

Guidance on humanitarian evaluations

Compendium to the Evaluation Handbook



2024



This compendium is intended for UNFPA headquarters, regional and country office staff for planning, managing and participating in evaluations of UNFPA humanitarian action. It should be read alongside the [Evaluation Handbook](#).

The compendium is being piloted in several evaluations. Given that the learning process is ongoing, it should be considered as a living document, subject to further revisions and updates.

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Introduction

The purpose of this compendium is to complement the UNFPA [Evaluation Handbook 2024](#) and provide additional information for evaluations with a humanitarian component.

In line with the above, readers should familiarize themselves with the [country programme evaluation roadmap](#) and its milestones, presented in the introduction section of the Evaluation Handbook.

In addition to the Evaluation Handbook, the compendium should be read and used in conjunction with the following resources:



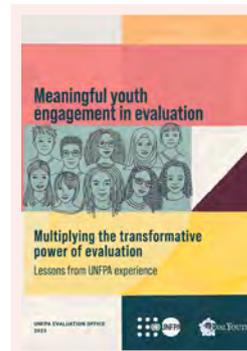
[Country Programme Evaluation Management Kit](#)



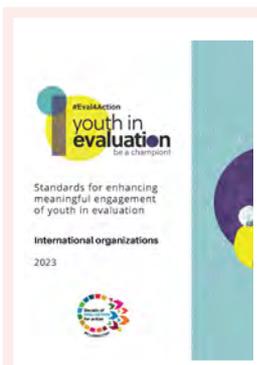
[Guidance on integrating the principles of leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind in UNFPA evaluations](#)



[Guidance on disability inclusion in UNFPA evaluations](#)



[Meaningful engagement of youth in evaluation. Multiplying the transformative power of evaluation: Lessons from UNFPA experience](#)



[Standards for enhancing meaningful engagement of youth in evaluation](#)

Phase 1: Preparation

While all types of evaluations have their fair share of challenges, evaluations of humanitarian action have some unique challenges vis-à-vis risk management, security and protection of vulnerable populations. As a result, adequate time spent during the preparation phase will help save time during other stages of the evaluation process, an important consideration during emergencies.

Getting ready

In addition to the UNFPA Evaluation Handbook and this compendium, the evaluation manager and the evaluation team should familiarize themselves with existing guidance on evaluating humanitarian action available at the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance ([ALNAP](#)) website.

Budget

In addition to securing and preparing the evaluation budget, the evaluation manager should discuss with the relevant headquarters, regional and country office staff what might be the possible expenses that are applicable to the specific context and must be included in the evaluation budget. These expenses may differ, depending on the type of humanitarian crisis. For example, the use of armoured vehicles may be a requirement for security purposes, or the evaluation team may be obliged to use the [United Nations Humanitarian Air Service](#) in certain countries, if travel by road is impracticable, following a natural disaster.

Evaluation reference group

As in all types of evaluations, the evaluation reference group of a humanitarian evaluation should include a wide range of stakeholders such as representatives from the government, other humanitarian and development actors, implementing partners, donors and United Nations agencies. Membership will change according to each unique context. The evaluation manager should pay particular attention to include actors from the existing humanitarian coordination mechanisms.¹

The table on the next page presents an example of an evaluation reference group that includes humanitarian actors.

¹ For example, humanitarian clusters or sectors leads and members.

Composition of evaluation reference group in humanitarian evaluation (example)

- Evaluation manager (chair or co-chair)
- UNFPA staff (e.g. thematic leads)
- Representatives of the government (these may include representatives of de-facto authorities to ensure impartiality of the evaluation process, as appropriate)
- Representatives from United Nations agencies
- Lead for gender-based violence area of responsibility²
- Representatives of implementing partners
- Representatives of humanitarian non-governmental organizations
- Members of selected clusters or sectors with whom UNFPA works closely

The evaluation questions workshop

Given the occurrence of logistics and security constraints during emergencies, the evaluation team should consider the feasibility of holding the evaluation questions workshop online, in agreement with the evaluation manager.³

Drafting the terms of reference

In humanitarian evaluations, the evaluation manager and the evaluation team should remember that UNFPA personnel and country stakeholders are already fully occupied with the emergency response. Their availability to review lengthy terms of reference documents may be limited. The evaluation manager and the evaluation team should also clarify what is the expected engagement of these stakeholders throughout the evaluation process. This should ideally be done when drafting the terms of reference.

