

UNFPA Evaluation Office

**GUIDANCE ON PREPARING
COSTED EVALUATION PLANS**

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1. Introduction

Country and regional offices must develop a costed evaluation plan as an integral part of the country or regional programme document submitted for every programme cycle to the PRC and to the Executive Board. A costed, multi-year evaluation plan describes and budgets for all evaluative activities that will be undertaken over the duration of the country/regional programme and constitutes a commitment on the part of the unit submitting the evaluation plan. The evaluation plan will constitute the basis for planning, prioritizing, costing, mobilizing resources, and funding of all evaluative activities. In addition to being a planning tool, units can utilize the evaluation plan to follow up and assess implementation and progress of evaluative activities. The evaluation plan will be an important tool to support the implementation of the evaluation function at UNFPA. Evaluation Office will report on its implementation to senior management and the Executive Board.

The evaluation plan contains important information related to the country/ regional programme and evaluative activities including: main areas of programme support, evidence utilized in the design of the costed plan, evaluative activities and their purpose, partners, time frames, and level of financial resources needed.

The audience of the costed evaluation plan includes the unit preparing and implementing the plan, the PRC, UNFPA Executive Board, and country/ regional stakeholders and partners.

2. Preparation of costed evaluation plans

As per the Evaluation Policy, the design of new country programmes has to be informed by an adequate and relevant body of evaluations, including by country programme evaluations to be conducted at least once in every two programme cycles, unless the quality of the previous country programme evaluation was unsatisfactory and/or significant changes in the country contexts happened.

Evaluation plans should ensure the adequate coverage of evaluations, including in humanitarian situations, and appropriate preparation to ensure high quality. Plans should enable evaluations to respond to the critical challenges in the delivery of programmes; make provision for the timely delivery of products in accordance with decision-making schedules and programming cycles; and spell out how the use of findings and recommendations will be promoted.

Decentralized units should consider the criteria presented in the UNFPA Evaluation Policy to guide the selection of exercises when developing the costed evaluation plan, namely¹:

- 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? (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?

¹ Please refers to the Evaluation Policy for additional details and descriptions of the selection criteria

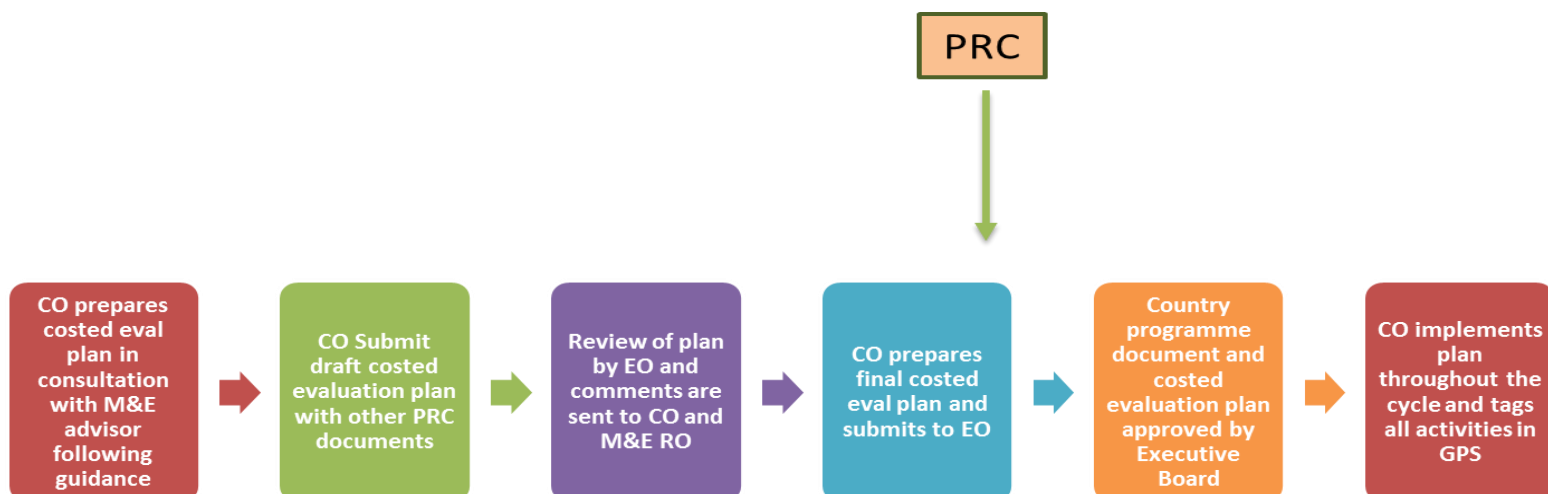
- b) Risk associated with the subject. Are there political, economic, funding, structural or organizational factors that present a potentially high risk for the non-achievement of results or for which further evidence is needed for decision-making by management?
- c) Potential for system-wide, joint or United Nations development assistance framework evaluations. 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? (ii) Does the commissioning office (the independent 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? (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 or through partner countries requesting the evaluation to inform national programmes)? (ii) Can the request for the evaluation be satisfied through an evaluation that is already planned?

