

Guidance on integrating the principles of leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind in UNFPA evaluations



UNFPA Evaluation Office
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At the centre of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is the principle of leaving no one behind (LNOB). LNOB is a firm commitment made by Member States to eradicate poverty, discrimination and exclusion and reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that undermine a safe and equitable future for all.

The United Nations formalized a common approach to LNOB, launching the “Shared Framework on Leaving No One Behind: Equality and Non-Discrimination at the Heart of Sustainable Development”, which was endorsed by the Chief Executives Board in November 2016.¹ At the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, Member States, United Nations entities, non-governmental organizations and other relevant actors committed to advancing the pledge of LNOB in crisis contexts, with LNOB being one of the five core responsibilities of the Secretary General’s Agenda for Humanity.² At the country level, LNOB is one of the six guiding principles under the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and is operationalized through the UNSDG Operational Guide for United Nations Country Teams on Leaving No One Behind.

¹ https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/imported_files/CEB%20equality%20framework-A4-web-rev3.pdf.

² <https://agendaforhumanity.org/>

Definitions

Gender+

Gender plus. This term refers to the overlapping, intersecting factors in addition to gender that harm, exclude and disadvantage groups, leaving them furthest behind

LNOB

Leaving no one behind. This principle includes all groups excluded from progress, including those impacted due to their gender alone

LNOB groups

Those who get left behind when they lack choices and opportunities to participate in and benefit from development progress

RFB

Reaching the furthest behind. This principle is focused on situations where gender and other exclusionary factor(s) work together to create the disadvantage

RFB factors

Characteristics that drive discrimination and inequality and may intersect with various other drivers of exclusion in the same person or group. As outlined in the UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025, the following are core furthest behind factors and characteristics often associated with discrimination and exclusion: age; culture/ethnicity/race/language/religion; disability; HIV/AIDS status; migration/asylum/displacement; sexual orientation/gender identity; income/wealth

Source: UNFPA LNOB and RFB Operational Plan (2021-2025).

What prompted the development of this guidance?

At UNFPA, the principle of LNOB is an important cornerstone of all its organizational policies, corporate strategies and operations. Guided by the 1994 Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, UNFPA has embedded LNOB in all of its programming during the Decade of Action to realize the Sustainable Development Goals. Specifically, the UNFPA strategic plan, 2018-2021, placed the principle of LNOB as integral to charting a path towards the achievement of its three transformative results. Moreover, in the UNFPA 2020 integrated mid-term review and progress report, the principles of LNOB and reaching the furthest behind (RFB) was recognized as strategic priorities for the organization. Since then, LNOB has become a core component of the UNFPA human rights-based approach (HRBA) guidance.

Programmatically, UNFPA has a strong track record in working with and for marginalized groups, such as young women and adolescent girls, LGBTQI+,³ indigenous peoples, people living with HIV/AIDS, and persons with disabilities. In an effort to scale up and accelerate its work on LNOB, UNFPA commissioned an external assessment of UNFPA performance in addressing the principle of leaving no one behind in 2019 to help inform its next strategic plan.⁴ Taking stock of the assessment, LNOB emerged as a clear corporate priority in the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025 and was identified as one of its six accelerators. Thus, UNFPA reaffirmed its commitment to the principle of leaving no one behind and placed an emphasis on reaching the furthest behind first. The integrated results and resources framework of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025, presents outcome indicators disaggregated by sex and by one or more of the UNFPA left

³ LGBTQI+ is an inclusive term that includes people of all genders and sexualities, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, queer, intersex, asexual, pansexual, and their allies.

