



**Executive Board of the  
United Nations Development  
Programme, the United Nations  
Population Fund and the United Nations  
Office for Project Services**

Distr.: General  
17 March 2023

Original: English

**Annual session 2023**

5 to 9 June 2023, New York

Item 13 of the provisional agenda

**UNFPA – Evaluation**

**United Nations Population Fund**

**Annual report on the evaluation function, 2022**

**Report of the Director, Evaluation Office**

*Summary*

This report provides information on the performance of the evaluation function at centralized and decentralized levels, details the contribution of UNFPA to coherence among evaluation functions across the United Nations, as well as national evaluation capacity development. It also presents the 2023 programme of work and budget for the Evaluation Office.

*Elements of a decision*

The Executive Board may wish to: (a) take note of the annual report on the evaluation function, and of the programme of work and budget of the Evaluation Office in 2023; (b) welcome the achievements across the evaluation performance indicators and the continued adaptability and responsiveness of the evaluation function to local contexts and new and emerging global challenges; (c) welcome the achievements in contributing to United Nations system-wide evaluation efforts, and in fostering national evaluation capacity development; (d) welcome the update of the peer review of the evaluation function, which will inform the revision of the evaluation policy; (e) request the Evaluation Office to present a revised evaluation policy for endorsement by the Executive Board during the first regular session in 2024; and (f) encourage UNFPA to continue to enhance the capacity of the decentralized evaluation function and humanitarian evaluations and to increase investments in the evaluation function.

*Note: The present document was processed in its entirety by UNFPA.*

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## I. Introduction

*In alignment with the United Nations Secretary-General's 'Our Common Agenda,' evaluation contributes to accelerating the delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the UNFPA Strategic Plan, 2022-2025*

1. Our planet is now home to 8 billion people. This milestone reminds us of the importance of rights, choices and dignity for all. However, the world today is facing massive interlinked and complex challenges at a level not seen in a generation. To steer a new course, the United Nations Secretary-General's report, titled 'Our Common Agenda,' was also a call to action to get back on track to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Aligned to this call, evaluation at UNFPA is enhancing global solidarity and multilateralism, furthering human rights, providing evidence on emerging mega-trends and contributing to reversing the "war on science."<sup>1</sup> Further, by supporting decision-making, learning and adaptation, evaluation continues to be a multiplier towards the progress towards the achievement of the three transformative results of UNFPA: ending the unmet need for family planning; ending preventable maternal deaths, and ending gender-based violence and harmful practices.

2. Given that evaluation is a source of evidence based on facts and methodological rigour, the ongoing advocacy of the UNFPA Evaluation Office (EO) for the use of evaluation in policy and decision-making, contributes to overturning the "infodemic"<sup>2</sup> rampant today. For stronger, more networked and inclusive multilateralism, the EO has expanded its work on national evaluation capacities and systems by building stronger multi-stakeholder evaluation partnerships. The Decade of Evaluation for Action (Eval4Action) advocacy campaign, co-led by the EO, EvalYouth and the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation (GPFE), advocates for influential evaluation at all levels. Enhancing intergenerational solidarity with youth in evaluation through sustained advocacy co-driven by young evaluators is a key focus of the evaluation function.

3. In line with the increased joint programme modalities and responding to the reform of the United Nations development system, the EO continued to prioritize joint and system-wide evaluations: 61 per cent of centralized evaluations in 2022 were joint or system-wide evaluations. To continue providing relevant evaluation lessons and knowledge for United Nations system-wide decision-making and learning, the EO is leading or contributing to several system-wide meta-synthesis, including on (a) the United Nations Youth 2030 strategy; (b) Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5); and (c) the SDGs on partnerships, peace, people and the planet.

4. The multitude of overlapping humanitarian crises and the unabated COVID-19 pandemic spurred the need for an agile and responsive approach to evaluations. In the face of these challenges, the EO showed flexibility and an ability to adapt to deliver on its core programme of work, including by exploring how to leverage artificial intelligence to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of the evaluation function.

