

2019 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE EVALUATION FUNCTION

Annex 1

Transitional quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2020-2023

I. Background and purpose of the transitional quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2020-2023

1. In line with the 2019 UNFPA evaluation policy (DP/FPA/2019/1), evaluation at UNFPA serves three main purposes:

- a. It is a means to demonstrate accountability to stakeholders on performance achieved;
- b. It supports evidence-based decision-making;
- c. It contributes important lessons learned to the knowledge base of the organization.

2. The transitional quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan (QBEP), 2020-2023 is in accordance with the 2019 evaluation policy approved by the Executive Board, and is aligned with General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR), as well as the ongoing UN Reform processes, including specifically Resolution A/RES/72/279 on Repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.¹

3. The purpose of the transitional quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan is to provide a coherent, transitional framework to guide the commissioning, management and use of evaluations at UNFPA in 2020-2023. The plan also provides a basis for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of planned centralized and decentralized programme-level evaluations.

4. The transitional quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan revises and updates the 2018-2021 QBEP to ensure ongoing alignment with the current UNFPA strategic plan (2018-2021) and its mid-term review, as well as the development of a comprehensive forward-looking QBEP. The transitional plan should be viewed as a rolling plan, responsive to the changing context in which UNFPA works, and will, as such, be revised as necessary to ensure its ongoing relevance to the organization and its goals, including the priorities stemmed at the ICPD+25 Nairobi Summit.

5. To facilitate a balanced approach between strategic coverage and utility of evaluation, the transitional quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan covers four years. Firm proposals are presented for 2020-2021, with indicative proposals for 2022-2023 to be validated as appropriate in 2021.

Scope and coverage of the transitional quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2020-2023

6. The transitional QBEP plan is aligned with the programmatic and organizational effectiveness and efficiency outcomes of the UNFPA strategic plan 2018-2021 including the mid-term review of the plan.

7. The transitional QBEP plan covers two categories of evaluations, as defined in the 2019 UNFPA evaluation policy.

8. First, centralized evaluations are covered by the plan. 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 organizational-

¹ See Resolution A/RES/72/279 at <https://undocs.org/a/res/72/279>.

wide issues, and include thematic, institutional, joint and United Nations system-wide evaluations, as well as meta-synthesis studies and evaluations of major UNFPA-wide programmes, global trust funds and partnerships at the request of funding partners.

9. Decentralized programme-level evaluations are the second category of evaluation covered. These evaluations are managed by the respective commissioning unit (i.e. country and regional offices). Independent external evaluators pre-qualified by the Evaluation Office conduct these evaluations according to the terms of reference approved by the Evaluation Office and as indicated in the 2019 evaluation policy. There are two types of programme-level evaluations: country programme evaluations and regional programme evaluations. These evaluations assess progress towards outcomes at country or regional level, respectively, generating learning and informing the design and implementation of forthcoming programmes.

II. Intentionality and use of evaluations

10. Evaluation findings, recommendations and lessons learned are used to improve organizational and United Nations system-wide performance toward the fulfilment of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, and the accelerated implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development and other internationally agreed development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

11. UNFPA seeks to strengthen accountability for results and ensure that evaluation findings contribute to informed, evidence-based decision-making and feed into organizational learning for more effective programming. Results should inform the development and implementation of operational and normative plans and policies, including the implementation of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2018-2021, the design, implementation and midterm review of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025, and the development of country and regional programme documents and UNSDCF's.

12. The use of evaluation findings is a critical element of the evaluation process and is a shared responsibility between management and the Evaluation Office. To facilitate use, evaluation must be relevant, timely, targeted, and efficiently communicated. Hence, the Evaluation Office conducts evaluations in a participatory and consultative manner with established reference groups. This supports organizational buy-in and use of findings and recommendations from the onset, while ensuring independence, objectivity and credibility. Additionally, formal management responses to all completed evaluations are requested and knowledge generated by evaluations is shared and disseminated through various knowledge-management platforms.

III. Strategic approach to planning of evaluations

A. Overarching principles and norms of evaluation

13. The guiding principles of evaluation at UNFPA emanate from the 2019 evaluation policy, decisions taken by the General Assembly and the Executive Board, from the commitment of UNFPA executive management to nurture an evaluation culture, and from the United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards and code of conduct for evaluations.

