and evaluation. Investment in evaluation continued to increase at both decentralized and central levels, having more than doubled from 2014 to 2020. The investment has yielded discernible results – especially in terms of coverage, quality, utility and use of evaluations. Overall, the evaluation function has achieved or exceeded the evaluation key performance targets of the previous evaluation strategy, 2018-2021.

The new strategy will sustain existing achievements while simultaneously deepening the focus on enhancing quality, knowledge, and learning from evaluations, as part of a concerted effort to increase the influence and uptake of evaluation insights towards implementation of the strategic plan. The strategy will seek to foster coordination and synergy between centralized and regional-

<sup>6</sup> Independent external strategic review of the evaluation function of UNFPA, 2018.

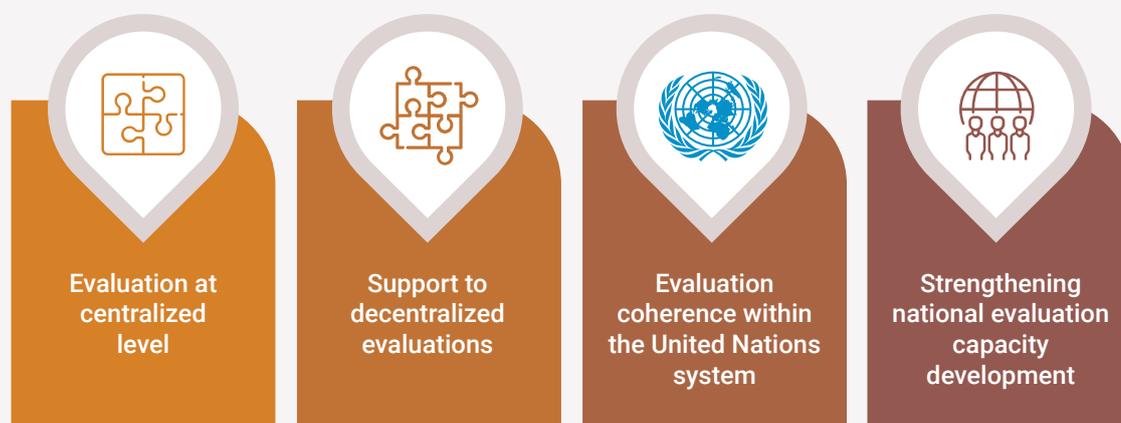
level strategic evaluations with the view to increasing efficiency and avoiding duplication. Evaluation capacity development will remain the centrepiece of the strategy. This also implies enhancing capacities on integrating human rights, gender equality, disability inclusion, leaving no one behind, and reaching the furthest behind principles and dimensions in evaluation processes and products.

Further changes are likely to happen over the period of the UNFPA strategic plan 2022-2025 and of this evaluation strategy. The evaluation strategy will take into account, and adapt as required, to the evolution and changes both internal and external to UNFPA.

### 2.2.2 Main areas of work

The UNFPA evaluation function encompasses four major areas of work:

(i) evaluation at centralized level; (ii) support to decentralized evaluations, with a focus on quality assurance and evaluation capacity development; (iii) evaluation coherence within the United Nations system; and (iv) strengthening national evaluation capacity development.



#### Centralized evaluations

Centralized evaluations are managed by the Evaluation Office and include institutional, programme, thematic and joint or system-wide evaluations, as well as evaluability assessments and baseline studies. Quality assurance is provided during the evaluation process and the final evaluation reports are subject to an external quality assessment. In its drive for greater organizational learning, a synthesis

report pulling together and aggregating findings from evaluations is produced periodically by the Evaluation Office.

The Evaluation Office implements the 2022-2025 Quadrennial Budgeted Evaluation Plan, whose purpose is to provide a coherent framework to guide the commissioning, management and use of evaluations at UNFPA. The plan provides a basis for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of planned centralized evaluations, as well as decentralized country and regional programme-level evaluations. The Evaluation Office is responsible for implementing the plan and reports on its implementation to the Executive Board annually.



### **Decentralized evaluations, with a focus on quality assurance and evaluation capacity development**

Country and regional programme evaluations are undertaken in conformity with the evaluation policy and are considered a formal part of the evaluation function of UNFPA. Country programme evaluations provide an assessment of the entirety of the country programme and assess whether UNFPA has made appropriate strategic choices in the given context and delivered effectively. Country programme evaluations are designed to meet the need for learning and accountability at UNFPA, and to inform the strategic orientation and the design of the next programme cycle. In line with the evaluation policy, country programme evaluations should be conducted at least every other programme cycle.

Similarly, regional programme evaluations provide an assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of UNFPA support and progress towards the expected outputs and outcomes set forth in the results framework of the regional programme.

Country programme evaluations and regional programme evaluations continue to be an integral feature of the UNFPA country programme development and approval processes. They coordinate with the UNSDCF evaluations<sup>7</sup> and country programme evaluations from other United Nations system agencies, as much as possible. Evidence and lessons from country programme evaluations have been instrumental in catalyzing decisions and will continue to serve as a key conduit

<sup>7</sup> Timing and sequencing may differ based on country context.

to ensure that next-generation country programmes deliver on the strategic plan ambition to accelerate progress towards the three transformative results.

The timing and sequencing of country programme evaluations will synchronize with key milestones of the revamped country programme development and approval processes. This will generate evidence that can be used to make the country programme development process and strategic dialogues more analytical and rigorous.