At the terms of reference drafting stage, the evaluation manager should consider the possibility of conducting an evaluability assessment, if he or she finds it useful to assess the feasibility and determine the requirements of the evaluation (data availability, information needs, scope and tentative timeline).

Scope

The scope of humanitarian evaluations is not fixed and will be defined on a case-by-case basis. Nevertheless, the purpose of humanitarian evaluations is to meet accountability requirements and generate learning on the performance of UNFPA in delivering assistance in the complex contexts where it operates.

² The gender-based violence area of responsibility (GBV AoR) lead could be the chair or co-chair of the cluster or working group, the GBV coordinator, the field coordinator, or others.

³ Remote or online meetings should be considered for other phases of the evaluation, in consultation with the UNFPA evaluation manager.



Generally, the following guidance also applies:

Temporal scope: The humanitarian evaluation may have the following temporal scopes:

- **At the beginning or mid-term of an emergency response:** the evaluation is used to assess the performance of UNFPA in delivering humanitarian assistance in the acute or post-acute phases of the emergency
- **Towards the end of the response:** the evaluation is used to assess the performance of UNFPA in responding to a humanitarian crisis in the early recovery or reconstruction phase, or in the case of a protracted humanitarian crisis, after a certain number of years.

The temporal scope of the evaluation is determined by several factors, such as the duration of the emergency response, the completion of a country programme evaluation in the last country programme document cycle, or the country context (i.e. the stage of transition from humanitarian assistance to long-term development programming).

Geographic scope: The geographic scope will be determined based on the characteristics of the humanitarian crisis. For example, the evaluation may focus on a specific country or region. The geographic scope may include emergency-type interventions only, at national or subnational levels.⁴

Thematic scope: The thematic scope is not predetermined and will be discussed based on the type of evaluation. Humanitarian evaluations may have a specific sectoral focus or aim to assess the performance of UNFPA in all sectors where it plays a leading role.

Examples of humanitarian evaluations	
Thematic evaluations	Crisis-specific evaluations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of the UNFPA capacity in humanitarian action • Evaluation of the global coverage of humanitarian responses • Evaluation of UNFPA engagement in humanitarian-development cooperation • Evaluation of UNFPA humanitarian systems and processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of a specific country programme implemented in humanitarian contexts or protracted crises • Evaluation of humanitarian and life-saving interventions in a specific regional or country emergency • Evaluation of regional and cross-border humanitarian responses

4 This could be the case of evaluations of humanitarian action in refugee settings.

Consultants' recruitment

In addition to prior experience conducting evaluations, the evaluation team for humanitarian evaluations should also have prior experience in humanitarian settings, demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the humanitarian architecture and, where necessary, show a strong understanding of how to navigate insecure and volatile environments. Recruiting an evaluation team can take time and should be initiated several months in advance, as good consultants working in humanitarian settings are often limited in number and may have prior commitments.

Document repository

Together with the documents that are gathered internally, for humanitarian evaluations the evaluation team will require access to additional documentation, which includes non-UNFPA resources. An example is presented below.

Example of additional document repository in humanitarian evaluation

- Humanitarian response plans or refugee response plans
- Humanitarian cluster or sector updates (bulletins, meetings minutes, the "4Ws" ("who does what, when and where") etc.)
- Funding appeals, including updates
- Humanitarian needs overview
- Situation updates (by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and other United Nations agencies)
- Maps and infographics, such as rapid displacement tracking updates

Stakeholders map

Humanitarian settings often see a plethora of actors involved, especially in well-funded responses. The evaluation manager should ensure that the mapping includes an overview of the actors with whom UNFPA engages.

These should be partners and stakeholders across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, such as government, non-governmental and civil society organization partners, women- and youth-led organizations, donor partners, United Nations agencies, academia and rights-holders. Depending on the context, the stakeholder map may also include actors with whom UNFPA may not traditionally engage.

