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Quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2018-2021

Summary

The quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan for 2018-2021 has been prepared in line with the revised evaluation policy of UNFPA (DP/FPA/2013/5), and in accordance with relevant Executive Board decisions as well as General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

The plan presents the strategic approach to evaluation planning and details proposed corporate and decentralized programme-level evaluations for UNFPA, together with information on budget, key risks and reporting arrangements.

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to:

- (a) *Welcome* the relevance and utility of the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan for 2018-2021;
- (b) *Acknowledge* the transparent and participatory process undertaken in developing the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan for 2018-2021;
- (c) *Approve* the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan for 2018-2021.

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I. Background and purpose of the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2018-2021

1. In line with the revised UNFPA evaluation policy (DP/FPA/2013/5), evaluation at UNFPA serves three main purposes:
 - (a) It is a means to demonstrate accountability to stakeholders on performance achieved;
 - (b) It supports evidence-based decision-making;
 - (c) It contributes important lessons learned to the knowledge base of the organization.
2. The quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2018-2021 is in accordance with the revised evaluation policy approved by the Executive Board, and is aligned with General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR).
3. The purpose of the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan is to provide a coherent framework to guide the commissioning, management and use of evaluations at UNFPA. The plan also provides a basis for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of planned corporate and decentralized programme-level evaluations foreseen in the revised evaluation policy. Corporate evaluations included in the plan will be presented to the UNFPA Executive Board.
4. The plan should be viewed as flexible and responsive to the changing context in which UNFPA works. Therefore, it will be revised if necessary to ensure its constant relevance to the organization and its goals. To facilitate a balanced approach between strategic coverage and utility of evaluation, the plan covers four years. Firm proposals are presented for 2018-2019, with indicative proposals for 2020-2021.

Scope and coverage of the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2018-2021

5. The quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan is aligned with the programmatic outcomes and organizational effectiveness and efficiency results set out in the UNFPA strategic plan, 2018-2021.
6. The plan covers two categories of evaluations, as defined in the revised UNFPA evaluation policy.
7. First, corporate evaluations are covered by the plan. Corporate evaluations are independent exercises undertaken by the Evaluation Office in order to assess issues that contribute to achieving the goals of the UNFPA strategic plan with regard to development effectiveness and organizational performance. Corporate evaluations address organizational-wide issues, and include thematic, institutional, joint and United Nations system-wide evaluations and synthesis studies, as well as evaluations of major UNFPA-wide programmes, global trust funds and partnerships at the request of funding partners.
8. Decentralized programme-level evaluations are the second category of evaluation covered. These evaluations are managed by the respective country and regional offices managing the evaluation. Independent external evaluators pre-qualified by the Evaluation Office conduct these evaluations according to terms of reference approved by the Evaluation Office and as indicated in paragraph 13(b) of the revised evaluation policy. There are two types of programme-level evaluations: country programme evaluations and regional programme evaluations. These evaluations assess progress towards outcomes at country or regional level, respectively, generating learning and informing the design and implementation of forthcoming programmes.

II. Intentionality and use of evaluations

9. Evaluation findings, recommendations and lessons learned are used to improve organizational and United Nations system-wide performance toward the fulfilment of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, and the accelerated implementation of the

International Conference on Population and Development and other internationally agreed development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

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

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

III. Strategic approach to planning of evaluations

A. Overarching principles and norms of evaluation

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

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

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

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

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

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

B. Selection criteria of evaluations included in the plan

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

(a) Strategic relevance of the subject: (i) Does the evaluation cover issues of corporate strategic significance that contribute to the achievement of the strategic plan?; (ii) Is the subject of the evaluation a socioeconomic or political priority?; (iii) Is the subject of the

evaluation part of the annual priorities of UNFPA?; and (iv) Is the subject of the evaluation a priority for UNFPA in a specific geographical region where, for example, there is high maternal mortality, low contraceptive prevalence, or high teenage pregnancy rates?

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

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

(d) Significant investment: Is the subject considered significant in relation to the portfolio of activities of UNFPA?

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

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

(g) Knowledge gap: Will the evaluation help to fill a vital knowledge gap in relation to the thematic focus of UNFPA?

