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Population Fund and the United
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UNFPA – Evaluation

United Nations Population Fund

Annual report on the evaluation function, 2018

Report of the Director, Evaluation Office

Summary

The present document provides information on the performance of the evaluation function at centralized and decentralized levels, and reports on the contribution of UNFPA to coherence in evaluation functions across the United Nations, as well as national evaluation capacity development. In addition, the report presents the 2019 programme of work and budget for the Evaluation Office.

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to: (a) take note of the present report on the evaluation function of UNFPA, 2018, and of the programme of work and budget of the Evaluation Office in 2019; (b) welcome the efforts made by UNFPA and the significant progress achieved in strengthening the evaluation function, in actively contributing to United Nations system-wide evaluation efforts, and in fostering national evaluation capacity development; (c) reaffirm the role played by the evaluation function at UNFPA and underscore the importance of high-quality, independent evaluation evidence in the context of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2018-2021, and its contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

I. Introduction

Repositioning the United Nations Development System to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

1. The United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/279 on repositioning the United Nations development system (UNDS), together with Assembly resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) of operational activities for the United Nations system, marks the most ambitious and comprehensive reform of UNDS in decades.
2. The QCPR resolution calls upon the entities of the UNDS to strengthen capacities, resources and skill sets to support national Governments in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In line with their respective mandates and building on comparative advantages, the QCPR emphasises the importance of building capacities and expertise across United Nations entities to promote progress on Goals lagging behind, with a view to reducing gaps, overlaps and duplication. Further, the QCPR stresses the need to improve monitoring and reporting on system-wide results, and welcomes the strengthening of independent system-wide evaluation measures by the Secretary-General, including measures to improve existing capacities.
3. The ambitious UNDS reform process lays the groundwork for a new era of coherence and collaboration for the United Nations development system. The major UNDS reform work streams are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Together, it is expected that they will change the way United Nations entities operate at all levels, geared towards increased collective results and joint work.
4. The UNFPA Evaluation Office is fully committed to the reform agenda and has actively supported it in 2018. Notably, the Evaluation Office worked collaboratively within the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) to deliver technical advice and advocate for the integration of evaluation into both the United Nations funding compact as well as the revised UNDAF guidance. UNFPA will continue to actively contribute to the UNDS achievement of the key evaluation indicators, as expressed in the funding compact, including by continuing to actively engage with the UNEG, the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, and the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Steering Group, as well as joint and system-wide evaluations, United Nations regional evaluation groups and UNDAF evaluations, as explained in chapter III of this report.
5. As a clear expression of UNFPA commitment to joint and system-wide evaluations, almost 50 per cent of centralized evaluations to be managed by the Evaluation Office in 2019/2020 are either joint or system-wide, as presented in table 3 of this report.

II. UNFPA evaluation function

A. UNFPA evaluation policy 2019

6. During 2017-2018, UNFPA undertook an external, independent strategic review of the UNFPA evaluation function, as foreseen by the 2013 evaluation policy (DP/FPA/2013/5). The review highlighted the need to update the 2013 evaluation policy in order to align it with internal strategic frameworks, including the UNFPA strategic plan 2018-2021, and global normative and strategic instruments, including the 2030 Agenda. In response to this recommendation, the revised 2019 evaluation policy (DP/FPA/2019/1) was developed in line with Executive Board decision 2018/11, relevant General Assembly resolutions and the QCPR. The revised 2019 evaluation policy – the result of a transparent and participatory process, which included extensive consultations with key stakeholders throughout 2018 – was endorsed by the Executive Board in its first regular session 2019.
7. The 2019 evaluation policy provides up-to-date definitions, principles, and norms and standards on evaluation and further clarifies the roles and responsibilities for the evaluation function at UNFPA. The policy highlights three priorities for the evaluation function: (a) enhanced focus on the use of evaluations, as described in paragraphs 50-53 of this report; (b) greater United Nations coherence through joint evaluations, system-wide

evaluations, UNEG and Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) initiatives and multi-stakeholder partnerships to strengthen national capacities to evaluate the SDGs, as described in chapter III of this report; (c) increased support to national evaluation capacity development through multi-stakeholder partnerships for country-led evaluation systems, as described in chapter IV of this report.

B. Performance of the evaluation function

8. With the aim of improved transparency and clarity in reporting, key indicators capturing the performance of the evaluation function over time are presented below.

Table 1
Trends in key performance indicators, 2014-2018

		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Overall assessment
Key performance indicator (%)	Description						
1. Financial resources invested in evaluation function*	Budget for evaluation as a percentage of total UNFPA programme budget	0.45	0.69	0.91	0.83	0.96	Positive trend with room for improvement
2. Human resources for monitoring and evaluation	Percentage of country offices staffed with either a monitoring and evaluation focal point or officer	100	95.9	99.2	96.7	96.6	Overall positive trend (closed to the totality of country offices with M&E staff)
3. Evaluation Coverage*	Percentage of country offices that have conducted a country programme evaluation once every two cycles	-	-	-	80.0	90.0	Positive trend
4. Evaluation implementation rate	Percentage of programme-level evaluations implemented as planned	-	-	60.0	55.0	92.0	Positive trend
5. Quality of evaluations	Percentage of programme-level evaluations rated 'good' or 'very good'	50.0	77.0	92.0	95.0	80.0	Potentially negative trend
6. Evaluation reports posted on evaluation database	Percentage of completed programme-level evaluation reports posted on evaluation database	100	100	100	100	100	Achieved
7. Management response submission	Percentage of completed programme-level evaluation reports with management response submitted	100	100	100	100	100	Achieved
8. Implementation of management response	Percentage of management response actions completed	76.5	78.0	78.5	84.4	89.5	Positive trend
9. Use of evaluation in programme development**	Percentage of new country programme documents whose design was clearly informed by evaluation	-	-	-	-	79.8	Improvement needed

Source: Evaluation Office and the Policy and Strategy Division

* Captures an eight-year period (2012-2019) of completed, ongoing and planned evaluations. The key performance indicator will continue to capture subsequent 8-year intervals (2011-2018 was reported in the 2017 annual report; 2012-2019 in the current report; and 2013-2020 will be reported on in the 2019 report). The first year for which this data is reported is 2017.

** This is a new key performance indicator introduced and measured for the first time in 2018, with data generated from the Programme Review Committee's indicator on evaluative evidence for programme development. Therefore, data for previous years do not exist.

9. The majority of key performance indicators registered consistent overall progress. The implementation rate of planned evaluations improved considerably from previous years, with 92 per cent being implemented in 2018, compared to 55 per cent in 2017. Evaluation coverage increased from 80 per cent in 2017 to 90 per cent in 2018, signalling an expansion of the evaluative evidence available for decision-making, including for the development of country programmes. Although the percentage of reports assessed as ‘good’ or better decreased from 95 per cent in 2017 to 80 per cent in 2018, in absolute numbers only two reports were assessed as of ‘fair’ quality, while 5 of 10, or half of the assessed reports, were rated ‘very good’, and no reports were rated ‘unsatisfactory’.