To ensure sufficient evaluation coverage, priority for evaluation should be given to significant investments and/or programmes equal to or exceeding one third of the overall office portfolio. When there is no programme/area of investment that equals or exceeds one third of the overall office portfolio, a number of programmes that equal at least one third of the overall office portfolio are evaluated (on a clustered or individual basis). Evaluation is also recommended when a commitment has been made to key stakeholders (donors, Member States, beneficiaries, etc.) and for all strategic pilot initiatives that are designed for replication or scale up.

When preparing the costed evaluation plan, units should start by considering the areas covered by their country programme and undertake a mapping of what information needs they have and with what exercises these information gaps can be addressed. Units should take into consideration all evidence available stemming from evaluations (at country, regional and corporate level) and other exercises to inform their evaluation plans. Units need to consider CPEs within a broader range of evaluations to be strategically articulated in costed evaluation plans such as outcome or thematic evaluations, UNDAF evaluations and programme evaluations. Other exercises such as outcome evaluations can constitute building blocks to inform a future CPE or the design of the next programme if a CPE is not undertaken on that cycle.

The costed evaluation plan should be prepared in collaboration with the M&E regional advisor and submitted as part of the PRC process. The exercises included in the costed evaluation plan should be reflected in Atlas and tagged as evaluations including by type of evaluation or evaluative activity and if it joint or not. All units should monitor the implementation of their evaluation plan.

To ensure the highest possible quality of the costed evaluation plan, regional offices and the independent Evaluation Office review country costed evaluation plans within the Programme Review Committee (PRC), before presentation to the Executive Board. Regional costed evaluation plans are reviewed by the Evaluation Office. The country costed evaluation plan process is detailed below.



2.1 Evaluations to be included in the Costed Evaluation Plan

UNFPA follows the UNEG definition of evaluation: “An evaluation is an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders.”

Only the following exercises should be included as evaluations in the costed evaluation plan. Definitions follow below:

Types of Evaluations
Country Programme Evaluation (CPE)
Regional Programme Evaluation (RPE)
Other types of evaluations (neither CPE nor RPE evaluations): projects, programme, thematic, outcome evaluations
DAO (Delivering as One) Evaluation
UNDAF Evaluation
Humanitarian Evaluation
Evaluation’s Meta-Synthesis/Meta-Analysis
Evaluability Assessment

Country Programme Evaluation (CPE): UNFPA country programme evaluations are intended to provide an independent assessment of the relevance and performance of UNFPA support in a specific programme country. CPEs are conducted by independent external evaluators and managed by the responsible business unit in accordance with the '[Handbook on How to Design and Conduct a Country Programme evaluation at UNFPA](#)'.

Regional Programme Evaluation (RPE): UNFPA regional programme evaluations are intended to provide an independent assessment of the relevance and performance of a regional programme. Similar in nature to a CPE but the unit of analysis is the regional programme. RPEs are conducted by independent external evaluators and managed by the regional office (specifically the regional M&E adviser).