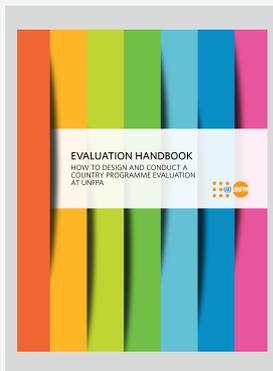
⁴ Assessment of UNFPA performance in addressing the principle of leaving no one behind as part of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2018–2021. December 2020. <https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1hwJqazo0j-zjTPgqPpDfQk2x6aNK0I>.

furthest behind factors and characteristics. In addition, UNFPA developed a LNOB and RFB operational plan for the UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025.⁵

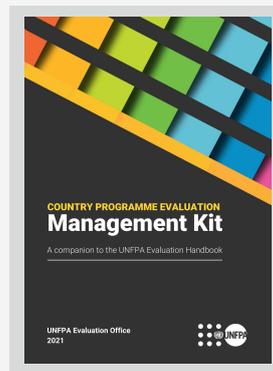
To operationalize the principle of LNOB in its programming, UNFPA uses a human rights-based approach to identify intersecting forms of discrimination and to address the social inequalities and underlying power relations that lead to exclusion. In order to reach the groups that are the furthest behind, UNFPA focuses on the most marginalized populations by identifying and prioritizing factors of discrimination and exclusion found in each operating context. To prioritize such factors of discrimination, UNFPA works with the gender+ approach where UNFPA identifies those facing gender disadvantage plus at least one other intersectional disadvantage.

What does this guidance offer?

This guidance note provides key considerations for integrating the principles LNOB/RFB into UNFPA evaluations in a systematic and meaningful way. The guidance should be read and used in conjunction with the following:



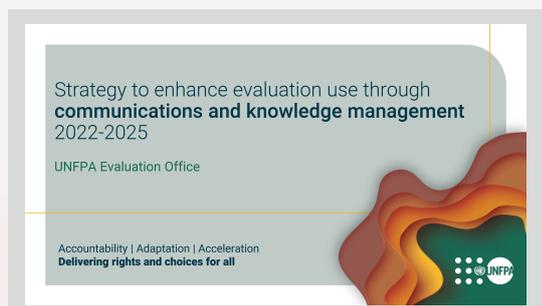
[Evaluation Handbook: How to design and conduct a country programme evaluation at UNFPA](#)



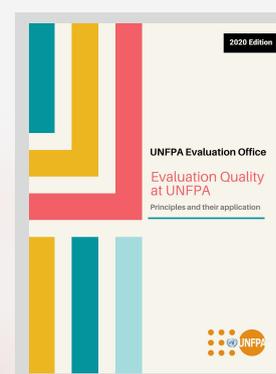
[Country Programme Evaluation Management Kit](#)



[Guidance on disability inclusion in UNFPA evaluations](#)



[UNFPA strategy to enhance evaluation use through communications and knowledge management, 2022-2025](#)



[UNFPA Evaluation Quality Assurance and Assessment: Tools and guidance \(2020\)](#) includes gender and disability inclusion dimensions

⁵ Leaving No One Behind and Reaching the Furthest Behind: Strategic Plan, 2022-2025.

This guidance note applies a human rights based-approach to LNOB and RFB, which facilitates an intersectional lens to ensure that evaluations address the root causes of discrimination, stereotypes, social norms, stigma, xenophobia, racism, inequity, and gender inequality. Moreover, the guidance note provides a dual approach to the integration of LNOB/RFB through:

 **mainstreaming** LNOB/RFB elements into evaluation processes and practice

 **developing** targeted evaluation questions that address LNOB/RFB dimensions

The guidance note aligns with the current LNOB and RFB Operational Plan, 2021-2025.

What are the key dimensions to consider?

When integrating these principles into evaluation work, LNOB groups and RFB factors should both be taken into consideration. There is a risk attached to considering LNOB groups as a homogenous population where all members are assumed to share the same characteristics and suffer from the same disadvantage(s). Viewing these groups as homogenous misses the diverse experiences of disadvantage, discrimination and inequality of different sub-populations within the group. As an example, the disadvantage, discrimination and inequality faced by Afro-descendant women with disability are very different from those faced by Afro-descendant men with disability.