10. The financial resources for evaluation more than doubled from 0.45 per cent of total UNFPA programme expenditure in 2014 to 0.96 per cent in 2018. The submission rate of management responses held steady at 100 per cent, while the annual implementation rate of evaluation recommendations reached nearly 90 per cent, a notable increase from 2014, where 77 per cent of recommendations had been implemented. As in previous years, nearly all country offices were staffed with a monitoring and evaluation focal point or officer.

11. Although significant progress has been made in most indicators, there is scope to further strengthen the coverage and implementation of decentralized programme-level evaluations, the quality of evaluation reports, the implementation rate of management responses of centralized evaluations, the use of evaluation in programme development, and investment in the evaluation function.

Key performance indicator 1: financial resources

12. The 2019 Evaluation Policy clearly states that the evaluation function encompasses centralized and decentralized evaluations, as well as efforts to enhance coherence among evaluation functions within the United Nations system, and internal and national evaluation capacity development. These efforts are supported by financial and human investments. To more accurately capture the total budget invested in the evaluation function, the Evaluation Office in 2018 systematically included a percentage of staff time devoted to evaluation at country, regional and headquarters levels, as well as a comprehensive range of activities that directly enhance the evaluation function (in previous years, only country programme evaluations were included in the analysis).

13. Overall, the amount budgeted in 2018 for the evaluation function was \$8.40 million, with \$4.23 million budgeted at the central level (the Evaluation Office) and \$4.17 million budgeted at the decentralized level (see table 2). In absolute terms, investment in evaluation continued to increase at both decentralized and central levels, having more than doubled from 2014 to 2018. In relative terms, this represents 0.96 per cent of the total UNFPA programme expenditure for 2018,

Table 2
Budget invested in the evaluation function, 2014-2018
(in millions of \$)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total UNFPA programme budget expenditure*	820.2	798.6	763.5	752.9	872.3
Total budget of the evaluation function	3.69	5.52	6.94	6.30	8.40
<i>Evaluation Office</i>	2.38	2.63	3.71	3.36	4.23
<i>Decentralized evaluation function</i>	1.31**	2.89	3.23	2.94	4.17***
Total budget of the evaluation function as percentage of UNFPA programme budget expenditures	0.45%	0.69%	0.91%	0.83%	0.96%

* *Total UNFPA programme budget expenditure* is generated from UNFPA Statistical and Financial Reviews. The Evaluation Office budget is derived from the UNFPA financial system, while the budget for the decentralized function includes the budget for decentralized evaluations, internal and national evaluation capacity development activities and staffing costs.

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

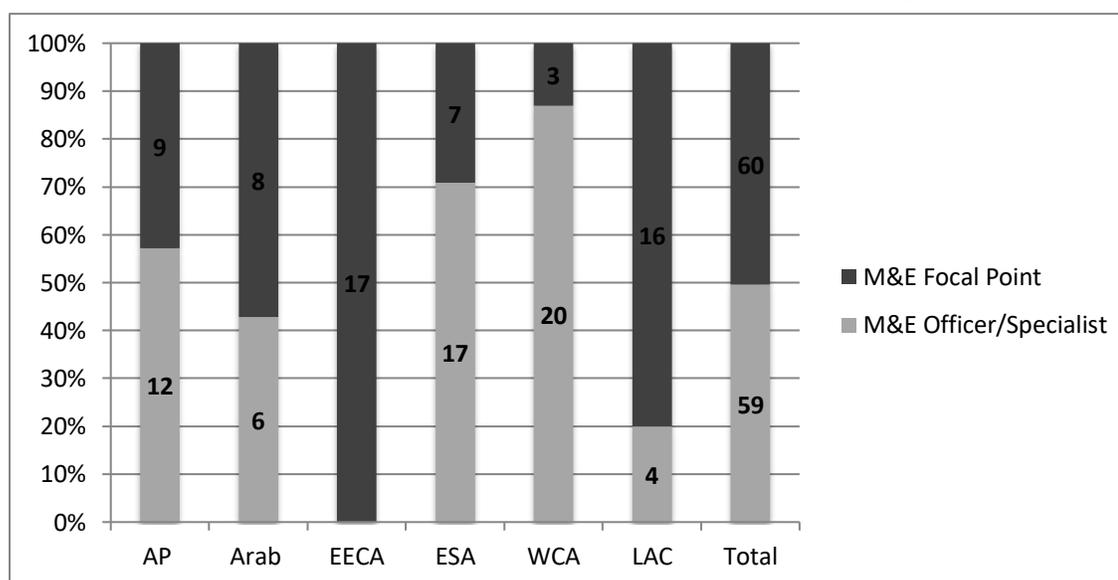
*** The majority increase from \$2.94 million in 2017 to \$4.17 million in 2018 is mainly due to the enhancement in better capturing the totality of investment in decentralized evaluation as explained in paragraph 12 above

Key performance indicator 2: human resources

14. As of December 2018, the Evaluation Office had nine approved posts: one at general service level, seven at professional level and one at director level. In line with the Evaluation Strategy 2018-2021, which prioritizes the communication and use of evaluation, a communications and knowledge management specialist joined the office in 2018, focusing primarily on strengthening the dissemination and use of evaluation results across the organization. In addition, a junior professional officer was recruited in October 2018, providing support to the implementation of centralized evaluations, the development of an e-learning course to strengthen internal capacity for evaluation, as well as the engagement with EvalYouth to scale up capacity development efforts for young and emerging evaluators.

15. At the decentralized level, the staffing profile remained roughly the same as in previous years. UNFPA has six regional monitoring and evaluation advisors at P5 level; all posts were filled. On aggregate, almost 97 per cent of country offices¹ were staffed with either a monitoring and evaluation officer/specialist (48 per cent) or a monitoring and evaluation focal point (52 per cent). As in previous years, the regional spread/distribution of profiles varied: dedicated monitoring and evaluation officers were concentrated in regions with larger country offices, while focal points were found primarily in regions comprising country offices that had relatively smaller budgets.

Figure 1
Human resources for monitoring and evaluation, 2018, by region



Source: Evaluation Office

Abbreviation: M&E: monitoring and evaluation

Key performance indicator 3: coverage of decentralized evaluations

16. In order to ensure a robust base of evaluative evidence to inform programming, the evaluation policy calls for country offices to conduct a country programme evaluation at least once every two programme cycles.