### A. An intergenerational and geographically diverse peer review panel of the evaluation function of UNFPA

5. Given the significant changes in external and internal contexts, the evaluation policy is currently being revised, during 2023, aiming to ensure a stronger and more integrated evaluation function that provides credible evidence to support UNFPA in achieving its mandate. The revised evaluation policy will be presented for Board approval at the first regular session 2024. This revision will be informed by a UNEG peer review panel comprising a geographically and intergenerationally diverse group, including a young evaluator from Mexico, a parliamentarian from Sri Lanka, as well as evaluation experts from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and South Africa. The wide diversity on the peer review panel will bring fresh perspectives to the evaluation function. This diversity is also a first among peer review panels in UNEG history.

1 A/75/982. Our Common Agenda: report of the Secretary-General.  
<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3939258?ln=en>

2 Ibid.

6. The peer review panel conducted extensive interviews and consultations with members of the UNFPA Executive Committee, the Evaluation Office, the regional and country offices as well as external partners, including UNEG and Executive Board members. The draft peer review report, scheduled for June 2023, will then be presented to the Executive Board in an informal meeting by the peer review panel chair.

## **B. Adapting evaluations to the COVID-19 pandemic and other emerging challenges**

7. Thanks to the gradual lifting of travel restrictions world-wide in 2022, most decentralized programme level evaluations resorted to the classical data collection methods, while leveraging a hybrid approach of remote and onsite visits. This presented an important opportunity to deepen the methodological rigor through firsthand observations and meaningfully capturing diverse voices from those left furthest behind. Under circumstances where travel restrictions were still in place, the EO maximized the use of technology and online communication options. This was augmented by an increased engagement of in-country expertise, including young and emerging evaluators, contributing to national-level evaluation capacities.

8. All centralized and decentralized evaluations embedded a specific line of inquiry regarding the UNFPA response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, a centralized evaluation on the organizational resilience of UNFPA in response to the COVID-19 pandemic was launched in November 2022.<sup>3</sup> The EO also took part in several system-wide initiatives related to the response to COVID-19 pandemic. These included the co-management of the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the COVID-19 Humanitarian Response and the participation in the Global COVID-19 Evaluation Coalition. Overall, the continued flexibility and adaptation of the evaluation function, tailored to the specificities of local contexts and global challenges, has enabled it to remain purposeful and responsive while driving accountability and organizational learning.

## **C. Advocating for influential evaluation during the Eval4Action campaign**

9. The EO, together with EvalYouth and the GPFE, continued to implement the ‘Eval4Action campaign’, which is committed to accelerating the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals during the Decade of Action. Following a highly inclusive, intergenerational and participatory approach, the campaign, in less than three years, now has more than 160 partners all over the world.

10. In May 2022, the Eval4Action campaign launched the ‘Youth in Evaluation’ initiative, intensifying the global momentum and commitment to advancing meaningful engagement of youth and young evaluators in evaluation. The event marked the release of the Youth in Evaluation manifesto<sup>4</sup> in six languages that has nearly 600 signatories (138 organizations and 461 individuals), including from governments, international agencies, voluntary organizations for professional evaluation (VOPEs), academia, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), youth organizations and the private sector. For example, the Governments of Argentina, Costa Rica, Ecuador, India, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria and Uganda have endorsed the manifesto, as have the evaluation offices of the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNDP, UNFPA, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank, and four of the regional CLEAR Centers (for Anglophone Africa, Francophone Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and South Asia), among others.

11. To translate the vision of the manifesto into reality, Eval4Action facilitated a process for co-creating ‘standards on enhancing meaningful youth engagement in evaluation’. These standards provide a roadmap to enhance the practice and accountability towards engaging youth in evaluation. Following intergenerational and inclusive dialogues, tailored standards have been developed for specific target groups, such as international agencies, VOPEs, governments, youth organizations, academia, NGOs and the private sector.

12. Together with regional VOPEs and EvalYouth regional chapters, the Eval4Action campaign also launched volunteer-driven communication hubs in seven regions. The hubs comprise nearly 50 volunteers, with young evaluators in the lead, stepping up evaluation communications and advocacy. Taking forward the Eval4Action “Walk the Talk” video drive in 2021, where the evaluation community showcased institutional

<sup>3</sup> The scope of the evaluation, initially planned to focus on the UNFPA response to the COVID-19 pandemic, was expanded to an assessment of the ability of UNFPA to anticipate, adapt and respond to future global crises.