Stakeholders for mapping in humanitarian evaluations (example)

- Government and other representatives (including of different parties in case of conflict)
- United Nations agencies
- Donors responding to humanitarian crises
- Cluster, area of responsibility and sector leads and members
- UNFPA implementing partners, civil society organizations, key grassroots organizations
- Humanitarian non-governmental organizations, youth groups, women-led organizations
- Peacekeeping missions (representatives and field coordinators)



Preparation phase checklist

- Ensure adequate time is allocated for the preparation phase
- Consider risk management, security and protection of vulnerable populations
- Think about strategies to reduce time in the evaluation timeline and potential risks of delays
- Assess potential constraints presented by the context (logistics, security, financial etc.)
- Start early to establish the evaluation reference group and inform the members well-ahead of time so they can dedicate resources
- Keep the number of evaluation questions limited to 8-10 maximum
- Evaluate opportunities for conducting meetings and events online (e.g. the evaluation launch, the evaluation questions workshop)
- Recruit an evaluation team with prior experience in humanitarian settings
- Create a document repository that includes both humanitarian and development interventions
- Create a comprehensive stakeholder mapping, with actors from both humanitarian and development sectors.

Phase 2: Design

Compared to other types of evaluations, in emergency situations it may be challenging to follow the planned evaluation process and timeline due to travel restrictions and access constraints. Time is also a key constraint that needs to be considered. Therefore, in the design phase, the evaluation team in collaboration with the evaluation manager should consider proposing that some evaluation stages may be shortened, conducted remotely, run in parallel or combined with the field phase.

Desk review

The evaluation team should take advantage of the desk review during the design phase to reflect on the potential challenges and risks (and related mitigation actions) that may present when conducting evaluations in complex environments such as those affected by fragility, natural disasters, conflict and violence (an example is presented below).

The evaluation team should use the information gathered during the desk review to reflect on how these challenges and risks impact the evaluation design, the feasibility of the evaluation questions and the methods.

Challenges of evaluating in uncertain environments		
Fluidity and unpredictability	Systemic issues	Learning and accessing the invisible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak theoretical foundations, limited evidence base • Defining how change happens – adapting to the change • Fluid or unstable governance structures • Shifting agendas (often politically driven) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power and relationship dynamics • Cultural and religious restrictions • A lack of technical capacity or evaluation know-how or tools • Restricted access in remote areas • Risk of violence • Lack of access to technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitive issues • Unintended consequences • Building trust • What works today may not work tomorrow
<p>Adapted from Hur Hassnain, Lauren Kelly and Simona Somma, eds. 2021. <i>Evaluation in Contexts of Fragility, Conflict and Violence: Guidance from Global Evaluation Practitioners</i>. Exeter, UK: IDEAS.</p>		



Other challenges that the evaluation team should consider in the design phase include:

1. **Constrained access:** Speaking to internally displaced persons, refugees, disaster-affected households and other vulnerable groups may be challenging. The evaluation team may not be able to visit field sites, some work may have to be planned remotely or through third parties.
2. **Data gaps:** Baseline data may not be available or may be outdated. There may be data gaps in the response due to various reasons or circumstances. The evaluation team should consider different sources to fill gaps and triangulate information.
3. **Changing plans:** Plans and targets may change quickly. The evaluation team should be ready to adapt accordingly.
4. **High staff turnover:** High staff turnover and evacuations are common in humanitarian responses. The evaluation team should consider allocating extra time to contact and interview staff who have been relocated or reassigned or have even left UNFPA.
5. **Data protection and ethical considerations:** All collection tools must strive to meet the ethical and analytical challenges raised by 'do no harm' principles and protection risk reduction.
6. **Security risk management:** Many humanitarian evaluations take place in conflict-affected areas and countries. The evaluation manager and team must be aware of the security risks and consider how to balance acceptable risks with the criticality of the evaluation. The United Nations Department for Safety and Security will advise whether the evaluation team might have to take additional security training prior to the field phase.

Evaluation approach

The approach for evaluating humanitarian action must strike a balance between the complexities of operating in emergency responses and UNFPA expectations for both rapid results and high-quality deliverables.