14. These principles - which guided the development of the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan - are as follows:

a. Evaluations are planned and conducted to ensure national ownership and leadership of evaluation processes by rights holders and duty bearers. They are undertaken with a view to strengthening national evaluation capacity and to increasing the participation of national counterparts and rights holders (including young people), through inclusive and participatory approaches, and in accordance with the principles of aid effectiveness, specifically the principles of national ownership and mutual accountability;

b. Evaluation abides by universally shared values of equity, justice, gender equality and respect for diversity, as stated in the United Nations Evaluation Group guidelines on the integration of human rights and gender equality in evaluation;

c. By generating evidence, evaluation enables informed management and decision-making. Management ensures that evaluation is an integral part of the organizational standards of UNFPA. As part of a culture of accountability and managing for results, UNFPA seeks empirical evidence on the results achieved, using lessons learned to improve programme design and effectiveness, and to meet the needs of rights bearers;

d. UNFPA harmonizes and aligns its evaluations with the evaluation efforts of United Nations system partners, including through joint evaluations with these and other development partners, as well as engaging in United Nations system-wide evaluation efforts.

B. Selection criteria of evaluations included in the plan

15. The following criteria, in the order of priority set in the 2019 evaluation policy, were used to guide the selection of centralized and programme-level evaluations:

a. *Strategic relevance of the subject.* (i) Does the evaluation cover issues of corporate strategic significance that contribute to the achievement of the strategic plan?; (ii) Is the subject of the evaluation a socioeconomic or political priority?; (iii) Is the subject of the evaluation part of the annual priorities of UNFPA?; and (iv) Is the subject of the evaluation a priority for UNFPA in a specific geographical region where, for example, there is high maternal mortality, low contraceptive prevalence, or high teenage pregnancy rates?

b. *Risk associated with the subject.* Are there political, economic, funding, structural or organizational factors that present a potentially high risk for the non-achievement of results or for which further evidence is needed for decision-making by management?

c. *Potential for joint or United Nations system-wide evaluation.* Does the evaluation present an opportunity to evaluate jointly with other partners (United Nations agencies, national governments, donors, etc.) or contribute to a United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework evaluation to avoid duplication and promote coordination?

d. *Significant investment.* Is the subject considered significant in relation to the portfolio of activities of UNFPA?

e. *Feasibility for implementing the evaluation.* (i) Is the evaluability of the intervention sufficient to conduct an in-depth study that can provide sound findings, recommendations and lessons learned?; and (ii) Does the commissioning office (the Evaluation Office, the regional office or the country office) have the resources available to conduct or manage a high-quality evaluation within the time period indicated?

f. *Potential for replication and scaling-up of innovations.* (i) Would an evaluation provide the information necessary to identify the factors required for the success of an innovative intervention and determine the feasibility of its replication or scaling-up?; and (ii) Is the intervention a pilot and/or an innovative initiative?

g. *Knowledge gap.* Will the evaluation help to fill a vital knowledge gap in relation to the thematic focus of UNFPA?

h. *Formal commitments to stakeholders.* (i) Are stakeholders requesting the evaluation (for example, through donor requirements in co-financing arrangements)?; and (ii) Can the request for the evaluation be satisfied through an evaluation that is already planned?

C. Consultative process followed to revise the QBEP 2018-2021 and develop the transitional QBEP 2020-2023

16. The QBEP 2018-2021 stated that the plan should be viewed as flexible and responsive to the changing context in which UNFPA works. Therefore, it should be revised if necessary to ensure ongoing relevance to the organization and its goals. Firm proposals were presented for 2018-2019, with indicative proposals for 2020-2021.

17. Within the framework of the 2018 Annual Report of the Evaluation Function,² revisions pertaining to 2019 and 2020 were presented and approved by the Executive Board at the 2019 Annual regular session.³ These revisions have been reflected in the transitional QBEP 2020-2023.

18. The Evaluation Office followed three key steps to identify (a) strategic evaluation priorities in relation to the UNFPA Strategic Plan and organizational priorities; and (b) knowledge gaps where centralized evaluations would add value.

19. First, an evidence-gap analysis was conducted by assessing the coverage of centralized evaluations managed during 2014-2019 against the outcomes of the UNFPA strategic plan. The analysis found that, while there has been broad coverage across all four strategic plan outcome areas, evaluations of outcome 2 on empowering youth and outcome 4 on population data, as well as system-wide evaluations, including in humanitarian assistance, were insufficiently covered, with only one centralized evaluation for each of the outcome 2 and 4, and only one system-wide evaluation in humanitarian assistance.

20. Second, based on the criteria mentioned above, a tentative list of proposed centralized evaluations was subject to a selectivity analysis to assess their relevance and utility. The list of potential evaluations was used as the basis for bilateral consultations with major stakeholders at all levels of the organization, including the UNFPA Executive Director, Deputy Executive Directors, Directors at Headquarters, Regional Directors and Regional M&E Advisors. Consultations were also undertaken with other United Nations organizations, with a view to identifying possible system-wide and joint evaluations.

