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UNFPA – Internal audit and investigation**United Nations Population Fund****Multi-year costed evaluation plan, 2024-2027***Summary*

The multi-year costed evaluation plan for 2024-2027 has been prepared in line with the evaluation policy of UNFPA (DP/FPA/2024/1) and following relevant Executive Board decisions as well as General Assembly resolution 75/233 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 centralized and decentralized programme evaluations for UNFPA, together with information on costs, key risks and reporting arrangements.

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to:

- (a) *welcome* the relevance and utility of the multi-year costed evaluation plan for 2024-2027;
- (b) *acknowledge* the transparent and participatory process undertaken in developing the multi-year costed evaluation plan for 2024-2027; and
- (c) *approve* the multi-year costed evaluation plan for 2024-2027.

Contents

I.	Background and purpose of the multi-year costed evaluation plan, 2024-2027	3
II.	Intentionality and use of evaluations	3
III.	Strategic approach to the planning of evaluations.....	4
A.	Overarching principles and norms of evaluation	4
B.	Selection criteria of evaluations included in the plan.	4
C.	Consultative process followed to develop the plan.....	5
D.	Responsiveness to evolving needs.....	5
IV.	Centralized evaluations	6
V.	Decentralized programme-level evaluations	7
VI.	Expected resources for evaluation.....	8
A.	Human resources	8
B.	Financial resources	9
VII.	Risks	10
VIII.	Reporting	11

I. Background and purpose of the multi-year costed evaluation plan, 2024-2027

1. The multi-year costed evaluation plan, 2024-2027 is prepared in line with the UNFPA Evaluation Policy, the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, as well as General Assembly resolution 75/233 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR), and General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system, and the funding compact.

2. The purpose of the multi-year costed evaluation plan is to provide a coherent framework to guide the commissioning, management and use of evaluations at UNFPA. The plan provides a basis for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of planned centralized evaluations, as well as decentralized programme evaluations. Centralized evaluations included in the plan will be presented to the Executive Board or relevant stakeholders, in compliance with the Evaluation Policy.

3. 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 continued relevance to the organization and towards the achievement of its three transformative results. To facilitate a balanced approach between the strategic coverage and the utility of evaluation, the plan covers four years. Firm proposals for evaluations are presented for 2024-2025, while indicative proposals for evaluations are presented for 2026-2027, to be validated in 2025.

Scope and coverage of the multi-costed evaluation plan, 2024-2027

4. The plan covers two categories of evaluations and other evaluative exercises, as defined in the evaluation policy:

- (a) *Centralized evaluations*, commissioned by the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO);
- (b) *Decentralized evaluations*, commissioned by country offices and regional offices, as well as headquarters business units.

5. UNFPA is fully committed to supporting system-wide evaluation mechanisms as well as inter-agency and joint evaluations with other United Nations organizations, both at centralized and decentralized levels. As such, this plan also includes these typologies of evaluations.

II. Intentionality and use of evaluations

6. Evaluation results 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 (ICPD) and other internationally agreed development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

7. 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, 2022-2025, the design of the next UNFPA strategic plan for 2026-2029, as well as the development of country and regional programme documents.

8. The use of evaluation results is a critical element of the evaluation process and a shared responsibility between management and the Independent Evaluation Office. To facilitate use, an evaluation must be relevant, timely, targeted, and efficiently communicated. The Independent Evaluation Office purposefully conducts evaluations in a participatory and consultative manner with established reference groups to enhance the use of evaluation results from the onset of each exercise while ensuring its independence, objectivity and credibility. Additionally, formal management responses to all completed evaluations are requested and knowledge products that are generated by evaluations are shared and disseminated through various knowledge-management platforms.

III. Strategic approach to the planning of evaluations

A. Overarching principles and norms of evaluation

9. 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 a culture for evaluations, and from the United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards and code of conduct for evaluations.