Evaluation methods

Humanitarian evaluations require agility and flexibility. Methods are adapted to the availability of stakeholders during an emergency, they acknowledge the volatility of the context, and they provide close to real-time results that can directly serve to inform the response.

As compared to other types of evaluations, the key factor to consider in conducting humanitarian evaluations is the importance to adapt the methodology to an environment with potentially limited access. As a result, the evaluation team must dedicate adequate time, in the design phase, to reflect

on the different levels of access and inclusion, especially when using information, communication and technology tools, and any impact these may have on the most marginalized members of a community. In other words, humanitarian evaluations should be designed with the aim of strengthening inclusion and meaningful participation and ensuring no one is left behind. Furthermore, given the nature of emergencies, data collection and analysis methods that are considered time and labour intensive (i.e. economic modeling, large-scale surveys, systematic reviews) may be less appropriate.

In case of remote data collection, the evaluation team is encouraged to consult the UNFPA [guidance note](#) for remote data collection tested during COVID-19 and discuss the feasibility of each method with the evaluation manager.

Theory of Change

In complex settings where a transition towards peace or renewed violence is often unpredictable, establishing a theory of change is a major challenge. Perhaps a theory of change is already available as part of the existing country programme document. But given the often fluid and fast-moving contexts in emergencies, some of the assumptions made at the formulation stage of the country programme document will need to be revisited.

The initial intervention logic can quickly become outdated, and the validity of the initial assumptions may need to be reassessed. Furthermore, UNFPA programmes may have been adapted to the changing conditions and other documents, such as the humanitarian response plans, may have become the reference strategic documents for the UNFPA humanitarian action. In response to these challenges, the evaluation team will be invited to reconstruct a theory of change for the humanitarian evaluation, taking into account the country programme document and any other relevant country and regional documents. Further information and guidance on how to formulate or reconstruct a theory of change can be found in the Evaluation Handbook.

Evaluation criteria

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) evaluation criteria are the pre-eminent criteria for evaluating development and humanitarian assistance.⁵ As updated in 2019, the six criteria are **effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, impact, sustainability and coherence**.⁶

In humanitarian action, there is a consensus among United Nations agencies and other actors to use the [ALNAP 2006 Guide on Evaluating Humanitarian Action](#), which interprets the criteria for application as: **effectiveness, appropriateness or relevance, efficiency, impact, coverage, coherence and connectedness**. Additional criteria may be included, and the evaluation team will discuss these with the evaluation manager on a case-by-case basis. The weight of each criterion will be also discussed with the evaluation manager.

5 Kennedy-Chouane, M. (2020). 'Evaluation criteria: What has changed, why, and why does it matter?' [Webinar]. January 16. <https://library.alnap.org/evaluation-criteria-what-has-changed-why-and-why-does-it-matter>.

6 <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/dacriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>.

Set out below is an example of the application of the OECD DAC evaluation criteria in the evaluation of humanitarian action:

Relevance or appropriateness⁷	The extent to which the objectives of the programme correspond to population needs at the country level (in particular, those of vulnerable groups), and have been aligned throughout the programme period with government priorities and with strategies of UNFPA.
Coherence	The extent to which UNFPA interventions in the mandated thematic areas are mutually reinforcing (or not). Coherence includes internal coherence and external coherence (with other actors, such as governments and other United Nations agencies).
Effectiveness	The extent to which programme outputs have been achieved and the extent to which these outputs have contributed to the achievement of the programme outcomes.
Efficiency	The extent to which programme outputs and outcomes have been achieved with the appropriate amount of resources (funds, expertise, time, administrative costs, etc.).
Sustainability	The likelihood of the continuation of benefits from a UNFPA-financed intervention after its termination, linked, in particular, to its continued resilience to risks.
Coordination⁸	The extent to which UNFPA has been an active member of, and contributor to, existing coordination mechanisms, specifically, the United Nations country team. This also includes UNFPA membership of, and contributions to, humanitarian coordination mechanisms of the humanitarian country team, where applicable.
Coverage	The extent to which major population groups facing life-threatening suffering are reached by the humanitarian action.
Connectedness	The extent to which activities of a short-term emergency nature are carried out in a context that takes longer-term and interconnected problems into account.