21. Third, consultations presenting the draft transitional quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan were held with the UNFPA Executive Committee, the Oversight Advisory Committee, and the Executive Board.

D. Responsiveness to evolving needs

22. UNFPA operates in a dynamic and shifting development landscape. In particular, the Sustainable Development Goals, the QCPR, the UN Reform Agenda, new types of development partnerships and the Nairobi Summit on ICPD+25, demand changes in the way UNFPA operates. Timely, relevant and good quality evaluations will be important for evidence-based decision-making and lesson learning in UNFPA. At the same time, the maturation of the UNFPA evaluation function and gradual strengthening of evaluation systems and capacities permit UNFPA to diversify the range of evaluations conducted at all levels, to better respond to lesson learning and accountability needs. Therefore, the following evolving needs, the 2019 Evaluation Policy as well as the priorities stated in the 2018-2021 Evaluation Strategy have guided the development of the plan.

23. *United Nations coherence in evaluation.* Increasingly, 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. This may entail managing or conducting joint evaluations or participating in system-wide evaluation initiatives, engaging in reference groups or other cooperative engagements. More than 50 per cent of centralized evaluations included in this plan are either joint or system-wide evaluations.

24. Humanitarian evaluations. The proliferation of increasingly severe and complex humanitarian crises has required an increasing number of UNFPA field offices to engage in humanitarian responses. UNFPA evaluation approaches need to address the specific requirements of assessing performance and lesson learning of humanitarian interventions and within humanitarian contexts. For this reason, a two-pronged strategy will be applied. On the

²UNFPA Annual report on the evaluation function, 2018 (DP/FPA/2019/5): https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/admin-resource/ENG_AR.pdf

³ See decision 2019/1 here: <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/board-documents/main-document/dp2020-2.pdf>

one hand, a new focus on UNFPA performance in humanitarian settings was established. On the other, all centralized evaluations will specifically analyse the development-humanitarian-peace nexus. In addition, the Evaluation Office will play a more active role in existing partnerships for humanitarian evaluations by (a) being an active member in selected United Nations system-wide evaluations of emergency responses managed by the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Steering Group; and (b) being an active member of the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action.

25. *Use of existing evaluative evidence through meta-synthesis.* It is vitally important for UNFPA to fully understand and utilize learning from both centralized and decentralized programme-level evaluations, particularly in relation to systemic and cross-cutting issues. The Evaluation Office will therefore conduct synthesis studies to capture and share cross-cutting learning.

26. *Use of innovation to enhance evaluation.* Given the evolving external and internal needs for evaluative evidence, as well as methodological challenges in ensuring the interconnectedness of Sustainable Development Goals is properly captured in evaluation, the Evaluation Office will implement a gradual approach to experiment innovative evaluation methodologies and approaches to address these rapidly evolving contexts, as stated in the 2018-2021 Evaluation Strategy. This will continue to lead to a diversified range of evaluations, which, in turn, will increase the supply of more relevant and responsive evaluative evidence to better inform decision-making, strengthen accountability and transparency, and contribute to organizational accountability and learning.

IV. Centralized evaluations

27. This plan adopted a “comprehensive and strategic evaluation package” approach to evaluate UNFPA Strategic Plans. Comprehensive, because through the centralized evaluations presented in Table 1 below, each and every outcome areas of UNFPA strategic plans – thematic areas, organizational effectiveness and efficiency outcomes, as well as humanitarian interventions – will be evaluated in depth. Strategic, because the strategic plan as a whole will be evaluated every two years with a strategic focus, producing unique and real-time evaluative evidence to inform either the MTR of the current strategic plan, or the design of the future one. In 2019, the centralized evaluation of UNFPA capacities in humanitarian action looked at the strategic plan with a specific focus on humanitarian interventions; in 2021, the centralized evaluation on UNFPA engagement in the UN reform will look at the strategic plan with a specific focus on how UNFPA contributed to the UN reform and how the UN reform shaped UNFPA systems and way of working; in 2023, the centralized evaluation of UNFPA approach to the development/humanitarian/peace nexus will look at the strategic plan with a specific focus on how UNFPA has been able to integrate and implement the nexus in all its policies, strategies and interventions. Last but not least, the joint UNDP-UNICEF-UNFPA-UN Women evaluation of the common chapter of the strategic plan will look at how the four agencies worked together to enhance effectiveness and efficiency, including in the in framework of the UN reform. Taken together, these evaluations will provide strategic unique and real-time evaluative evidence on the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the strategic plan, while also providing in-depth evaluative evidence on each and every outcome area.