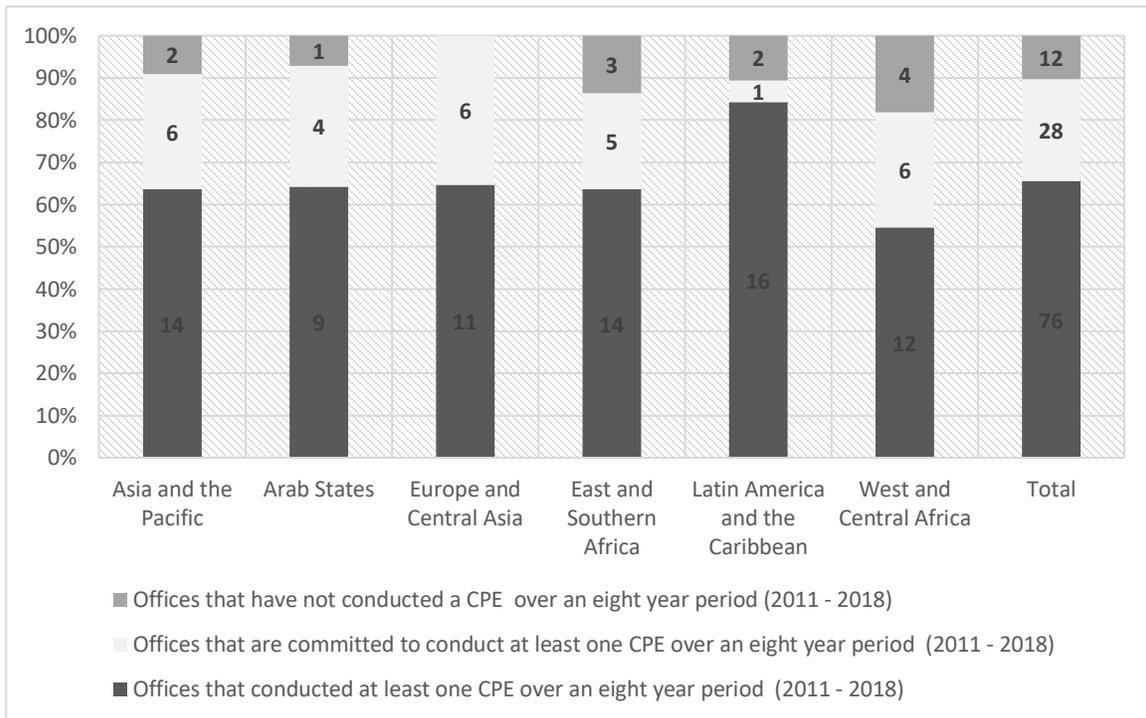
17. Currently, 90 per cent of country offices have completed or are scheduled to complete at least one country programme evaluation over the last eight-year period (the typical length of two UNFPA programme cycles),

¹ Vacancies were registered in two country offices in Asia and the Pacific, one office in the Arab States region and one office in West and Central Africa, with recruitment underway in all.

reflecting an improvement from 80 per cent in the previous reporting period. Joint efforts by the Policy and Strategy Division and the Evaluation Office to demand and monitor country offices’ compliance with the evaluation policy, in addition to a stronger evaluation culture in the organization, contributed to this improvement.

18. Country offices in Eastern Europe and Central Asia registered the highest coverage on aggregate – 100 per cent of country offices conducted or are planning to conduct a country programme evaluation at least once during two programme cycles. Country offices in the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean followed with 93 per cent, 91 per cent and 90 per cent coverage, respectively.

Figure 2
Evaluation coverage by region, 2012-2019 (*)



(*) Note: Methodologically, the Evaluation Office assumed four years as the average length of a country programme. However, programme cycles vary in duration, and can be extended.

Key performance indicator 4: implementation rate of planned evaluations

19. Overall, the implementation rate of evaluations improved significantly, with 92 per cent of planned evaluations implemented in 2018, compared to 55 per cent in 2017. Overall, 24 evaluations were planned, with 22 being implemented or postponed/replaced for valid programmatic reasons, showing responsiveness to changing programmatic contexts, as explained below.

20. Three country programme evaluations were postponed to align with extensions of the country programme. One evaluation at the regional level was replaced with another to ensure the evaluation scope better responded to contextual and programmatic needs, while another was postponed to allow for sufficient implementation of the programme (ensuring evaluability). However, two evaluations were cancelled without a valid programmatic reason: one due to financial constraints (it was replaced with a country programme assessment) and a regional-level evaluation, which is now expected to be conducted in 2020.

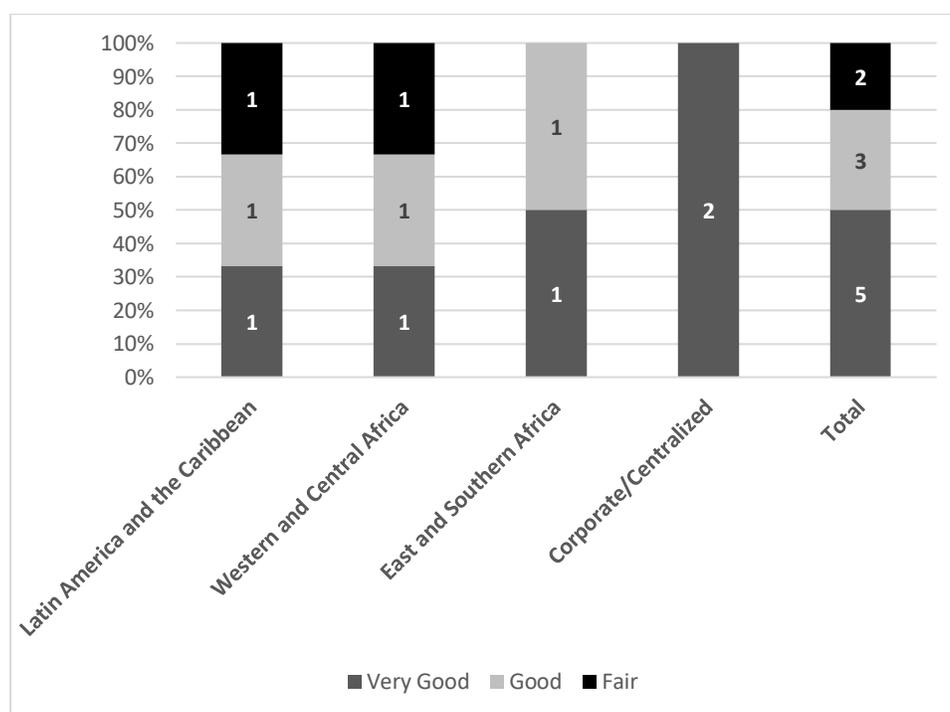
21. An important driver for this significant improvement – from 55 per cent in 2017 to 92 per cent in 2018 – was the new financial ring-fencing mechanisms put in place in 2018 as described in paragraph 46, as well as a new systematic monitoring mechanism put in place jointly by Policy and Strategy Division and the Evaluation Office.

Key performance indicator 5: quality of evaluation reports

22. In 2018, ten reports were quality assessed: eight country programme evaluation reports from three regions and two centralized evaluations completed by the Evaluation Office. As seen in Figure 4, no evaluation reports were completed and submitted for quality assessment from Asia and the Pacific, Eastern Europe and Central Asia and the Arab States during the 2018 reporting cycle. This variability is normal and expected, as country programme cycles vary, affecting the number of country programme evaluations conducted in each region annually.