7 Relevance and appropriateness are often used interchangeably. Appropriateness also refers to cultural appropriateness of interventions, or whether the design was gender-sensitive. More information on defining and measuring appropriateness can be found at <https://jhumanitarianaction.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s41018-019-0062-y>.

8 ALNAP (2006) includes coordination under the effectiveness criterion. Other United Nations agencies have sometimes used this criterion as a stand-alone for evaluating coordination. The evaluation team in discussion with the evaluation manager may propose the feasibility of using this criterion independently or include relevant evaluation questions under another evaluation criterion.



Why use the coverage and connectedness criteria?

Coverage criterion

In disasters, whether man-made or natural, the most vulnerable people are often located in hard-to-reach or the most insecure locations. As a result, coverage and quality of humanitarian assistance is paramount but also more difficult to assess given the limits on agencies and partners to implement and monitor interventions. Coverage helps assess UNFPA interventions in terms of geography and reach, sectoral or thematic focus, in resource allocations and expenditure.

Connectedness criterion

As defined by the ALNAP Guide on Evaluating Humanitarian Action, in complex emergencies where there is limited development activity, or in natural disasters where primary stakeholders are semi-permanently caught in the relief phase, sustainability may be difficult to achieve, which is why the focus in evaluations should be on connections among humanitarian action, recovery and development. Connectedness helps to assess how the UNFPA humanitarian response has considered longer-term development goals articulated in the results framework of the programme.

Evaluation matrix and indicative evaluation questions

Compared to other evaluations, in humanitarian evaluations not all data sources may be available at the design phase or they may not be available at all. As a result, the evaluation team should include additional time and efforts for data collection in the evaluation plan.

Evaluation questions must be situation-specific and must be drafted during the evaluation questions workshop, against each criterion. The number may vary and will be discussed with the evaluation manager. An example of questions to evaluate humanitarian action is presented below:

Relevance

- To what extent is the emergency response adapted to: (i) the needs of diverse populations, including the needs of vulnerable and marginalized groups (e.g. internally displaced persons, households headed by women, pregnant women, people with disabilities, youth and adolescents.); (ii) national development strategies and policies where applicable; (iii) the strategic direction and objectives of UNFPA; (iv) priorities articulated in international frameworks and agreements, in particular the International Conference on Population and Development's Programme of Action, the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the New Way of Working?⁹

9 For more information, please see <https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/20170228%20NWoW%2013%20high%20res.pdf>.

Coherence

- To what extent have the UNFPA interventions implemented under the mandated thematic areas been mutually reinforcing, helping to achieve comprehensive outcomes for the most vulnerable and marginalized groups?
- To what extent have UNFPA interventions been complementary to those of other development and humanitarian actors, thus reducing gaps and avoiding duplications, given the operational context? What have been the drivers and obstacles to strategic and effective internal and external coherence?

Effectiveness

- To what extent have UNFPA interventions delivered outputs and contributed to the achievement of the outcomes of the programme, also taking into consideration adherence to humanitarian principles?

Efficiency

- To what extent has UNFPA made good use of its human, financial and administrative resources, and used a set of appropriate policies, procedures and tools to pursue the achievement of the outcomes defined in the programme?

Coordination

- To what extent has the cluster modality contributed to ensuring timely and cost-effective preparedness and response delivery in the country or region?

Coverage

- To what extent have UNFPA humanitarian interventions systematically reached all geographic areas in which affected populations (women, adolescents and youth) reside? Is the response coverage in line with the criticality of needs and gaps identified by the OCHA-led intersectoral needs analysis?
- To what extent have UNFPA humanitarian interventions systematically reached the most vulnerable and marginalized groups (young people and women with disabilities; those of racial, ethnic, religious and national minorities; etc.)?

Connectedness

- To what extent has the UNFPA humanitarian response considered longer-term development goals articulated in the results framework of the programme?
- To what extent has UNFPA contributed to developing the capacity of local and national actors (government line ministries, youth and women's organizations, health facilities, communities, etc.) to better prepare for, respond to, and recover from, humanitarian crises?

