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OVERVIEW OF COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION AT UNFPA

1.1 CPEs AND THE UNFPA EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Evaluation at UNFPA serves three main purposes that support the organization's drive to achieve results. It:

- Demonstrates accountability to stakeholders on performance in achieving development results at country level, and on invested resources (for example, with respect to governing bodies, donor governments, partner governments, other United Nations organizations and UNFPA beneficiaries)
- Supports evidence-based decision-making
- Contributes important lessons learned to the existing knowledge-base on how to accelerate implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action; in particular, on how best to advance SRHR, and on how UNFPA can best support the achievement of SDGs.

As per the UNFPA evaluation policy, evaluations fall under two main categories: (i) centralized evaluations; and (ii) decentralized evaluations.

Centralized evaluations are independent exercises undertaken by the Evaluation Office in order to assess issues that contribute to achieving the goals of the UNFPA strategic plan with regard to development effectiveness and organizational performance. Centralized evaluations address organization-wide issues, and include thematic, institutional, joint and United Nations system-wide evaluations and synthesis studies, as well as evaluations of major UNFPA-wide programmes, global trust funds and partnerships at the request of funding partners.

Decentralized evaluations – of which CPEs and regional programme evaluations are the most common – are managed by the respective business unit commissioning the evaluation, which is responsible for the programme being evaluated. Independent external evaluators pre-qualified by the Evaluation Office conduct these evaluations according to terms of reference (ToR) approved by the Evaluation Office. These evaluations assess progress towards outcomes at country or regional level, respectively, generating learning and informing the design and implementation of forthcoming programmes.

At UNFPA, centralized and decentralized evaluations (including CPEs) are planned on a quadrennial basis and presented by the Evaluation Office within the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan to the Executive Board.

CPEs are conducted by country offices at least once in every two cycles to inform the development of the subsequent programme.

The Evaluation Office plays an important role in decentralized CPEs, notably through the provision of methodological guidance. The Evaluation Office also performs the pre-qualification of consultants, and approves the ToR. Finally, the Evaluation Office assesses the quality of the final evaluation reports and manages the UNFPA evaluation database.



Standards and guidance for evaluation in the United Nations system:

- Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016) - <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>
- Integrating Gender Equality and Human Rights in Evaluation - <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/980>
- UNEG Ethical Guidelines - <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102>
- UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN system - <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100>

1.1.2 The objectives of the CPE

The overall objectives of a CPE are (i) enhancing the accountability of UNFPA for the relevance and performance of its country programmes and (ii) broadening the evidence base for the design of the next programming cycle.

In terms of specific objectives, CPEs are meant to:

- Provide an independent 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 country programme, including in humanitarian settings¹
- Provide an assessment of the role played by the UNFPA country office in the coordination mechanisms of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) with a view to enhancing the United Nations collective contribution to national development results
- Draw key lessons from past and current cooperation and provide a set of clear and forward-looking options leading to strategic and actionable recommendations for the next programming cycle.

UNFPA CPEs will contribute to the accountability of UNFPA for results, facilitate organizational learning and support evidence-based programming only to the extent that they are of high quality. Their credibility and usability as a tool to improve UNFPA programming over time relies on the consistent validity of their findings and conclusions, and the usefulness of their recommendations.

A number of conditions are necessary to achieving good-quality evaluations. These conditions are the responsibility of individual business units, and they refer, in particular, to:

- Timeliness, both (i) ensuring that a critical mass of results has already materialized in the field and can contribute to data collection by the evaluators; and (ii) completing the exercise within a time frame that allows an evaluation to meet the needs of the main users at the most appropriate time
- Evaluability, which depends in particular on (i) the results framework soundness and (ii) the existence of a results-oriented monitoring system
- The existence of skilled staff to manage the evaluation
- The availability of adequate financial resources; and
- the selection of qualified consultants to conduct the evaluation

1.1.3 The object of the evaluation

UNFPA CPEs are intended to provide an independent assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and coordination of UNFPA support² in a specific programme country, over a period of either one

¹ The assessment of humanitarian interventions requires two additional criteria: connectedness and coverage (see 3.2.1, *The evaluation criteria*).