To ensure country programme evaluations are of high quality, the Evaluation Office and regional monitoring and evaluation advisers have an important role to play in coordinating and strengthening evaluation capacity, knowledge, and skills across UNFPA. The Evaluation Office approves their terms of reference and pre-qualifies and approves the selected evaluation teams. The regional monitoring and evaluation advisers provide quality assurance during the evaluation processes. Final evaluation reports are subject to an external quality assessment managed by the Evaluation Office.

The Evaluation Office continues to implement the Evaluation Quality Assurance and Assessment (EQAA) system with the aim of improving the quality and use of decentralized evaluations. The system uses UNEG evaluation report standards as a basis for review and assessment while observing specific standards relevant to UNFPA.

In doing so, the system: (i) provides senior managers with a clear, concise and independent assessment of the quality and usefulness of individual evaluation reports; (ii) strengthens internal evaluation capacity by providing offices commissioning evaluations with individualized feedback on how to improve future evaluations; (iii) contributes to corporate knowledge management and organizational learning by identifying evaluation reports of good quality to be used in meta-syntheses, facilitating internal and external sharing of good evaluation reports; and (iv) facilitates reporting to the Executive Board on the quality of evaluation reports.

The Evaluation Office and regional monitoring and evaluation advisers also conduct and coordinate training and learning initiatives, promote exchange of knowledge, provide guidance and tools, promote the increased use of evaluation, and foster a greater understanding of evaluation. As part of its efforts to

continuously enhance internal evaluation capacity, the Evaluation Office will further promote the roll-out of the Country Programme Evaluation Management Kit, which was launched during the last quarter of 2021. The Country Programme Evaluation Management Kit provides up-to-date and ready-to-use guidance, tools and templates to facilitate effective preparation, management and utilization of a country programme evaluation. As a companion to the Handbook on How to Design and Conduct a Country Programme Evaluation, the kit rests on three building blocks: (i) draft good quality country programme evaluation terms of reference; (ii) identify and select qualified evaluation consultants; and (iii) effectively communicate on the country programme evaluation process and results.



### Evaluation coherence within the United Nations system

Capitalizing on the QCPR and the UNDS repositioning, as well as the commitments articulated in the strategic plan, the Evaluation Office will sustain and further deepen its engagement in system-wide and joint evaluations at different levels. At the global level, UNFPA has been active in strengthening evaluation coherence within the United Nations system, through engagement with United Nations evaluation platforms (such as UNEG, the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Group, and joint and system-wide centralized evaluations) and through the United Nations System-Wide Evaluation Unit and the Global COVID-19 Evaluation Coalition.

At regional and country levels, UNFPA has been active in joint evaluations, UNSDCF evaluations, and inter-agency monitoring and evaluation groups at country and regional levels. Although not in large scale, there are pockets of examples where UNFPA has pursued a coordinated approach to country programme evaluations with other United Nations agencies. A case in point is a coordinated country programme evaluation approach in the Lao People's Democratic Republic with the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Resident Coordinator's Office. Another example is a joint Common Country Programme Evaluation (CCPE) in Cape Verde, undertaken by the Evaluation Offices of UNFPA, UNDP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). In the wider context of United Nations system-wide evaluation efforts, these experiences are expected to spawn similar collaboration and joint evaluations elsewhere.



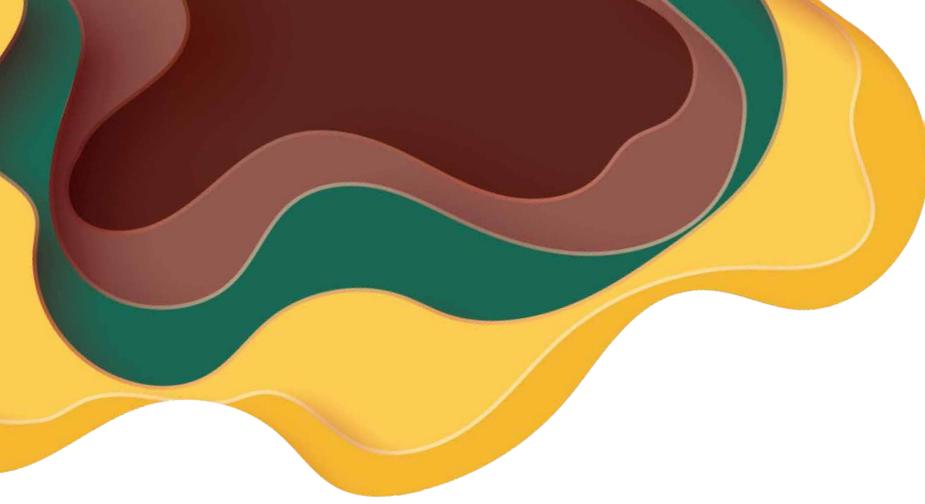
### **Strengthening national evaluation capacity development**

The evaluation function strives to strengthen the evaluation capacity among UNFPA implementing partners and other partner country institutions such as ministries, parliaments, municipalities or civil society organizations. It seeks to leverage multi-stakeholder partnerships – for example, EvalPartners, EvalGender+, EvalYouth and the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation – to support and strengthen the national evaluation capacity of governments, voluntary organizations for professional evaluation, and other national stakeholders. The UNFPA commitment to engage youth in evaluation process and enhance evaluation capacities of young and emerging evaluators will remain the tenet of the strategy.