23. The average quality of evaluations rose year-on-year from 2014 to 2017, with the proportion of reports assessed as ‘good’ or ‘very good’ increasing from 50 per cent in 2014 to 95 per cent in 2017. In 2018, 80 per cent of reports assessed (8 out of 10) were rated ‘good’ or better. Although the percentage of reports assessed as ‘good’ or better decreased from 95 per cent in 2017 to 80 per cent in 2018, in absolute terms only two reports were assessed as ‘fair’, while 5 of 10, or half of the assessed reports were rated ‘very good’, and no reports were rated ‘unsatisfactory’.

Figure 43
Quality of evaluations, by region, 2018



Source: Quality assessment conducted by an external consulting firm (managed by UNFPA Evaluation Office)

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

24. As in previous years, in 2018, all completed evaluations were made publically available through the evaluation database. In addition to being posted on the evaluation database, centralized evaluations are featured on the Evaluation Office’s website and are released through a communication message sent to all UNFPA staff and the wider external evaluation community, including to members of UNEG.

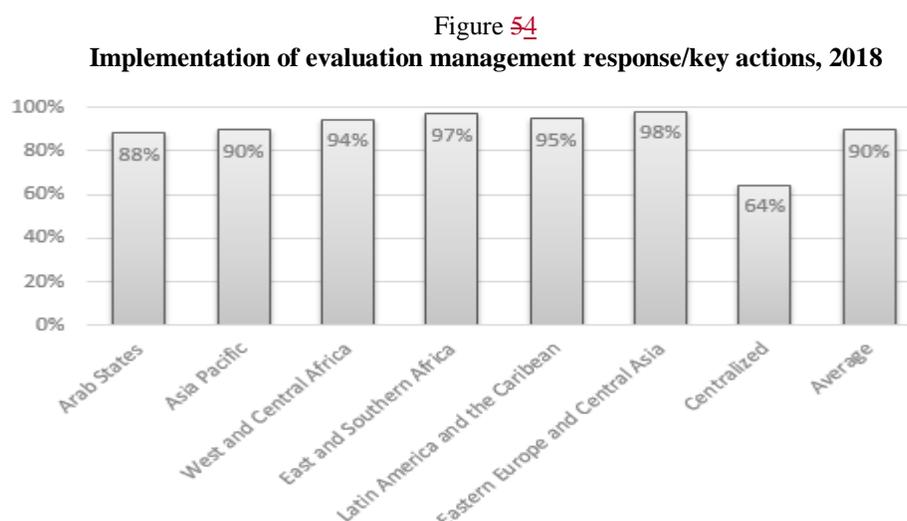
Key performance indicator 7: evaluations with management responses

25. In 2018, all completed evaluations were accompanied by a management response, in compliance with UNFPA evaluation policy.

Key performance indicator 8: implementation of management responses

26. The Policy and Strategy Division monitors the implementation of evaluation recommendations for both centralized and decentralized evaluations. In 2018, the percentage of ‘accepted programme evaluation recommendations for which the actions due in the year have been completed’ has continued to improve, reaching 89.5 per cent, a 4.5 per cent increase from 2017, and the highest level observed in seven years. However, the implementation rate of recommendations of centralized evaluations decreased to 64 per cent in 2018.

27. The Policy and Strategy Division reported that the decrease was due to (a) an increased number of centralized evaluation recommendations, and (b) the nature of recommended actions, mostly targeting corporate matters, such as policy changes, development of strategies, human and financial resources and strategic partnerships, which take longer to implement.



Source: UNFPA management response tracking systems

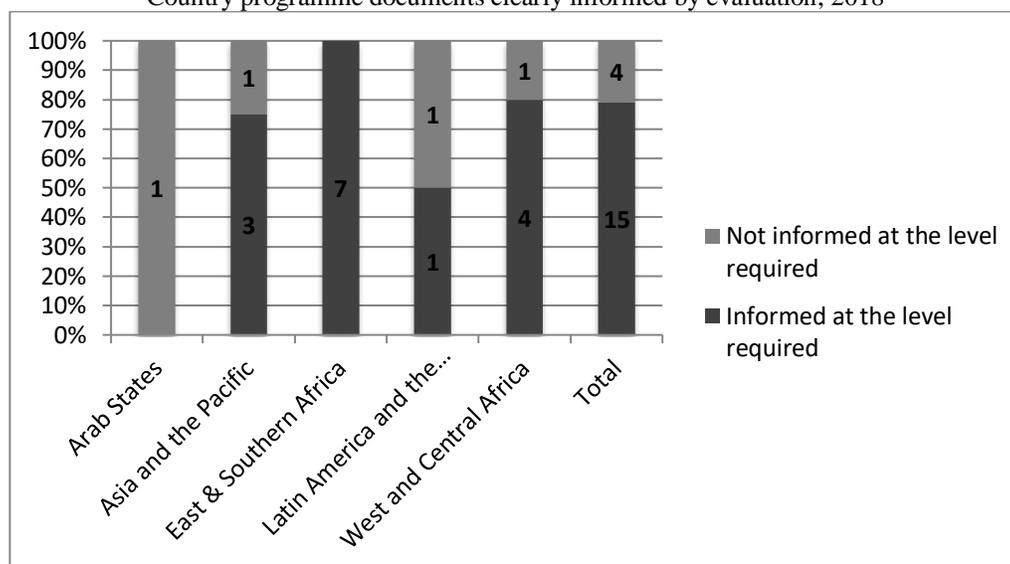
Key performance indicator 9: Use of evaluation in programme development

28. The 2019 Evaluation Policy as well as the Evaluation Strategy 2018-2021 call for a stronger emphasis in ensuring that evaluation is used to inform UNFPA programmes. With the aim of monitoring the performance against this priority, starting in 2019, the Evaluation Office is reporting on this new key performance indicator.

29. While evaluation informed all new country programme documents approved by the Executive Board in 2018, the level and quality of use – the degree to which country programme design was clearly informed by recommendations from the previous country programme evaluation, as reported by the Programme Review Committee’s secretariat – varied, with only 78.9 per cent (15 of 19) of country programme documents meeting this requirement.

30. Regional variations were registered (as shown in figure 6), with scope for improvement in this key performance indicator. The Evaluation Office, together with the Policy and Strategy Division, will work to support the use of credible evaluative evidence as a key requirement for the submission of country programme documents.

Figure 56
Country programme documents clearly informed by evaluation, 2018



Source: Programme Review Committee's secretariat

C. Centralized evaluations

31. In 2018, the Evaluation Office implemented the Evaluation Strategy 2018-2021 to further improve the influence and strategic importance of the evaluation function. In particular, the Evaluation Office enhanced the following three areas: (a) responsiveness to users' demands and needs; (b) cost-efficiency and timeliness of centralized evaluations; and (c) innovation in evaluation approaches.