² With the addition of connectedness and coverage for the assessment of humanitarian interventions.

or two programme cycles. At the centre of the scope of each CPE stands one specific country programme document (CPD), together with the corresponding documents that UNFPA uses to operationalize its country programmes and develop annual implementation strategies.

The performance of UNFPA in any given country is influenced by a variety of factors. Some of these pertain to the UNFPA country programme itself – i.e., its design, the resulting thematic scope and the implementation of the programme by the country office. Contextual factors also play an important role in influencing the performance of UNFPA support:

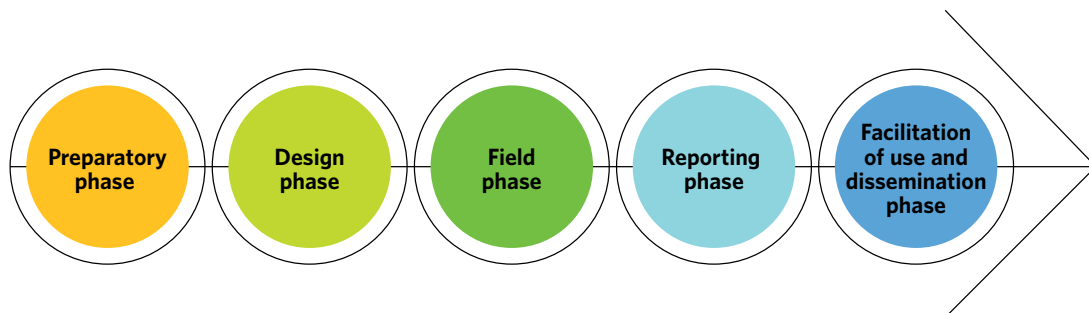
- UNFPA generally works in partnership with the national government in programme countries. Country programmes are meant to be aligned with the governmental policies and implementation mechanisms in each country. Therefore, governmental policies, operations and implementation mechanisms have a strong influence on the activities of UNFPA.
- In most cases, UNFPA also works with a diversity of partners from the development community, both within and outside of the United Nations system. The implementation of a UNFPA country programme is influenced by the actions of these other partners.
- Finally, activities funded, the deliverables produced, and the results achieved by UNFPA are also influenced by a wide range of economic, social and cultural factors, as well as other influences; for example, the extent of social cohesion, education levels or the nature of cultural norms in the programme country.

i For more detailed information on how to plan for the analysis of the CPE components, see [sections 3.1.2, Understanding the UNFPA response, 3.2.1, The evaluation criteria, and 3.2.2 The evaluation questions.](#)

1.2 The evaluation process

A CPE unfolds in five phases: 1) preparatory phase, 2) design phase, 3) field phase, 4) reporting phase, and 5) facilitation of use and dissemination phase.

FIGURE 1 *The phases of a CPE*



1. During the preparatory phase, the UNFPA country office monitoring and evaluation (M&E) officer becomes the evaluation manager of the CPE. In the event that there is no M&E officer, it is the responsibility of the representative, in consultation with the regional M&E adviser, to nominate an evaluation manager, ensuring that this person is not involved in the implementation of the country programme interventions. The first tasks for the evaluation manager are as follows:

- i. The evaluation manager captures the specific elements of the country context and programme, conducts consultations with relevant stakeholders and rights-holders, and prepares the ToR for the evaluation, in consultation with the RO M&E adviser.
- ii. Once final, the regional M&E adviser sends the ToR to the Evaluation Office for approval.
- iii. With the support of the regional M&E adviser, the evaluation manager identifies potential evaluators (using the UNFPA consultant roster³) and assesses their suitability, upon which the regional M&E adviser submits these assessments to the Evaluation Office for pre-qualification.
- iv. The evaluation manager compiles a preliminary list of background information and documentation on both the country context and the UNFPA country programme and lists these in an Annex of the ToR.
- v. The evaluation manager establishes a reference group for the evaluation, which will accompany the evaluation manager throughout the conduct of the evaluation.⁴
- vi. The evaluation manager prepares a first stakeholders mapping of the main partners relevant for the CPE.
- vii. The evaluation manager prepares the “list of all interventions” implemented during the period under evaluation (list of activities/projects).