Other types of evaluation: an evaluation, conducted by decentralized UNFPA units at HQ, regional and country levels, of a project, programme, strategy, theme, outcome, or output. Includes all evaluations that are neither CPEs nor RPEs. It includes formative, summative, developmental and impact evaluations as well as mid-term evaluations.

DAO (Delivering as One) Evaluation: This refers to an evaluation used to assess the contribution and value added of “Delivering as one” and to draw lessons learned that are significant for the United Nations system. DAO Evaluations are conducted by the UNCT at country level during the penultimate year of the cycle to feed into the new programming cycle. UNFPA CO are encouraged to be part of the evaluation management group and make a financial contribution to the exercise that should be tagged under this category.

UNDAF Evaluation: The purpose of the UNDAF evaluation is to support greater learning about what works, what doesn't and why in the context of an UNDAF. The evaluation will provide important information for strengthening programming and results at the country level, specifically informing the planning and decision-making for the next UNDAF programme cycle and for improving United Nations coordination at the country level. UNDAF evaluations contribute to ensuring the accountability of the UNCT to various stakeholders, including national governments. UNFPA CO are encouraged to be part of the evaluation management group and make a financial contribution to the exercise that should be tagged under this category.

Humanitarian Evaluation: This refers to evaluations conducted by UNFPA units at HQ, regional and country levels of humanitarian interventions in the context of the response of UNFPA to level 1 -2 -3 emergencies. This may include joint evaluation exercises. Humanitarian evaluations should focus on yielding rapid and timely evidence to support decision-making in fast-changing humanitarian contexts.

Evaluation Synthesis/Meta-Analysis: The term is used for exercises designed to aggregate findings from a series of evaluations to draw out common lessons.

Evaluability Assessment: This refers to an exercise to determine the readiness of a programme for a productive evaluation. The purpose of an Evaluability Assessment is to determine the extent to which progress towards the objectives of a programme can be reliably measured, monitored and evaluated. In principle, evaluability looks at the design of the intervention, including the Theory of Change (ToC) and results framework and asks if it is possible to evaluate the intervention as it is described at present. Evaluability also looks at the availability of relevant data, as well as systems and capacities that make that data available.

Joint evaluations: The evaluation plan will also indicate if the exercise is joint or not.

2.2 Other evaluative activities (not evaluations) to be included in the costed evaluation plan.

Given the highlighted importance of UN coherence in evaluation, as well as internal and external evaluation capacity development, the following activities should also be included in the costed evaluation plans:

- UN coherence in evaluation (i.e. planned attendance to meeting/workshops organized by UNCT M&E task forces, regional evaluation groups or UNEG)
- Internal capacity development in evaluation (UNFPA staff attendance to training, workshops, conferences, etc.)
- National evaluation capacity development in evaluation (Partners attendance to training, workshops, as well as other capacity development activities for partners)

2.3 Exercises that are not considered evaluations and should not be included as evaluations in the costed evaluation plan

Monitoring is a continuous management function that provides managers and key stakeholders with regular feedback on the consistency or discrepancy between planned and actual activities and programme performance, and on the internal and external factors affecting results. Monitoring tracks progress towards the results agreed in the results matrix and checks if the assumptions made and risks identified at the design stage are still valid or need to be reviewed. It helps make mid-course corrections as an integral part of programme management.

IMPORTANT: Do not include monitoring activities in the costed evaluation plan.

Below you will find definitions of activities that are considered falling under 'monitoring' and therefore should not be included in a costed evaluation plan:

Reviews, including mid-term reviews: conducted by decentralized UNFPA units at HQ, regional and country levels, of a country programme, regional programme, programme, project, strategy, theme, outcome, output, organizational/ management issues. It is closely associated with monitoring and is a periodic assessment of the performance of an initiative and does necessarily apply the due process and methodological rigour of evaluation.

Annual or quarterly reviews: conducted by decentralized UNFPA units at HQ, regional and country levels.

UNDAF Mid-Term Reviews: This refers to mid-term review of the UNDAF process conducted by decentralized UNFPA units at country level.

