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UNFPA – Evaluation

United Nations Population Fund

Annual report on the evaluation function, 2021

Report of the Director, Evaluation Office

Summary

This document provides information on the performance of the evaluation function at centralized and decentralized levels, reports on the adaptation of the evaluation function to the COVID-19 pandemic and details the contribution of UNFPA to coherence among evaluation functions across the United Nations, as well as national evaluation capacity development. In addition, the report presents the 2022 programme of work and budget for the Evaluation Office.

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to: (a) take note of the present report on the evaluation function, and of the programme of work and budget of the Evaluation Office in 2022; (b) welcome the achievements across the evaluation performance indicators and the continued adaptability and responsiveness of the evaluation function in the face of the COVID-19 crisis; (c) welcome the achievements in contributing to United Nations system-wide evaluation efforts, and in fostering national evaluation capacity development; and (d) encourage UNFPA to continue to increase investments in the evaluation function.



I. Introduction

Evaluation as an accelerator to implement the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, including informing the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

1. The recent and ongoing shifts, both in the global context and internal to the United Nations system, are shaping the landscape in which UNFPA operates. The megatrends and the scale and intensity of humanitarian emergencies underpin the need for continuing to enlarge the body of evaluative evidence to shape UNFPA responses. This has become acutely evident in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The intersection of these factors has enhanced the demand for constant learning and adaptation to accelerate progress towards the three transformative results: ending the unmet need for family planning; ending preventable maternal deaths; and ending gender-based violence and harmful practices.
2. It is within this context that the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025 provides a strong corporate commitment to evidence-based learning and decision making. The strategic plan, inter-alia, reiterates the commitment to strengthen capacity in human rights-based, gender-responsive and disability-inclusive evaluations. It further emphasizes high quality data and evidence as critical levers to accelerate the achievement of the three transformative results, and its contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
3. To support this commitment, the Evaluation Office (EO) has further strengthened its work to better support the implementation of the strategic directions of UNFPA and to deliver adaptive, high-quality and relevant evaluations to inform the strategic shifts envisaged in the strategic plan. As part of the 100-day plan to kick-start the implementation of the strategic plan, the EO has developed three new evaluation frameworks: (a) the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2022-2025; (b) the evaluation strategy, 2022-2025; and (c) the strategy to enhance evaluation use through communications and knowledge management, 2022-2025. These frameworks constitute an intimately entwined enhancement to make the evaluation function fit to support the delivery of the strategic plan.
4. Approved by the Executive Board at its 2022 first regular session, the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2022-2025 (DP/FPA/2022/1)¹ sets out a coherent framework for the commissioning, management and use of centralized and decentralized programme-level evaluations. The plan includes 87 evaluations, reflecting the priorities of the strategic plan, and further addresses critical knowledge gaps in the organization. The evaluation strategy, as described below, offers a clear, strategic and forward-looking roadmap to enhance even further the evaluation function.

A. The evaluation strategy, 2022-2025 and the strategy to enhance evaluation use through communications and knowledge management, 2020-2025

5. By positioning evaluation as an accelerator of the implementation of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2022-2025, the evaluation strategy, 2022-2025² seeks to promote learning, adaptation, accountability and informed decision-making by delivering increasingly responsive, adaptive, diversified and innovative evaluation processes and products. In particular, the strategy focuses on enhancing an organizational culture that delivers high-quality evidence, strengthens use and utility of evaluations, and improves evaluation capacities at all levels.
6. Firmly anchored in the evaluation strategy, the EO also released the strategy to enhance evaluation use through communications and knowledge management, 2022-2025.³ The strategy aims at further enhancing the utilization of evaluations through relevant, innovative and diversified evaluation knowledge products; streamlining and enhancing knowledge management platforms and processes for increased availability; and providing timely access to targeted evaluative knowledge for decision-making, adaptation and learning. It also reinforces the focus on evaluation advocacy and multi-stakeholder and intergenerational partnerships for influential evaluation.

B. Adapting evaluations to the COVID-19 pandemic

7. As the COVID-19 crisis continued in 2021, the EO enhanced its agility, adaptability and responsiveness to the quickly changing environment and contexts. In light of travel restrictions, the EO adjusted its evaluation processes

1 UNFPA quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2022-2025

2 <https://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/unfpa-evaluation-strategy-2022-2025>

3 UNFPA strategy to enhance evaluation use through communications and knowledge management, 2022-2025

and approaches by deploying a mix of tailored measures to mitigate risks while continuing to provide technical assistance and quality-assurance support to decentralized evaluations. In situations with partial lockdowns, a hybrid model, combining remote and on-site data collection methods, was deployed while adhering to safety protocols. Concerted efforts were made to increase the use of national consultants and young evaluators, contributing to the development of national evaluation capacity, including through real-time remote coaching.

8. Specific evaluation questions regarding UNFPA response to COVID-19 were systematically integrated in all centralized and decentralized evaluations to inform real-time adaptation of programmes and policies. In addition, a centralized evaluation on UNFPA response to the COVID-19 pandemic will be launched in the second semester of 2022. The EO also took part in several system-wide initiatives related to the response to COVID-19 pandemic. These include participation in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) working group on COVID-19; the Global COVID-19 Evaluation Coalition; the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Fund; and the system-wide evaluation of the United Nations development system response to COVID-19.

C. Advocating for influential evaluation during the Decade of Action (Eval4Action campaign)

9. Aligned with the commitment to accelerate the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Decade of Action, the EO, together with EvalYouth and the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation (GPFE), continued to implement the 'Eval4Action campaign'. Launched in 2020, Eval4Action is a global advocacy campaign that seeks to enhance the role of evaluation in accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda and the response and recovery from COVID-19. Following grassroots mobilization and a highly inclusive and participatory approach, the campaign rallied more than 150 partners all over the world in less than two years.

10. In 2021, Eval4Action regional evaluation advocacy efforts and the co-creation of the first regional evaluation strategy in the Asia Pacific were selected as a 'Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Good Practice' by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. This further reaffirms the campaign's scalable and sustainable advocacy efforts in the Decade of Action, as demonstrated by the inclusive, multi-stakeholders and participatory regional consultations carried out in all regions, in addition to four subregional consultations held in West and Central Africa; East and Southern Africa; South Asia; and East and Southeast Asia.