Section 7.3, Templates, provides guidance on drafting ToR, a template for the pre-qualification of consultants, and a sample letter to invite stakeholders to become members of the reference group for the evaluation. Chapter 7, Toolkit, provides guidance on preparing the stakeholders map and the “list of all interventions”.

2. Once the external evaluators have been selected, the CPE enters its **design phase**, dedicated to the structuring of the evaluation process. At this stage, the evaluators gain an in-depth understanding of both the UNFPA country programme and the country context. They select and adapt the evaluation questions and propose the most appropriate methods for data collection and analysis. From a sampling framework/comprehensive stakeholders map, the evaluators also select a sample of stakeholders to interview during the field phase. The methodological approach to sampling should be well described. The evaluators draft a design report, which is reviewed by the evaluation manager and approved by the regional M&E adviser.

³ <https://www.unfpa.org/unfpa-consultant-roster>

⁴ An evaluation reference group is usually composed of country office senior managers, a representative of the regional office management (e.g., the M&E regional adviser) and representatives of national counterparts, including government and implementing partners. It may also include representatives from academia and of civil society organizations, community groups and/or final beneficiaries.

With the assistance of the evaluation manager, the evaluators perform these tasks in close cooperation with the UNFPA country office personnel, particularly with a view to: (i) refining the evaluation questions; (ii) consolidating the stakeholders mapping; and (iii) identifying additional documentation.

Once the interviewees have been identified by the evaluators, the evaluation manager (together with the country office staff) should set a preliminary agenda for the field phase. The results of the design phase are summarized in the design report.


 Detailed outline of reports is covered in [Section 7.2 of the handbook](#).

3. The **field phase** consists of a three- to four-week field mission in the programme country to complete the data collection and proceed with the analysis. The evaluators will collect data through individual interviews, group discussions and focus groups, and by way of consulting additional documentation.

Towards the end of the field phase, the evaluators analyse the collected data and produce a set of preliminary findings, complemented by tentative conclusions and emerging, preliminary recommendations. These provisional evaluation results are presented to the evaluation reference group and the country office staff during a debriefing meeting to be scheduled at the end of the field phase. This exercise is particularly important to satisfy the – often strong – demand from the country office to be “reassured” that the evaluation will actually lead to the formulation of useful and realistic recommendations, and to allow the evaluators to formulate and test some hypotheses that may guide their analysis. In addition, this exercise also helps to get feedback and validation from the evaluation reference group on preliminary results.

However, and in order to avoid any misunderstanding, the evaluators should emphasize that their proposed elements of recommendations are only at a very initial stage and should, as such, be considered as working assumptions to be further confirmed through the analysis.

4. During the **reporting phase**, the evaluators submit a draft final evaluation report to the evaluation manager. The evaluation manager reviews and quality assures the draft report; the criteria outlined in the “Evaluation Quality Assessment (EQA) grid” can be used to quality assure the report.⁵ When the evaluation manager considers the draft evaluation report to be of adequate quality, s/he shares it with the reference group for comments (factual mistakes, omissions, misrepresentations, contextual factors) while respecting the independence of the evaluation team in expressing its judgement. Based upon the evaluation manager and the reference group’s comments (including comments from the regional M&E adviser), the evaluators proceed with the production of the final evaluation report.

 [Template 13](#) of the handbook features the EQA grid and explanatory note. Please note the EQA template must be attached to the ToR.

