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UNFPA – Evaluation

United Nations Population Fund

Annual report on the evaluation function, 2025

Report of the Director, Independent Evaluation Office

Summary

This report provides information on the performance of the evaluation function at centralized and decentralized levels, as well as the contribution to coherence among evaluation functions across the United Nations and to national evaluation capacity development. It also presents the 2026 programme of work and budget for the Independent Evaluation Office.

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to: (a) take note of the annual report on the evaluation function, including the programme of work and budget of the Independent Evaluation Office in 2026, and related management commentaries; (b) welcome the progress and achievements of the evaluation function, specifically the increased emphasis on humanitarian evaluations and the adaptability to local contexts and global challenges; (c) welcome the contributions to United Nations inter-agency and system-wide evaluation efforts and youth-responsive national evaluation capacity development; (d) encourage investments in innovative evaluation approaches, including the responsible use of artificial intelligence, and enhancing evaluation use; (e) welcome the strengthening of the decentralized evaluation function and encourage sustained capacity development, including through annual cross-regional training workshops, to ensure actionable evidence for programming; and (f) encourage UNFPA to continue investing in the evaluation function and to ensure it remains adequately staffed and resourced.

I. Introduction

Navigating transitions and shaping the future of evaluation: the strategic role of evaluation

1. As part of the UN80 initiative, the United Nations development system is navigating a structural transition accompanied by a humanitarian reset and significant budgetary constraints in many organizations. This complex environment demands a shift towards more efficient and agile ways of working. Against this background, the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) has demonstrated remarkable resilience, successfully relocating to Nairobi in 2025 while fully implementing the multi-year costed evaluation plan approved by the Executive Board in its decision 2024/3.

2. To meet the demands of this evolving landscape, IEO launched the Evaluation Forward initiative. This strategic recalibration, currently in its pilot phase, aims at enhancing the relevance and utility of centralized evaluations and other exercises, by shifting toward IEO-led and hybrid evaluation management models. By producing more concise reports focused on key messages and by scaling up the use of artificial intelligence (AI), IEO is delivering high-quality evidence that is directly responsive to organizational needs. This commitment to innovation is further exemplified by the development of the AI Evaluation Assistant – a custom application designed to provide UNFPA staff with rapid, synthesized insights from the institutional evaluation knowledge base.

3. Furthermore, IEO continues to play an active role in promoting a more accountable and coherent United Nations system. IEO remains deeply committed to strategically engaging in joint, inter-agency, and system-wide evaluation initiatives, collaborating actively with the United Nations System-Wide Evaluation Office (SWEO), the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), the Global SDG Synthesis Coalition, and the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHE) Steering Group. These partnerships ensure that evaluative evidence is of high quality and anchored within the broader United Nations-wide efforts to accelerate progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to inform the post-2030 Agenda.

4. As UNFPA begins implementing its Strategic Plan, 2026-2029, the evaluation function is evolving to be more inclusive and forward-looking. By championing youth engagement, IEO is advancing advocacy for stronger intergenerational leadership in evaluation. Ultimately, these efforts position evaluation at UNFPA as a dynamic force, informing the strategic cycle, 2026-2029, while strengthening shared accountability, learning and evidence-based action to ensure rights and choices for all.

Evaluation as a critical accelerator for the delivery of the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025

5. During the period 2022-2025, IEO strategically aligned its evaluation portfolio with UNFPA priority areas and outcomes, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the organization's mandate and the generation of actionable evidence to strengthen programming, organizational effectiveness and efficiency in a complex and evolving environment. At the core of this effort was the evaluation of the Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, which was complemented by a coherent set of thematic and institutional evaluations covering the three transformative results and key accelerators, as well as humanitarian, joint and system-wide evaluations. In addition, IEO was actively engaged in joint and system-wide evaluation meta-syntheses. Together, these exercises strengthened accountability, provided evidence for programming, and deepened organizational learning.

6. Alongside the evaluation of the Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, evaluative exercises on population dynamics and data, population data in humanitarian assistance, and census support placed renewed emphasis on demographic resilience, providing a strong basis for the development and implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2026-2029, and its new outcome on adaptation to demographic change. Overall, through its diverse body of evaluations, IEO provided critical insights that informed strategic decisions during a pivotal period of organizational transition and renewal.

Recalibration of centralized evaluations to improve effectiveness and efficiency

7. Under its Evaluation Forward initiative, IEO has redefined centralized evaluations, including humanitarian evaluations and meta-syntheses, to enhance relevance, improve timeliness and cost-effectiveness, and strengthen utilization. This strategic realignment shifts the conduct of evaluations and other exercises away from largely outsourced models toward approaches that are either fully led by the IEO or implemented through hybrid arrangements, whereby evaluations are co-led by IEO staff and external thematic experts.

8. To ensure clarity and utilization, evaluation reports will be significantly shorter and centred on key messages. This proactive initiative also scales up the integrated use of AI throughout the evaluation process to achieve significant efficiency gains, while maintaining rigorous human validation. By redesigning management models and reporting styles, and scaling up AI use, IEO is better positioned to deliver high-quality evidence that aligns with organizational imperatives such as the UN80 initiative and budgetary constraints.

Shaping the future of evaluation with youth and AI to inform the post-2030 Agenda

9. In May 2025, the Eval4Action campaign marked its fifth anniversary by co-organizing the Summit for the Future of Evaluation in Sri Lanka. Inaugurated by the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, this multi-stakeholder forum convened over 200 participants from 32 countries. Co-created and delivered by a partnership of young, emerging and experienced evaluators, alongside IEO and other partners, the Summit centred on two tracks: meaningful youth engagement and ethical use of AI. By exploring the synergy between these themes, the Summit positioned youth leadership and technological integration as the dual catalysts for shaping the future of evaluation. To bring this call to life, Eval4Action led the EvalTorch movement, a symbolic relay that travelled to 45 evaluation events in 2025, inspiring dialogues that shape the future of evaluation.

10. Building on the momentum from the Summit, the Future of Evaluation dialogue series was launched as a monthly discussion platform. Each dialogue explores emerging dimensions shaping the future of evaluation, linking the topic to the corresponding international observance of the month. The five dialogues in 2025 gathered 3,100 participants and generated 3,500 views on LinkedIn.

II. Performance of the evaluation function

11. The performance of the evaluation function is assessed against ten key performance indicators. This section provides an overview of results achieved in 2025 (see table 1) and takes stock of progress made over the last decade.