<sup>4</sup> See: <https://www.eval4action.org/youth-in-evaluation-manifesto-english>.

and individual actions to advance influential evaluation, six “Walk the Talk” blogs were published in 2022 to cross-fertilize actions and lessons for influential evaluation.

## II. Performance of the evaluation function

13. This year’s annual report, as in previous years, provides an overview of results achieved in 2022 against selected key performance indicators and takes stock of progress made over time. To strengthen a coherent mechanism for accountability and learning around collective results, an indicator on involvement of the EO in joint or system-wide evaluations was added this year.

**Table 1**  
**Trends in key performance indicators, 2014-2022**

<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>2022</i>	<i>Overall assessment</i>
<b>1. Financial resources invested in evaluation function</b>	Expenditures for evaluation as a percentage of total programme expenditures	0.45	0.69	0.91	0.83	0.96	0.98	0.83 0.94*	0.83 0.874**	0.80	Stable trend due to significant increase in UNFPA total expenditure
<b>2. Human resources for monitoring and evaluation</b>	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	100	Achieved
<b>3. Evaluation coverage</b>	Percentage of country offices that have conducted a country programme evaluation once every two cycles	-	-	-	80	90	97	97.3	96.5	95	Achieved (target of 90 per cent)
<b>4. Evaluation implementation rate</b>	Percentage of programme-level evaluations implemented as planned	-	-	60	55	92	92.7	88.9	94.4	100	Achieved (target of 90 per cent)
<b>5. Quality of evaluations</b>	Percentage of programme-level evaluations rated ‘good’ or ‘very good’	50	77	92	95	80	100	100	100	96	Achieved (target of 90 per cent)
<b>6. Evaluation reports posted on evaluation database</b>	Percentage of completed programme-level evaluation reports posted on evaluation database	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	Achieved
<b>7. Management response submission</b>	Percentage of completed programme-level evaluation reports with management response submitted	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	Achieved
<b>8. Implementation of management response</b>	Percentage of management response actions completed	76.5	78.0	78.5	84.4	89.5	84	90.0	95.0	95.0	Achieved (target of 90 per cent)

<b>9. Use of evaluation in programme development</b>	Percentage of new country programme documents whose design was clearly informed by evaluation	-	-	-	-	79.8	100	100	100	100	Achieved (target of 95 per cent)
<b>10. Engagement in centralized system-wide and joint evaluations</b>	Percentage of joint and system-wide evaluations out of total centralized evaluations	-	-	-	-	-	54	57	57	61	Achieved (target of 50 per cent)

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

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

Source: Evaluation Office and UNFPA Policy and Strategy Division

14. The EO conducted a series of actions to further enhance and consolidate the systems, processes and capacities for evaluations. The steady and continued investments over the years have brought sustained results in improving the quality, coverage and utility of evaluations.

15. Capitalizing on the strengths established over time, all key performance indicators have showed a stable trajectory in 2022. Mirroring the rising income of the organization, the expenditure on evaluation nearly tripled between 2014 and 2022, reaching the highest expenditure (in absolute terms) in the evaluation function, as shown in table 2 below. Human resources for evaluation remained stable over time, with 58 per cent of offices reporting at least one monitoring and evaluation specialist while the remaining 42 per cent reported appointing a focal point for the monitoring and evaluation function.

16. The past year also saw a positive trend in improving the evaluation coverage, contributing to a growing body of evaluative evidence to inform programme formulation and decision-making. In conformity with the evaluation policy, 95 per cent of offices have conducted at least one country programme evaluation (CPE) within two cycles, compared to 80 per cent in 2017. Most prominently, several country offices saw a notable upward trend in CPEs conducted in each country programme cycle. For the first time ever, all planned country programme level evaluations were implemented in 2022 (60 per cent in 2016).

17. Although the percentage of reports assessed as ‘good’ or ‘very good’ had slightly decreased from 100 per cent in 2021 to 96 per cent in 2022, in absolute numbers only one report was assessed ‘fair’, while 13 of 23, or over half of the assessed reports, were rated ‘very good’, and no reports were rated ‘unsatisfactory’. These achievements were made possible through a multi-path approach that combines rigorous quality assurance, targeted backstopping and capacity development, support by the EO and regional monitoring and evaluation advisors. Measures include: (a) review and approval of terms of reference; (b) pre-qualification of consultants; (c) technical and quality assurance support in evaluation design and for draft evaluation reports; (d) provision of guidance and methodological framework; and (e) external quality assessment of the final reports.