A responsive quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2018-2021

32. The quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan provides a coherent framework to strategically guide the commissioning, management, and use of evaluations at UNFPA, and sets out the planned centralized and decentralized programme-level evaluations over a four-year period. In order to ensure that the coverage and scope of evaluations remain responsive to the changing context in which UNFPA works, the plan is envisioned as dynamic and flexible, with revisions expected. In 2018, the Evaluation Office carried out a series of consultations with key stakeholders that led to the adjustments presented below.

33. To ensure evaluation reports will be ready in time to inform decision-making, three evaluations were anticipated: (a) evaluation of UNFPA support to HIV prevention, originally planned for 2020, was launched at the end of 2018; (b) evaluation of UNFPA support to South-South cooperation, also planned for 2020, will be launched in early 2019; and (c) joint evaluation of the joint UNFPA-UNICEF global programme to accelerate action to end child marriage, planned for 2019, was launched in 2018. The new joint evaluation of the common chapter of the strategic plans of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women was included at the request of the Executive Board.² This replaced two planned evaluations on similar topics, notably the evaluation of UNFPA contribution to United Nations coherence and the evaluation of the architecture of the UNFPA strategic plan. Based on the request of UNAIDS, one new evaluation was added to the plan: a system-wide midterm evaluation of the UNAIDS unified budget, results and accountability framework (UNBRAAF), 2016-2021. The midterm evaluation of the maternal health thematic fund, previously pending approval, was confirmed for 2020. Finally, the country-level system-wide inter-agency humanitarian evaluation was postponed (to 2019) as the original country to be covered (Yemen) was replaced with Ethiopia due to security reasons, while the thematic system-wide inter-agency humanitarian evaluation on the United Nations system response to empowering women and

² decision DP/2018/1

girls in humanitarian setting has been moved forward to 2020 from 2021. These changes have been reflected in the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2018-2021, presented in Annex III of this report, and will be validated during the midterm review of the Quadrennial Budget Evaluation Plan 2018-2021, to be presented at the Executive Board at its annual session 2020.

Enhanced cost-efficiency and timeliness of centralized evaluations

34. In the past, centralized evaluations experienced some delays, mainly due to long procurement processes. With the aim to ensure timely delivery of centralized evaluation, and enhance efficiency of centralized evaluation processes, in 2018, a long-term agreement (LTA) framework covering the corporate evaluations scheduled in the quadrennial budget evaluation plan 2018-2021 was established with a number of external consultancy companies. This four-year LTA produced a number of positive enhancements, notably: (a) significant reduction of procurement time for centralized evaluations from a maximum of six to a minimum of three months, to an average of one month, while continuing ensuring international bidding standards; (b) reduction in transactional costs (only one procurement process for the totality of the four-year centralized evaluations instead of 10 separate processes for each individual centralized evaluation); and, (c) reduction of the cost of centralized evaluations due to economies of scale.

Innovation in evaluation approaches

35. With the aim of exploring ways of adding more value from evaluation results to organizational decision-making and learning in a complex, dynamic and challenging environment, the Evaluation Office has embraced new innovative approaches to evaluation. By utilizing approaches that are more real-time and utility-focused, Evaluation Office addresses the organization's desire to innovate in order to improve.

36. For example, the ongoing evaluation of results-based management approaches at UNFPA utilizes a developmental approach emphasizing strategic learning, innovation in organizational change, adaptation and real-time feedback to managers. The approach provides an opportunity for stakeholders to balance reflection and dialogue with decision-making and action as well as obtaining a deeper contextual understanding of the issues based on evaluative thinking. The developmental evaluation will support decision-making in a way that summative evaluations cannot by providing real-time feedback and supporting rapid adaptive learning and use of information, which is critical under conditions of complexity. In addition, the evaluation is expected to strengthen internal and external relationships with key stakeholders and increase learning by using participatory approaches and maximizing stakeholder engagement.

Full and timely implementation of centralized evaluations

37. Aligned with the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2018-2021, the Evaluation Office continued to implement a wide-ranging portfolio of evaluations, and made sure their results and recommendations were shared with the organization in a timely manner.

38. As of December 2018, the implementation rate of centralized evaluations during 2018-2019 was 100 per cent, with all evaluations completed or on track as by schedule as by table 3 below.

Table 3
Implementation status of planned centralized evaluations and other evaluative studies, 2018-2019

#	Title	Status	Management response issued	Presentation to Executive Board/ steering committees
1	Meta-analysis of the engagement of UNFPA in highly vulnerable contexts	Completed	No*	Presented to the Executive Board within the 2017 annual report of the evaluation function at the annual session 2018
2	Midterm evaluation of the UNFPA supplies programme	Completed	Yes	Presented to the UNFPA Supplies Steering Committee
3	Evaluation of UNFPA support to the prevention, response to and elimination of gender-based violence and harmful practices	Completed	Yes	Presented to the Executive Board at the first regular session 2019
4	Evaluation of the UNFPA response to the Syria crisis	Completed	Yes	To be presented to the Executive Board at the second regular session of 2019
5	Developmental evaluation of results-based management approaches	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2019
6	<u>Joint evaluation</u> of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2019
7	<u>Joint evaluation</u> of UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2019
8	Evaluation of the UNFPA capacity to respond to humanitarian crisis	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2019
9	<u>System-wide</u> inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of United Nations system response to the drought crisis in Ethiopia	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2019
10	Evaluation of UNFPA support to the HIV/AIDS response	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2019
11	Evaluation of UNFPA support to Gender equality and Women's empowerment	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2020
12	Evaluation of UNFPA support to South-South and triangular Cooperation	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2020
13	Meta-synthesis of lessons learned and good practices to accelerate achievements of the three transformative results	On track	No*	To be completed in 2020
14	<u>Joint evaluation</u> of the common chapter of UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and UNICEF strategic plans	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2020/2021
15	<u>System-wide</u> midterm evaluation of the UNAIDS 2016-2021 unified budget, results and accountability framework (UNBRAf).	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2020

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

D. Use of centralized evaluations to foster change

39. Beyond the implementation rate of management responses to evaluations, the *functional quality* (or the added value) of the evaluation function can be measured through the changes (or lack thereof) evaluations have triggered in UNFPA strategies, policies, programmes or practices. Continuing the practice started last year of reporting on changes (or lack thereof) centralized evaluations completed two years earlier have triggered, this year the Evaluation Office reports on the effects of two recent centralized evaluations.

End-line evaluation of the H4+ joint programme Canada and Sweden (Sida), 2011-2016

40. The purpose of the evaluation was to support learning among key stakeholders from the experience of implementing the H4+ Joint Programme Canada Sweden (Sida), 2011-2016, in ten African countries.³ The H4+ (now H6) comprises UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, the World Bank, UNAIDS and UN-Women. The lessons learned were intended to inform initiatives for delivery of comprehensive packages of services and support in the field of sexual and reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health (SRMNCAH). The evaluation also aimed at supporting the H6 partners in the further development of their collaboration in support of the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016-2030).