Table 1
Trends in key performance indicators, 2016-2025

| <i>Key performance indicator</i> | <i>Description</i> | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | <i>Overall assessment</i> |
|---|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|---|
| 1. Financial resources invested in evaluation function | Expenditures for evaluation as a percentage of total programme expenditures | 0.91 | 0.83 | 0.96 | 0.98 | 0.83 | 0.83 | 0.80 | 0.80 | 0.79 | 0.85 | Stable trend (target of 1.0 - 1.6 per cent) |
| 2. Human resources for monitoring and evaluation | Percentage of country offices staffed with a monitoring and evaluation focal point or officer | 99.2 | 96.7 | 96.6 | 96.1 | 97.0 | 99.0 | 100 | 100 | 98.0 | 99.2 | Achieved (target of 95 per cent) |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-----------------------------------|
| 3. Evaluation coverage | Percentage of country offices that conducted a country programme evaluation once every two cycles | - | 80.0 | 90.0 | 97.0 | 97.3 | 96.5 | 95.0 | 97.3 | 95.8 | 95.8 | Achieved (target of 90 per cent) |
| 4. Evaluation implementation rate | Percentage of programme-level evaluations implemented as planned | 60.0 | 55.0 | 92.0 | 92.7 | 88.9 | 94.4 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | Achieved (target of 90 per cent) |
| 5. Quality of evaluations | Percentage of programme-level evaluations rated at least 'satisfactory' ^(a) | 92.0 | 95.0 | 80.0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 96.0 | 90.0 | 90.9 | 90.0 | Achieved (target of 90 per cent) |
| 6. Evaluation reports posted on evaluation database | Percentage of completed evaluation reports posted on evaluation database | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | Achieved (target of 100 per cent) |
| 7. Management response submission | Percentage of completed evaluation reports with management response submitted | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 88.9 | 100 | Achieved (target of 100 per cent) |
| 8. Implementation of management response | Percentage of management response actions completed | 78.5 | 84.4 | 89.5 | 84 | 90.0 | 95.0 | 95.0 | 94.0 | 98.0 | 94.0 | Achieved (target of 90 per cent) |
| 9. Use of evaluation in programme development | Percentage of new country programme documents whose design was clearly informed by evaluative evidence | - | - | 79.8 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | Achieved (target of 95 per cent) |
| 10. Engagement in centralized joint and inter-agency evaluations | Percentage of joint and inter-agency evaluations out of total centralized evaluations ^(b) | - | - | - | 54.0 | 57.0 | 57.0 | 61.0 | 58.0 | 58.8 | 57.1 | Achieved (target of 50 per cent) |

^(a) The indicator formulation was updated to align with the rating scale of the new quality assessment system launched in 2024.

^(b) The indicator covers centralized evaluations and other independently managed evaluative exercises such as evaluability assessments, evaluation syntheses and summaries that are conducted jointly or through an inter-agency modality.

Source: Independent Evaluation Office and Programme Division.

12. In 2025, UNFPA further strengthened evaluation systems, processes and capacities, achieving strong results across key performance indicators, with several exceeding targets.

13. In 2025, expenditures for evaluation accounted for 0.85 per cent of total programme expenditures. This demonstrates the continued commitment of UNFPA to the evaluation function, which saw an 11 per

cent increase in total evaluation expenditures in the strategic cycle, 2022-2025.

14. Monitoring and evaluation roles remained firmly established, with 99 per cent of country offices having either a monitoring and evaluation officer or focal point. Evaluation coverage of country programmes continued to be high. Aligned with the evaluation policy, 96 per cent of offices conducted at least one country programme evaluation (CPE) within two programme cycles. The rate remained consistently around 95 per cent throughout the strategic cycle, 2022-2025. For the fourth consecutive year, all the regional and country programme evaluations were implemented as planned. The 2022-2025 strategic cycle marked the highest level of evaluation implementation over the past decade due to the ring-fencing of CPE budgets, better planning and growing commitment to evaluation.

15. UNFPA was able to maintain high evaluation quality. All centralized evaluations and 90 per cent of decentralized evaluations (regional and country programme evaluations) were rated at least 'satisfactory' by external reviewers. The first project-level evaluations underwent quality assurance in 2025 and are scheduled for quality assessment in 2026. Adhering to the highest standards of transparency, UNFPA continued to publish all completed centralized and decentralized programme-level evaluations in the public evaluation database.

16. Following an exceptional decline in 2024, the management response submission rate returned to 100 per cent, consistent with performance over the past decade. The implementation rate of management responses remained strong at 94 per cent. All country programme documents submitted to the Executive Board were informed by evaluation findings, sustaining the consistent practice observed throughout 2022-2025. UNFPA continued to actively participate in joint and inter-agency evaluations, with 57 per cent of centralized evaluations and other evaluative exercises conducted in collaboration with other United Nations entities.

17. While implementation of the 2024 evaluation policy continues, decentralized and humanitarian evaluations remain constrained by persistent capacity gaps. In 36 per cent of country offices, evaluation functions are still managed by monitoring and evaluation focal points rather than dedicated staff, limiting effectiveness. Across regions, national evaluators combining strong methodological skills with expertise in the UNFPA mandate areas remain scarce. These challenges are compounded by resource constraints, high demand for a limited number of experienced consultants, particularly for humanitarian evaluations, and limited capacity in some offices to source specialized expertise. Language-specific requirements further complicate consultant selection.

18. Weak national evaluation capacity and limited monitoring and evaluation staffing place significant quality assurance demands on already stretched regional offices. Regional offices have insufficient capacity to adequately support country offices without dedicated monitoring and evaluation staff, affecting the timeliness and quality of evaluations. In some offices, with an emerging evaluation culture, the perception of evaluations as primarily compliance exercises exacerbate these challenges. Meanwhile, the evaluation policy's expanded coverage of project-level evaluations has further strained capacity at all levels. In addition, insufficient disaggregated, baseline and outcome-level data limit the ability to robustly assess contributions to results and leaving-no-one-behind considerations, particularly in humanitarian contexts.

Key performance indicator 1: financial resources

19. The 2024 evaluation policy established a target between 1 per cent and 1.6 per cent of the overall programme expenditure to be invested in the evaluation function.

20. Building on the positive trend over the past decade, investments in evaluation continued to grow at both decentralized and centralized levels. In 2025, total expenditure on the evaluation function reached \$10.73 million, representing 0.85 per cent of UNFPA total programme expenditure. Of this amount, \$4.47 million was spent for IEO and centralized evaluations, while \$6.26 million was spent for decentralized evaluations (see table 2). While still below the 2024 evaluation policy target, this represents the highest-ever investment in evaluation, reflecting strong UNFPA commitment to the evaluation function.