⁵ Once submitted to the Evaluation Office, the Office conducts an independent quality assessment of the final evaluation report using the same criteria outlined in the “Evaluation Quality Assessment grid”.

5. During the **facilitation of use and dissemination phase**, the evaluation manager, together with communication/knowledge management officer in the country office, develops and rolls out a communication plan to share evaluation results with country and regional offices, relevant divisions at headquarters and external audiences. The evaluation manager ensures the final report and other evaluation knowledge products are shared with relevant stakeholders and rights-holders through the evaluation reference group and through other relevant channels and communication and knowledge-management platforms. S/he also makes sure the final evaluation report, is communicated to the relevant units at UNFPA and invites them to submit a management response.

The evaluation manager will consolidate all responses in a final management response document. The UNFPA Policy and Strategy Division (PSD) is responsible for monitoring and overseeing the implementation of the recommendations. The PSD also ensures the evaluation findings are integrated into strategic policy and planning.

The Evaluation Office makes available all CPE reports and accompanying independent EQA grids in the UNFPA evaluation database.⁶ The UNFPA country office is responsible for posting the evaluation report, the final evaluation quality assessment conducted by the Evaluation Office and the management response on the country office website.

Building on the stakeholders map, a communication plan for sharing evaluation results should preferably be developed during the preparatory phase. As evaluation progresses, any new opportunities for communication and dissemination should be identified and the communication plan should be updated accordingly. By embedding a focus on communication and learning at all stages of the evaluation process, the communication plan will be ready for quick implementation at the final facilitation of use and dissemination phase.



Template 12 of the handbook presents the format of the management response.

Template 16 of the handbook includes a format for planning communications to share evaluation results.

⁶ See the evaluation database at <http://web2.unfpa.org/public/about/oversight/evaluations>