# 3

## **Strategic priorities**





The strategy has identified seven priorities, which are perceived to be an integrated and coherent set of elements to enhance the UNFPA evaluation function. These priorities provide a frame of reference for making choices about how UNFPA should best allocate its efforts and resources over the strategic cycle.

Although these priorities are intended as an overarching organization-level frame of reference for evaluation in UNFPA, there is flexibility for adaptation and prioritization based on regional and country contexts.

The seven priorities are:



These overall priorities are in turn operationalized by key results areas of evaluation work: centralized, decentralized, evaluation coherence within the United Nations system, and national evaluation capacity development.

### 3.1 Demand-driven evaluation processes and products

The Evaluation Office is making an unwavering commitment to provide relevant, credible and high quality evaluations in order to inform policy, strategy and programmatic decisions. Increasingly, achieving this requires meeting the needs for accountability and learning and at the same time being more responsive – or demand-driven – to the information needs and decision-making processes of UNFPA and other key external stakeholders (Executive Board, UNFPA management, governments, implementing partners, and rights holders).

The priority of the evaluation function is to ensure engagement of all UNFPA stakeholders so that evaluation use and utility are a shared responsibility and a core component of accountability, executive management, informed decision-making and learning, consistent with a demand-driven or “pull” approach to foster use and utility.

Evaluation starts with the question of how it can best address stakeholder requirements. It then goes on to provide strategic and policy information to senior management; offer programme-level evidence for decision-making and action; and make organization-wide learning available to then tailor the responses to evaluation needs and requirements.

#### Intended outcomes

Strategic and consultative processes are carried out to plan for evaluation, that is, quadrennial budgeted evaluation plans at the centralized level, and costed evaluation plans at the country and regional levels

Strategic communication is enhanced and demand for, and use of, evaluative knowledge specific to stakeholder requirements is facilitated

### 3.2 Diversification and innovation of evaluation processes and products

The evolving external and internal needs for evaluative evidence require diversification, adaptation, and innovation to better meet organizational and stakeholder needs and requirements. Humanitarian contexts and the COVID-19 pandemic in particular have been important catalysts for diversifying and innovating UNFPA evaluation practices.

In many cases, the value in evaluation resides as much, if not more, in the evaluation process as it does in the evaluation report. Therefore, the UNFPA evaluation function taps into the full range of evaluation approaches and methodologies, including developing and testing innovative evaluative solutions to best meet stakeholder needs and requirements. Building on its existing positive momentum, the Evaluation Office will continue to promote innovative approaches including developmental evaluations, to provide UNFPA with critical, real-time feedback and evaluative input for decision-making in complex, uncertain and dynamic conditions.

Overall, the evaluation function in UNFPA is moving from a primary focus of reporting on performance to one of generating and communicating value, using the most responsive and appropriate evaluative means at its disposal to enhance accountability for learning and adaptation for results.

#### Intended outcomes

The evaluation function delivers increasingly responsive, flexible, diversified, and innovative evaluation processes and products

Organizational support systems are strengthened to facilitate relevant, timely, high quality, credible and strategically useful evaluations

### 3.3 Quality and credibility of evaluations

The Evaluation Office continues to support the improvement of evaluation quality to adhere to the norms and standards of UNEG, but is further committed to expanding its quality and function to optimize aspects such as user satisfaction and contributing to UNFPA effectiveness and efficiency in order to improve

the lives of women, adolescents and youth. This commitment to improvement constitutes an integral part of the quality of evaluation.

In other words, the Evaluation Office recognizes that, although evaluation may meet the norms and standards for quality, the integration of functional aspects, such as user satisfaction, contributing to the UNFPA organizational effectiveness and efficiency to improving the lives of women, adolescents and youth, constitute an integral part of the quality of evaluation.

### Intended outcomes

Evaluations increasingly meet  
UNEG norms and standards

Stakeholders are increasingly  
satisfied with evaluations produced  
and use them for decision-making

## 3.4 Enhanced use and utility of evaluations

Relevant, timely, targeted, efficiently and strategically communicated evaluation evidence is vital to influence change and to augment the commitment of UNFPA to be a results-driven organization that is continually learning and adapting.

The strategy underscores the importance of a strategic approach to communications and knowledge management in order to facilitate enhanced use of evaluations. It does this by focusing on audience knowledge needs; producing relevant, innovative and diversified evaluation knowledge products for a range of audiences; streamlining and enhancing knowledge management platforms and processes for increased availability; and providing timely access to targeted evaluative knowledge for decision-making, adaptation, learning and accountability.

Further, the Evaluation Office in collaboration with regional and country offices will expand outreach efforts on evaluation evidence to various key stakeholder groups within and outside UNFPA. Overall, strategic communication thinking will be further embedded in evaluation. Evaluation staff's capacity to use communication and knowledge management channels and tools will also be further enhanced.

More and better engagement will be created with business units to strengthen strategic engagement through evaluation reference groups and other methods of reflection. This ensures that the right questions are asked and that the

right stakeholder concerns are addressed in the evaluation. It also supports organizational buy-in and use of findings and recommendations from the onset while ensuring independence, objectivity and credibility.