DAO Mid-Term Reviews: This refers to mid-term review of DAO process conducted by decentralized UNFPA units at country level.

Monitoring activities: Activities such as field visits/ site visits, monitoring meetings with partners.

Baseline studies: This refers to a study with the intent of providing an information base against which to monitor and assess an activity's progress and effectiveness during implementation and after the activity is completed.

End-line studies: This refers to a study that uses the tools and methods from the baseline study to assess the same activities to create a comparison between the baseline and end-line data.

Studies and research: This refers to any thematic study or research.

Surveys: Surveying is a way to collect information directly from project stakeholders, participants or beneficiaries in a systematic, standardized way, and rely on the use of questionnaires distributed to respondents.

These questionnaires can be delivered through a variety of options, including postal surveys, face to face interviews, using handouts, online forms, or by telephone.

3. Modification of the Costed Evaluation Plan

Costed evaluation plans may change even once approved together with the country programme document by the Executive Board. If new evaluations or evaluative activities are added once implementation of the new country programme begins, the costed evaluation plan should be modified with input from the regional M&E advisor and the updated plan should be sent to EO explaining the changes to the original plan. If evaluations or evaluative activities are cancelled, the reason for the cancelation should be clearly detailed.

4. Repository

The Evaluation Office will keep a repository of all costed evaluations plans.

5. Format for Costed Evaluation Plan

The table below contains the format to be utilized for the costed evaluation plan.

Costed Evaluation Plan: Indicate name of country						
Programme Cycle:	Indicate programme cycle and years of duration					
Evidence utilized in the design of the costed plan	Indicate evaluations (all types) undertaken in the previous cycle or being currently undertaken and other evidence informing the evaluation plan. If a CPE was conducted indicate EQA rating. Indicate evidence from any corporate evaluation informing the plan.					
CP areas	Detail areas of coverage of the country programme					
Evaluations						
Exercise title and type	Purpose of the Exercise	Start and end date (Month, Year)	Estimated Cost \$ ²	Source of Funding	Key partners when conducting the exercise	Is it a joint exercise?
<i>Indicate the title and the type of exercise based on the evaluation categories. Please do not include monitoring related exercises as contained under B2.</i>	<i>The purpose of planned evaluations should be as specific as possible, providing the rationale, intended use and users of the evaluation, etc.; standard paragraphs, copy-pasted from one exercise to another should be avoided</i>	<i>Start and end month for all evaluations. In the case of CPEs the final report should be available at least 6 months before submission of CPDs to the Executive Board. Please note that the average duration of a CPE is about 9 months; any deviation from this standard should be clearly justified (reduced scope, etc.);</i>	<i>The recommended budget of a CPE is USD 70,000; in case of deviation from budget, a justification should be provided</i>	<i>Indicate source of funding from regular and other resources</i>	<i>Indicate partners such as government, NGO, etc.</i>	<i>Indicate if exercise is joint and if so with whom</i>
Evaluative activities (not evaluations)						
UN coherence in evaluation						
Internal capacity development activity on evaluation						
National Evaluation Capacity Development on evaluation						

² The budget of the evaluation plan should be commensurate to the overall budget of the country programme

6. Template for the technical review of the costed evaluation plan by the Evaluation Office

The table below contains the format to be utilized by the Evaluation Office for the technical review of costed evaluation plans.

General comments on the evaluation plan:	
Name of Country:	
Programme cycle:	
Region:	
Criteria	Assessment
Appropriateness of format including: Evaluation title, purpose of evaluation, timeline including start and end date, estimated cost, source of funding, key evaluation partners	
Articulation with evidence from other evaluations or exercises to prepare the plan and evidence of mapping of information needs to be addressed by plan	
Articulation of purpose of the proposed evaluations	
Number and nature of evaluations foreseen taking into consideration the budget of CPD and programmatic portfolio	
Adequacy of estimated cost of each evaluation	
Adequacy of expected duration of each evaluation	
Timeliness of the exercises to provide input to the next CPD design and programming	




Ensuring rights and choices for all

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