Mainstreaming humanitarian principles

Humanitarian principles provide the foundational normative framework for many international humanitarian agencies, distinguishing humanitarian action from other activities, for example activities undertaken by political and military actors. For United Nations agencies, humanitarian principles are enshrined in the United Nations Charter, and in two resolutions by the General Assembly. Their global recognition and relevance are underscored by the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief and the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability.

Definitions of humanitarian principles			
Humanity	Neutrality	Impartiality	Independence
Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. The purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings	Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature	Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions	Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented
Source: OCHA, 2022.			

The evaluation team in collaboration with the evaluation manager will make suggestions on how to mainstream the integration of these principles in evaluation questions and tools.

Depending on the objective and scope of the evaluation, and the context, all humanitarian principles may be mainstreamed in evaluation questions or only selected ones. An example of how to mainstream humanitarian principles for selected evaluation criteria is presented below:

Effectiveness criterion

- To what extent has UNFPA engagement in complex humanitarian emergencies been guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence and what effect have these had on coverage?
- To what extent was assistance provided in [Country/Region X] according to need and reached the most vulnerable, according to the principles of humanity and impartiality?

Coherence criterion

- What programme approaches and partnership strategies has UNFPA in [Country/Region X] employed at the field level, in accordance with the humanitarian principles, in order to gain access and to improve coverage and quality, and with what success?



Design phase checklist

- Reflect on potential challenges and how these may impact the evaluation design, the feasibility of the evaluation questions and the methods
- Dedicate adequate time to prepare for the field phase
- Consider the possibility of constrained access and how fieldwork may be planned remotely
- Assess data availability and gaps and options to fill gaps and triangulate information
- Assess protection issues and address ethical considerations and inclusion in data collection methods and tools
- Understand security risks and discuss them with the evaluation team
- Ensure a theory of change for UNFPA humanitarian interventions is reconstructed
- Ensure the evaluation criteria related to evaluating humanitarian action are included and that relevant evaluation questions are formulated
- Adapt the methodology to an environment with potentially limited access
- Think about mainstreaming the integration of the humanitarian principles in evaluation questions and tools.

Phase 3: Fieldwork

Humanitarian evaluations may present an additional set of challenges because of the difficulties in accessing hard-to-reach areas. When conducting evaluations in these settings it is important to be conscious of how major constraints (such as security for the evaluation team and the affected populations) affect the strength and validity of data. To mitigate these constraints, the evaluation team should use multiple qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods and adopt a robust triangulation approach. The use of these methods, as mentioned earlier, is subject to ethical considerations, particularly in conflict-affected areas.

During the field phase, the evaluation team should consider the need for some adaptations. These adaptations may include: (i) changing the sample size for interviews; (ii) altering timings; (iii) amending question formulation and focus group composition; and (iv) varying the evaluators' experience and training.

Preparing for the field phase

Logistics

Conducting evaluations in humanitarian settings requires specific knowledge and skills. The volatile contexts and the impact of conflicts and natural disasters pose significant challenges to performing humanitarian assessments.

For example, movements may be restricted, transport may require armoured vehicles, and road trips may be impracticable or dangerous. Therefore, evaluation teams should be prepared to develop multiple scenarios for field missions and show flexibility to change field plans according to access, security, availability of people to interview and other reasons that may arise. The details of the logistics will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and discussed with the evaluation manager.

Security management

It is crucial to properly balance the effort needed to reach people. The risk to individual beneficiaries, stakeholders and evaluators should be weighed carefully against the added value of the information sought.

Analysing access and risks is crucial. The evaluation team must follow instructions and recommendations from the country or regional office, the security focal point and the United Nations Department for Safety and Security, and receive security clearance to travel. The evaluation team must also complete relevant United Nations security awareness training prior to any field mission. Depending on the country, the evaluation team might have to undertake additional security awareness courses and training.

Collecting primary data

There are ethical and safety recommendations related to evaluation in humanitarian crises, and more specifically on sensitive topics such as sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender-based violence. For this reason, all humanitarian evaluations should have a clearly defined plan outlining how to: (i) collect data (both primary and secondary) with strong protection and ethical considerations, (ii)

respect the principle of 'do-no-harm'¹⁰ and (iii) comply with existing guidance, such as the World Health Organization's [WHO ethical and safety recommendations for researching, documenting and monitoring sexual violence in emergencies](#).