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

C. Consultative process followed to develop the plan

15. The Evaluation Office followed three key steps to identify (a) strategic evaluation priorities in relation to the UNFPA strategic plan, 2018-2021; and (b) knowledge gaps where corporate evaluations would add value.

16. First, an evidence-gap analysis was conducted by assessing the coverage of corporate evaluations managed during 2014-2017 against the outcomes and outputs of the UNFPA strategic plan. The analysis found that, while there has been broad coverage across all four strategic plan outcome areas, evaluations of humanitarian assistance were only just beginning to emerge, with a corporate evaluation and a meta-analysis initiated in 2017 and expected to be finalized in 2018.

17. Second, based on the criteria mentioned above, a tentative list of proposed corporate evaluations was subject to selectivity analysis to assess their relevance and utility (see Annex 3 for additional details). The list of potential evaluations was used as the basis for bilateral consultations with major stakeholders at all levels of the organization.

18. Third, consultations presenting the draft quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan were held with the UNFPA Executive Committee, senior management at headquarters and regional levels, the Oversight Advisory Committee, and the Executive Board. Consultations were also undertaken with other United Nations organizations, with a view to identifying possible joint evaluations.

D. Responsiveness to evolving needs

19. UNFPA operates in a dynamic and shifting development landscape. In particular, the Sustainable Development Goals, the QCPR, the UN Reform Agenda, new types of

development partnerships and, within UNFPA, the recently approved strategic plan, 2018-2021 demand changes in the way UNFPA operates. Timely, relevant and good quality evaluations will be important for evidence-based decision-making and lesson learning in UNFPA. At the same time, the maturation of the UNFPA evaluation function and gradual strengthening of evaluation systems and capacities permit UNFPA to diversify the range of evaluations conducted at all levels, to better respond to lesson learning and accountability needs. Therefore, the following evolving needs have guided the development of the plan.

20. United Nations coherence in evaluation. Increasingly, the United Nations system organizations are seeking to jointly evaluate their combined efforts, in particular in the context of joint programmes or system-wide goals. The Evaluation Office will increase efforts to strategically engage in joint or system-wide evaluation initiatives. This may entail managing or conducting joint evaluations or participating in system-wide evaluation initiatives, engaging in reference groups or other cooperative engagements. Three corporate evaluations have been identified as joint evaluations, and two as United Nations system-wide evaluations.

21. Humanitarian evaluations. The proliferation of increasingly severe and complex humanitarian crises has required an increasing number of UNFPA field offices to engage in humanitarian responses. UNFPA evaluation approaches need to address the specific requirements of assessing performance and lesson learning of humanitarian interventions and within humanitarian contexts. For this reason, a two-pronged strategy will be applied. On the one hand, a new focus on UNFPA performance in humanitarian settings was established. On the other, all corporate evaluations will specifically analyse the development-humanitarian nexus. In addition, the Evaluation Office will play a more active role in existing partnerships for humanitarian evaluations by (a) being an active member in selected United Nations system-wide evaluations of emergency responses managed by the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Steering Group; and (b) becoming a member of the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action.

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

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

IV. Corporate evaluations

24. The list of corporate evaluations presented in Table 1 below ensures comprehensive coverage of key results areas of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2018-2021 by providing the assessment of its thematic areas, as well as humanitarian interventions and organizational effectiveness and efficiency results. The plan foresees the delivery of five corporate evaluations¹ per year. Therefore, over the span of four years, the Evaluation Office anticipates managing 20 corporate evaluations – out of which three will be joint evaluations with other United Nations entities; two will be United Nations system-wide under the umbrella of the

¹ Corporate evaluations include thematic and institutional evaluations, as well as synthesis and meta-analysis exercises.

Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation; and one an independent review of UNFPA evaluation function.

25. Table 1 presents in summary form the broad topics proposed for corporate evaluations by outcome area of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2018-2021 and the sequencing of evaluations over the four years covered by the plan. The evaluations are expected to be commissioned in the year in which they are listed and, in most cases, completed the following year.