41. In response to the evaluation's recommendation to sustain programme gains and deploy an exit strategy, the global and regional H6 technical teams provided support to the country teams for integrating those impactful interventions within governmental SRMNCAH programmes supported by domestic, multilateral and/or bilateral funding. Based upon the results of the evaluation, the H6 partners revisited the vision and results framework for the partnership and aligned it with the Every Woman Every Child Global Strategy results framework and the relevant SDGs to address the full spectrum of sexual and reproductive health – including family planning, adolescent health, women's empowerment and information and services in humanitarian and fragile settings. Beyond the H6 programme countries (receiving funds from Canada and Sweden), the evaluation was also used to reach out to 29 African countries and invite Governments and H6 partners to undertake actions to enhance the effectiveness of national SRMNCAH programmes and ensure that national health systems strengthening processes receive support for (a) facilitating the “chain of coordination” from national to health facilities levels; and (b) balancing demand and supply side interventions to address the root causes of high maternal and child mortality. Efforts by the H6 partner are also underway to collectively and in collaboration with national Governments address the broader impediments to SRMNCAH through a multi-sectoral approach for the strengthening of health systems.

Evaluation of UNFPA support to adolescent and youth

42. The evaluation of UNFPA support to adolescents and youth informed the development of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, by strengthening the focus of UNFPA work on adolescents and youth. Recognizing and building on the global commitment around the demographic dividend, and political leadership to prioritize investments in young people to achieve sustainable development, the strategic plan integrates multisectoral interventions for youth empowerment and development. UNFPA has committed to working with young people and partners across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, including through UNFPA co-leading roles on related global initiatives: the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action, and Youth Peace and Security.

43. Following the evaluation recommendations, UNFPA updated its adolescents and youth strategy. Specifically, it adopted a unified framework for programming on adolescents and youth by: (a) consolidating and building on the achievements so far, with stronger linkages between areas; (b) mainstreaming adolescents and youth programming to achieve the three transformative results of the UNFPA strategic plan; and (c) aligning with the United Nations youth strategy and the SDGs. As recommended by the evaluation, the updated strategy fosters greater coherence across UNFPA-supported interventions in sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality, population dynamics and youth participation. It envisions multisectoral partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders, and prioritizes meaningful engagement of adolescents and youth at all levels. UNFPA is also consolidating technical expertise and knowledge sharing on adolescents and youth to further advocate for and strengthen targeting of investments in marginalized and vulnerable young people, in particular adolescent girls.

E. Decentralized evaluation system

44. Sixty eight per cent of all evaluations implemented in 2018 were managed by country or regional offices, reflecting the decentralized nature of evaluation at UNFPA, with the remainder managed at central level by the Evaluation Office. This ensures the right balance between centralized evaluations that inform global policies,

³ Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

strategies and initiatives, and decentralized evaluations managed by field offices that generate country-specific evidence relevant to both UNFPA country programme development, as well as upstream policies and strategies.

45. However, this also underscores the challenge of ensuring the timely delivery of high-quality decentralized evaluations. To address this challenge, the Evaluation Office and the Policy and Strategy Division continued to work together to implement systems to enhance decentralized evaluations, as explained below.

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

46. To address the challenge of financial constraints that in the past were reported as the main cause for not implementing planned decentralized evaluations, in 2018, the Evaluation Office facilitated an internal discussion on how to ensure small country offices will be able to implement planned decentralized evaluations despite of financial constraints. As result, the Policy and Strategy Division and the Division of Management Services established a *financial ring-fencing mechanism* that benefits those country offices that exceed a threshold of 3 per cent of programme resources to be used for a planned evaluation and expect a funding shortfall. It was agreed that \$500,000 would be set aside yearly within the annual resource allocation system to support the mechanism. In 2018, seven country programme evaluations benefitted from ring-fenced funds and, as result, were able to implement their own decentralized evaluation as planned, contributing to the significant improvement in the implementation of decentralized evaluations.

47. To ensure proper evaluation planning, costed evaluation plans continued to be reviewed by the Evaluation Office and presented to the Programme Review Committee. In 2018, the Evaluation Office updated the guidance for preparing costed evaluation plans in close collaboration with regional monitoring and evaluation advisors. To enhance proper implementation, the Evaluation Office together with the Policy and Strategy Division developed a monitoring system for the implementation of costed evaluation plans.

48. To better capture the total budget invested in the evaluation function (both centralized and decentralized), the Evaluation Office and Policy and Strategy Division jointly updated the evaluation tagging system within the UNFPA Global Programming System, with the aim of providing a more comprehensive picture of the resources budgeted for evaluation by all units at all levels of the organization.

49. The evaluation quality assurance and assessment system continued to support the quality and credibility of decentralized and centralized evaluations. Through the use of guidance, templates and the evaluation quality assessment grid (which details seven criteria/dimensions central to the quality of evaluation reports), individual targeted feedback was given to country offices on how to enhance the quality of future decentralized evaluations.

Strategy to strengthen evaluation use through communications and knowledge management

50. In 2018, the Evaluation Office embarked on the development of a strategy to strengthen evaluation use through communications and knowledge management. This is in alignment with the UNFPA evaluation strategy 2018-2021, the UNFPA evaluation policy (DP/FPA/2019/1), and in response to the recommendations of the external independent strategic review of the evaluation function 2017.

51. The strategy aims at going beyond the traditional perspective on dissemination of evaluation results to include a more strategic approach aimed at effectively communicating evaluation knowledge to a wider public, both within and outside UNFPA. This includes, among others, relevant and diversified evaluation products for a range of audiences, a social media presence and a dynamic website, a community of practice for UNFPA staff, a user-friendly evaluation database and other knowledge platforms that work in synergy to facilitate evaluation use.

52. As a first step in the development of the strategy, consultations were held with Evaluation Office staff, the Policy and Strategy Division and with regional monitoring and evaluation advisors on the structure and outline of the strategy. Taking stock of these contributions, the Evaluation Office is developing a strategy that will be finalized in 2019, while key elements are already being implemented. For example, to engage wider audiences, in 2018 the Evaluation Office amplified its online platforms and social media presence. This resulted in 35 per cent increase in page views for new evaluation reports on the Evaluation Office website. Critical to this growth was the revamped and more user-friendly web page, along with broader outreach efforts that created spotlight on Evaluation Office products. Further, from July to December 2018, the Evaluation Office account on Twitter

has grown 22 per cent per month. In these six months, the tweets had more than 306,000 impressions.⁴ In order to diversify and tailor evaluation products for different audiences and needs, Evaluation Office is investing in visual storytelling of evaluation results through infographics and short videos.

53. In addition, to facilitate timely use of evaluation to inform decision-making, the Evaluation Office provided targeted evaluative evidence to key stakeholders at strategic moments. For example, when the Division of Human Resources was developing the priorities for new corporate training, the Evaluation Office provided the list of areas in which UNFPA staff needs additional skills, as reported by various evaluations; when the Supplies Programme organized regional meetings to discuss future strategies to enhance the programme, the Evaluation Office participated by presenting the relevant conclusions and recommendation of the related centralized evaluation; when the leadership of the joint UNICEF-UNFPA programme were deciding future priorities for the programme, the evaluation office informed the decision by presenting the relevant conclusions and recommendation of the centralized evaluation on gender-based violence and harmful practices.