All of the above strengthen management attention on the evaluation function because of the increased demand and use for evaluations, as well as a gradual increase in resources invested in the evaluation function. The aim is to achieve the target of a minimum of 1.4 per cent of total programme expenditure to the evaluation function, up to a maximum of 3 per cent, as stated by the evaluation policy.

### Intended outcomes

<p>Organizational positioning and corporate identity of the Evaluation Office are streamlined to facilitate the use of evaluation results, products and processes</p>	<p>Evaluation is used to inform and make decisions at country, regional and corporate level</p>
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### 3.5 Human rights-based approach to evaluation, especially gender, youth, social and environmental standards and disability inclusion

Consistent with the commitment to leave no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first, the strategy proposes a multi-path approach to enhance systematic integration of human-rights, gender equality, youth and disability inclusion, as well as social and environmental dimensions in evaluation processes and products. This will be achieved, inter alia, through: i) strengthening evaluation quality assurance systems, guidance and tools; ii) promoting participatory and consultative approaches; iii) building and equipping the capacities of evaluation managers and evaluators; and iv) leveraging internal and United Nations system-wide frameworks and guidance, such as the United Nations System Wide Action Plan on Gender and Women’s Empowerment (UN SWAP), the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) accountability frameworks, UNFPA Disability Inclusion Strategy (2022-2025), UNFPA leaving no one behind and reaching

the furthest behind strategies as well as the UNFPA social and environmental standards.

### Intended outcome

Evaluations increasingly meet and exceed the UN SWAP and UNDIS evaluation performance indicator requirements

## 3.6 Evaluation capacity development

Evaluation capacity development is mainstreamed throughout the current strategy with the aim of strengthening the relevance, quality and use of evaluations. In UNFPA, evaluation capacity development activities are conceptualized to strengthen both individual and institutional capacities, while also enhancing a culture of, and an enabling environment for evaluation. Each level can be strengthened independently; nonetheless success comes from a systemic and comprehensive approach to the development of all three.

While there is a minimum of competencies required for the management of evaluation-related activities, a priority for the UNFPA evaluation function is to support the organization's move from single learning ('are we doing things well'), to double learning ('are we doing the right things'), and triple loop learning ('how do we know what it is the right thing to do?'). That means evolving from addressing problems, to improving systems, to transforming the organization through evaluative thinking and developing a culture of evaluation. Although each of these levels addresses different purposes, the progression from single to double and triple loop learning can lead to deeper and more sustainable learning and adaptation and ultimately lead to generating credible evidence and accelerating progress towards the three transformative results.

The evaluation capacity development efforts will be synchronized with internal and United Nations system-wide efforts, including the upcoming launch of the UNFPA self-paced e-learning course on rights-based management (RBM) and evaluation and the UNEG-wide intermediate-level self-paced, online course to certify knowledge on evaluation.

**Intended outcomes**

Monitoring and evaluation staff at global, regional and country levels have appropriate knowledge of diversified and innovative evaluation processes and products

The abilities of monitoring and evaluation staff are enhanced to manage, conduct and use evaluations

### 3.7 Global evaluation advocacy and partnerships to accelerate influential evaluation at national level

In January 2020, the United Nations Secretary-General issued a global call to mobilize all actors, at all levels, for a Decade of Action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The Decade of Action campaign aims to mobilize everyone everywhere, demand urgency and ambition, and supercharge ideas to solutions. In alignment with, and complementary to, the Decade of Action campaign, UNFPA Evaluation Office, EvalYouth Global Network and the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation have partnered as co-leaders of the Decade of EVALUATION for Action, a global advocacy campaign to promote influential evaluation to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The campaign seeks to bring widespread recognition to evaluation as a powerful tool to improve public accountability and good governance toward delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The overall objective of the campaign is to mobilize and spur commitments from decision makers, the evaluation community and other stakeholders to develop stronger national evaluation systems and capacities, toward delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, with a focus on leaving no one behind. Further, in line with the Decade of Action campaign, the global advocacy campaign for evaluation actively collaborates with young and emerging evaluators in the design and the roll-out of the various initiatives. It also seeks to reach out to young evaluators, and youth movements at large, on the importance of evaluations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. By the end of 2021, close to 150 partners around the globe had actively engaged in the promotion of influential

evaluation through the campaign. The evaluation strategy advances the advocacy campaign through stronger partnership building and increased engagement and through digital outreach on action for influential evaluation.