To meaningfully integrate the principles of LNOB and RFB into evaluation work requires a human rights-based approach and a consideration of the following:

<p>Participation, representation and inclusion⁶</p>	<p>The evaluation should seek to ensure the participation, representation and inclusion of a wide range of stakeholders, including local and grassroots organizations, women’s rights/feminist activists, youth-led and -based organizations, and stakeholders who are underrepresented or excluded from development processes. Their participation, representation and inclusion should be ensured throughout the evaluation process, from its preparation to the dissemination and facilitation of use of its results</p>
<p>Reciprocity</p>	<p>The evaluation should be conceptualized, conducted and used in a way that ensures that those who are involved or impacted (including those interviewed during data collection) benefit from the exercise</p>
<p>Non-discrimination and equality</p>	<p>The evaluation should apply an intersectional lens to identify and address multiple forms of discrimination based on priority RFB factors as identified by UNFPA and how they overlap and interact with each other. It should also seek to ensure that discrimination or bias of any form is neither perpetuated nor exacerbated in the exercise. Moreover, the evaluation should capture the diverse values and perspectives of rights-holders and communities and avoid favouring or privileging one over the other</p>

⁶ Leaving No One Behind and Reaching the Furthest Behind: Strategic Plan, 2022-2025. “Participation, representation, inclusion: UNFPA will follow the principle of ‘nothing about us without us’ in its RFB work. This applies in all aspects of organizational life, from staffing to consultations, programmes, advocacy and partnerships.”

1. Integrating the principles of leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind into the evaluation process

In the following table, examples of how to integrate LNOB/RFB are presented for each phase of the evaluation process. These are meant to be illustrative and should be carefully adapted to each evaluation.

Preparatory phase

Elements to address	Explanation	Other considerations
<p>The terms of reference (ToR) of evaluations address LNOB/RFB in a meaningful way</p>	<p>This requires a reflection of the contextual factors of the intervention, identifying key groups that are “left behind” and/or specific factors that drive discrimination and inequality, and an understanding of how UNFPA is “reaching the furthest behind” in these contexts</p> <p>LNOB/RFB principles should be mainstreamed into the evaluation questions, criteria, methods, data collection and analysis and reporting. Integrating LNOB/RFB principles in this way will ensure these considerations will flow from the ToR, to the methodology, to the analysis of data, and eventually, to the final report</p>	<p>The evaluation scoping exercise is an opportunity to assess how an evaluation can best address LNOB/RFB principles</p>
<p>The evaluation team has knowledge and/or experience of LNOB/RFB, where relevant</p>	<p>An evaluation team with knowledge and/or experience of LNOB/RFB can provide a more nuanced perspective, improving the relevance and utility of the evaluation. This will help to ensure LNOB/RFB dimensions are mainstreamed throughout the evaluation</p>	<p>If hiring local consultants, consider professionals who are representative of marginalized and vulnerable groups and/or are affected by specific factors that drive discrimination and inequality. They can provide valuable insight and first-hand information on their situation and experience, enhancing the overall relevance and credibility of the report</p>

Design/inception phase

Elements to address	Explanation	Other considerations
<p>Evaluation questions address LNOB/RFB dimensions where appropriate (see section 2)</p>	<p>This will help to ensure LNOB/RFB dimensions are taken into consideration in data collection and analysis, as well as in the formulation of findings, conclusions and recommendations</p>	<p>Evaluators should check whether LNOB dimensions and/or RFB factors (to account for intersectionality dimensions) were taken into consideration to inform the design and implementation of UNFPA programmes or interventions</p> <p>Where relevant, consultations should be made with LNOB/RFB groups relevant to the evaluation</p>
<p>Evaluation stakeholder mapping includes persons identified from LNOB groups/or persons affected by specific factors that drive discrimination and inequality in the context of the intervention</p>	<p>Inclusion of such stakeholders can provide valuable insight and first-hand information on their situation and experience, enhancing the overall relevance and credibility of the report</p>	
<p>The methodology includes participatory techniques that are clearly described and designed to ensure participation, representation and inclusion of LNOB groups</p> <p>The methodology allows for a rigorous analysis of the underlying, structural or systemic drivers of exclusion and discrimination</p>	<p>Participatory methods can help to include a diversity of stakeholders, especially those from LNOB/RFB groups. The inclusion of their perspectives and voices can help to ensure a more complete, fair and unbiased assessment</p> <p>Mainstreaming LNOB/RFB dimensions into the evaluation methodology will ensure that data on factors of exclusion and discrimination are collected, and can be examined to better understand the root causes of exclusion and discrimination</p>	