Table 1. Proposed corporate evaluations, 2018-2021

Plan outcomes	2018	2019	2020	2021
Outcome 1	Midterm evaluation of the UNFPA supplies programme (started in 2017)		Final evaluation of the UNFPA supplies programme Evaluation of UNFPA support to HIV prevention (to be finalized in 2022)	
Outcome 2		Joint formative evaluation of UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage		
Outcome 3	Evaluation of UNFPA support to the prevention, response to and elimination of gender-based violence and harmful practices, including in humanitarian settings (started in 2017)	Evaluation of UNFPA support to gender equality and women's empowerment		
	Joint evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation: Accelerating Change (Phase I + II)		Joint formative evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation: Accelerating Change (Phase III)	
Outcome 4			Evaluation of UNFPA support to the use of population data in humanitarian preparedness and response	
Humanitarian	Evaluation of the UNFPA response to the Syria crisis (started in 2017)			
	Evaluation of the UNFPA capacity to respond to humanitarian crisis			
	System-wide inter-agency humanitarian evaluation (I)		System-wide inter-agency humanitarian evaluation (II)	
Organizational effectiveness and efficiency	Evaluation of results-based management approaches		Evaluation of the architecture of the strategic plan	
			Evaluation of the UNFPA contribution to United Nations coherence	
Synthesis/Meta-analysis		Synthesis study -- learning from UNFPA country programme evaluations		Synthesis study -- learning from UNFPA country programme evaluations

V. Decentralized programme-level evaluations

26. Costed evaluation plans, developed by country offices and regional offices and approved by the Board, were reviewed and planned country and regional programme-level evaluations were included in the quadrennial evaluation plan.

27. Overall, 81 country programme evaluations have been planned across all six UNFPA regions, with an average of roughly 20 country programme evaluations per year across the regions (see Table 2 and Annex 2). At regional level, 19 regional programme-level evaluations are planned (see Table 3).

Table 2. Number of proposed country programme evaluations by region, 2018-2021

Country Programme Evaluations by Region	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Asia and the Pacific	1	3	5	5	14
Arab States	2	2	4	4	12
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	1	12	1	3	17
East and Southern Africa	2	4	4	1	11
Latin America and the Caribbean	6	1	4	1	12
West and Central Africa	2	4	5	4	15
Total by year	14	26	23	18	81

Table 3. Number of proposed regional programme evaluations by region, 2018-2021

Regional Programme Evaluations	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
Arab States	0	1	2	0	3
Asia and the Pacific	1	1	2	1	5
East and Southern Africa	0	0	1	0	1
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	0	0	1	0	1
Latin America and the Caribbean	1	1	1	0	3
West and Central Africa	1	3	2	0	6
Total by year	3	6	9	1	19

VI. Resources for evaluation

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

A. Human resources

29. Since 2013, monitoring and evaluation has grown in importance at UNFPA, reflected in the increased number of monitoring and evaluation officers in country offices. In 2016, the ratio of monitoring and evaluation staff to overall UNFPA staff increased slightly, from 2.8 per cent in 2015 to 3.0 per cent in 2016, and half of UNFPA country offices had a dedicated monitoring and evaluation specialist.

30. Staff of the Evaluation Office is responsible not only for the management of corporate evaluations but also for other evaluative activities. In 2018-2021, the Evaluation Office will continue to support decentralized programme-level evaluations in the following ways:

- (a) provision of methodological guidance on how to design and conduct decentralized programme-level evaluations at UNFPA;
- (b) training on decentralized country and regional programme evaluation methodology and coordination of professional development opportunities to develop the evaluation capacity of UNFPA country offices and of national counterparts;
- (c) management of the quality assessment system of both corporate and decentralized programme-level evaluations;
- (d) in coordination with regional offices, contribute to the quality assurance of decentralized programme-level evaluations through prequalification of evaluation teams and approval of the Terms of Reference;
- (e) dissemination of evaluation knowledge, through the UNFPA knowledge-management platforms, networks and communities of practice.

B. Financial resources

31. The revised UNFPA evaluation policy sets an overall target of 3 per cent of total programme expenditure (regular and other resources) as the recommended level of investment in evaluation (DP/FPA/2013/5 paragraph 32).

32. Despite a resourcing environment marked by continued volatility in 2016, UNFPA management increased the budget of the Evaluation Office to \$3.71 million, from \$2.63 million in 2015. Of this amount, 64.1 per cent came from the institutional budget, while 30.7 per cent of funding was provided by other resources and 5.2 per cent came from regular resources.