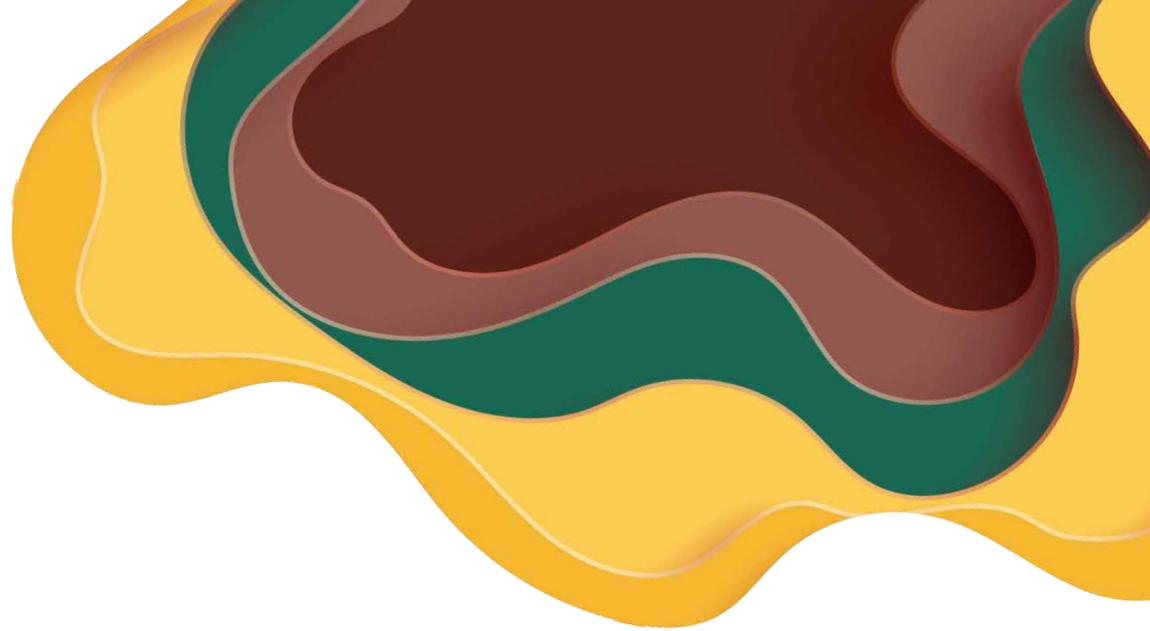
**Intended outcome**

National evaluation capacity is strengthened through multi-stakeholder partnerships at global, regional and national levels, including with other United Nations organizations to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 with a focus on leaving no one behind

# 4

## **Theory of change to strengthen UNFPA evaluation function**





The theory of change is premised to make the UNFPA evaluation function more robust, responsive, flexible and innovative to support the attainment of the strategic plan priorities in rapidly changing and challenging contexts. The ultimate intent of the strategy is to nurture an organizational culture that is constantly seeking evidence to better manage and deliver quality results and to achieve better organizational effectiveness.

This will be achieved through a system-wide approach that seeks to: (i) enhance institutional and individual capabilities; and (ii) strengthen an enabling environment for evaluations to perform better and generate their expected results, as per the stipulations of the evaluation policy.

The theory of change in particular aims to strengthen the capability of managers to demand and use evaluation as well as the capability of evaluation specialists and UNFPA monitoring and evaluation personnel to supply high quality evaluative evidence. It takes into account the commitment of UNFPA to human rights-based, gender-responsive, social and environmental standards and disability-inclusive evaluations to deliver rights and choices for women, adolescents and youth.

As described by the figure ahead, the theory of change aims to develop and strengthen institutional systems (output level) that will enhance the capacities of individuals to change their knowledge, attitude and practices towards evaluation

(outcome level). To enhance the capacities of UNFPA managers to demand and use evaluation (the demand side), UNFPA strengthens the following systems and mechanisms:

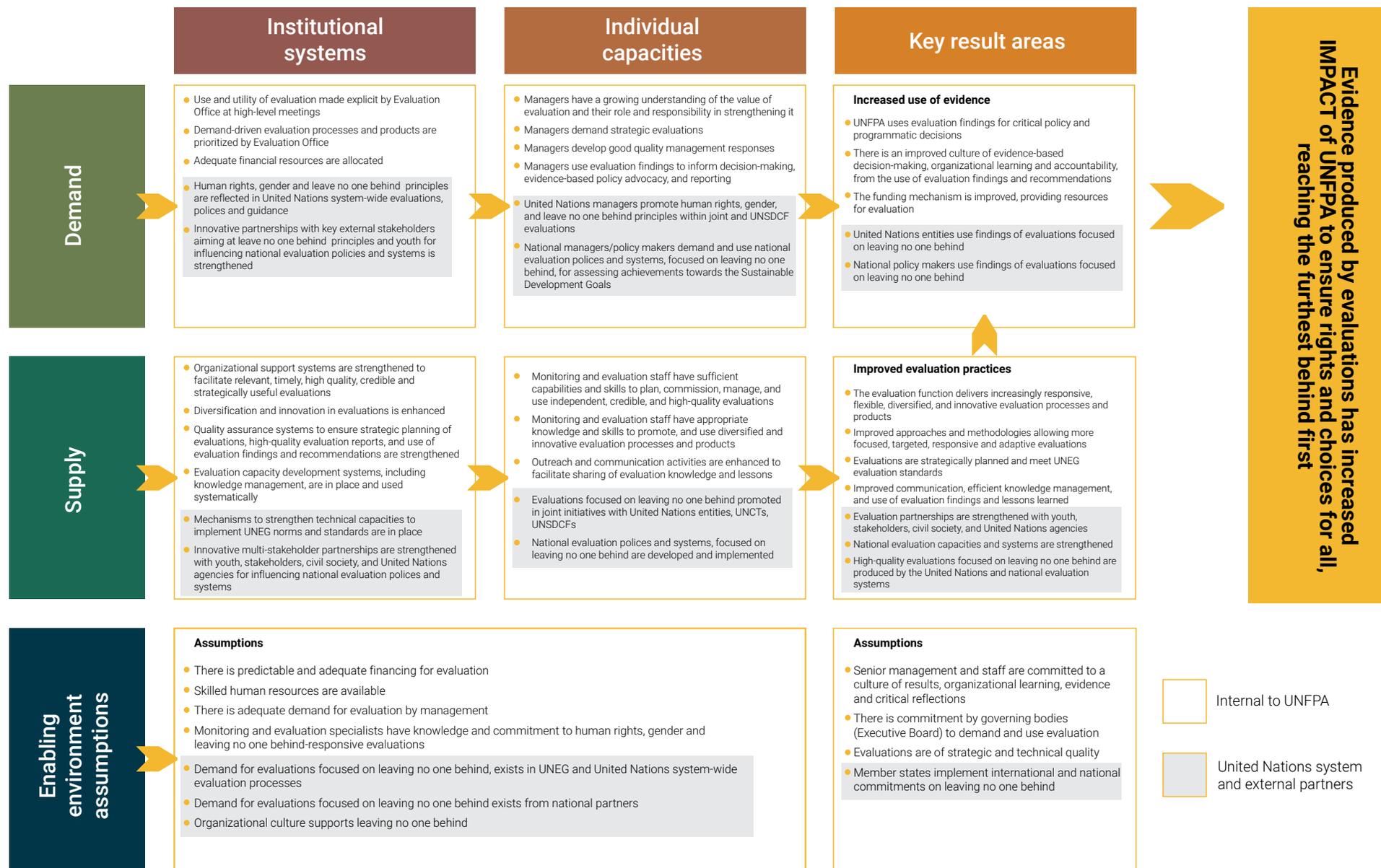
- The use and utility of UNFPA evaluation function to enhance management attention
- Demand-driven evaluation processes and products
- Budgeting mechanisms that will enable the organization to meet the target of investing a minimum of 1.4 per cent, up to a maximum of 3 per cent of total programme expenditure to the evaluation function.