18. Progress is also evidenced in the extent to which UNFPA evaluations are gender responsive. For the fourth consecutive year, UNFPA exceeded the United Nations System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) evaluation performance indicator, with a 10.5 score, the same as in 2021 and a 5 per cent increase from 2020.

19. Similar to previous years, the submission rate of management responses continues to be at 100 per cent, representing a stable trend over time. The annual implementation rate of management responses continues to demonstrate a positive trend, reaching 95 per cent in 2022. All country programme documents (100 per cent) submitted to the Executive Board were informed by evaluation, against a baseline of 79.8 per cent in 2018.

20. To further catalyse coherence and joint action, the EO continued to be actively involved in and contributing to system-wide and joint evaluations: 61 per cent of centralized evaluations were conducted either as joint or system-wide exercises in 2022. In doing so, UNFPA not only supports joint accountability but also promotes system-wide learning for collective results while also enhancing programme efficiency.

21. Notwithstanding this overall significant progress, further efforts are necessary to enhance the effectiveness of the evaluation function at the decentralized level. The competency of the monitoring and evaluation officers/focal points at the country level was reported to vary from office to office, including in the requisite skills to manage complex evaluations. This has become acutely evident in the context of the increasing

scale and intensity of humanitarian emergencies and the commensurate growth in humanitarian funding. In view of the specific technical competencies needed to manage these complex evaluations, UNFPA offices, including the EO and the regional offices, should consider boosting their monitoring and evaluation capacities. Addressing challenges related to identifying multidisciplinary and skilled consultants needs to be prioritized. These challenges have further illustrated the need for a differentiated and systematic evaluation capacity development, targeting especially offices with capacity gaps.

22. Further efforts are needed to ensure all CPEs are designed and completed in a timely fashion to ensure the findings and recommendations are useful. While there is a great commitment to using evidence from evaluations, more needs to be done in effectively distilling lessons and embedding knowledge from evaluations in strategic, programmatic and operational thinking. Allocation of adequate resources to the evaluation function and sustaining the ring-fencing mechanism within the resource allocation system, is essential to maintaining the gains achieved across all key performance indicators.

23. In moving forward, the evaluation function needs to continuously adapt its approaches and processes to meaningfully inform and support the acceleration of the three transformative results within rapidly changing and challenging contexts.

**Key performance indicator 1: financial resources**

24. Investment in evaluation continued to steadily increase at both decentralized and centralized levels, having nearly tripled from 2014 to 2022. Overall, the expenditure for the evaluation function in 2022 amounted to \$9.7 million, the highest amount ever spent in the evaluation function. Of the total expenditure, \$4.3 million was spent at the centralized level while \$5.4 million was spent at the decentralized level (see table 2). In relative terms, this represents 0.80 per cent of the total UNFPA programme expenditure, as compared to 0.83 per cent in 2021. Although the ratio is below the evaluation policy norm of 1.4 per cent to 3 per cent of the total programme budget for the evaluation function, in real terms, the total expenditure on evaluation function in 2022 increased by 7 per cent over 2021 (\$9.03 million). In term of economies of scale, as the income of the organization grows, the proportion of spending on evaluation will conversely decrease, even with nominal growth and additional investments. Thus, the relative decrease in the ratio of evaluation expenditure is reflective of the increased total programme expenses in 2022.

25. Significantly, the regular resources expenditure of the evaluation function (including net institutional budget) was \$7.68 million, representing 2.5 per cent of the UNFPA regular resources programme expenditure; this at the upper bounds of the target established in the evaluation policy. This calculation better reflects the measurement of this key performance indicator, as nearly all of the UNFPA evaluation function is supported by unarmarked funds (either through the Institutional Budget in the case of the EO or regular resources in the case of country programme evaluations).