11. To mark the first anniversary of the campaign, an innovative Twitter 'marathon' (Tweetathon) on influential evaluation was held in April 2021. With leadership and support from 18 global partners, regional leaders and EvalYouth chapters, each region hosted an online dialogue, passing the Eval4Action 'torch' across the globe in 24 hours. During the Tweetathon and its lead up, more than 700 participants posted 14,000 tweets in 10 languages. This resulted in more than a four-fold increase in social media engagement since the first Twitter Chat held in 2020.

12. In October 2021, the Eval4Action 'Walk the Talk' video drive was held, as a follow up to the Eval4Action Commitment Drive in 2020, where worldwide commitments were made to accelerate action for influential evaluation. During the drive, evaluation associations, networks, young and emerging evaluators, parliamentarians, the private sector and United Nations agencies shared over 170 videos on actions implemented to accelerate influential evaluation.

II. Performance of the evaluation function

13. This year's report provides an overview of results achieved in 2021 and takes stock of progress made against the evaluation performance indicators over the four-year period of the preceding UNFPA strategic plan 2018-2021.

Table 1
Trends in key performance indicators, 2014-2021

<i>Key performance indicator (%)</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>	<i>2019</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>Overall assessment</i>
1. Financial resources invested in evaluation function	Expenditure for evaluation as a percentage of total UNFPA programme expenses	0.45	0.69	0.91	0.83	0.96	0.98	0.83	0.83	Stable trend
								0.94 ⁴	0.87 ⁵	
2. Human resources for monitoring and evaluation	Percentage of country offices staffed with either a monitoring and evaluation focal point or officer	100	95.9	99.2	96.7	96.6	96.1	97.0	99.0	Achieved
3. Evaluation coverage	Percentage of country offices that have conducted a country programme evaluation once every two cycles	-	-	-	80.0	90.0	97.0	97.3	96.5	Almost achieved
4. Evaluation implementation rate	Percentage of programme-level evaluations implemented as planned	-	-	60.0	55.0	92.0	92.7	88.9	94.4	The target of 85 per cent has been achieved ⁶
5. Quality of evaluations	Percentage of programme-level evaluations rated 'good' or 'very good'	50.0	77.0	92.0	95.0	80.0	100	100	100	Achieved
6. Evaluation reports posted on evaluation database	Percentage of completed programme-level evaluation reports posted on evaluation database	100	100	100	100	100		100	100	Achieved
7. Management response submission	Percentage of completed programme-level evaluation reports with management response submitted	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	Achieved
8. Implementation of management response	Percentage of management response actions completed	76.5	78.0	78.5	84.4	89.5	84	90.0	95.0	The target of 85 per cent has been achieved ⁷
9. Use of evaluation in programme development	Percentage of new country programme documents whose design was clearly informed by evaluation	-	-	-	-	79.8	100	100	100	Achieved

Source: Evaluation Office and the Policy and Strategy Division (PSD)

14. Over the course of the UNFPA strategic plan, 2018-2021, a broad range of actions were undertaken to enhance capacities, systems and tools for the planning, management, quality assurance as well as the utility and use of evaluations. The investments over the years have yielded discernible results, especially in terms of increasing the coverage, quality and utility of evaluations.

⁴ Original budgeted allocation for the evaluation function (at central and decentralized level) against the total UNFPA programme expenditure for 2020.

⁵ Original budgeted allocation for the evaluation function (at central and decentralized level) against the total UNFPA programme expenditure for 2021.

⁶ OEE 1.7, UNFPA 2018-2021 Strategic Plan

⁷ OEE 1.9, UNFPA 2018-2021 Strategic Plan

15. Despite the setbacks and obstacles imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, all key performance indicators (KPIs) have retained strong performance. The expenditure on evaluation increased from 0.45 per cent of total UNFPA programme expenditure in 2014 to 0.83 per cent in 2021. Human resources for evaluation remained strong, with increased monitoring and evaluation capacity at the country office level.

16. Substantial progress has been made on increasing evaluation coverage. In conformity with the evaluation policy, 96.5 per cent of offices have conducted at least one country programme evaluation (CPE) within two cycles, compared with 90 per cent in 2018. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, a record 23 centralized and decentralized programme level evaluations were completed in 2021, compared to 10 in 2018. The implementation rate of planned evaluations consistently met the target since the introduction of the ‘ringfencing’ mechanism in 2018.

17. Continuing the trend over the last three years, 100 per cent of evaluations were externally assessed as ‘good’ or higher, signalling the multi-layered quality support was effective. Significant improvement has been seen on the extent to which UNFPA evaluations are gender responsive. For the third year in a row, UNFPA exceeded the United Nations system-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) evaluation performance indicator, with a 10.6 score.

18. As in previous years, the submission rate of management responses continued to be 100 per cent, achieving the desired target. The annual implementation rate of management responses demonstrates a positive trend, reaching 95 per cent implementation in 2021, marking the highest achievement over the years. All country programme documents submitted to the Executive Board were clearly informed by evaluation, against a baseline of 79.8 per cent in 2018.

19. While significant progress has been made on many fronts, sustained efforts are needed to ensure the timely planning and completion of country programme evaluations to ensure results are available early enough to feed into strategic dialogues and the design of new country programmes. Continuous flexibility and adaptation are required to respond effectively to new demands for evidence and unforeseen crisis, including in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sustained action is also needed to protect the gains in coverage, quality and implementation of management response actions recorded in the recent years. The ring-fencing mechanism within the resource allocation system needs to be sustained to ensure decentralized evaluations are fully funded.

Key performance indicator 1: financial resources

20. Overall, the expenditure for the evaluation function was \$9.03 million, with \$3.88 million spent at the centralized level and \$5.15 million spent at the decentralized level (see table 2). In absolute terms, investment in evaluation more than doubled from 2014 to 2021. In relative terms, this represents 0.83 per cent of the total UNFPA programme expenses. Similar to 2020, the evaluation function expenditure in 2021 was lower than what was originally budgeted due to the COVID-19 induced travel restrictions for in-country data collection and evaluation capacity-development initiatives. Nonetheless, the actual expenditures grew by 5.5 per cent, from \$8.5 million to \$9.03 million.