FIGURE 2 Summary of the main aspects to cover in each phase of the evaluation

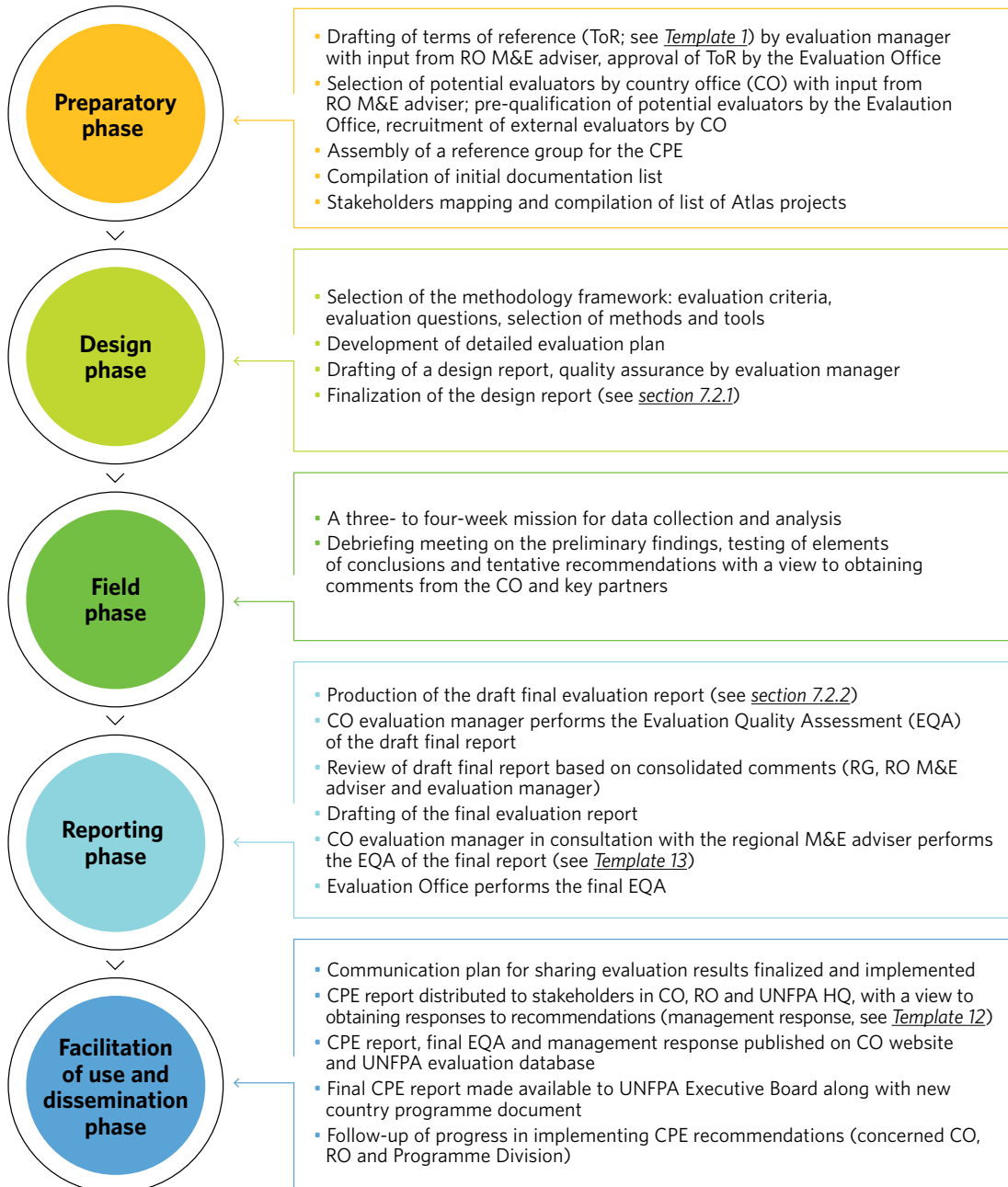


TABLE 3 *Summary of responsibilities of the evaluation manager, evaluators, reference group, regional M&E adviser and evaluation office in the conduct of a CPE*

Actors	Roles and responsibilities
Evaluation manager	<p>The manager of a CPE oversees the entire process of the evaluation, from its preparation to the dissemination and use of the final evaluation report. S/he:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepares the ToR of the evaluation with support from the RO M&E adviser, who thereafter sends them to the Evaluation Office for approval Constitutes the reference group ▪ Constitutes the reference group ▪ Chairs the evaluation reference group ▪ Manages the interaction between the team of evaluators and the reference group; serves as an interlocutor between both parties ▪ Launches the selection process for the team of evaluators, leading the selection of and preparing the contract for the consultants, in consultation with the regional M&E adviser ▪ With the assistance of the regional M&E adviser, identifies potential candidates to conduct the evaluation, and prepares the summary assessment table with the input of the regional M&E adviser, who thereafter sends the table to the Evaluation Office for pre-qualification of consultants ▪ Sets up the initial meeting for the evaluation and provides the team of evaluators with a first set of background documents and other materials ▪ Ensures the quality control of deliverables submitted by the evaluators throughout the evaluation process, paying particular attention to ensuring that the UNEG Norms and Standards, code of conduct and ethical guidelines for evaluations, as well as guidance on integrating human rights and gender equality into evaluations, are adhered to ▪ Assists the evaluators with logistical support in setting up the data-collection arrangements – e.g., for project visits, focus groups, interviews with key informants ▪ Prevents any attempts to compromise the independence of the team of evaluators during the evaluation process ▪ Coordinates comments on, quality assures and approves the deliverables of the evaluators, including the final evaluation report ▪ Sends final report to the Evaluation Office ▪ Ensures the development and implementation of a communication plan for sharing evaluation results, focusing on the dissemination of the final evaluation report and the main findings, conclusions and recommendations (through a published knowledge product and other modalities), independent quality assessment and the management response on the country office website.