28. The plan foresees the delivery of an average of 4 centralized evaluations per year. Therefore, over the span of four years, the Evaluation Office anticipates managing 26 centralized evaluations (six of which were launched in 2019) – out of which 14 (54 per cent) will be either joint or system-wide. Table 1 presents in summary form the broad topics proposed for centralized evaluations by outcome area of the UNFPA strategic plan and the sequencing of evaluations over the four years covered by the transitional QBEP. The evaluations are expected to be commissioned in the year in which they are listed (unless otherwise noted by an asterisk) and, in most cases, completed the following year. Centralized thematic and institutional evaluations included in the plan will be presented to the UNFPA Executive Board; centralized programme evaluations will be presented to the respective stakeholders.

Table 1
Proposed centralized evaluations, 2020-2023

Strategic Plan Outcomes	2020	2021	2022	2023
Outcome 1 (Sexual and Reproductive Health & Reproductive Rights)	Evaluation of UNFPA support to HIV prevention*			
	<u>System-wide</u> Midterm Evaluation of the UNAIDS 2016-2021 Unified Budget, Results & Accountability Framework*			
	<u>System-wide</u> evaluability assessment of SDG3- Global Action Plan		<u>System-wide</u> evaluation of SDG3- Global Action Plan	
	Final Evaluation of UNFPA Supplies Programme			
Mid Term Evaluation of Maternal Health Thematic Fund				
Outcome 2 (Adolescents and Youth)	Formative evaluation of UNFPA Support to Adolescents and Youth			
Outcome 3 (Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment)	Evaluation of UNFPA Support to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment*		Joint Formative Evaluation of UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage (TBC)	
	<u>System-wide</u> evaluation of UNAIDS Programme's work on preventing and responding to GBV		Joint evaluation of Spotlight Initiative (TBC)	
	Joint evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF joint programme on the abandonment of FGM: accelerating change, 2018-2021, Phase III			
Outcome 4 (Population and Development)	Evaluation of UNFPA support to the use of population data in humanitarian preparedness and response			Evaluation of UNFPA support to 2020-round of population and housing census data
	Evaluation of UNFPA contribution to address low fertility and aging			
Humanitarian	<u>System-wide</u> Humanitarian Evaluation – crisis specific TBD			
	<u>System-wide</u> Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of UN response to empowering women and girls in humanitarian crisis*		<u>System-wide</u> Humanitarian Evaluation - thematic TBD	
	Joint UNFPA-UNDP-UNICEF-UN Women baseline study and evaluability assessment of the common chapter of Strategic Plans*		Joint UNFPA-UNDP-UNICEF-UN Women of the accelerator initiatives relevant to the common chapter of Strategic Plans	
Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency	Formative evaluation of UNFPA support to south-south and triangular cooperation*		Formative evaluation of UNFPA engagement with UN reform	
			Evaluation of UNFPA's use of a human rights based approach (TBC)	
			Evaluation of UNFPA approach to the development/humanitarian/peace nexus	
		Joint meta-synthesis of UN evaluations or meta-synthesis of UNFPA country programme evaluations (TBD)		Joint meta-synthesis of UN evaluations or meta-synthesis of UNFPA country programme evaluations (TBD)

*Evaluation was launched in 2019

V. Decentralized programme-level evaluations

29. Costed evaluation plans, developed by country offices and regional offices and approved by the Board, were reviewed, and planned country and regional programme-level evaluations are included in the transitional QBEP 2020-2023.

30. In total, 56 country programme evaluations have been planned across all six UNFPA regions, with an average of 14 country programme evaluations per year across regions (see Table 2). At regional level, a total of seven regional programme evaluations are planned (see Table 3).

31. In addition, UNFPA will also support all United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework's evaluations.

Table 2
Number of proposed country programme evaluations by region, 2020-2023

Country Programme Evaluations by Region	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Asia and the Pacific	6	6	3	0	15
Arab States	6	4	0	1	11
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	1	3	0	0	4
East and Southern Africa	5	1	5	1	12
Latin America and the Caribbean	3	1	0	1	5
West and Central Africa	3	3	2	1	9
Total by year	24	18	10	4	56

Table 3
Number of proposed regional programme evaluations by region, 2020-2023

Regional Programme Evaluations	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Arab States	1	0	0	0	1
Asia and the Pacific	1	1	0	0	2
East and Southern Africa	0	1	0	0	1
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	1	0	0	0	1
Latin America and the Caribbean	1	0	0	0	1
West and Central Africa	1	0	0	0	1
Total by year	5	2	0	0	7

VI. Resources for evaluation

32. An effective evaluation function requires secure, predictable and adequate investment in financial and human resources.