21. Overall, without the COVID-19 related reduction, the budgeted original allocation for the evaluation function (at central and decentralized levels) was \$9.48 million, representing 0.87 per cent of the total UNFPA programme expenses for 2021. Although this still falls short of the Evaluation Policy target of 1.4 per cent to 3 per cent against the overall UNFPA programme expenses, the regular resources expenditure of the evaluation function (including net institutional budget) was \$5.2 million, representing 2.0 per cent of the UNFPA regular resources programme expenses, which is within the bounds of the target established in the evaluation policy.

Table 2
Budget invested in the evaluation function, 2014-2021

	(in millions of \$)							
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total UNFPA programme expenses*	820.2	798.6	763.5	752.9	872.3	933.8	1 027.9	1 086.4
Total expenditure of the evaluation function	3.69	5.52	6.94	6.30	8.40	9.13	853(a) 9.64(b)	9.03(a) 9.48(b)
<i>Evaluation Office</i>	2.38	2.63	3.71	3.36	4.23	3.9	3.2(a) 4.31(b)	3.88 (a) 4.33(b)
<i>Decentralized evaluation function</i>	1.31**	2.89	3.23	2.94	4.17***	5.23	5.33	5.15
Total expenditure of the evaluation function as percentage of UNFPA programme expenses	0.45%	0.69%	0.91%	0.83%	0.96%	0.98%	0.83%(a) 0.94%(b)	0.83% (a) 0.87%(b)

* Total UNFPA programme expense is generated from UNFPA statistical and financial reviews. The Evaluation Office budget is derived from the UNFPA financial system, while the budget for the decentralized function includes the budget for decentralized evaluations, internal and national evaluation capacity development activities, and staffing costs.

** Decentralized staffing costs are not available for 2014; the figure (\$1.31 million) therefore reflects only the budget for evaluations.

*** The majority of increase from \$2.94 million in 2017 to \$4.17 million in 2018 is mainly due to the enhancement in better capturing the totality of investment in decentralized evaluation.

(a) with COVID-19-related reduction

(b) without COVID-19-related reduction

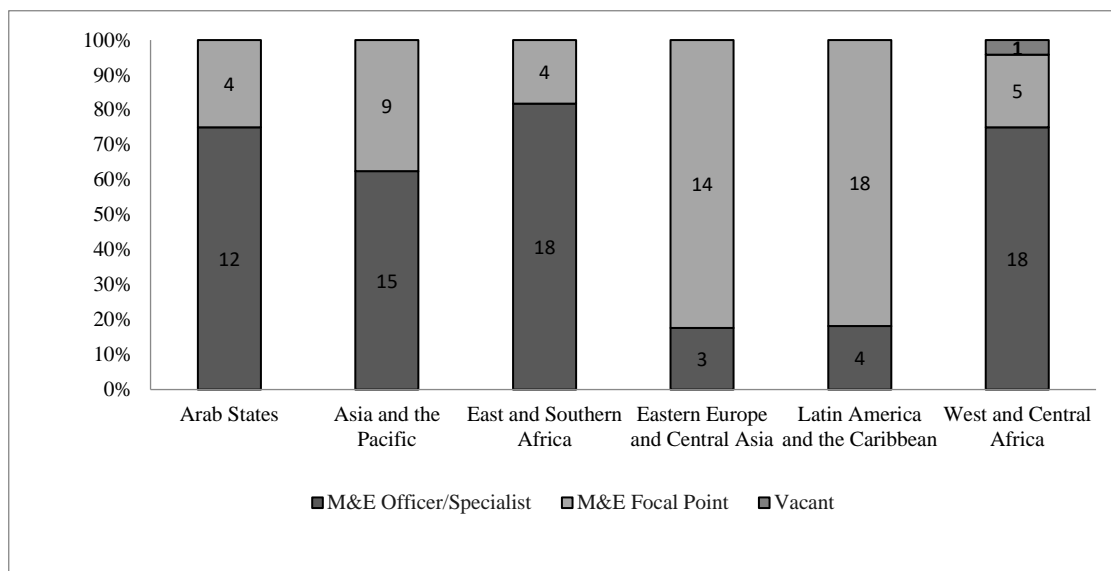
Key performance indicator 2: human resources

22. The composition of the EO remained the same as reported last year, with ten approved posts: one at general service level, eight at professional level and one at director level as well as two Youth UN Volunteers.

23. At the decentralized level, the staffing profile remained roughly the same. UNFPA has six regional monitoring and evaluation advisors at the P5 level. Recruitment to replace the vacant post of regional monitoring and evaluation advisor in West and Central Africa was finalized in 2022. The EO has helped to bridge the gap by deploying a senior staff member to the regional office.

24. On aggregate, 99 per cent of country offices were staffed with either a monitoring and evaluation officer (56 per cent) or focal point (44 per cent). The number of country offices with monitoring and evaluation officers represented an increase of eight percentage points compared to 48 per cent in 2018. Dedicated monitoring and evaluation officers continued to be concentrated in regions with larger country offices, such as Africa and Asia and the Pacific, while focal points were found primarily in regions where country offices had relatively smaller budgets, such as Latin America and the Caribbean and Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Figure 1
Human resources for monitoring and evaluation, 2021, by region