To enhance the capacities of UNFPA monitoring and evaluation specialists and focal points to manage good quality evaluations (the “supply side”), UNFPA strengthens the following systems and mechanisms:

- Diversification and innovation of evaluation processes and products
- Quality assurance systems to ensure strategic planning of evaluations, high quality evaluation reports, and use of evaluation findings and recommendations
- Internal capacity development systems, including those covering knowledge management in support of the evaluation function and e-learning to strengthen the capacities of monitoring and evaluation specialists and UNFPA staff
- Technical assistance mechanisms, mainly led by regional offices, to ensure that timely and high quality support is provided to country offices.

The following institutional systems and mechanisms are expected to change the knowledge, attitude, and practices towards evaluation of UNFPA managers (demand side) as well as UNFPA monitoring and evaluation specialists (supply side). UNFPA managers should ensure that they: (i) better understand the value of, and demand for, strategic evaluations; (ii) develop good quality management responses; (iii) use evaluation findings to inform decision-making, evidence-based policy advocacy and reporting; and (iv) are accountable for the performance of the evaluation function in their own offices/regions. Monitoring and evaluation specialists should ensure that they support country offices in producing high quality, costed evaluation plans and manage high quality evaluations.

# Theory of change to strengthen UNFPA evaluation function



The same theory of change applies for strengthening the capabilities of United Nations agencies as well as national governments, parliaments and civil society organizations. Within the United Nations system, UNFPA will sustain and further deepen its engagement with the evaluation efforts of United Nations system partners through joint evaluations, UNSDCF evaluations and United Nations system-wide evaluation efforts. To strengthen the demand for gender-responsive, disability-inclusive, and youth-focused evaluations within the United Nations system, UNFPA works with UNEG at the global level, and with United Nations evaluation regional groups and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) at the country level in order to strengthen mechanisms to ensure the principle of leaving no one behind is reflected in United Nations system-wide evaluation policies, guidance and practices. Within national governments and civil society organizations, UNFPA engages with innovative multi-stakeholder partnerships aiming to strengthen the promotion of influential evaluation in order to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 with a focus on leaving no one behind.