Table 2
Expenditures on the evaluation function, 2016-2025

| | <i>(in millions of \$)</i> | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|-------|--------|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
| Total UNFPA programme budget expenditure* | 763.5 | 752.9 | 872.3 | 933.8 | 1 027.9 | 1 086.4 | 1 218.3 | 1 295.7 | 1 274.7 | 1 256.9 |
| Total expenditure of the evaluation function | 6.94 | 6.30 | 8.40 | 9.13 | 8.53 | 9.03 | 9.7 | 9.8 | 10.04 | 10.73 |
| <i>Independent Evaluation Office</i> | 3.71 | 3.36 | 4.23 | 3.9 | 3.2 | 3.88 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 4.46 | 4.47 |
| <i>Decentralized evaluation function</i> | 3.23 | 2.94 | 4.17** | 5.23 | 5.33 | 5.15 | 5.4 | 5.5 | 5.58 | 6.26 |
| Total expenditure of the evaluation function as a percentage of UNFPA programme budget expenditures | 0.91% | 0.83% | 0.96% | 0.98% | 0.83% | 0.83% | 0.80% | 0.80% | 0.79% | 0.85% |

* Total UNFPA programme expenditure is extracted from the UNFPA statistical and financial reviews. Expenditures for the IEO and the decentralized evaluation function are sourced from the UNFPA financial system. The latter include costs for decentralized evaluations, internal and national evaluation capacity development activities, and staffing.

**Most of the increase (from \$2.94 million in 2017 to \$4.17 million in 2018) can be attributed to improved costing methods, which more accurately capture the full scope of investment in decentralized evaluations.

Key performance indicator 2: human resources

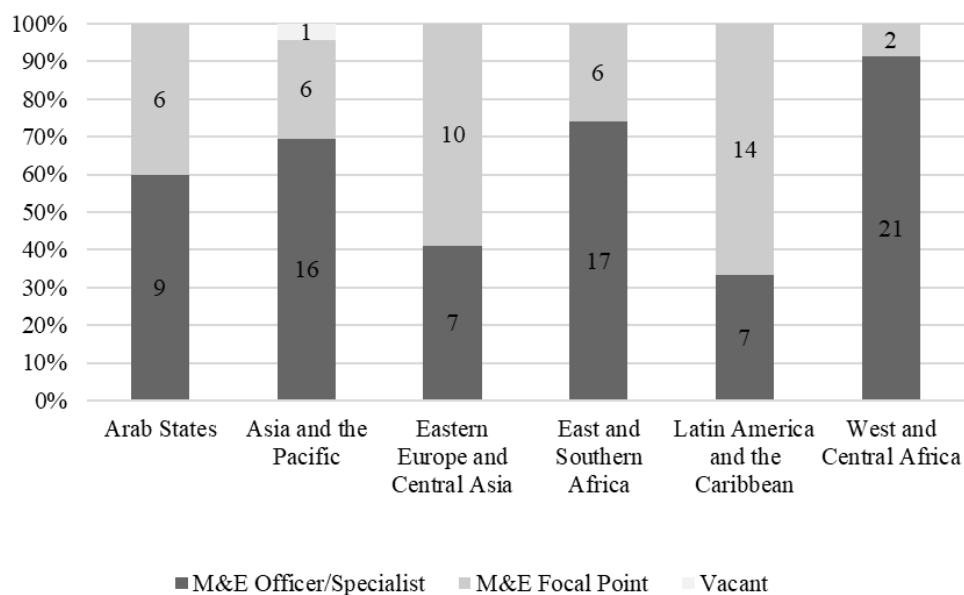
21. Following its relocation to Nairobi, IEO continued to operate with 12 approved posts: one general service position, 10 professional staff, and the Director. The secondment of an Evaluation Adviser to the SWEO in 2024 and 2025 concluded in September 2025, after which the staff member joined the office in Nairobi. Of the 12 posts, eight are held by women (67 per cent) and five are held by staff from programme countries (42 per cent).

22. At the regional level, staffing was characterized by high turnover. UNFPA maintains six Regional Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Adviser posts at the P5 level. While the position in the West and Central Africa region was filled, the posts in the Arab States and East and Southern Africa regions remained vacant and were covered on an interim basis by existing monitoring and evaluation staff within the respective regional offices. In 2025, all six staff members performing the regional adviser functions were women from programme countries.

23. At the country level, the staffing profile differs across regions. As of December 2025, 99 per cent of country offices were staffed with either a monitoring and evaluation officer or monitoring and evaluation focal point. Forty-seven per cent of monitoring and evaluation personnel in country offices were women, while 53 per cent were men.

24. Despite a constrained funding environment, the share of country offices with dedicated monitoring and evaluation officers remained stable at 64 per cent. As in previous years, monitoring and evaluation officers were primarily located in regions with larger country offices, such as Africa and Asia and the Pacific, while monitoring and evaluation focal points were concentrated in Latin America and the Caribbean, and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where offices typically operate with smaller budgets.

Figure 1
Country-level human resources for monitoring and evaluation in 2025, by region

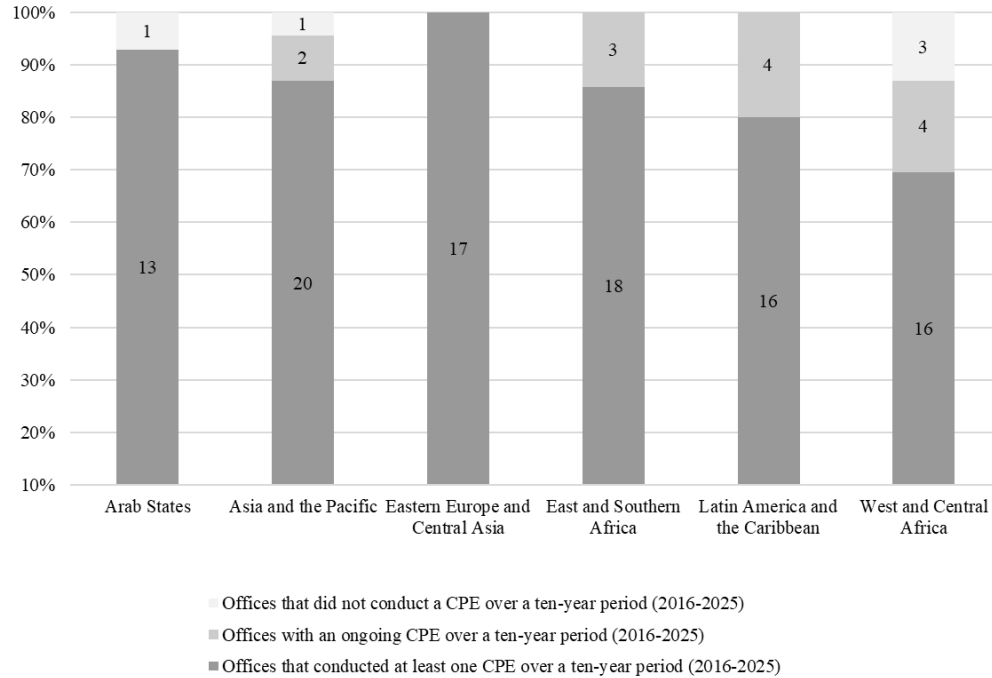


Source: Independent Evaluation Office.