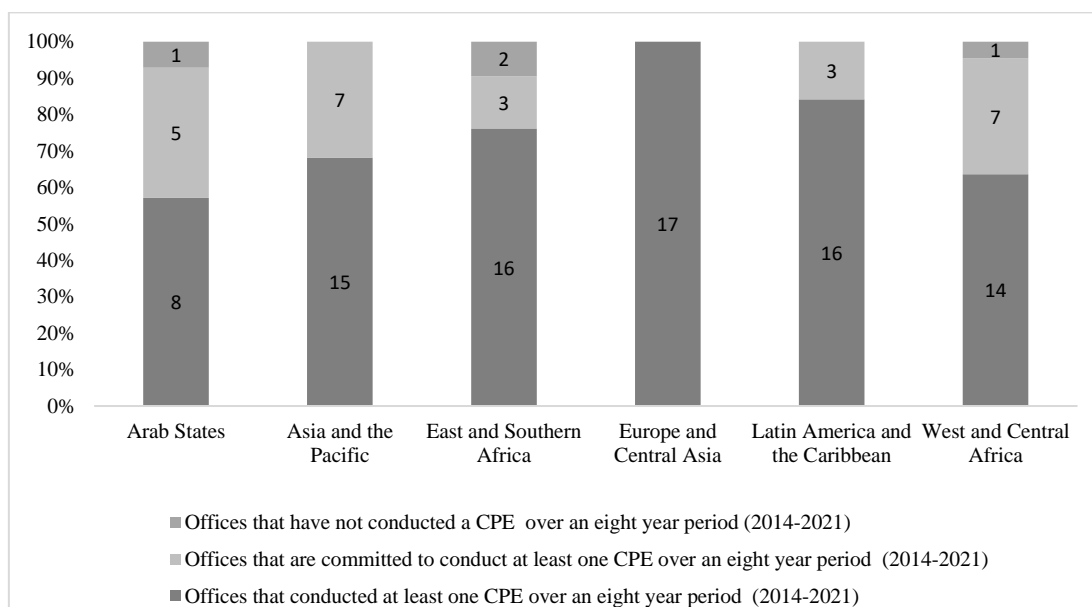


Source: Evaluation Office
Abbreviation: M&E: monitoring and evaluation

Key performance indicator 3: coverage of decentralized programme level evaluations

25. To ensure a robust base of evaluative evidence to inform programming, the Evaluation Policy calls for country offices to conduct a CPE at least once every two programme cycles. The performance for this KPI remained strong, with 96.5 per cent of country offices having completed or being on track to complete at least one CPE over the last eight-year period (the typical length of two country programme cycles).

Figure 2
Evaluation coverage by region, 2014-2021 (*)



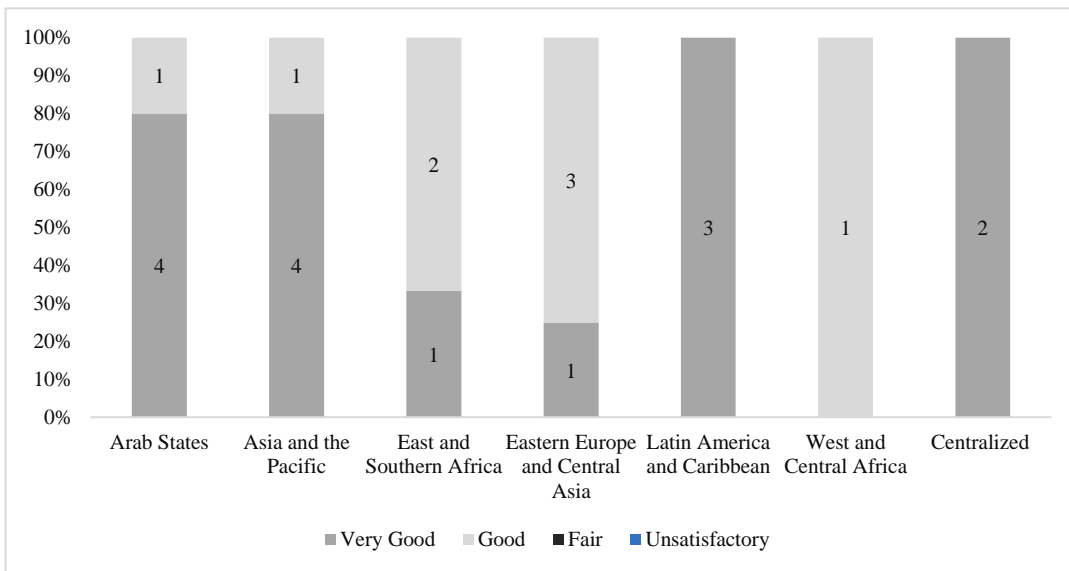
Key performance indicator 4: implementation rate of planned decentralized evaluations

26. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis, implementation rate of planned decentralized evaluations remained robust. In 2021, 94.4 per cent of decentralized programme-level evaluations were implemented as planned. Of the total 18 evaluations planned, four country offices opted to use the evidence from previous-cycle country programme evaluations (CPEs) to inform their new country programme. However, one evaluation was cancelled without valid contextual or programmatic reasons. Technical guidance and quality-assurance support provided to country offices, in addition to the ringfencing mechanism, has helped the implementation of planned evaluations despite the restrictions of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Key performance indicator 5: quality of evaluation reports

27. Consistent with the past three years, 100 per cent of reports assessed were rated ‘good’ or higher, a significant improvement from 50 per cent in 2014. The strong performance across regions is likely attributable to the multi-layered quality-assurance processes, rigor in vetting consultants, availability of guidance on how to conduct CPEs and other internal capacity-development initiatives.

Figure 3
Quality of evaluations, by region, 2021



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

28. As in previous years, all completed centralized and decentralized programme-level evaluations were made publicly available on the EO database. Centralized evaluations are featured on the EO website and – to further facilitate its use – shared with all staff and the wider evaluation community, including UNEG members.