10. The development of the multi-year costed evaluation plan is guided by all principles and norms as outlined by the Evaluation Policy; it is particularly grounded in the following:

(a) *Universally shared values* of equity, justice, gender equality and respect for diversity underpin all evaluations. Further, evaluations take into consideration factors and characteristics often associated with discrimination and exclusion, including gender, age, culture, ethnicity, race, language, religion, disability, location, migration status, socio-economic status and health status. Evaluations also examine the intersections and intersectionality across factors affecting a person's development;

(b) *Stakeholder engagement and capacity development*. The commitment to national capacity development in evaluation is realized through partnerships that promote local ownership and values local knowledge, including of young people. Local ownership helps to meet strategic plan principles of equity, leaving no one behind, non-discrimination, and gender equality. Evaluations adopt inclusive approaches, including meaningful engagement of young people, people with disabilities, and indigenous and marginalized communities, and integrate social and environmental dimensions.

B. Selection criteria of evaluations included in the plan.

11. The following selection criteria, in the order of priority set in the Evaluation Policy, were used to guide the selection of centralized and decentralized evaluations:

Table 1

Criteria	Key Questions
Clarity of intended use for strategic decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Will the evaluation cover issues of strategic significance that contribute to the achievement of the strategic plan or regional/country programme? ▪ Is the subject of the evaluation a priority? ▪ Has the external/internal environment changed significantly? ▪ Is the subject related to a humanitarian response or a protracted crisis?
Risk associated with the subject, including periodicity of efforts to avoid extended periods without evaluative attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are there humanitarian, 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?
Potential for system-wide, inter-agency or joint evaluation or strategic contribution/synergy with United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework evaluation to avoid duplication and promote coordination? ▪ Do complementarities with sister United Nations agencies and partners' evaluation plans exist?
Significant investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is the subject a significant investment in relation to the portfolio of activities of UNFPA? Is it being requested by a donor?
Feasibility for implementing the evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is the evaluability of the intervention sufficient to conduct an in-depth assessment that can provide sound findings, recommendations and lessons learned? ▪ Does the commissioning office have the resources available to conduct or manage a high-quality evaluation within the period indicated?
Knowledge gap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Will the evaluation help to fill a vital knowledge gap in relation to UNFPA thematic focus or organizational effectiveness?
Formal commitments to stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are stakeholders requesting the evaluation (for example, through donor requirements in co-financing arrangements or through partner countries requesting the evaluation to inform national programmes)?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can the request for the evaluation be satisfied through an evaluation that is already planned or a clustered evaluation? *
Innovation with potential for replication and scaling-up.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Would an evaluation provide the evidence necessary to identify the factors required for the success of an innovative intervention and determine the feasibility of its replication or scaling-up? Is the intervention a pilot and/or an innovative initiative?

* A clustered evaluation consists of a group of programme or project evaluations combined into one single evaluation. Clustered programmes or projects should share one or more of the following characteristics: thematic area, geographic area of intervention, resource partner, type of crisis, among others. Besides potential efficiency gains, clustered evaluations allow for the analysis of the commonalities and differences of similar projects or programmes, which can help identify critical success factors and potential risks associated with future and ongoing interventions.

C. Consultative process followed to develop the plan.

12. The Independent Evaluation Office followed two key steps to identify (a) strategic evaluation priorities concerning the UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025; and (b) knowledge gaps where centralized evaluations would add value:

(a) Building on the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan (2022-2025), an evidence-gap analysis was conducted by the Independent Evaluation Office, assessing the coverage of centralized evaluations managed during 2018-2023 against the corresponding strategic plans. In conformity with the increasing scale and the corresponding growth of the UNFPA portfolio on humanitarian response, the analysis also illustrated increasing need for evaluative evidence of humanitarian responses;

(b) Consultations presenting the draft multi-year costed evaluation plan were held with the UNFPA Executive Committee and senior management at headquarters and regional levels, the Oversight Advisory Committee, and with the Executive Board. Consultations were also undertaken with other United Nations organizations, to identify possible joint, inter-agency and system-wide evaluations.