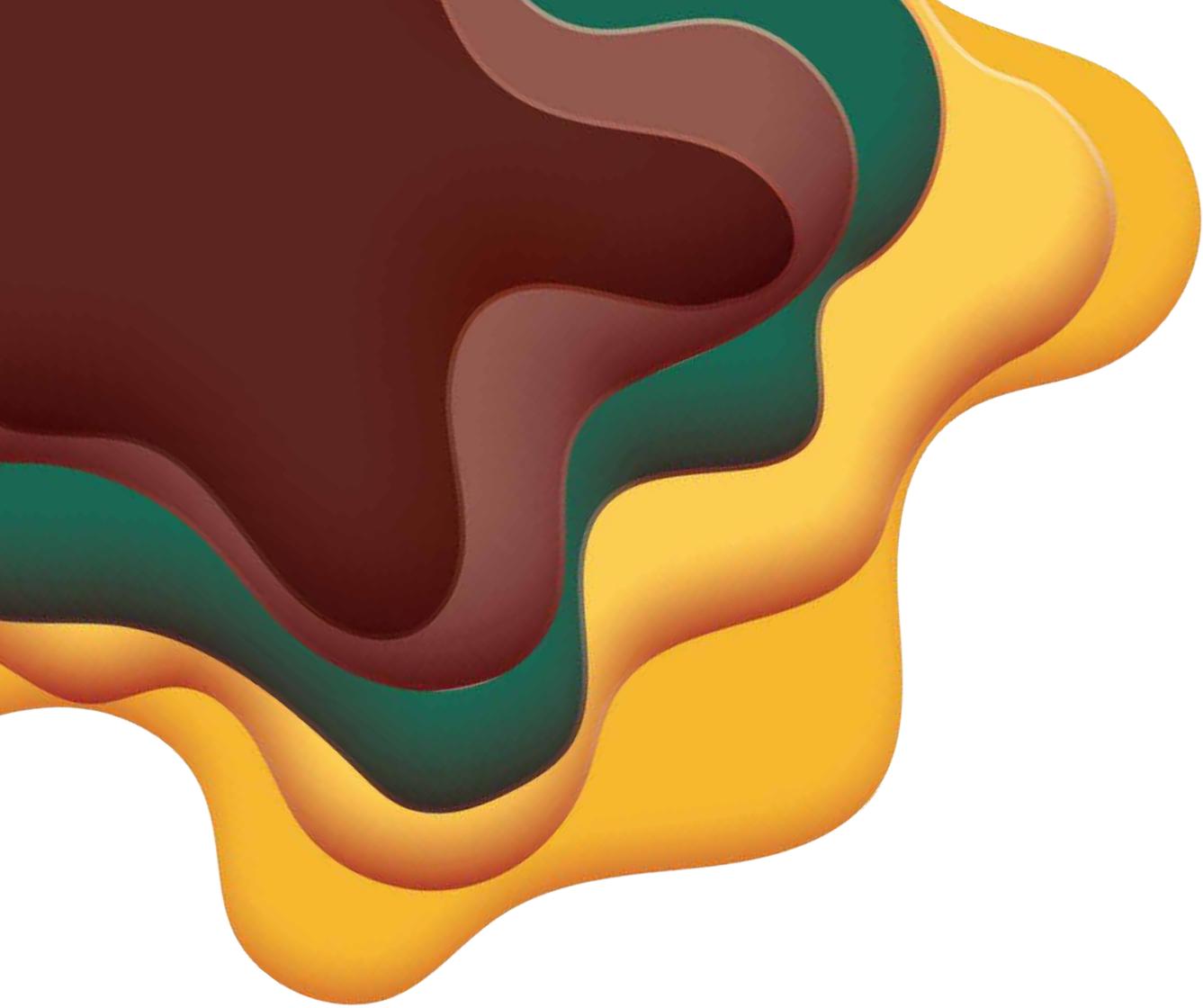
As a result, the supply and use of high quality evaluations focusing on leaving no one behind will improve within UNFPA, United Nations entities and national policy-making processes, leading to greater development effectiveness for sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, youth development, gender equality, and women's empowerment.

The theory of change makes a number of assumptions about the conditions required to achieve the proposed results. Given the complexity of social change and transformation of gender relations as well as varied national contexts, this theory of change should not be viewed as a linear model but as a complex system where change happens through feedback loops, reversals, and sometimes, even backlashes.

# 5

## **Budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and reporting**





To implement the evaluation strategy, the Evaluation Office develops costed annual work plans at the beginning of each year, specifying the financial and human resources needed to achieve annual expected results that contribute to the achievements of the four-year results stated in this strategy. To monitor the implementation of the strategic plan against the monitoring and evaluation framework (section 5.1), the Evaluation Office gathers information from field offices and headquarters on an annual basis. In addition, the Evaluation Office conducts meta-evaluations of the evaluations undertaken in the organization to assess their quality on an annual basis. Based on that information, the Evaluation Office prepares an annual report on the evaluation function, which is presented to UNFPA senior management and the Executive Board.

## 5.1 Evaluation strategy's monitoring and evaluation framework

OUTCOMES	OUTPUTS	INDICATORS/TARGETS
<b>Area 1: Effective centralized evaluation systems are implemented</b>		
Management attention to the global evaluation function is heightened	A robust evaluation function with adequate level of resources as stipulated in the evaluation policy	<p><i>Financial resources invested in evaluation function</i>  <b>Indicator:</b> Budget for evaluation as a percentage of total UNFPA programme budget  <b>Target:</b> A minimum of 1.4 per cent of the total UNFPA programme expenditure invested in evaluation function</p> <p><i>Use of evaluation in programme development</i>  <b>Indicator:</b> Percentage of new country programme documents whose design was clearly informed by evaluation  <b>Target:</b> 95 per cent</p>
Centralized evaluations of strategic relevance are used in support of accountability, decision-making and programme learning	2022-2025 Quadrennial Budgeted Evaluation Plan approved and implemented	<p><i>Centralized evaluation implementation rate</i>  <b>Indicator:</b> Percentage of centralized evaluations implemented as planned  <b>Target:</b> 100 per cent of centralized evaluations completed as planned</p> <p><i>Quality of centralized evaluations</i>  <b>Indicator:</b> Percentage of centralized evaluations rated as 'good' or 'very good'  <b>Target:</b> 100 per cent of centralized evaluation reports assessed as at least 'good'</p> <p><i>Management response submission</i>  <b>Indicator:</b> Percentage of completed centralized evaluation reports with management response submitted  <b>Target:</b> 100 per cent of centralized evaluations have management response</p> <p><i>UN SWAP evaluation performance indicator (EPI) requirements</i>  <b>Indicator:</b> Percentage of centralized evaluations that have met the UN SWAP evaluation performance indicator requirements  <b>Target:</b> 100 per cent</p>
Offer of centralized evaluations is diversified through innovation	Innovative approaches and methods in conducting centralized evaluations implemented	<p><i>Innovative and diversified approaches</i>  <b>Indicator:</b> Percentage of centralized evaluations that have used diversified and innovative approaches to meet organizational and stakeholder needs and requirements  <b>Target:</b> At least 50 per cent of centralized evaluations used diversified and innovative approaches</p>