Key performance indicator 7: evaluations with management responses

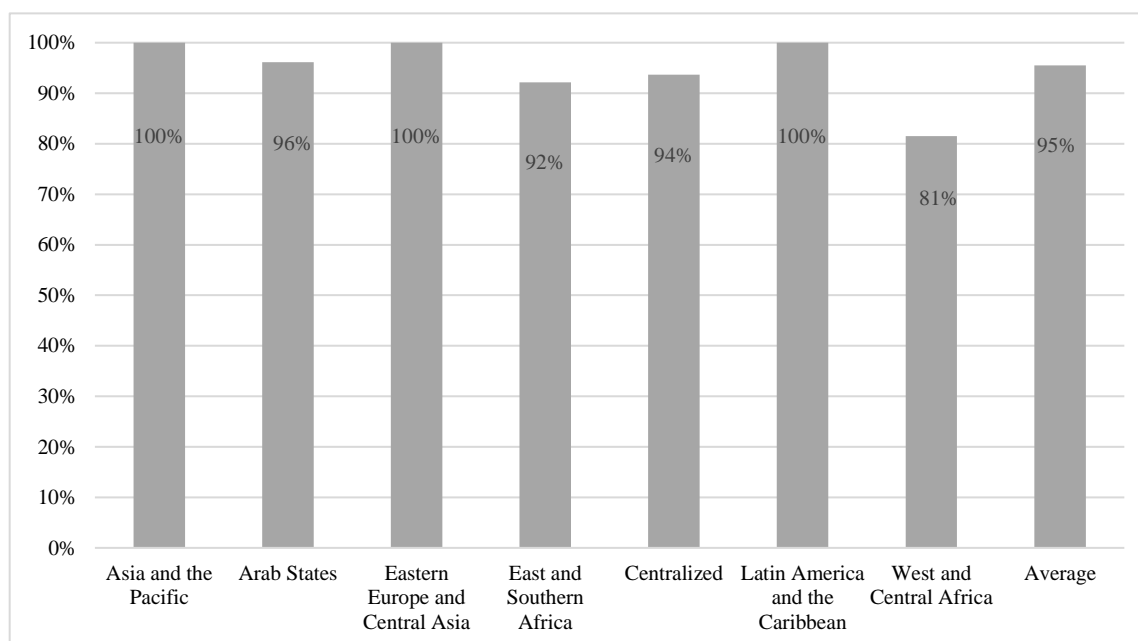
29. The evaluation management response provides a key mechanism for taking action on evaluation recommendations at various levels, aiming to improve programme performance, effectiveness and efficiency. As in previous years, all completed centralized and decentralized programme-level evaluations were accompanied by management responses.

Key performance indicator 8: implementation of management responses

30. Thanks to numerous measures that Policy and Strategic Division (PSD) has put in place over the years – including (a) addition of two evaluation follow-up indicators in the corporate dashboard; (b) strengthened corporate guidance; and (c) a more individualized follow-up approach – reporting frequency increased, contributing to a steady improvement in implementation rates.

31. In 2021, UNFPA achieved the annual implementation rate of 95 per cent – five percentage points over the Strategic Plan target and the highest in 10 years. Further, implementation of centralized recommendations, which lagged most when compared to the regions' performance in previous years, not only reached but exceeded the 85 per cent target for the first time in 10 years.

Figure 4
Implementation of evaluation management response/key actions, 2021



Source: UNFPA management response tracking systems

Key performance indicator 9: Use of evaluation in programme development

32. Learning from evaluations continued to inform actions and decisions, including development of new programmes. In 2021, all 21 new country programme documents (100 per cent) submitted to the Executive Board for approval were clearly informed by evaluative evidence. This marks a significant improvement from 2018, when 78.9 per cent of country programme documents met this requirement.

33. The survey conducted by EO in 2021 has shown a positive expansion in terms of use of evaluation at the decentralized level. In addition to informing design of new country programmes, UNSDCF and common country assessments, evaluations were used for advocacy and policy dialogue with key stakeholders; replication and scale-up of good practices; to determine the choice of interventions and modes of engagement; strengthening strategic alliances and partnership; prioritization of targeted population as well as mobilization of resources.

A. Centralized evaluations

34. To further strengthen the relevance, quality and use of centralized evaluations, the EO has continued to ensure evaluations are: (a) responsive to users' demands and needs; (b) adapted to the external environment, including the COVID-19 pandemic; (c) innovative in approaches and practices to respond to this dynamic environment; and (d) implemented in a timely manner.

Full and timely implementation of centralized evaluations

35. In accordance with the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, the EO undertook a wide range of evaluations to deliver timely and relevant evaluative evidence to inform the implementation of the previous strategic plan (2018-2021) and the design of the current one (2022-2025). Confirming the active EO commitment to enhance evaluation coherence within the United Nations system, 57 per cent (8 out of 14) of centralized evaluations are either joint or system-wide evaluations.

36. As of December 2021, the implementation rate of centralized evaluations was 100 per cent, with all evaluations completed or on-track as per schedule (see table 3 below).

Table 3
Implementation status of planned centralized evaluations and other evaluative studies, 2021-2022

#	Title	Status	Management response issued	Presentation to Executive Board/steering committees
1	Evaluation of UNFPA support to gender equality and women's empowerment	Completed	Yes	Presented to the Executive Board at the annual session 2021
2	Baseline study and evaluability assessment of the UNFPA support to the generation, provision and utilization of data in humanitarian assistance	Completed	Not required*	Presented to the Reference Group and the Humanitarian Steering Committee
3	System-wide meta-synthesis of lessons learned from youth evaluations (2015-2020) to support the implementation of the UN Youth Strategy 2030 (part 1)	Completed	Not required*	Presented to Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth (OSGEY) Technical Working Group Meeting
4	Joint Evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation: Accelerating Change Phase III (2018-2021)	Completed	Yes	Presented to the Joint Programme Steering Committee
5	Joint assessment of adaptations to the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage in light of COVID-19	Completed	Not required*	Presented to the (i) Joint Programme Steering Committee and (ii) the Global Programme Bi-annual Meeting
6	Joint evaluation of the UN Joint Programme on AIDS on preventing and responding to violence against women and girls	Completed	Yes	Presented to the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, December 2021
7	Joint evaluation of the UNAIDS Joint Programme work on efficient and sustainable financing for the AIDS response	Completed	Yes	Presented to the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, December 2021
8	Midterm evaluation of the Maternal and Newborn Health Thematic Fund	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2022
9	Evaluation of UNFPA support to adolescents and youth	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2022
10	Evaluation of UNFPA engagement with UN development system reform	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2022
11	Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) of the Humanitarian Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2022

12	Joint impact feasibility assessment of UNFPA-UNICEF joint programmes to: (i) End Child Marriage and (ii) Eliminate Female Genital Mutilation	On track	Not required*	To be completed in 2022
13	System-wide meta-synthesis of lessons learned from youth evaluations (2015-2020) to support the implementation of the UN Youth Strategy 2030 (part 2)	On track	Not required*	To be completed in 2022
14	Evaluation of UNFPA support to population dynamics and data	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2023

*Management responses are only issued for evaluations, and not meta-analyses and evaluability assessments

Innovation in evaluation approaches – meaningful engagement of young people in evaluation

37. The EO continued to diversify and adapt its evaluation approaches and methods to the changing needs and priorities of UNFPA. For example, in line with UNFPA Evaluation Policy to engage youth in a meaningful manner, the EO piloted an innovative approach to ensure young people participate in all phases of the evaluation as well as in different capacities, including as key informants, young evaluators working together with the core evaluation team, active-advisors and co-decision-makers. This approach created a space to engage young people as active contributors to the evaluation while also developing their technical capacities.