Internal evaluation capacity development

54. To systematically sustain and strengthen internal capacities on evaluation, the Evaluation Office released the handbook on *How to Design and Conduct a Country Programme Evaluation at UNFPA*. The handbook serves as a practical guide to help evaluation managers apply methodological rigour to evaluation practices in decentralized units. While UNFPA staff who manage country programme evaluations are the primary audience of the handbook, it also contains practical tools and hands-on advice for a wider audience, including consultants who carry out evaluations commissioned by UNFPA and national stakeholders involved in evaluation processes.

55. The handbook is also part of a broader initiative aimed at the professionalization of evaluation at UNFPA and beyond. In 2018, the Evaluation Office launched the design and development of an e-learning course on results-based management and evaluation in collaboration with the Policy and Strategy Division and Human Resources Division. This online learning will provide internal and external users with an interactive learning experience to develop practical skills in the design and conduct of decentralized evaluations and in results-based management. The course targets monitoring and evaluation staff and focal points, newly recruited staff, programme and communication personnel and external partners, as well as senior management.

56. Further, the Evaluation Office and the Policy and Strategy Division collaborated to develop an interactive community of practice to support knowledge sharing and collaborative learning on results-based management and evaluation at UNFPA. The community of practice was launched in early 2019.

57. At decentralized levels, the regional offices continued to support internal evaluation capacity development. In 2018, the Arab States Regional Office together with the Policy and Strategy Division and the Evaluation Office organized a training workshop for monitoring and evaluation staff and other country-level staff on results-based management and evaluation. The Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office organized an evaluation design workshop targeting country office staff and selected national and international evaluators. The Evaluation Office, in collaboration with the East and Southern Africa Regional Office, conducted a two-day evaluation training workshop for the UNFPA monitoring and evaluation officers and focal points in the region.

III. Enhancing coherence in the United Nations system evaluation functions

58. UNFPA is fully committed to UNDS reform and the Evaluation Office works at enhancing the coherence in the United Nations system evaluation functions. It does so by engaging and collaborating with other United Nations entities, either bilaterally or system-wide, as presented below.

A. The United Nations Evaluation Group

59. The Evaluation Office is an active member of the UNEG. In 2018, it contributed to the design and implementation of the UNEG workplan 2017-2018 as well as to the review of the UNEG strategy 2014-2019.

⁴ ‘Impressions’ are the number of times a tweet appears in a user’s timeline or search results

The Evaluation Office also participated in several interest groups across the four strategic objectives of the UNEG strategy, as described below.

60. Since 2015, the evaluation office has been leading UNEG work on the decentralized evaluation function as co-convenor of the interest group. In 2018, the Evaluation Office contributed to promoting and sharing good practices and learning across member agencies, including through the facilitation of panel discussions around relevant themes, such as evaluation capacity development and certification, quality assurance and assessment systems, independence and impartiality, as well as reporting lines in decentralized evaluation functions.

61. On evaluation use, the office participated in a mapping exercise of United Nations agency practices on increasing use to identify good practices that can be further replicated by United Nations agencies. Within the work of the humanitarian working group, the Evaluation Office also took part in the piloting of a draft guidance note for the evaluation of humanitarian interventions. Within the work of the gender equality and human rights working group, the Evaluation Office contributed to the development of the UNEG Guidance on Evaluating Institutional Gender Mainstreaming. The office also engaged in a forthcoming meta-evaluation of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) with a gender lens.

62. Finally, the Evaluation Office actively participated in the UNEG evaluation week. In particular, it organized and presented, together with UN-Women and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, a session on the interlinkages between the decentralized evaluation function and the development of national evaluation capacities. With the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the Evaluation Office organized and facilitated a panel discussion on the use of theories of change for better evaluative evidence.

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

63. On a yearly basis, the Evaluation Office reports on the extent to which UNFPA evaluation reports comply with the evaluation performance indicator of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. In 2018, with an aggregate score of 8, UNFPA evaluation reports met the requirements of the indicator.

C. Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation

64. In 2018, the Evaluation Office took part in the activities of several working groups within the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) Steering Group. The Evaluation Office contributed to the development of the conceptual framework for the IAHE Steering Group and to the revision of the methodological guidelines for inter-agency humanitarian evaluations. The Evaluation Office is also a member of the management group of the system-wide evaluation of the response to the humanitarian crisis in Ethiopia, launched at the beginning of 2019. The Evaluation Office will also take part in the management group of the first thematic system-wide evaluation on empowering women and girls in humanitarian settings, planned to be launched at the end of 2019.

65. Reflecting the full engagement of UNFPA evaluation function within the development-humanitarian-peace nexus, even beyond the United Nations system, in 2018, the Evaluation Office became a member of the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action, the global network of non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies, members of the Red Cross/Crescent Movement, donors, academics and consultants dedicated to learning how to improve the response to humanitarian crises.

D. Independent system-wide evaluation mechanisms

66. The Evaluation Office continued to be fully committed and engaged in supporting independent system-wide evaluation mechanisms, as a member of the UNEG, and, under the guidance and leadership of the Secretary-General, will continue to do so in future. In 2018, the Evaluation Office worked collaboratively within UNEG to deliver technical advice to the Transition Team for the repositioning of the United Nations development system, advocating for the integration of evaluation in both the funding compact and the revised UNDAF guidance.

E. Joint evaluations

67. In 2018, UNFPA continued to seek out opportunities for joint evaluations with other United Nations agencies and, at the country level, in consultation with national Governments, including evaluations of joint programmes, the common chapter of the strategic plans for 2018-2021 and UNDAFs.

68. In 2018, the evaluation offices of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women created an inter-agency group responsible for managing the joint evaluation of the common chapter of the strategic plans, under the guidance of the directors of evaluation of the four entities. As a first step, a concept note was developed to guide the design of the joint evaluation.

69. The UNFPA and UNICEF evaluation offices have jointly conducted an evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation: Accelerating Change Phase I and II, 2008-2017. After the data collection at country and regional levels was completed, preliminary findings were shared with the evaluation reference group in December 2018 to inform the 2019 programming. The evaluation, currently in the reporting phase, will be finalized in 2019.

70. UNFPA and UNICEF started the evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, 2016-2019. The evaluation covers the implementation of the Global Programme in 2016 through 2018, and includes all 12 programme countries. It examines all levels of interventions (global, regional, national and community) and their interconnections. The evaluation, currently in the reporting phase, will be finalized in 2019.

71. At country level, in addition to supporting UNDAF evaluations, UNFPA also manages joint evaluations. For example, in Jordan, a joint evaluation with UNICEF and UN-Women on the Hemayati (gender-based violence) project is currently ongoing.