OUTCOMES	OUTPUTS	INDICATORS/TARGETS
Improved communication, and use of evaluation findings and lessons learned	2022-2025 strategy to enhance evaluation use through communications and knowledge management is implemented	<p><i>Evaluation reports posted on evaluation database</i>  <b>Indicator:</b> Percentage of completed programme-level evaluation reports posted on evaluation database  <b>Target:</b> 100 per cent</p> <p><i>Management response submission</i>  <b>Indicator:</b> Percentage of completed programme-level evaluation reports with management response submitted  <b>Target:</b> 100 per cent of decentralized evaluations have management response</p> <p><i>Implementation of management response</i>  <b>Indicator:</b> Percentage of management response actions completed  <b>Target:</b> 85 per cent</p>

**Area 2:** Effective decentralized evaluation systems are implemented for greater accountability, improved programming and a stronger culture of results

Management attention to decentralized evaluation function is heightened	Evaluation function is compliant with the evaluation policy	<p><i>Human resources for monitoring and evaluation</i>  <b>Indicator:</b> Percentage of country offices staffed with a monitoring and evaluation focal point or officer  <b>Target:</b> At least 95 per cent of country offices have dedicated human resources (monitoring and evaluation officer or focal point) to support the evaluation function</p> <p><i>Evaluation implementation rate</i>  <b>Indicator:</b> Percentage of programme-level evaluations implemented as planned  <b>Target:</b> At least 90 per cent of decentralized programme-level evaluations completed as planned</p> <p><i>Quality of evaluations</i>  <b>Indicator:</b> Percentage of programme-level evaluations rated as 'good' or 'very good'  <b>Target:</b> At least 90 per cent of decentralized programme-level evaluation reports are rated as 'good'</p> <p><i>Evaluation coverage</i>  <b>Indicator:</b> Percentage of country offices that have conducted a country programme evaluation once every two cycles  <b>Target:</b> At least 90 per cent</p> <p><i>UN SWAP evaluation performance indicator</i>  <b>Indicator:</b> Proportion of programme-level evaluations that meet the UN SWAP evaluation performance indicator requirements  <b>Target:</b> At least 90 per cent of decentralized programme-level evaluations meet the UN SWAP evaluation performance indicator requirements</p>
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OUTCOMES	OUTPUTS	INDICATORS/TARGETS
Enhanced capacities of staff to plan, manage and use evaluations	<p>Evaluation guidance enhanced and training delivered</p> <p>Improved quality of decentralized evaluations</p>	<p><i>Enhanced capacity of staff to plan, manage and use evaluations</i></p> <p><b>Target:</b> All monitoring and evaluation officers and focal points have completed the UNFPA e-learning course on country programme evaluations</p> <p><b>Target:</b> 90 per cent of monitoring and evaluation specialists are members of the internal M&amp;E Net</p> <p><b>Target:</b> UNFPA country programme evaluation management kit operationalized across all regions for better country programme evaluation planning, implementation, use and dissemination</p>
Country and regional programme evaluations used to meet strategic knowledge requirements through further analysis of findings and results of evaluations	Evaluation findings and lessons are synthesized in line with UNFPA strategic knowledge requirements	<p><b>Indicator:</b> Percentage of new country programme documents that factored in evaluative evidence</p> <p><b>Target:</b> 100 per cent of new country and regional programmes demonstrated evidence of application of evaluation findings, lessons and recommendations</p> <p><b>Target:</b> Periodic meta-synthesis reports produced in line with strategic learning and knowledge requirements</p>

**Area 3: Evaluation coherence within the United Nations system is promoted**

Effective participation in United Nations system-wide and joint evaluations	<p>UNFPA actively participates in UNEG, the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHE), the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP), the United Nations System-Wide Evaluation Unit, and the Global COVID-19 Evaluation Coalition</p> <p>UNFPA actively engages in joint and system-wide evaluations</p>	<p><i>System-wide and joint evaluations</i></p> <p><b>Indicator:</b> Percentage of centralized evaluations being joint or system-wide evaluations</p> <p><b>Target:</b> At least 50 per cent</p>
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OUTCOMES	OUTPUTS	INDICATORS/TARGETS
<b>Area 4:</b> National evaluation capacities for monitoring and evaluation systems are strengthened		
Effective engagement in multi-stakeholder partnerships	Evaluation partnership strengthened with youth, stakeholders, civil society and United Nations agencies	<p><b>Indicator:</b> Number of strategic multi-stakeholder partnerships towards promotion of influential evaluation to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 with a focus on leaving no one behind</p> <p><b>Target:</b> Strategic partnership with EvalYouth, Eval4Action, EvalPartners, EvalGender+, the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation</p>



**United Nations Population Fund  
Evaluation Office**

605 Third Avenue  
New York, NY 10158 USA

✉ [evaluation.office@unfpa.org](mailto:evaluation.office@unfpa.org)

🌐 [unfpa.org/evaluation](https://unfpa.org/evaluation)

🐦 [@unfpa\\_eval](https://twitter.com/unfpa_eval)

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