Interviews

During humanitarian evaluations, the evaluation team might consider conducting some or many key informant interviews remotely or online. This can help reduce the time required in-country during the field mission. Conducting interviews remotely may also prove to be convenient for UNFPA staff and partners involved in the emergency response, by offering them the flexibility to choose the time and place.

Without the need to travel, conducting key informant interviews remotely also allows important cost savings, thus making the evaluation more cost-efficient. Finally, during the field phase, the evaluation team has more time to focus on field observation and focus group discussions with targeted populations if they have conducted the majority of the key informant interviews remotely.

Focus group discussions

In humanitarian evaluations, focus group discussions are encouraged with some adaptations. For example, smaller groups may be preferred to larger ones for safety and security purposes. The evaluation team should also avoid asking focus group discussion participants to travel long distances, for the same reasons of safety and security. Particular attention should be paid to understanding whether there are ethnic, linguistic, religious, or cultural dynamics in the communities or areas affected by the emergency, and how to respect confidentiality and privacy concerns.

Surveys

Different kinds of surveys, including those remotely administered and using mobile-based solutions offer a convenient way to reach stakeholders without being exposed to potentially risky situations arising from armed conflict, natural disasters, or other obstacles preventing access to areas. Many United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations have piloted and used surveys in humanitarian evaluations and useful [guidance](#) is available.

Household meetings and interviews

The traditional method for collecting data on households is the household interview or meeting, during which a household survey is taken. This method, which is based on a face-to-face interview using pre-established survey questions, can be used to collect a great variety of data. In humanitarian contexts, it is typically conducted with the woman head of the household, but it can also include different members of the household and can be used to collect various types of information.

Advantages of this method include the possibility of collecting data on a large number of individuals over a period of time. It is particularly useful in contexts such as refugee camps. Disadvantages of this method include the differences in household composition within and between communities, which can have important consequences for how the sampling size is determined.

10 OECD, the DAC Network. Protection of people involved in evaluation, 2022. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/protection-of-people-involved-in-evaluation%20.pdf>.

Collecting secondary data

During the field phase, the evaluation team will probably collect secondary data on the emergency response to supplement the desk review and document repository. Secondary data may come from UNFPA and other sources. These may include, but are not limited to:

UNFPA sources: In emergencies, humanitarian needs are high and must be met urgently. United Nations agencies, such as UNFPA, launch dedicated appeals that are often met – at least partially – by its donors. Therefore, an analysis of key financial data for humanitarian responses is a critical component of a humanitarian evaluation, for both accountability and learning purposes.

The evaluation team should focus on analysing UNFPA planning, budget and expenditure data, for the period pre- and post-emergency, with support and guidance of the evaluation manager and the relevant country or regional office. To this purpose, the evaluation team must assess how emergency and regular resources are different, whether funding is used for immediate lifesaving needs or for long-term development objectives. The financial analysis should ideally break down programme expenditure by region and country (as relevant) for as many years as relevant to the humanitarian evaluations. Analysis of financial data should help to answer the evaluation questions, and at a minimum should cover the following:

- What is the current composition of UNFPA planning versus budget versus expenditure for the current humanitarian response?
- What is the breakdown by region or country and emergency level?
- Have proportions changed over time? What are the trends?

External sources: These are all offline and online data, information and reports that are not directly produced by UNFPA, but that either the organization relies on for its own programming or that can be useful to better assess its response in an emergency context. Examples include data from OCHA on cluster coordination, or emergency updates from other partner agencies.

Example of secondary data sources in humanitarian evaluations

Internal sources of data	External sources of data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports, data and information of UNFPA-mandated areas • Financial reports related to budget, allocation and expenditure • Human resources data on emergency response and deployments • Reports from implementing partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government reports, data and statistics • United Nations-coordinated responses in [Country/Region X] • Humanitarian clusters data and reports • Overall donor flows to the response (data and reports)

Example of secondary data sources in humanitarian evaluations

Internal sources of data	External sources of data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data from supply and procurement • Information on UNFPA-led areas of responsibility • Monitoring data and reports (e.g. surveys and assessments) • Situation analyses, security reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Nations-relevant documents and resolutions • Other agencies (United Nations, non-government organizations) updates and reports • Statistics on affected populations