🔍 Data collection phase

Elements to address	Explanation	Other considerations
Data collection and the subsequent analysis explicitly address drivers and underlying issues of exclusion, discrimination and inequality, including dimensions of LNOB/RFB	<p>Evaluations should collect information on factors of exclusion and discrimination, as well as disaggregated data by various factors including, but not limited to: sex, ethnicity, age, disability, geographic location, income or education</p> <p>When analyzing the data and information collected, the evaluators should examine the data through an intersectional lens and identify the impact of programmes on LNOB key populations, particularly those that are furthest behind. This will allow for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that may be at work that perpetuate exclusion and discrimination. It will also help to uncover barriers to transformative impact and to assess whether or not the intervention is reaching the populations in most need and those furthest behind, as well as the challenges attached to reaching these populations</p>	Leveraging the presence of community and civil society organizations and movements within data collection and validation can help to improve the participation, representation and inclusion of a diversity of rights holders

🔍 Analysis and reporting phase

Elements to address	Explanation	Other considerations
Evaluation findings should provide an analysis of the integration of LNOB and RFB, including an analysis of the systems and structures that perpetuate factors of exclusion, discrimination, inequity, and inequality based on substantiating evidence	The evaluation findings should not only help understand how LNOB/RFB dimensions were integrated in the intervention, but also help to understand to what extent the intervention addressed the systems and structures that perpetuate factors of exclusion, discrimination, inequity and inequality	<p>While there are several dimensions to consider, the following are a few examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess whether the concerns and experience of those furthest behind are treated as an integral dimension of the design, implementation and monitoring of UNFPA interventions • Assess whether sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) services are accessible to and reaching those at risk of being left out, including adolescents, youth, girls and women across various RFB factors • Assess whether programmes are driving sustainable and transformative change among vulnerable populations particularly those within groups that are furthest behind <p>Where appropriate, identify LNOB/RFB populations in the evaluation and establish a group to contribute to enhancing the credibility, reliability and utility of the exercise</p>

Elements to address	Explanation	Other considerations
<p>Issues of LNOB/RFB should be reflected in conclusions and recommendations, as appropriate</p>	<p>The extent to which LNOB/RFB should be reflected in the conclusions and/or recommendations of an evaluation should be based on the importance given to this issue in the findings section</p> <p>Concrete conclusions and recommendations should uncover barriers to transformative impact</p>	<p>The decision to include LNOB/RFB in the conclusions and/or recommendations should logically stem from the analysis in the findings section</p>

Facilitation of use and dissemination phase

Elements to address	Explanation	Other considerations
<p>Inclusive and accessible evaluation knowledge and communication products</p>	<p>Evaluation reports and other evaluation communication and knowledge products should use inclusive and local language and be made accessible in disability-inclusive and accessible formats and platforms (digital formats, audio visual formats, large print, easy-to-read, Braille as appropriate) with special attention given to the audience for which the evaluation has a particular and specific relevance</p>	<p>Establish a direct feedback loop to LNOB/RFB communities that participated in the evaluation to highlight and discuss the key results of the evaluation that are of priority and relevant to them. This can be done through the delivery of dissemination workshops or virtual webinars that are inclusive and accessible for diverse audiences, using local language and sign language interpreters as relevant</p>

2. Integrating leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind dimensions into evaluation questions by each evaluation criterion

In the following section, examples of how to integrate LNOB/RFB dimensions are presented for each evaluation criterion. These examples are not an exhaustive list, rather they are meant to be illustrative and should be carefully adapted to the context of the evaluation.