33. Since 2013, monitoring and evaluation has grown in importance at UNFPA, reflected in the increased number of monitoring and evaluation officers in country offices. In 2019, on aggregate, 92 per cent of country offices were staffed with either a monitoring and evaluation officer/specialist (52 per cent) or a monitoring and evaluation focal point (48 per cent).

34. Budgets are presented for centralized and decentralized programme-level evaluations, together with costs for the Evaluation Office. The budget presented herewith is intended to be flexible to allow responsiveness to ad hoc demands that may arise in the course of the implementation of the plan and for participation in joint and system-wide evaluations.

35. The overview of the budget for centralized evaluations is provided in Table 4 below. The total estimated cost for centralized evaluations is \$5.96 million.

Table 4
Centralized evaluations – estimated cost overview, 2020-2023

	Total Cost (in millions of \$)
Thematic and institutional evaluations	
Outcome 1	1.1
Outcome 2	0.62
Outcome 3	0.27*
Outcome 4	1.23
Organizational effectiveness and efficiency (OEE)	1.5
Subtotal	4.72
System-wide and joint evaluations, including humanitarian evaluations	1.24** (out of a total shared cost of 3.9 million)
Subtotal	1.24
Total cost for centralized evaluations	5.96

*Total investment under outcome 3 is 1.1 million USD; as the large majority of evaluations under this outcome are joint, this investment is captured below in the table as investment in “system-wide and joint evaluations, including humanitarian joint evaluations”.

** 1.24 million is UNFPA contribution to the total shared cost.

36. The overview of estimated costs for decentralized programme-level evaluations is provided in Table 5 below. The total amount to be invested in country and regional programme evaluations is estimated at \$4.84 million over the transitional quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan period.

37. The cost of decentralized programme-level evaluations is borne by the country and regional programmes and depends on, inter alia, the complexity of the programme evaluated, the related volume of activities, as well as the overall budget of the programme.

Table 5
Decentralized programme-level evaluations – overview of estimated budget, 2020-2023

Country programme evaluations, by region	Estimated budget (in millions of \$)
Asia and the Pacific	1.10
Arab States	0.78
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	0.24
East and Southern Africa	1.10
Latin America and the Caribbean	0.36
West and Central Africa	0.68
Total Country Programme Evaluations	4.26
Total Regional Programme Evaluations	0.58
Total estimated costs	4.84

38. The estimated overall cost of the evaluation function at UNFPA for 2020-2023 is \$22.51 million (with \$20.23 million from institutional budget and core programme resources and \$2.28 million from other resources), including costs for the Evaluation Office and centralized evaluations, as well as the estimated costs for decentralized evaluations.

Table 6
Overview of estimated budgeted cost of the evaluation function, 2020-2023
(in millions of \$)

Cost of centralized evaluations	5.96
Evaluation Office costs*	11.71
Decentralized programme-level evaluations - estimated costs	4.84
Estimated budget of the evaluation function (2020-2023)	22.51
*Evaluation Office costs include: (a) posts, (b) consultants, (c) furniture and equipment, and (d) operating expenses.	

39. The budget of the Evaluation Office funds not only centralized evaluations, but also other activities for which it has responsibility. These include its support and oversight role, in particular efforts to strengthen and professionalize the UNFPA evaluation function (including decentralized one) and underlying systems across the organization, and the participation of the Evaluation Office in partnerships and networks, primarily inter-agency activities aimed at strengthening and harmonizing evaluation within the United Nations system, as well as initiatives to strengthen national evaluation capacity, including of young and emerging evaluators.

VII. Risks

40. Risks to the delivery of the evaluation plan include:

- a. Financial and human resource constraints: the implementation of the proposed transitional budgeted evaluation plan, 2020-2023 may be adversely affected if funds are unavailable or curtailed, or if there are unforeseen staff movements. Proper planning and close monitoring of financial and human resources will help to mitigate these risks;
- b. The strategic plan is superseded: due to fast changing external and internal environments, the UNFPA strategic plan may need to be revised in the course of its implementation. The rolling approach to evaluation planning will allow for relevant adjustments to the evaluation plan to address any significant changes in UNFPA strategic direction.

VIII. Reporting

41. Progress in the implementation of the transitional budgeted evaluation plan will be reported in the annual report on the evaluation function presented to the Executive Board each year.

42. The Evaluation Office will incorporate the lessons learned from implementing this plan, including the level of resources in relation to expected results, in the preparation of the next quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2022-2025 for consideration by the Executive Board in 2021.