Collecting photographic material

Guidelines for collecting photographic material are well explained in the Evaluation Handbook and all humanitarian evaluations should adhere to them. In addition, the evaluation team must consider the following elements:

- In emergencies, photos can become powerful images of hope and action but also convey human vulnerability and injustice. The evaluation team must always aim to protect the dignity of the photographic subjects.
- There are risks associated with taking pictures in conflict-affected areas and the evaluation team must be careful not to take photographs of military installations, checkpoints or armed groups.
- It can often be challenging to obtain full written consent with people on the move and in distress. In these instances, recorded verbal consent can be used. Similarly, for subjects who are illiterate, oral recorded consent, fingerprint marks or other forms of marking can be used.

Field phase checklist



- Use multiple qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods and adopt a robust triangulation approach
- Think creatively about options, such as remote data gathering (if feasible)
- Assess again ethical considerations and whether there have been any changes since the design phase
- Reconsider security management risks and whether there have been any changes since the design phase
- Develop multiple scenarios for field missions and show flexibility to change field plans
- Consider how to complement gaps in data collection after the field phase is over.

Phase 4: Reporting

Humanitarian evaluations should focus on yielding rapid and timely evidence to support decision-making in fast-changing humanitarian contexts. In the appropriate context, evaluations should also address the nexus between humanitarian and development programming. The evaluation team should include limitations that they encountered when accessing individuals and communities in humanitarian responses and in obtaining comprehensive data and information on results.

In the case of complex emergencies, it may be feasible to consider online and remote options in lieu of in-person meetings. This is the case for interviews for additional data collection, evaluation reference group meetings, debriefs, the workshop for the co-creation of recommendations and the presentation of draft and final reports. Remote and online options are also an opportunity for cost- and time-saving. Nevertheless, any change to planned in-person gatherings should be considered on a case-by-case basis, depending on the evaluation progress and dynamics, the evaluation team's ability to travel and the overall evaluation timeframe.



Reporting phase checklist

- Be transparent about the evaluation's validity and limitations and the methodologies chosen
- Indicate limitations and constraints that evaluators encountered on collecting data and formulating findings
- Check that the evaluation report meets UNFPA reporting standards
- Consider online and remote options to hold the recommendations construction workshop
- Ensure adequate quality assurance has been carried out at all stages of the report drafting.

Phase 5: Dissemination and facilitation of use

Humanitarian evaluations by UNFPA, especially those conducted in countries or regions where an Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) system-wide scale-up activation is or has been in place,¹¹ are of particular interest to the humanitarian country team, other United Nations agencies and OCHA, which are likely to conduct similar individual humanitarian evaluations or an inter-agency humanitarian evaluation.¹²

Therefore, the evaluation manager should share evaluation reports, briefs and recommendations widely with the humanitarian community, for example, through cluster meetings and updates, via relevant United Nations groups such as the [United Nations Evaluation Group](#) Humanitarian Evaluation Interest Group and through websites such as [ALNAP](#) and [Reliefweb](#).

Dissemination and facilitation of use phase checklist



- Summarize key findings and lessons from the evaluation and think creatively about ways to disseminate and facilitate the use of the evaluation
- Ensure the timely dissemination of the results for action by management and other stakeholders
- Consider sharing the report with the humanitarian community in-country, and key humanitarian stakeholders abroad
- Update the communication plan if any new opportunities for advocacy and communication of the humanitarian evaluation are identified
- Develop and share the management response
- Proactively sustain an advocacy approach in the long term, to facilitate the use of the evaluation.

11 Please see here for further information on the IASC mechanism <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/humanitarian-system-wide-scale-activation>.

12 In addition to conducting humanitarian evaluations of its own work, UNFPA, through the Independent Evaluation Office, collaborates with the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Steering Group to conduct inter-agency humanitarian evaluations (IAHE) to assess results of the collective humanitarian response by member organizations of the IASC. IAHEs are launched by the Emergency Relief Coordinator and are mandated for any IASC scale-up activation as part of the humanitarian programme cycle. For more information on IAHEs, including the latest reports, please click [here](#).

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