B. Use of centralized evaluations to foster change

38. In addition to reporting on implementation of agreed-upon actions to evaluations' recommendations, the EO reports on how the implementation of recommendations generated by centralized evaluations have been instrumental in enhancing policies, strategies and programmes. This reporting provides a more holistic view of the strategic use of centralized evaluations.

Formative evaluation of UNFPA approach to South-South and triangular cooperation

39. This evaluation has contributed to strategic discussions and changes regarding South-South and triangular cooperation as a key programming strategy. This includes the accelerated mainstreaming of South-South and triangular cooperation in the work of the organization in thematic areas and frameworks, including its inclusion as a strategic accelerator in the strategic plan 2022-2025. The UNFPA South-South and Triangular Cooperation Strategy was completely revised and updated based on the evaluations' recommendations.

40. Furthermore, in response to the evaluation, UNFPA intensified the capture, documentation and dissemination of South-South and triangular cooperation practices and solutions both internally and externally, which enabled UNFPA to be the largest contributor of documented good practices and solutions among the United Nations agencies to the United Nations system-wide South-South Galaxy platform. The evaluation also informed the United Nations system-wide South-South Cooperation Strategy and its evaluation.

Developmental evaluation of results-based management at UNFPA

41. The first ever developmental evaluation at UNFPA influenced the organizational culture and priorities, leading to a transition towards a new stage of results-based management (RBM), reflected in the adoption of adaptive management as a key management strategy as reflected in the strategic plan, 2022-2025. Building on this, UNFPA developed new results-based management principles and standards and launched the 'RBM Seal' initiative in 12 country offices.

42. Furthermore, leveraging the high momentum created, EO, PSD and DHR launched the second phase of the developmental evaluation to enhance and accelerate the uptake of adaptive management as strategic corporate priority.

Evaluation of UNFPA support to gender equality and women's empowerment

43. This evaluation, the first-ever thematic evaluation of UNFPA support to gender equality and women's empowerment, has contributed to several key strategic discussions on the positioning of UNFPA work on gender

equality and gender mainstreaming, accelerating the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy. In addition, its results and lessons have been extensively used to inform the design and conceptualization of the strategic plan, 2022-2025. For example, in response to the evaluation insights on the intersectionality aspect of gender equality programming, the strategic plan includes a gender concept with a lens of intersectionality as means to strengthen UNFPA commitments to prioritizing ‘leaving no one behind’.

C. Decentralized evaluation system

44. Over the previous strategic plan (2018-2021), 59 decentralized programme-level evaluations were completed, generating country-specific evidence relevant to country programme development and implementation. However, this also underscores the challenge of ensuring the timely delivery of high-quality decentralized evaluations. To address this challenge, EO, PSD and the regional offices continued to work together to implement systems to enhance decentralized evaluations.

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

45. To ensure strategic planning of decentralized evaluations, UNFPA continued to plan evaluations through multi-year costed evaluation plans aligned with country programme cycles. In 2021, all new country programmes presented to the Board were accompanied by costed evaluation plans reviewed by EO.

46. In 2018, UNFPA established a ringfencing mechanism to ensure appropriate financing of programme-level evaluations facing funding shortfalls. A further step was taken in 2021 through ringfencing budgets for country programme evaluations into the initial country programme ceiling, securing a total of \$1,076,007 for decentralized programme-level evaluations to be implemented in 2022. Through this system, adequate funds are ringfenced in the resource allocation system to be used exclusively for country programme evaluations. These and other mechanisms have proven to be valuable in ensuring a secure and adequate funding for decentralized programme level evaluations.

47. The evaluation quality assurance and assessment system continued to support the quality and credibility of evaluations. Targeted feedback continued to be provided to country offices to enhance the quality of decentralized evaluations.

Internal evaluation capacity development

48. UNFPA has undertaken a series of initiatives aimed at bolstering internal staff capacity and to consolidate a culture that promotes the use, accountability and learning from evaluation. Over the past year, the EO has roll-out the ‘CPE management kit’. The kit aims to ensure evaluations are launched in a timely manner, implemented in accordance with their planned schedule, and conducted in line with the methodological guidance provided in the Evaluation Handbook. Providing essential guidance, tools and templates, the kit is available in English, French and Spanish.

49. As part of its internal evaluation capacity development, the EO co-organized the first ever virtual global retreat bringing together 60 participants from country offices, regional offices and relevant business units at headquarters, providing a dedicated and collective space for exchange, including a discussion of good practice and challenges pertinent to the evaluation function. The deliberations at the retreat were used to shape the priorities of the recently launched evaluation strategy, 2022-2025.

50. Complementing these efforts is the continued advisory and quality assurance support by regional monitoring and evaluation advisors at key phases of decentralized evaluations, including integration of gender equality and disability inclusion into evaluations. Regions also organized regional learning events and webinars. In addition to approving terms of reference and pre-qualification of consultants, the EO also continues to provide quality assurance and advisory services to programme level evaluations on a request basis.

III. Enhancing coherence in the United Nations system evaluation functions

51. As part of its commitment to United Nations development system reform, the EO is enhancing coherence among the evaluation functions across the United Nations system by actively engaging and collaborating with other agencies through joint and system-wide evaluations, and the UNEG network.

A. System-wide and joint evaluations

52. The EO continued to be fully committed and engaged in actively contributing to the system-wide evaluation mechanisms through the UNEG, including by contributing to the review and the revision of the draft system-wide evaluation policy and providing technical advice to the system-wide early lessons and evaluability assessment, as well as the system-wide evaluation of the socioeconomic response of the United Nations development system to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the EO is co-managing the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the COVID-19 humanitarian response, together with the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP), InterAction, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (Chair).