D. Responsiveness to evolving needs

13. UNFPA operates in a dynamic and shifting development landscape. In particular, the Sustainable Development Goals, the QCPR, the United Nations reform agenda, new types of development partnerships and, within UNFPA, the current strategic plan, 2022-2025, demand changes in the way the organization operates. In addition, the unprecedented challenges created by COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences have made evaluative evidence more important than ever for an informed recovery from the pandemic and moving beyond it. Within this context, timely, relevant and good quality evaluations will be important for evidence-based decision-making and lesson learning. At the same time, the maturation of the evaluation function and gradual strengthening of evaluation systems and capacities, as verified by the 2023 independent peer review of the UNFPA evaluation function, permit 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:

(a) *United Nations coherence in evaluation.* As part of their commitment to the United Nations development system reform, the United Nations system organizations are seeking to jointly evaluate their combined efforts, particularly in the context of joint programmes or system-wide goals. UNFPA is committed to continue to strategically engage in joint, inter-agency or system-wide evaluation initiatives. This may entail managing or conducting joint and inter-agency evaluations and syntheses or participating in system-wide evaluation initiatives, engaging in reference groups or other cooperative engagements. Under this plan, 15 centralized evaluations have been identified as United Nations system-wide or inter-agency evaluations, and three as joint evaluations;

(b) *Humanitarian evaluations.* The proliferation of increasingly severe and complex humanitarian crises coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic 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 responses and other interventions within humanitarian contexts. For this reason, a two-pronged strategy will be applied. On the one hand, an enhanced focus on UNFPA performance in humanitarian settings will be pursued. On the other, all centralized evaluations will specifically analyse the development-humanitarian-peace

continuum. In addition, the Independent Evaluation Office will deepen its engagement in existing partnerships for humanitarian evaluations such as (a) United Nations inter-agency evaluations of emergency responses managed by the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Steering Group; (b) the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP); (c) United Nations system-wide evaluation unit; and (d) the Global COVID-19 Evaluation Coalition;

(c) *Use of existing evaluative evidence through meta-synthesis.* It is important for UNFPA to fully understand and utilize learning from both centralized and decentralized evaluations, particularly concerning systemic and cross-cutting issues. The Independent Evaluation Office will, therefore, conduct meta-synthesis to capture and share learning on cross-cutting issues, including in partnership with other United Nations agencies;

(d) *Use of innovation to enhance evaluation.* Given the evolving external and internal needs for evaluative evidence, as well as methodological challenges brought about by these changes, the Independent Evaluation Office will continue to diversify and adapt its evaluation methodologies and approaches to address the rapidly evolving contexts, which includes exploring the use of new technologies, such as responsible and ethical artificial intelligence or other digital technologies, to improve evaluation. This will lead to more diversified, innovative, responsive and relevant evaluations at country, regional and global levels that respond to the accountability and learning needs of UNFPA.

IV. Centralized evaluations

14. The list of centralized evaluations presented in table 1 below ensures comprehensive coverage of the UNFPA strategic plan. The proposed evaluations cover key components of the strategic plan, including the three outcomes, as well as the foundational pathways, outputs, accelerators, organizational effectiveness and efficiency (OEE), and humanitarian and other cross cutting issues, to ensure a comprehensive assessment of the progress made towards achieving the three transformative results.

15. Over the four years covered in this plan, the Independent Evaluation Office anticipates managing 39 centralized evaluations and evaluative exercises – out of which 15 will be United Nations system-wide or inter-agency evaluations and other evaluative exercises;¹ and three will be joint evaluations with other United Nations entities. In total, 46 per cent of the proposed evaluations over the next four years will either be joint, inter-agency or system-wide exercises.

16. Table 1 presents, in summary, the broad topics proposed for centralized evaluations by key components of the UNFPA strategic plan, and the sequencing of evaluations over the four years covered by the plan.