Actors	Roles and responsibilities
Evaluation team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducts the CPE in accordance with the instructions of the handbook and the evaluation manager Recognizes and adheres to the UNEG evaluation Norms and Standards, code of conduct and ethical guidelines for evaluations, and the guidance on integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluation Produces the design report Produces the draft and final evaluation report.
Evaluation reference group (ERG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides input to the ToR of the evaluation and to the selection of the team of evaluators Contributes to the selection of evaluation questions Provides overall comments to the design report of the CPE Facilitates access of the evaluation team to information sources (documents and interviewees) to support data collection Provides comments on the main deliverables of the evaluation, including the draft final report.
Regional M&E adviser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides support (backstopping) to the evaluation manager at all stages of the evaluation Reviews and provides comments to the ToR for the evaluation Sends the ToR of the evaluation to the Evaluation Office for approval Assists the evaluation manager in the country office in identifying potential candidates and reviews the summary assessment table prior to sending it to the Evaluation Office Normally, participates in the evaluation reference group Provides support in the quality assurance of the draft and final evaluation reports. Provides support to the dissemination and use of evaluation results.
Evaluation Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviews and approves the final draft ToR for the evaluation after the review and comments by the regional M&E adviser (to be included in the draft ToR sent to the Evaluation Office) Pre-qualifies consultants Updates and maintains the UNFPA consultant roster with identified qualified evaluators Undertakes independent quality assessment (EQA) of the final evaluation report Publishes the final evaluation report and the EQA in the evaluation database.

1.3 TOOLS AND TEMPLATES TO BE USED THROUGHOUT THE EVALUATION PROCESS

Each phase of the evaluation process entails a set of specific tasks for evaluators. With a view to accompanying the evaluation manager and facilitating the work of the evaluation team, the handbook provides a number of readily usable tools, resources and templates. The table below links the main tasks for each phase of the evaluation process with the related tools, resources and templates.

TABLE 4 *Tools, resources and templates available throughout the evaluation process*

CPE phases and tasks	Tools and resources	Templates
Preparatory phase		
Drafting the ToRs	<i>Tool 1</i> – The evaluation matrix	<i>Template 1</i> <i>Template 5</i>
Pre-qualification of consultants	UNFPA consultant roster (https://www.unfpa.org/unfpa-consultant-roster)	
Desk review	<i>Tool 8</i> – Checklist for the documents to be provided by the evaluation manager to the evaluation team	
List of all UNFPA interventions	<i>Tool 3</i> – List of UNFPA interventions by country programme output and strategic plan outcome	
Letter of invitation to participate in a reference group		<i>Template 14</i>
Stakeholders map	<i>Tool 4</i> – The stakeholders mapping table	<i>Template 4</i>
Design phase		
Understanding the UNFPA strategic response	<i>Tool 2</i> – The effects diagram	
Understanding the UNFPA programmatic response	<i>Tool 3</i> – List of UNFPA interventions by country programme output and strategic plan outcome	<i>Template 3</i>
Drafting and selecting evaluation questions	<i>Section 3.2</i> – Drafting and selecting evaluation questions, and <i>Tool 5</i> <i>Tool 1</i> – The evaluation matrix	<i>Template 5</i>
Drafting the CPE agenda and individual agendas	<i>Tool 6</i> – The CPE agenda	<i>Template 6</i>
	<i>Tool 9</i> – Checklist of issues to be considered when drafting the agenda for interviews	
	<i>Tool 4</i> – The stakeholders mapping table <i>Tool 3</i> – List of UNFPA interventions by country programme output and strategic plan outcome	<i>Template 4</i> <i>Template 3</i>
Choosing data-collection methods	<i>Tool 7</i> – Field phase preparatory tasks checklist <i>Tool 8</i> – Checklist for the documents to be provided by the evaluation manager to the evaluation team	
	<i>Tool 10</i> – Guiding principles to develop interview guides Interview logbook	<i>Template 7</i>
Choosing data analysis methods	<i>Section 3.4.3</i> – Methods for data analysis	