Key performance indicator 3: coverage of decentralized programme-level evaluations

25. The evaluation policy requires country offices to conduct at least one CPE every two programme cycles to ensure strong evaluative evidence for programming. The performance of this key indicator remained stable, with 96 per cent of country offices ‘completing’ or ‘on track to completing’ at least one CPE over the last ten years (the typical duration of two country programme cycles). The high coverage level of CPEs is testament to the commitment of UNFPA to evidence-based action and continuous programme improvement.

Figure 2
Evaluation coverage by region, 2016-2025



Source: Independent Evaluation Office.

Key performance indicator 4: implementation of planned decentralized programme-level evaluations

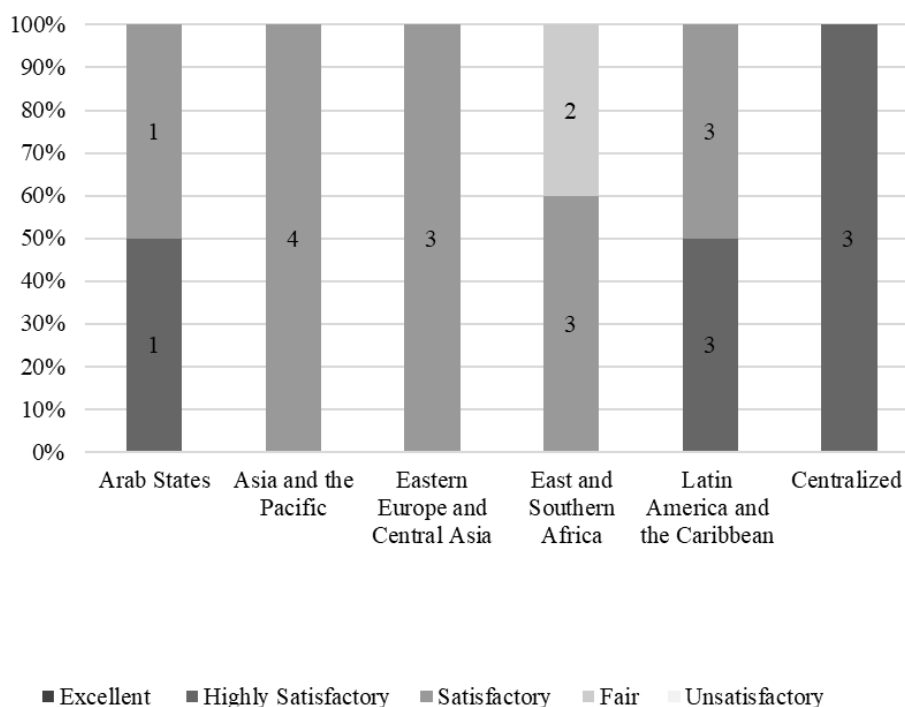
26. The implementation rate of decentralized programme-level evaluations remained at 100 per cent. In 2025, one sub-regional programme evaluation (Caribbean) and 18 CPEs were implemented as planned. Two CPEs were postponed due to the extension of country programmes, while two CPEs were cancelled based on valid contextual or programmatic justifications. In one case, the office agreed to replace the CPE with an IEO-led, crisis-specific humanitarian evaluation, which provided critical insights to inform humanitarian preparedness and response in the next programme cycle. In the other case, the office leveraged evidence from the previous cycle’s CPE, alongside other centralized and decentralized evaluations to inform the design of its new country programme.

Key performance indicator 5: quality of evaluation reports

27. Rigorous external assessments are essential for maintaining the credibility and quality of evaluations. In 2025, all completed centralized and decentralized programme-level evaluations underwent independent quality assessments to ensure the reliability of their findings, conclusions and recommendations. While there is room for improvement, the overall quality remains strong: all centralized evaluations were rated ‘highly satisfactory’ and 90 per cent of regional and country programme evaluations were rated at least ‘satisfactory’. Only two CPEs were rated ‘fair’, while none were assessed as ‘unsatisfactory’.

28. Despite the introduction of a more rigorous quality assessment system, performance against this indicator remained strong. Continued progress reflects sustained efforts to strengthen decentralized evaluation capacity, with the IEO leading targeted capacity development for CPE managers and quality assurance for CPEs with a humanitarian component, supported by robust quality assurance from Regional Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Advisers and underpinned by the dedicated ring-fencing funding mechanism for CPEs. However, as the first project-level evaluations are scheduled for external quality assessment in 2026, and further refinements to the quality assessment system are being considered, additional investment in evaluation capacity development will be required to sustain current performance.

Figure 3
Quality of evaluations assessed in 2025, by region



Source: Independent assessment of the quality of evaluation reports.

Note: No regional or country programme evaluations in West and Central Africa were completed and submitted for external quality assessment by 31 December 2025

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

29. All completed centralized and decentralized programme-level evaluations were made publicly available through the IEO evaluation database. In addition, centralized evaluations are featured on the IEO website and – to further facilitate their use – shared with all staff and the wider evaluation community, including UNEG members.

Key performance indicator 7: evaluations with management responses

30. Management responses are key to translating evaluation recommendations into action, ensuring accountability and learning. They specify how challenges will be addressed, by which business units, and within what timeframe, ensuring that evaluation results are systematically integrated into programming to

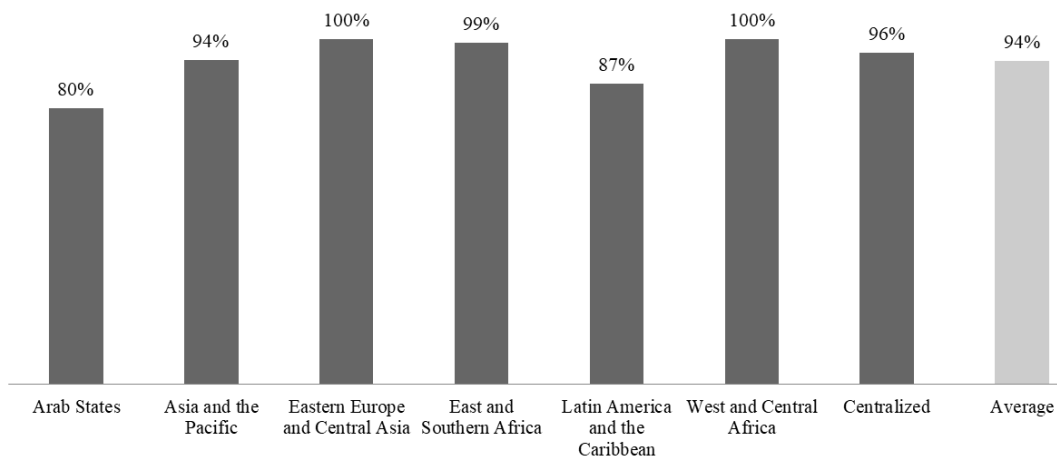
enhance impact. In 2025, the submission rate of management responses was restored to 100 per cent due to strong follow-up, reaffirming the longstanding trend of full compliance.