33. In 2016, the budget allocated to the evaluation function overall was slightly above \$6.95 million (including staffing costs at the decentralized level), representing a significant increase of 26.1 per cent from 2015. However, at a share of 0.75 per cent of UNFPA total programme expenditure, the investment in evaluation remains far below the target of 3 per cent.

VII. Expected budgets

34. Budgets are presented for corporate and decentralized programme-level evaluations, together with costs for the Evaluation Office. It is important to notice that, in the case of decentralized programme-level evaluations, estimated budgets are indicative and subject to availability. Budgets for corporate evaluations are formalized as part of the 2018-2021 Integrated Budget.

35. The budget presented herewith is intended to be flexible to allow meeting ad hoc additional demands that may arise in the course of the implementation of the plan and for participation in joint evaluations and United Nations system-wide evaluations.

36. The overview of the budget for corporate evaluations is provided in Table 4 below. The total cost for corporate evaluations is 6.05 million, of which 3.72 million is from the Institutional Budget and 2.33 million from other resources. Further details are included in Annex 1.

Table 4. Corporate evaluations – cost overview, 2018-2021

	Institutional budget	Other resources	Total
	<i>(in millions of \$)</i>		
Thematic, programme and institutional evaluations			
Outcome 1	0.25	1.11	1.36
Outcome 2		0.26	0.25
Outcome 3	0.67	0.72	1.40
Outcome 4	0.57		0.56
Humanitarian	0.65	0.24	0.90
Organizational effectiveness and efficiency (OEE)	1.40		1.40
Subtotal	3.54	2.33	5.87
Other evaluations			
System-wide Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (I and II)	0.10		0.10
Subtotal	0.10		0.10
Other studies			
Synthesis study - learning from UNFPA country programme evaluation (2016-2017)	0.04		0.04
Synthesis study - learning from UNFPA country programme evaluation (2018-2019)	0.04		0.04
Subtotal	0.08		0.08
Total cost for corporate evaluations	3.72	2.33	6.05

37. The overview of estimated costs for decentralized programme-level evaluations is provided in Table 5 below, with further details included in Annex 2. The total amount to be invested in country and regional programme evaluations is estimated at 7.43 million over the quadrennial plan period.

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

Table 5. Decentralized programme-level evaluations – overview of estimated budget, 2018-2021

Country Programme Evaluations by Region	Estimated budget (in millions of \$)
Asia and the Pacific	1.15
Arab States	0.80
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	0.95
East and Southern Africa	1.18
Latin America and the Caribbean	0.70
West and Central Africa	1.26
Total Country Programme Evaluations	6.04
Total Regional Programme Evaluations	1.39
Total estimated costs	7.43

39. The estimated overall cost of the evaluation function at UNFPA for 2018-2021 is 22.50 million, including costs for the Evaluation Office and corporate evaluations (12.74 million as per the Integrated Budget 2018-2021 plus 2.33 million in other resources) and estimated costs for decentralized evaluations (7.43 million).

**Table 6. Overview of estimated budgeted cost of the evaluation function, 2018-2021
(in millions of \$)**

Evaluation Office costs* and corporate evaluations funded by integrated budget	12.74
Corporate evaluations funded by other resources	2.33
Decentralized programme-level evaluations - estimated costs	7.43
Estimated budget of the evaluation function (2018-2021)	22.50
*Evaluation Office costs include: (a) posts, (b) consultants, (c) furniture and equipment, and (d) operating expenses.	

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

VIII. Risks

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

- (a) Financial and human resource constraints: the implementation of the proposed quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2018-2021 may be adversely affected if funds are

unavailable or curtailed, or if there are unforeseen staff movements. Close monitoring of financial and human resource planning will help to mitigate these risks;

(b) The strategic plan is superseded: due to the continuing austerity and volatility in the resourcing environment, the UNFPA strategic plan, 2018-2021 may need to be revised in the course of its implementation. The rolling approach to evaluation planning will allow relevant adjustments in the evaluation plan to address any significant changes in UNFPA strategic direction.

IX. Reporting

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

43. The Evaluation Office will incorporate the lessons learned from implementing this plan, including the level of resources in relation to expected results, into the midterm review of the current plan – if needed – and in preparation of the next quadrennial evaluation plan, 2022-2025 for consideration by the Executive Board in 2021.