CPE phases and tasks	Tools and resources	Templates
Drafting the design report	Tool 1 – The evaluation matrix	Template 5
	Section 7.2.1 – How to structure and draft the design report	Template 8
Field phase		
Conducting data collection	Tool 1 – The evaluation matrix	Template 5
	Tool 7 – Field phase preparatory tasks checklist	
	Tool 9 – Checklist of issues to be considered when drafting the agenda for interviews	
	Tool 10 – Guiding principles to develop interview guides	
	Tool 11 – Checklist for sequencing interviews	
	Tool 12 – How to conduct interviews: interview logbook and practical tips	Template 7
Conducting data analysis	Tool 13 – How to conduct focus groups: practical tips	
	Tool 1 – The evaluation matrix	Template 5
	Section 3.4 – Planning data collection and analysis	
Reporting phase		
Drafting the design and the final reports	Section 7.2.1 – How to structure and draft the design report	Template 8
	Evaluation Quality Assessment (EQA) grid	Template 13
	Section 7.2.2 – How to structure and draft the final evaluation report	Template 10
Facilitation of use and dissemination phase		
Management response		Template 12
Communication plan for sharing evaluation results		Template 16
Strengthen human rights and gender responsiveness of CPE throughout the evaluation process (across phases)		
UNEG 2011: “Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation –Towards UNEG Guidance”	Tool 14 Also available at: http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/980	
Annex 1: Summary checklist for a human rights and gender equality evaluation process		

CPE phases and tasks	Tools and resources	Templates
UNEG 2018: UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator Technical Note, Annex I: United Nations SWAP – Individual Evaluation Scoring Tool	<i>Tool 15</i> Also available at http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1452	
UNEG 2014: “Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation”	Available at: http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1616 (Note that this guidance document builds on and further develops the theories and concepts put forward in the 2011 UNEG guidance “Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation – Towards UNEG Guidance”, available here http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/980)	

Some of the tools and templates are indispensable to the conduct of good-quality evaluations. The evaluation manager must ensure that they are duly used by the evaluators.

1.3.1 The evaluation matrix in a nutshell

The evaluation matrix plays a role at all stages of the evaluation process. As such, it deserves particular attention from the evaluation manager, who should know how to develop and use it. Both the evaluation manager and the evaluation team should get an in-depth understanding of this tool (its purpose and how to use it) prior to reading the rest of the handbook.

The evaluation matrix contains the core elements of the evaluation: (a) what will be evaluated (evaluation criteria, evaluation questions and related issues to be examined – “assumptions to be assessed”); (b) how to evaluate (sources of information and methods and tools for data collection).

Evaluators must use the evaluation matrix as a:

- Communication tool to inform (in a snapshot) the relevant stakeholders on the core aspects of the evaluation
- Reference document for developing the agenda (field and analysis stages) and for preparing the structure of interviews, group discussions and focus groups
- Useful tool to check the feasibility of the evaluation questions
- Control tool to verify the extent to which evaluation questions have been answered and to check whether enough evidence has been collected.



Tool 1 explains what the evaluation matrix is, why and how it must be used, and at what stages of the evaluation process. This tool also provides guidance on (and examples of) how evaluators should complete the evaluation matrix.

WHO SHOULD PREPARE THE EVALUATION MATRIX?

The main responsibility for drawing up the evaluation matrix lies with the evaluation team under the supervision of the evaluation team leader. This process also involves the evaluation manager, the UNFPA regional M&E adviser, and the members of the reference group since they should all be consulted – in particular, in regard to the selection of the evaluation questions.

REFINING THE EVALUATION MATRIX

The evaluation matrix will be drafted at design phase and must be included in the design report. However, it may be necessary to revise the matrix at the beginning of the field phase.⁷ The evaluation manager must ensure that the evaluation matrix is annexed to the design and final reports.

⁷ This situation is described in more detail in [section 4.1, Starting the field phase](#).