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

Table 1. Proposed centralized evaluations, 2024-2027

Strategic Plan	2024	2025	2026	2027
Three outcomes	Systemwide evaluation of SDG 3 – Global Action Plan	Evaluation of the global out-of-school CSE programme	Evaluation of the Maternal Health Thematic Fund (MHTF – Phase 4, 2024-2027)	Evaluation of Maternal and Newborn Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2023-2030) *
				Evaluation of UNFPA support to gender equality and women’s empowerment
		Midterm evaluation of the UNFPA Supplies Partnership programme (2022-2030)		Endline evaluation of the UNFPA Supplies Partnership programme (2022-2030) *
				Joint evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage (Phase III – midterm review)
				Evaluation of the UNFPA Strategy for Family Planning (2022-2030) *
	System-wide evaluation UNAIDS (TBD)	System-wide evaluation UNAIDS (TBD)	System-wide evaluation UNAIDS (TBD)	System-wide evaluation UNAIDS (TBD)
	Joint evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme to Eliminate FGM			Joint final evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme to Eliminate FGM *
Six outputs and six accelerators		Formative evaluation of UNFPA support to ‘leaving no one behind’		Evaluation of innovation at UNFPA
		Evaluation of UNFPA support to 2020 round of population and housing census data		
Humanitarian** β		Evaluation of UNFPA capacities in humanitarian action		Thematic humanitarian evaluation (TBD)
	Crisis-specific humanitarian evaluation (TBD)	Crisis-specific humanitarian evaluation (TBD)	Crisis-specific humanitarian evaluation (TBD)	Crisis-specific humanitarian evaluation (TBD)
		Systemwide Humanitarian Evaluation - Thematic (TBD)		Systemwide Humanitarian Evaluation - Thematic (TBD)
OEE and crosscutting	Formative evaluation of UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025		Evaluation of UNFPA policy support	Evaluation of the UNFPA strategic plans for 2018-2026 (summative)
Synthesis/ Meta-analysis	Global Coalition evaluation synthesis (Partnership, Peace, People, Planet Pillars)		System-wide meta-synthesis (TBD)	System-wide meta-synthesis (TBD)
	Systemwide meta-synthesis United Nations Youth Strategy (part 3)	Meta-synthesis of UNFPA evaluations on OEE/3 transformative results	Systemwide meta-synthesis United Nations Youth Strategy (part 4)	Meta-synthesis of UNFPA evaluations on OEE/3 transformative results

* To be finalized in 2028

** Humanitarian aspects are mainstreamed in all centralized evaluations included in this plan.

β A clustered evaluation consists of a group of programme or project evaluations combined into one single evaluation. Clustered programmes or projects should share one or more of the following characteristics: thematic area, geographic area of intervention, resource partner, type of crisis, among others.

V. Decentralized programme-level evaluations

17. Programme evaluations included in costed evaluation plans, developed by country offices and regional offices and presented to the Executive Board as annex to the country programme documents, were included in the multi-year costed evaluation plan.

18. Overall, 66 country programme evaluations (see table 2) and 6 regional programme evaluations have been planned across all six UNFPA regions (see table 3). Further, UNFPA will engage in 100 per cent of UNSDCF evaluations.

Table 2. Number of country programme evaluations by region, 2024-2027

Country programme evaluations	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
Asia and the Pacific	5	4	5	-	14
Arab States	5	1	3	-	9
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	4	1	2	-	7
East and Southern Africa	5	6	4	1	16
Latin America and the Caribbean	2	6	4	2	14
West and Central Africa	-	1	5	-	6
Total	21	19	23	3	66

Table 3. Number of regional programme evaluations by region, 2024-2027

Regional programme evaluations	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
Asia and the Pacific	1	0	0	0	1
Arab States	1	0	0	0	1
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	1	0	0	0	1
East and Southern Africa	1	0	0	0	1
Latin America and the Caribbean	1	0	0	0	1
West and Central Africa	1	0	0	0	1
Total	6	0	0	0	6

VI. Expected resources for evaluation

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

A. Human resources

20. The staff of the Independent Evaluation Office is responsible not only for the management of centralized evaluations but also for other evaluative activities, including evaluation capacity development. During 2024-2027, the Independent Evaluation Office will continue to support decentralized evaluations in the following ways:

- (a) Provision of methodological guidance on how to design and conduct decentralized evaluations;
- (b) Training on the decentralized country and regional programme evaluation methodology and coordination of professional development opportunities to develop the evaluation capacity of UNFPA country offices and national counterparts;
- (c) Management of the quality assessment system of decentralized evaluations;
- (d) Dissemination of evaluation knowledge, through the UNFPA knowledge-management platforms, networks and communities of practice.

21. At the decentralized level, there has been a progressive increase in the number of monitoring and evaluation officers/focal points across country offices over the last five years. As of 2023, all country offices were staffed with either a monitoring and evaluation officer/specialist or a monitoring and evaluation focal point.