Evaluation criterion: **Relevance**

Example

- ✓ To what extent were factors of exclusion and discrimination identified and addressed in designing UNFPA programmes and interventions?
- ✓ To what extent was the gender+ perspective used for the identification of target populations when designing the intervention? (i.e. in addition to gender there is consideration of other RFB factors that may further exclude and discriminate target populations)
- ✓ To what extent does the intervention address the diverse needs of the population, including those of vulnerable and marginalized groups?
 - ✓ To what extent have UNFPA SRHR information and services addressed the varied needs of different marginalized and vulnerable groups, including those furthest behind as identified by UNFPA?
 - ✓ To what extent have UNFPA programmes and interventions addressed the hard-to-reach populations in terms of provision of, access to, and uptake of, maternal health and family planning commodities at the last mile?
 - ✓ To what extent has UNFPA support to SGBV addressed those furthest behind/most at risk of SGBV?
- ✓ To what extent were vulnerable and marginalized groups involved in the planning and the design of the intervention?

Evaluation criterion: **Effectiveness**

Example

- ✓ To what extent did the intervention contribute to positive changes in the lives of vulnerable and marginalized populations, particularly those left furthest behind?
- ✓ To what extent did UNFPA interventions support the elimination of barriers to access (e.g., social, economic, legal, location, language, cultural), SRHR and SGBV information and services for vulnerable and marginalized populations, particularly those left furthest behind?
- ✓ To what extent have UNFPA interventions contributed to improved access to and use of quality services for all, including vulnerable and marginalized groups, leaving no one behind?
- ✓ To what extent do programme indicators disaggregate data in order to be able to track progress across different groups at the country level?
- ✓ To what extent have interventions supported by UNFPA contributed to improved access to and use of quality services for those who are the furthest behind?

Evaluation criterion: Efficiency**Example**

- ✓ To what extent does UNFPA adequately allocate its financial resources to ensure that its interventions reach those left furthest behind first?
- ✓ To what extent does UNFPA adequately allocate its financial resources with a view to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups?
- ✓ To what extent has the intervention supported the generation of evidence-based data with a view to prioritizing the principle of LNOB?
- ✓ To what extent has data been disaggregated to assess existing inequalities and ensure UNFPA reaches specific groups who are the furthest behind?

Evaluation criterion: Sustainability**Example**

- ✓ To what extent have UNFPA interventions supported an enabling environment that promotes the principles of LNOB and RFB in national policies, strategies and legislative frameworks?
- ✓ To what extent are the benefits of UNFPA interventions in favour of vulnerable and marginalized groups, including those left furthest behind, likely to continue beyond termination of UNFPA support?

Evaluation criterion: Coherence**Example**

- ✓ To what extent has UNFPA leveraged strategic partnerships with national, local and grassroots organizations (e.g., women's rights /feminist activists, or youth-led groups, etc.), to reach those left furthest behind while ensuring synergies and avoiding duplications of efforts?
- ✓ To what extent has UNFPA adopted a holistic and synergetic approach across its priority thematic areas to adequately address the needs of vulnerable and marginalized populations, including those left furthest behind?

Evaluation criterion: Coordination**Example**

- ✓ To what extent has UNFPA contributed to strategically position LNOB and RFB principles in United Nations Country Teams (UNCT) coordination mechanisms?

Evaluation criterion: **Coverage**

Example

- ✓ To what extent have UNFPA humanitarian interventions reached the most vulnerable and marginalized populations, including those left furthest behind?

Evaluation criterion: **Connectedness**

Example

- ✓ To what extent have UNFPA interventions supported linkages between relief and recovery along the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach while addressing the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized populations, including those left furthest behind?