Key performance indicator 8: implementation of management responses

31. The Programme Division monitors the implementation of evaluation recommendations for both centralized and decentralized programme-level evaluations. Due to numerous measures that the Division has put in place over the years – including (a) the addition of two evaluation follow-up indicators in the corporate dashboard; and (b) a more individualized follow-up approach – UNFPA achieved an annual implementation rate of 94 per cent.

32. Despite a slight decrease from 98 per cent in the previous year, the overall implementation rate of management responses to both centralized and decentralized evaluations remained robust, exceeding the corporate target of 90 per cent. The implementation rate was particularly strong for centralized evaluations, reaching 96 per cent, while decentralized programme-level evaluations achieved an implementation rate of 93 per cent. The implementation rate of management responses varied markedly across regions. Eastern Europe and Central Asia and West and Central Africa achieved full implementation, while Latin America and the Caribbean reached 87 per cent and the Arab States 80 per cent, highlighting the need for closer follow-up. The Programme Division is committed to working closely with the implementing business units and the Oversight Compliance and Monitoring Committee to ensure that these actions are implemented in 2026.

Figure 4
Implementation of evaluation management responses in 2025, by type of evaluation and region



Source: UNFPA management response tracking system.

Key performance indicator 9: use of evaluation in programme development

33. Evaluations continued to inform action and decision-making, particularly in developing new regional and country programmes. According to the quality assessments of the inter-divisional Programme Review Committee, all new regional and country programme documents submitted for Executive Board approval in 2025 were adequately informed by evaluative evidence.

34. IEO supported evidence-based programming by integrating evaluation results into the design of new regional and country programme documents through its participation in strategic dialogues and Programme Review Committee discussions. White papers and country programme documents demonstrated that CPEs

provided valuable insights to guide the strategic direction and priorities of country programmes. Similarly, the regional programme evaluations provided critical insights to shape the design of the regional programmes, 2026-2029. Still, further efforts are needed to ensure programming is systematically informed by evaluative evidence from both decentralized and centralized evaluations to fully capitalize on the UNFPA institutional knowledge base.

Key performance indicator 10: percentage of centralized joint and inter-agency evaluations

35. Aligned with the IEO commitment to enhance coherence in the United Nations system to drive learning and accountability for collective results, IEO continued its engagement in joint and inter-agency evaluation efforts. In 2025, 57 per cent of centralized evaluations were conducted jointly or as inter-agency initiatives.

III. Centralized evaluations

36. In accordance with the multi-year costed evaluation plan, IEO continued to deliver a variety of evaluations that added value, depth and insight across UNFPA Strategic Plan outcomes and priority areas.

37. The implementation rate of planned centralized evaluations was 100 per cent, with all exercises completed or on track as scheduled. The status of planned centralized evaluations is presented in table 3.

Table 3
Implementation status of planned centralized evaluations and other evaluative exercises, 2025-2026

| # | Title | Status | Management response issued | Presentation to Executive Board / steering committee |
|---|---|-----------|----------------------------|--|
| 1 | Mid-term evaluation of the UNFPA Supplies Partnership (2021–2030) | Completed | Yes | Presented to The Supplies Partnership Executive Committee on 22-23 October 2025 |
| 2 | Independent evaluation of UNFPA support to the integration of the principles of ‘leaving no one behind’ and ‘reaching those left furthest behind first’ | Completed | Yes | Presented to the Executive Board at the first regular session 2026 |
| 3 | Independent evaluation of the capacity of UNFPA in humanitarian action 2019-2025 | Completed | Yes | Presented to the Executive Board at the first regular session 2026 |
| 4 | Independent evaluation of the UNFPA humanitarian response in Sudan 2023-2024 | Completed | Yes | Presented to the evaluation reference group in May 2025 |
| 5 | Independent evaluation of UNFPA support to the 2020 round of population and housing censuses | Completed | Yes | To be presented to the Executive Board at the annual session 2026 |
| 6 | Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the response to the humanitarian crisis in Somalia 2021-2024 | Completed | N/A* | Presented and launched publicly through a webinar on 29 April 2025 |
| 7 | Synthesis of inter-agency humanitarian evaluations | Completed | N/A* | Presented to the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Deputies Group in November |

| | | | | |
|----|---|-----------|---------|--|
| | | | | 2025, as well as humanitarian coordinators in January 2026 |
| 8 | Global SDG Synthesis Coalition: synthesis of evidence on SDG 16 – Peace Pillar ¹ | Completed | N/A* | Presented and launched publicly in February 2026 |
| 9 | System-wide evaluation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy | Completed | Yes | Report published by the United Nations System-Wide Evaluation Office in September 2025 |
| 10 | Independent evaluation of UNFPA normative role 2018-2025 | On track | Not yet | To be presented to the Executive Board in 2027 |
| 11 | Joint evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation Phase IV (2022-2030) | On track | Not yet | To be presented to the Joint Programme Steering Committee in the third quarter of 2026 |
| 12 | Inter-agency meta-synthesis of evaluations to support the United Nations Youth Strategy (part 4 on youth and health) | On track | N/A* | To be presented at the Economic and Social Council Youth Forum 2026 |
| 13 | Evaluation of the UNAIDS Joint Programme in achieving the 2030 target and sustaining gains | On track | Not yet | To be completed in 2026 |
| 14 | Global SDG Synthesis Coalition: synthesis of evidence on SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 – People Pillar | On track | N/A* | To be completed in 2026 |

* Not applicable: Management responses are only issued for evaluations, and not reviews, meta-analyses and evaluability assessments.

38. Aligned with the United Nations Funding Compact and to facilitate a broader uptake of results, UNFPA made all its centralized evaluations available on the UNEG website.

Innovation in evaluation approaches

39. In 2025, IEO in collaboration with the Information Technology Solution Office (ITSO), developed the AI Evaluation Assistant, a customized conversational application for UNFPA staff. Launched in March 2026, this initiative provides rapid synthesized insights from the entire UNFPA evaluation knowledge base to accelerate evidence-based programming. Furthermore, it will optimize institutional resources by significantly reducing the manual effort required for evidence identification and synthesis, ensuring that evaluative knowledge is readily accessible.