F. United Nations regional evaluation groups and UNDAF evaluations

72. UNFPA has actively supported UNDAF evaluations managed by the United Nations system in 2018 – whether through technical or financial support. In the majority of cases, UNFPA is a member of the monitoring and evaluation task force of the United Nations country teams.

73. UNFPA also co-leads or actively contributes to United Nations regional evaluation groups, comprising the regional monitoring and evaluation advisors of different United Nations entities. For example, in the Arab States region, UNFPA is part of the core members of the evolving United Nations Regional Evaluation Group (IRENAS). UNFPA is also an active member of the United Nations Evaluation Development Group for Asia and the Pacific (UNEDAP). In Latin America and Caribbean region, UNFPA is the chair of the interagency regional monitoring and evaluation task team of the Programme Support Group of the United Nations Development Group.

IV. Multi-stakeholder partnerships for national evaluation capacity development

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

74. In 2018, the Evaluation Office further strengthened its engagement for national evaluation capacity development. Already a member of key multi-stakeholder partnerships (including EvalPartners and EvalGender+), the Evaluation Office has reinforced its new partnership with EvalYouth – an EvalPartners' global movement of young evaluators that engages up to 20,000 youth all over the world.

75. Within this framework, UNFPA led a coalition of United Nations entities (UNDP, UNICEF, UN-Women, WFP, the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the United Nations Volunteers programme) committed to deploying young evaluation professionals as UN Youth Volunteers across the United Nations system to support effective delivery of the 2030 Agenda and enhance national evaluation capacity development. This new collaboration between the United Nations system and EvalYouth aims to ensure youth voices are included in evaluations, national evaluation capacities are enhanced through skills development and knowledge transfer, and that United Nations

evaluation capacities are enriched through the contributions of motivated and well-supported UN Youth Volunteers. To develop a ready-to-deploy talent pool of young monitoring and evaluation professionals, UNV conducted a special recruitment drive (in collaboration with UNFPA and EvalYouth) attracting applicants from over 100 different nationalities, out of which 56 per cent were from sub-Saharan Africa. The average age of applicants was 26 years, and 50 per cent were women.

76. In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, UNFPA partnered with EvalYouth's regional chapter, to develop a comprehensive programme on building capacity of young and emerging evaluators. This programme includes a summer school, three webinars and an internship/mentorship programme. UNICEF has also joined this initiative.

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

77. In 2018, the Evaluation Office supported *EvalColombo2018*, a global event organized by the Global Parliamentarian Forum for Evaluation and held at the Parliament of Sri Lanka bringing together parliamentarians and other key stakeholders from all over the world to discuss how to strengthen the demand for and capacity to use evaluation to inform national decision-making. At this occasion, the necessity for sustainable development to be informed by evidence that is credible, objective and timely was reaffirmed, as well as the role of evaluations as a valuable source of evidence. Furthermore, parliamentarians in their role as representatives of citizens, custodians of parliamentary oversight and lawmakers recognized the leading role they can play in creating and sustaining an enabling environment for evaluation, and committed to implement this role in their own countries.

78. As a regional follow-up event, UNFPA and UNICEF supported a similar event held at the Parliament of Morocco that saw the participations of parliamentarians from the Middle East and North Africa region. This event was part of the regional evaluation conference organized by EvalMENA, in which the evaluation office delivered the keynote opening speech on "Evaluating humanitarian assistance and refugee response in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" and, in partnership with EvalYouth and the Regional Office for Arab States, organized a workshop for young evaluators.

Multi-stakeholders event to bring together demand and supply of country-led evaluations

79. In partnership with UNDP, UNICEF and WFP, UNFPA supported the Asia evaluation week organized by the Government of China and the Asian development Bank, themed "Evaluation for Policymaking". The event provided a venue for knowledge sharing on the latest and cutting edge ideas and practices on evaluation within Asia, as well as between Asia and other regions (such as Africa and Latin America).

80. In partnership with UNDP, IFAD, UN-Women, Oxfam, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and International Initiative on Impact Evaluation (3ie), UNFPA supported the Evaluation Community of India bi-annual event. It delivered a keynote speech on "No one left behind. Ensuring visibility of the furthest behind in evaluation and public policies". The event facilitated the co-production, sharing of knowledge and building of partnerships with various stakeholders, aimed at ensuring evaluation and evidence use become corner-stones in working towards achieving SDGs.

81. In partnership with UNDP, IFAD, WFP and the World Intellectual Property Organization, UNFPA supported the bi-annual conference of the European Evaluation Society themed "Evaluation for more resilient societies". In addition to facilitating the active participation and contribution of young evaluators, UNFPA led the organization of a United Nations panel with the directors of evaluation of the five United Nations agencies mentioned above on "United Nations evaluation functions for more resilient societies" to discuss how evaluation functions in the United Nations system are evolving to be even more relevant to the development-humanitarian-peace nexus.

82. The Evaluation Office also contributed to the Inter-ministerial Conference on South-South and Triangular Cooperation "Emerging population and development issues influencing the 2030 development agenda", where it advocated for a follow-up and review mechanisms for South-South and triangular initiatives designed on the model of the 2030 Agenda, which was endorsed by participants. This should allow for a comprehensive review of progress made and lead to policy recommendations to further promote South-South cooperation for attaining the International Conference on Population and Development goals and the SDGs.

V. The Evaluation Office programme of work in 2019

83. The Evaluation Office will continue in 2019 its work in the following four key results areas.

A. Centralized evaluations

84. As detailed in the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2018-2021, the Evaluation Office will manage 11 evaluations in 2019, six of which will be completed in 2019 and five in 2020, as presented in table 3 above. As a clear expression of UNFPA commitment to joint and system-wide evaluations, almost half of centralized evaluations to be managed in 2019 are either joint or system-wide evaluations.

B. Decentralized evaluation system

85. As in previous years, the Evaluation Office will continue to support the strengthening of the decentralized evaluation system, delivering technical support, managing the evaluation quality assurance and assessment system and, together with regional offices, offering capacity building in evaluation. It will also continue maintaining the roster of evaluation consultants and the knowledge management system, including a database of evaluation reports.

C. Enhancing coherence in the United Nations system evaluation functions

86. The Evaluation Office will continue to actively engage in UNDS reform, be an active participant in UNEG, the IAHE steering group, the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, and other system-wide evaluation initiatives. It will continue to co-convene the UNEG interest group on the decentralized evaluation function and take part as active member in other UNEG work streams, namely on evaluation use, gender and human rights, humanitarian issues and on the Evaluation Criteria of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. The Office will also continue to work with the IAHE steering group and the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action.

D. Multi-stakeholder partnerships for national evaluation capacity development

87. The Evaluation Office will continue its engagement in multi-stakeholder partnerships for national evaluation capacity development, including with EvalPartners and EvalYouth.

E. Budget for the 2019 work plan

88. As of 28 February 2019, the total budget of the Evaluation Office for 2019 is \$4,024,342. The budget comprises two funding categories: (a) institutional budget (\$3,312,383) and (b) non-core resources (\$711,959).