B. Financial resources

22. Estimated costs to implement the multi-year costed evaluation plan are presented for centralized and decentralized programme evaluations, together with costs for the Independent Evaluation Office. The actual budget allocation will be reviewed and confirmed at the preparation of the relevant integrated budget to be presented for approval by the Executive Board. However, the figures presented do not represent the totality of the estimated costs of the evaluation function – as was the case in the previous quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan (2022-2025) – since the evaluation function also includes the cost of other types of decentralized evaluations, the evaluation quality assurance and assessment system, and initiatives for internal and national evaluation capacity development. It is important to note that, in the case of decentralized country programme evaluations, estimated costs are indicative but ringfenced as part of the overall regular resources for country programmes. Budgets for centralized evaluations and the Independent Evaluation Office are formalized within the UNFPA Integrated Budget.

23. The overview of the costs for centralized evaluations is provided in table 4 below. The total estimated cost for centralized evaluations is \$9.70 million, of which \$7.49 million is from the institutional budget and \$2.21 million from other resources.

Table 4. Centralized evaluations – estimated cost overview, 2024-2027

	Institutional budget	Other resources	Total
	<i>(in \$)</i>		
Thematic, programme and institutional evaluations			
Outcome level	1,238,839	2,206,296	3,445,135
Outputs and accelerators	3,764,308	0	3,764,308
Organizational effectiveness and efficiency (OEE)	1,290,213	0	1,290,213
Subtotal			
Other evaluative exercises			
System-wide meta-synthesis study	1,200,000	0	1,200,000
Subtotal			
Total cost for centralized evaluations	7,493,360	2,206,296	9,699,656

24. The overview of estimated costs for decentralized programme evaluations is provided in table 5 below. The total amount to be invested in country and regional programme evaluations is estimated at \$5.07 million over the multi-year costed evaluation plan period.

25. The cost of decentralized programme 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 resources of the programme.

Table 5. Decentralized programme evaluations – estimated costs overview, 2024-2027

Country programme evaluations, by region	Estimated budget (in \$)
Asia and the Pacific	1,101,156
Arab States	740,000
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	380,000
East and Southern Africa	1,187,000
Latin America and the Caribbean	650,000
West and Central Africa	560,000
Total country programme evaluations	4,618,156
Total regional programme evaluations	450,000
Total estimated costs	5,068,156

26. The estimated overall cost for the implementation of the multi-year costed evaluation plan, 2024-2027, is \$29.42 million, including costs for the Independent Evaluation Office and centralized evaluations (\$22.14 million estimated to be covered by the Integrated Budget, plus \$2.21 million by other resources) and estimated costs for decentralized programme evaluations (\$5.07 million).

Table 6. Overview of the estimated costs for the implementation of the multi-year costed evaluation plan, 2024-2027

Typology of costs	Estimated budget (in millions of \$)
Independent Evaluation Office costs* and centralized evaluations funded by the Integrated Budget	22.14
Centralized evaluations funded by other resources	2.21
Decentralized programme evaluations – estimated costs	5.07
Total estimated costs for the implementation of the multi-year costed evaluation plan, 2024-2027	29.42

*Independent Evaluation Office costs include: (a) posts, (b) consultants, (c) furniture and equipment, and (d) operating expenses.

VII. Risks

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

(a) *Contextual factors*. These may require a reprioritization of evaluation themes, to ensure continued relevance and usefulness of planned evaluations. Travel restrictions owing to humanitarian or emergency contexts or other inhibiting factors may also affect the ability of evaluation teams to conduct

field missions and consult key informants. Such constraints and limitations will be addressed through a flexible adaptation of the evaluation scope as well as of data collection methods and tools;

(b) *Financial and human resource constraints.* These may adversely affect the implementation of the proposed multi-year costed evaluation plan, 2024-2027, if funds are unavailable or curtailed or if there are significant staff movements. Close monitoring of financial and human resource planning will help to mitigate these risks;

(c) *Adjustments to the UNFPA strategic plan.* These might happen during the implementation of the strategic plan due to changes emanating from the midterm review of the plan, for example, or the resourcing environment. The rolling approach to evaluation planning will allow relevant adjustments in the evaluation plan to address any significant changes in UNFPA strategic direction.

VIII. Reporting

28. Progress in the implementation of the multi-year costed evaluation plan will be reported within the annual report on the evaluation function presented to the Executive Board each year.

29. The Independent Evaluation Office will incorporate the lessons learned from implementing this plan, including the level of resources concerning expected results, into the midterm review of the current plan – if needed – and in preparation for the next multi-year costed evaluation plan, for 2026-2029.