40. IEO led the independent evaluation of the UNFPA humanitarian response in Sudan, 2023-2024. This is the first IEO-led evaluation focusing on a crisis-specific humanitarian response under the Inter-Agency Steering Committee (IASC) level 3 activation. The evaluation assessed UNFPA performance in responding to this major humanitarian crisis at the global, regional and country levels. It was implemented in close collaboration with the regional and country-level monitoring and evaluation staff to ensure ownership and facilitate use of the evaluative evidence in future humanitarian responses.

¹ The 2024 annual report erroneously indicated that this exercise had been completed. At the time of reporting, only the interim report and the evidence gap mapping had been finalized.

IV. Use of evaluations to foster change

41. Beyond the implementation rate of management responses, the added value of the evaluation function can be measured through the changes evaluations have triggered in policies, programming and operations. This section provides a synopsis of the strategic use of selected centralized and decentralized evaluations.

A. Centralized evaluations

Formative evaluation of the organizational resilience in light of the COVID-19 pandemic

42. Building on the evaluation recommendations, UNFPA strengthened its organizational resilience by updating the Business Continuity Model and Emergency Policy and Procedures to better support field offices and supply chain management. Key measures included enhancing the Office of Strategy and Coordination for improved business model continuity oversight, automating and centralizing business continuity plans, and implementing recommendations from the Joint Inspection Unit to meet United Nations system-wide resilience standards. UNFPA also reinforced its operational foundation by updating the duty-of-care framework for non-staff personnel and by providing crisis management training for country office managers.

Mid-term evaluation of the Maternal and Newborn Health Thematic Fund, phase III 2018-2022

43. The evidence from the mid-term evaluation served as a critical foundation for the future direction of the Maternal and Newborn Health Thematic Fund, with implications for wider UNFPA priorities and programming approach on maternal and newborn health. Notably, the evaluation results were instrumental in defining the business plan of the Thematic Fund phase IV, including a revised monitoring and evaluation framework aligned with UNFPA Strategic Plan indicators, stronger focus on tracking the catalytic impact of the Thematic Fund, and strengthened integration with the UNFPA Supplies Partnership through joint work planning.

44. The evaluation also led to the development of the UNFPA “Start with Her” strategy for reproductive, maternal and newborn health and well-being, which is referenced as the key programming strategy towards delivering outcome 2 (accelerate reduction in maternal deaths by 2029) in the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2026-2026. Furthermore, it contributed to enhancing the Thematic Fund Advisory Board’s role and the successful re-positioning of midwifery as the centrepiece of the UNFPA framework for sexual and reproductive health of mothers, newborns and adolescents, with the establishment of the Midwifery Accelerator Partnership.

Joint evaluation of phase II 2020-2023 of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage

45. The evaluation offices and programme units of UNFPA and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) jointly used evidence from the evaluation of the Global Programme phase II to guide the design and implementation of phase III (2024-2030). Aligned with the evaluation recommendations, UNFPA and UNICEF developed a structured evidence-generation and learning agenda, supported the implementation of child marriage laws while mitigating unintended consequences, advanced work on men and boys through the promotion of positive masculinities, helped country offices develop sustainability plans, and strengthened programming to address child marriage in humanitarian contexts.

46. In response to the recommendation to build a structured evidence-generation and learning agenda, the UNFPA and UNICEF evaluation offices presented a set of complementary evaluation exercises for phase III to the Steering Committee of the Global Programme in 2024, including a pilot study to rigorously assess the programme’s contribution to outcome-level change. The Steering Committee endorsed this approach, recognizing the pilot as a key mechanism to move beyond accountability toward deeper learning on programme effectiveness. The pilot study, now underway, draws on phase II evaluation findings to inform its methodological design, country selection and analytical focus. Its results will directly inform the forthcoming mid-term evaluation of phase III.

B. Decentralized evaluations

47. Across all regions, evaluations led to strategic, programmatic and operational adjustments. Evaluation results shaped the strategic orientation of programming, facilitated the scaling of impactful interventions, and guided resource prioritization and mobilization.

48. In Bangladesh, evidence from an evaluation of a project funded by the Korea International Development Agency was essential to secure \$10 million for a second phase, enabling the expansion of adolescent and youth centres in Rohingya camps. The country office applied lessons from the evaluation to the new phase, enhancing integration of menstrual health management with broader awareness of sexual and reproductive health services and allocating resources to build local partner capacity in line with localization goals. In Tunisia, the country office used evidence from project-level evaluations and global supply chain reviews to address bottlenecks in delivering lifesaving sexual and reproductive health commodities, informing an action plan to reduce stock-outs and last-mile assurance challenges. In Uzbekistan, the evaluation of a United Kingdom-funded regional project on violence against women and girls led to stronger engagement with mahalla institutions, integration of disability-inclusive modules into training of service providers, enhanced collaboration with organizations of persons with disabilities, and the development of standardized protocols for coordinating multi-sectoral response services. In Bolivia, the mid-term evaluation of an adolescent sexual and reproductive health project informed the adaptation of interventions, ensuring a strong project closure with all established targets exceeded.

49. Beyond UNFPA-commissioned evaluations, United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) evaluations offered key insights that informed programming. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, recommendations from the UNSDCF evaluation informed the new UNFPA country programme, leading to the creation of a data sub-group with UNICEF to strengthen data systems and address gaps in the absence of an updated population census. In Somalia, the UNSDCF evaluation underscored the importance of community-led initiatives and self-reliance strategies to ensure sustainable impact in communities affected by displacement. In response, UNFPA strengthened its focus on durable solutions for internally displaced persons and refugees, positioning resilience building at the centre of its new country programme.

V. Decentralized evaluation system

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

50. Aligned with the 2024 evaluation policy, UNFPA started operationalizing the revised reporting lines for decentralized evaluation. For IEO, this has facilitated closer engagement with Regional Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Advisers through quarterly meetings and continuous exchanges for improving decentralized evaluations. These interactions have enabled IEO to provide targeted guidance and timely technical support and to contribute to quality assurance across regional and country-level evaluations. While an important step toward activating the functional reporting line, it has not yet led to formal assessment of Regional Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Adviser performance on evaluation matters. Further efforts are needed to strengthen oversight of decentralized evaluations.

51. In 2025, IEO rolled out the updated costed evaluation plan guidance and tools, ensuring that evaluations planned by regional and country offices were prioritized, adequately resourced, and aligned with evidence needs. Applied to costed evaluation plans developed in 2025, this process identified project-level evaluations for integration into the evaluation quality assurance and assessment system, with the first project-level evaluations completing the cycle in 2026. In parallel, the implementation of the global evaluation tracking tool strengthened real-time monitoring of all decentralized evaluations. The tool enabled IEO to promptly detect challenges, such as delays in drafting terms of reference or recruiting consultants, and, through discussions with the Regional Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Advisers, to facilitate corrective actions to safeguard evaluation quality, timeliness and utility. Furthermore, IEO provided initial guidance to the Programme Division to develop a consolidated plan for headquarters-commissioned decentralized evaluations. This plan will be finalized in 2026, following the approval of the Multi-Year Costed Evaluation

Plan, 2026-2029.