53. The EO is also supporting system-wide coordination and exchange of good practices on adaptation of the evaluation functions to the pandemic, as a member of the UNEG Working Group on COVID-19 and the COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition, which brings together evaluation units from Member States, multilateral institutions and United Nations agencies. Within this coalition, the EO is taking part in an evidence sharing exercise on gender equality and women’s empowerment. The EO will also engage in country-level collaboration with Coalition members within the framework of the upcoming UNFPA country programme evaluations.

54. In line with the United Nations Funding Compact commitment to increase accessibility of strategic evaluation results, the EO continued to make 100 per cent of centralized evaluations available on the UNEG website. Regarding collaborating in at least one joint or system-wide evaluation, UNFPA continued to significantly exceed this commitment, as 57 per cent (8 out of 14) of centralized evaluations are either joint or system-wide. Going forward, 58 per cent of the proposed evaluations in the next four years will either be joint or system-wide exercises, allowing an estimated cost-saving of almost \$2.5 million.

55. The EO, together with the evaluation office of UNICEF, co-led a system-wide meta-synthesis of lessons learned from youth evaluations in partnership with EvalYouth Global Network, Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), IOM, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), UNDP and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). This inter-agency collaboration captures lessons learned from 2015 to 2021 on what works and what does not work in United Nations youth interventions. The report serves to inform and guide future youth programming to accelerate the implementation of the United Nations Youth Strategy 2030, a system-wide framework for how the United Nations should programme for, with and alongside youth. This exercise is the first in a series of meta-syntheses that will focus on different priority areas of the United Nations Youth Strategy.

B. The United Nations Evaluation Group and regional evaluation groups

56. The EO continued to participate actively in UNEG, including actively contributing to the UNEG general assembly. EO served as the co-convenor of the interest group on joint evaluations. As member of the working group on gender, disability and human rights, the EO contributed to undertaking a gap analysis of the guidance on (a) integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluations, and (b) evaluating institutional gender mainstreaming. The updated guidance is expected to be published by the end of 2022. The EO also contributed to the development of the draft guidance on integrating disability inclusion in evaluations. As part of the evaluation use interest group, the EO contributed to advancing evaluation use measurement; as member of the methods working group, it shared concrete examples of innovations used in evaluations, notably on developmental evaluations.

57. Furthermore, the EO has been participating on the decentralized evaluation interest group and professionalization working groups. As a member of the partnership group, the EO was part of the organizing committee of the “2021 UNEG-EvalPartners partnership forum: towards leaving no one behind through evaluation”. As a member of the national evaluation capacity development group, EO supported the preparation of the report on “Support to Member States in the implementation of national evaluation capacity development interventions by United Nations Agencies since 2014”.

58. In addition, UNFPA continues to co-lead or actively contribute to the United Nations Regional Evaluation Groups. These include the United Nations Evaluation Development Group for Asia and the Pacific (UNEDAP), the

Regional Inter-agency Working Group on monitoring and evaluation in Latin America and Caribbean, the United Nations Evaluation Group in the East and Southern Africa region, and the United Nations Regional Evaluation Group (IRENAS) in the Arab States region. Within Eastern Europe and Central Asia, UNFPA contributed to an informal regional evaluation group comprising of monitoring and evaluation advisors from UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women.

C. United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and integration of disability inclusion

59. For a third year in a row, UNFPA ‘exceeded requirements’ of the evaluation performance indicator (EPI) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, with a composite score of 10.6. The majority of the evaluations reviewed in 2021 ‘met requirements’ (86%, 19 reports), with only three reports ‘approaching requirements’ and none were ‘missing requirements’. In addition, the completion of the centralized evaluation of UNFPA support to gender equality and women’s empowerment placed UNFPA in the ‘exceeded requirements’ category.

60. In addition, to accelerate the meaningful integration of a disability inclusion lens across evaluation processes and products, the EO rolled-out the guidance on disability inclusion in evaluation. As a member of the UNEG human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion working group, the EO has contributed to the development of guidance on integrating disability inclusion in evaluations and reporting on the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS) accountability framework evaluation indicator.

D. United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework evaluations

61. UNFPA, in collaboration with other agencies, United Nations country teams (UNCTs) and regional mechanisms, actively supported United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) evaluations by providing technical assistance, quality assurance and financial support. Countries that received support included Afghanistan, Bolivia, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Palestine, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and the Pacific Island countries and territories.

62. The EO also served as member of the evaluation management group for the Cape Verde Common Country Programme Evaluation (CCPE) together with UNDP and UNICEF.

63. As part of the regional Peer Support Group, the Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Monitoring and Evaluation Task Team, co-chaired by UNFPA, supported regional and country-specific training sessions targeting countries planning cooperation framework evaluations. The Asia and Pacific Regional Office, as co-chair of the United Nations Evaluation Development Group for Asia and the Pacific (UNEDAP), co-funded, coordinated and facilitated the development and execution of a 6-week online training course on evaluation together with other members of UNEDAP.

IV. Multi-stakeholder partnerships for national evaluation capacity development

64. In 2021, UNFPA continued to strengthen national evaluation capacities, together with major stakeholders, including United Nations entities. This is in line with General Assembly resolutions 69/237 (building capacity for evaluation of development activities at country level); 70/1 (endorsing the 2030 Agenda); and 71/243 (QCPR); as well as the UNFPA Evaluation Policy.

65. The EO continued to be a member of global evaluation coalitions, including (a) the EvalPartners Executive Committee representing the United Nations system together with WFP, and (b) the EvalGender+ Management Group, representing the United Nations system together with UN-Women.

66. In addition, and complementary to co-leading the Eval4Action campaign at global level, UNFPA is also an active partner at regional level. In Asia and the Pacific, the EO and the regional office supported the Asia Pacific Evaluation Association, EvalYouth Asia and the Asian Parliamentarians Forum for Development Evaluation in implementing the first-ever regional evaluation strategy. The key actions implemented include: (a) consultations on community ownership in evaluation and professionalization of evaluation; (b) surveys on national evaluation policies and systems, and the capacity of voluntary organizations for professional evaluation (VOPE), professionalization and existing academic courses on monitoring and evaluation; and (c) regional dialogue on national evaluation policies and systems where 12 countries presented status on national evaluation policies and systems.