52. To strengthen humanitarian evaluation quality, IEO continued providing technical guidance and backstopping to decentralized humanitarian evaluations. This included advising Regional Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Advisers and conducting quality assurance of terms of reference and design reports for all CPEs with a humanitarian component, as well as selected humanitarian project evaluations, in line with the criteria established in 2024. IEO also widely disseminated the humanitarian evaluation compendium to the Evaluation Handbook, ensuring a consistent methodological framework across UNFPA and equipping offices with practical tools to assess humanitarian action.

Internal evaluation capacity development

53. IEO delivered a series of interactive webinars across all regions, to ensure robust preparation of decentralized evaluations planned in 2026, with a special focus on CPEs. Complementing the webinars, a virtual ‘clinic’ provided practical guidance in formulating and prioritizing evaluation questions, fostering early stakeholder engagement and alignment with their information needs. As a result, 47 participants were equipped with a tailored roadmap for the preparation phase and gained knowledge to engage in subsequent evaluation phases.

54. While the preparation phase webinars integrated considerations for humanitarian evaluations, IEO also held a specialized webinar on decentralized humanitarian evaluations. The session focused on the unique challenges of conducting evaluations in humanitarian contexts, ensuring that monitoring and evaluation personnel are better equipped to especially manage CPEs with a humanitarian component.

55. In 2025, IEO transitioned to a hybrid evaluation capacity development model. Foundational training on the preparation phase was delivered virtually in August 2025 to support readiness for CPEs, while training on the more technically demanding phases (design, fieldwork, reporting) was conducted in person in March 2026, to enable practical exercises and peer exchange. The training workshop brought together 35 participants, including five young and emerging evaluators from Kenya. Further detailed training on the dissemination and facilitation of use of evaluation, and the responsible use of AI in evaluation, will be delivered virtually to broaden participation, including both monitoring and evaluation and communications personnel, and to promote the uptake of evaluative evidence. This hybrid approach ensures coherence across the evaluation cycle, optimizes resources, and provides consistent support to decentralized evaluations. Maintaining it as a recurrent annual offer is essential to effectively prepare successive cohorts of country offices and uphold high standards of evaluation quality.

56. IEO capacity development was complemented by regional learning events and webinars led by Regional Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Advisers to strengthen monitoring and evaluation personnel’s capacity to manage CPEs, including through peer exchange, orient implementing partners on evaluation, and enhance the use of evaluative evidence in developing new country programme documents. Overall, over 104 staff and partners benefited from these learning opportunities across six regions.

VI. Enhancing coherence in the United Nations evaluation functions

57. As part of its commitment to United Nations reform, IEO continued enhancing coherence among the evaluation functions across the United Nations system by actively engaging in and collaborating with other organizations through joint and inter-agency evaluations, the UNEG network, the IAHE Steering Group and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Co-sponsor Evaluation Group.

A. Joint evaluations

58. IEO has cultivated a high profile within the United Nations development system through its commitment to joint evaluations. In 2025, UNFPA continued to exceed the Funding Compact target of collaborating in at least one joint evaluation, as it co-led or participated in the management group of eight joint and inter-agency evaluative exercises.

59. In partnership with the UNICEF Evaluation Office, IEO launched the evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation Phase IV (2022-2030). It also co-managed a pilot study assessing the contribution of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme to End Child Marriage to outcome-level change. The study draws on the findings from the phase II evaluation to inform the mid-term evaluation of phase III of the Global Programme in 2027. In addition, IEO actively participated in the management group of the evaluation of the UNAIDS Joint Programme in achieving the 2030 target and sustaining gains.

60. Beyond evaluations, UNFPA was actively engaged in two joint and inter-agency evaluation syntheses. In partnership with the UNICEF Evaluation Office, IEO completed the third inter-agency meta-synthesis of United Nations evaluations to support the implementation of the United Nations Youth Strategy, focusing on priorities 2 and 3 on education and employment. The synthesis findings were presented at a side event during the 2025 Economic and Social Council Youth Forum, engaging nearly 470 participants. The high-level dialogue with youth leaders, ministers and senior United Nations officials positioned the synthesis as a system-wide tool to inform strategic decision-making and policy change on youth-related priorities. IEO is also co-chairing, as lead agency, the fourth inter-agency meta-synthesis of United Nations evaluations, focused on youth, health and well-being.

61. Furthermore, IEO contributed to the Evidence Synthesis Infrastructure Collaborative as a member of its AI Working Group, including participation in the strategic Wilton Park dialogue on AI and knowledge management in evaluation synthesis.

B. Inter-agency humanitarian evaluations

62. Inter-agency humanitarian evaluations are central to strengthening collective accountability and system-wide learning, particularly amid the humanitarian reset's call for greater coherence and efficiency. In 2025, IEO served on the management group of the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Response to the Humanitarian Crisis in Somalia and the Synthesis of Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations. Through this engagement, UNFPA contributed critical insights to strengthening humanitarian capacity across the United Nations system, informing ongoing efforts to restructure the global humanitarian architecture.

C. System-wide evaluations

63. IEO remained strongly committed to supporting independent, system-wide evaluation mechanisms. Recognizing the strategic importance of SWEQ, IEO actively contributed to its programme of work by participating in the Steering Committee. IEO also seconded a senior evaluation specialist (P5) to SWEQ in 2024 and 2025, which concluded in September 2025.

64. In addition, IEO supported flagship system-wide evaluations, including the evaluation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. The evaluation results informed discussions on strengthening intersectionality, accountability and system-wide learning at the launch event of a report on gender responsiveness within the strategy, organized by the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Gender and Disability Inclusion under the leadership of UNFPA and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in December 2025.

D. United Nations Evaluation Group and regional evaluation groups

65. IEO continued to co-coordinate the UNEG working groups on data analytics and AI, and young and emerging evaluators.

66. As a co-coordinator of the UNEG working group on data analytics and AI, IEO collaborated with other United Nations entities to share experiences and build synergies through six knowledge-sharing events focused on the responsible use of AI in evaluation. IEO also led a comprehensive survey and developed a mapping report of AI initiatives among UNEG member organizations. In addition, IEO contributed to the development of a checklist for AI ethical principles for evaluation managers.

67. IEO continued to co-coordinate the UNEG working group on young and emerging evaluators. In this

role, it co-led the dissemination and promoted the uptake of the mapping report on the engagement of young evaluators across UNEG member organizations, following its official launch in June 2025. IEO also played a key role in supporting the ongoing implementation of the UNEG–United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Young Evaluators Programme.