67. UNFPA continued to support strategic initiatives and events in order to mobilize a range of stakeholders and share good practices and lessons learned on how to strengthen inclusive national evaluation systems. In Europe, UNFPA conducted three panels at the European Evaluation Society (EES) conference: (a) a panel on ‘multi-stakeholder perspectives: lessons and good practices in enhancing use of evaluation’, in partnership with the World Bank, EvalYouth and EES; (b) a panel on ‘practical tips by senior and young evaluators on boosting a career in evaluation’, in partnership with EvalYouth and EES; (c) a panel on ‘how to build a culture of evaluation’, in partnership with WFP. In Asia, UNFPA in partnership with EvalYouth, conducted a panel at the Asian Evaluation Week on “Permission to dream and act: the youth in evaluation movement and the power of transformation”. UNFPA also supported the Réseau francophone de l’évaluation at the International Francophone Evaluation Forum 2021. The conference supported capacity building of 100 young and emerging evaluators through their active participation in workshops and conference sessions.

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

68. The EO continued to promote the participation of young people in evaluation, and build professional capacity of young and emerging evaluators, as articulated in the Evaluation Policy. UNFPA signed a partnership agreement with the World Bank’s Global Evaluation Initiative aiming to enhance national evaluation capacity particularly for young and emerging evaluators and parliamentarians.

69. In this regard, UNFPA continued to support the Global EvalYouth strategic priorities, including (a) the roll-out of the fourth phase of the EvalYouth global mentoring programme; (b) the annual EvalYouth virtual conference (simultaneously translated in four languages) on ‘Evaluation to construct a resilient and better future’; (c) dissemination of the toolkit on how to increase engagement of young and emerging evaluators in VOPE activities, governance structures and leadership and (d) support “Winter Schools” for young and emerging evaluators.

70. UNFPA also supported several EvalYouth regional and national chapters. The EvalYouth regional chapter in Asia conducted the second Winter School for 80 young and emerging evaluators from 21 countries. With support from the EO, the Community of Evaluators – South Asia launched the EvalYouth South Asia chapter and conducted a series of four training sessions for the young emerging evaluators. The EvalYouth Peru and EvalYouth Bolivia capacities were improved by sharing knowledge and integrating lessons as part of improving national chapters of EvalYouth in Latin America and the Caribbean. EvalYouth Europe and Central Asia updated two modules of the Regional Mentoring Programme on Evaluation while EvalYouth North America conducted mapping on Youth Engagement and Employment services.

71. In partnership with EvalYouth, EO supported the ‘Peer-to-peer career advisory sessions for emerging evaluators’. EO sponsored young and emerging evaluators to attend the EES virtual conference and the International Francophone Evaluation Forum, virtually organized by Réseau francophone de l’évaluation. In addition, a comprehensive training package on career development in monitoring and evaluation was developed to be used across all regions under the initiative.

72. In partnership with EvalYouth, UNFPA piloted innovative approaches to meaningfully engage young and emerging evaluators in UNFPA evaluation. The EO established a youth steering committee that is co-managing, together with EO, the ongoing evaluation of UNFPA support to youth. At decentralized level, Youth Engagement and Employment were included as a member of the evaluation team in the regional programme evaluation and the CPEs of Algeria, Central African Republic, Gabon, Jordan, Libya, Sao Tome, Mauritania, Nigeria, the Pacific subregion, Papua New Guinea, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Togo.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships to enhance the demand for and use of country-led evaluation by national policy-makers

73. In addition to the partnership with the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation (GPFE) to co-lead the Eval4Action campaign, the EO continued to support the Forum in its outreach to parliamentarians, to strengthen the capacity of individual parliamentarians, regional parliamentary fora and parliamentary staff on demanding and using evaluation for evidence-based decision-making. The Forum carried out a global mapping on national evaluation policies and conducted training for parliamentarians in Asia and the Pacific in partnership with the International Program for Development Evaluation Training (IPDET) and the Asia Pacific Evaluation Association. Overall, 63 parliamentarians from 25 countries successfully completed the training.

74. UNFPA supported the active participation of parliamentarians in evaluation conferences, such as the Asian Evaluation Week and the EES Conference. At both events, parliamentarians from Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Uganda joined panels and shared their experience on the use of evaluation for policymaking.

V. The Evaluation Office programme of work in 2022

75. In 2022, the EO will continue its work in the following four key results areas, ensuring full adaptation of evaluations to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

A. Centralized evaluations

76. As detailed in the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, the EO will manage 14 evaluations in 2022/23.

B. Decentralized evaluation system

77. The EO will continue supporting the strengthening of the decentralized evaluation system, by delivering technical support, managing the evaluation quality assessment and assurance system and, together with the regional offices, develop capacities in evaluation, including those of young and emerging evaluators. The EO will launch the e-learning programme on evaluation, and provide guidance on alternative approaches, methods and considerations to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on evaluations.

C. Enhancing coherence in the United Nations system evaluation functions

78. The EO will continue to actively engage in United Nations development system reform, the UNEG, and other joint and system-wide evaluation initiatives. It will also continue to engage with the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) steering group and Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP). To enhance coherence and minimize overlaps and avoid overburdening stakeholders, the EO will seek opportunities for collaboration and coordination of CPEs among UNEG members, when appropriate and feasible.

D. Multi-stakeholder partnerships for national evaluation capacity development

79. The EO will continue to co-lead the Eval4Action campaign, including by supporting the roll-out of regional evaluation action plans and strategies to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through evaluation. In addition, it will continue its engagement in multi-stakeholder partnerships for national evaluation capacity development, including with EvalPartners and EvalYouth.

E. Budget for the 2022 workplan

80. The total EO budget for 2022 is \$4,822,397. The budget comprises two funding categories: (a) institutional budget (\$4,344,407) and (b) non-core resources (\$477,990).