68. Furthermore, IEO actively participated in the UNEG working groups on evaluation use, decentralized evaluations and professionalization. As part of the evaluation use working group, IEO co-organized four webinars on assessing the impact of policy evaluations, lessons learned for stronger management response implementation, the use of United Nations evaluations by external stakeholders, and AI approaches for enhancing evaluation utilization and synthesis. The latter webinar was a public knowledge-sharing event organized in collaboration with UNEG synthesis and data analytics and AI working groups. IEO also continued its involvement in the UNEG humanitarian-development-peace continuum and evaluation synthesis working groups.

69. At the regional level, UNFPA actively participated in the Regional Inter-agency Working Group on Monitoring and Evaluation in Latin America and Caribbean and the United Nations Evaluation Development Group for Asia and the Pacific, providing technical assistance to UNSDCF evaluations and supporting evaluation capacity development. In the East and Southern and West and Central Africa regions, UNFPA actively engaged in the United Nations Network for Evaluation Systems Strengthening. UNFPA also participated in the newly established United Nations Evaluation Group for Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

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

70. For the seventh consecutive year, UNFPA ‘exceeded requirements’ of the evaluation performance indicator on gender equality and the empowerment of women, with a composite score of 9.3. In addition, all evaluations completed in 2025 analysed whether and how the needs of persons with disabilities were addressed.

F. Joint and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework evaluations

71. UNFPA actively supported UNSDCF evaluations in 27 countries by providing technical assistance, quality assurance and/or financial support. In addition, 14 decentralized evaluations were jointly conducted with other United Nations entities.

72. Beyond involvement in UNSDCF and joint evaluations, UNFPA actively engaged in and provided leadership to monitoring and evaluation groups of United Nations country teams in 21 countries.

G. Multi-stakeholder partnerships for national evaluation capacity development

73. In line with General Assembly resolutions 69/237 (building capacity for evaluation of development activities at the country level); 70/1 (transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development); 77/283 (strengthening Voluntary National Reviews through country-led evaluation); 79/226 (quadrennial comprehensive policy review); and the 2024 evaluation policy, UNFPA continued its efforts to strengthen national evaluation capacities, together with major stakeholders, including United Nations organizations.

74. IEO continued to be a member of global evaluation coalitions, including: (a) the EvalPartners Executive Committee representing the United Nations system together with UNAIDS; (b) the EvalGender+ Management Group, representing the United Nations system together with UN-Women; and (c) the Global Evaluation Initiative Implementation Committee, led by the World Bank. To strengthen evaluation capacity globally, IEO collaborated with regional evaluation associations at key conferences to share lessons and best practices in building national evaluation systems.

75. As a co-leader of the Eval4Action campaign, IEO continued to spearhead its flagship Youth in Evaluation initiative in partnership with the EvalYouth Global Network, the Global Parliamentarian Forum for Evaluation, and the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation. This global momentum

was mirrored at the regional level in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, where IEO and the regional office collaborated with the regional EvalYouth chapter, the Eurasian Alliance of National Evaluation Associations, and the Eurasian Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation to bolster regional evaluation systems. This collaborative effort included the delivery of the Bishkek Evaluation Forum 2025, alongside targeted evaluation capacity building programmes for young and emerging evaluators and government officials.

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

76. Eval4Action co-led the Summit for the Future of Evaluation, with a focus on youth and AI, to bring a forward-looking vision to evaluation. A significant milestone of this summit was the recognition of 25 champions from a group of 56 organizations that actively committed to adopting the Youth in Evaluation standards in 2025. IEO received the Youth in Evaluation Legacy Champion award for its exceptional and sustained efforts in meaningfully engaging young people. Furthermore, 10 panel sessions highlighting meaningful youth engagement in evaluation were conducted in several regional and global evaluation conferences. This momentum was further amplified by the Youth in Evaluation manifesto drive, which has now secured 1,300 endorsements from individuals and organizations.

77. In partnership with the EvalYouth network, IEO drove evaluation capacity development initiatives for young evaluators across Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and North America. IEO continued to support EvalYouth's global strategic priorities, facilitating professional growth through specialized training, technical sessions, pre-conference workshops, and mentoring programmes designed to help young professionals build successful careers in evaluation. In all, young evaluators contributed to 14 completed or ongoing decentralized evaluations in 2025. In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, UNFPA supported the implementation of a survey of young and emerging evaluators in seven countries, in collaboration with UNDP, UNICEF and regional evaluation networks. The survey identified competency gaps to guide capacity development and strengthen regional evaluation ecosystems.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships to enhance the demand for and use of country-led evaluations

78. As part of its longstanding partnership with the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation, IEO continued supporting parliamentarians, including in regional parliamentary fora, to strengthen their capacity to demand and use evaluation for evidence-based decision-making. IEO also supported the African Parliamentarians Network on Development Evaluation as a member of its Executive Committee. In Latin America and the Caribbean, UNFPA contributed to national evaluation capacity development by supporting government officials from six countries to attend the EVALAC 2025 regional conference, led by the Office of Evaluation and Oversight of the Inter-American Development Bank, enhancing their understanding of how to assess structural inequalities and policy impacts on vulnerable and marginalized populations.

VII. The Independent Evaluation Office programme of work in 2026

79. In 2026, IEO will continue its work in four key results areas.

A. Centralized evaluations

80. As detailed in its new Multi-Year Costed Evaluation Plan, 2026-2029, IEO will manage at least 12 evaluative exercises in 2026/2027.

B. Decentralized evaluation system

81. IEO will further strengthen the decentralized evaluation function by enhancing guidance and technical support to regional and country offices, including for project-level evaluations. It will ensure effective implementation of the updated costed evaluation plan guidance, and reinforce quality assurance and assessment, including for headquarters-commissioned evaluations. In partnership with Regional Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Advisers, IEO will step up hybrid capacity development, combining webinars

and in-person training. To advance humanitarian evaluation, IEO will provide targeted quality assurance for CPEs and major humanitarian project evaluations, conduct specialized capacity development, and pilot an innovative approach to strengthen community engagement.

C. Enhancing coherence in the United Nations system evaluation functions

82. IEO will continue to engage with UNEG, SWEO, the IAHE Steering Group and the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in humanitarian action.

D. Partnerships for national evaluation capacity development

83. IEO remains committed to advocating for influential and future-fit evaluation through the Eval4Action campaign and its global partners. It will continue to champion the Youth in Evaluation standards, sustaining the Future of Evaluation dialogue series, and co-leading the Youth in Evaluation Forum 2026.

E. Budget for the 2026 workplan

84. The total IEO budget for 2026 is \$4,107,754; this includes \$2,996,879 allocated for posts and capacity development and \$1,110,875 for centralized evaluative exercises and related operational costs.