**Table 2**  
**Expenditures in the evaluation function, 2014-2022**

	<i>(in millions of \$)</i>								
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Total UNFPA programme budget expenditure*</b>	820.2	798.6	763.5	752.9	872.3	933.8	1 027.9	1 086.4	1 218.3
<b>Total expenditure of the evaluation function</b>	3.69	5.52	6.94	6.30	8.40	9.13	8.53(a) 9.64(b)	9.03(a) 9.48(b)	9.7
<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)	4.3
<i>Decentralized evaluation function</i>	1.31**	2.89	3.23	2.94	4.17***	5.23	5.33	5.15	5.4
<b>Total expenditure of the evaluation function as a percentage of</b>	<i>0.45%</i>	<i>0.69%</i>	<i>0.91%</i>	<i>0.83%</i>	<i>0.96%</i>	<i>0.98%</i>	<i>0.83%<sup>(a)</sup></i> <i>0.94%<sup>(b)</sup></i>	<i>0.83%<sup>(a)</sup></i> <i>0.87%<sup>(b)</sup></i>	<i>0.80%</i>

### UNFPA programme budget expenditures

\* Total UNFPA programme budget expenditure 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; therefore, the figure (\$1.31 million) reflects only the budget for evaluations.

\*\*\* The majority of the increase (from \$2.94 million in 2017 to \$4.17 million in 2018) is mainly due to the enhancement in costing, now capturing the totality of investment in decentralized evaluations better.

<sup>(a)</sup> with COVID-19-related reduction

<sup>(b)</sup> without COVID-19-related reduction

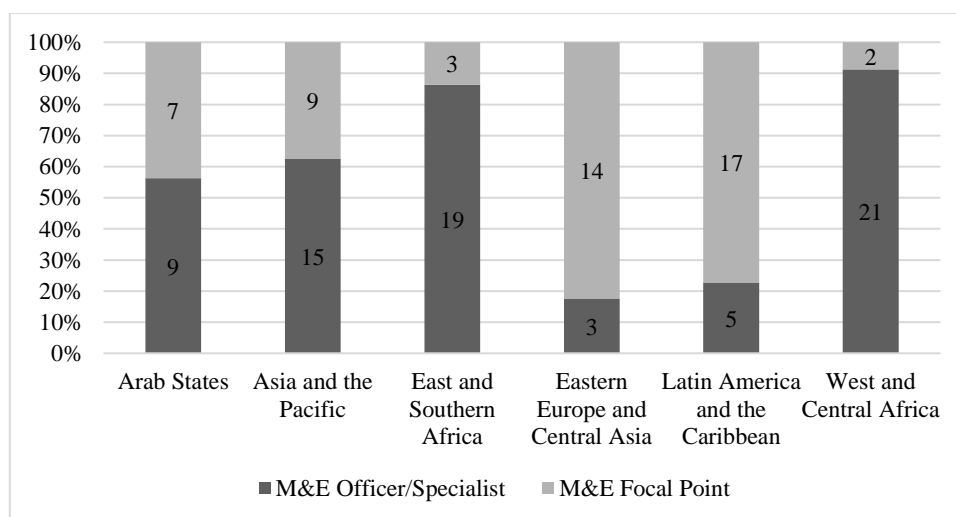
### Key performance indicator 2: human resources

26. The composition of the EO remained unchanged from last year, with 10 approved posts: one at general service level, eight at professional level and one at director level. Six of the 10 EO staff are women and seven of the 10 are from developing countries.

27. Staffing in the regional offices was marked by a relatively high turnover; however, all posts are now filled. At the regional level, UNFPA has six regional monitoring and evaluation advisors at the P5 level. In the West and Central Africa region, the EO assigned one evaluation advisor on a stretch assignment to temporarily fill in the vacant position of monitoring and evaluation adviser from December 2021 to May 2022.

28. At the decentralized level, the staffing profile differs across regions. On aggregate, 100 per cent of country offices were staffed with either a monitoring and evaluation officer (58 per cent) or monitoring and evaluation focal point (42 per cent). The number of country offices with monitoring and evaluation officers represented an increase of 10 percentage points, compared to 48 per cent in 2018. However, their level and seniority vary significantly. Mirroring the size and portfolio of offices, dedicated monitoring and evaluation officers are concentrated in regions with larger country offices, such as Africa and Asia and the Pacific, while focal point arrangements are in place 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, 2022, by region**



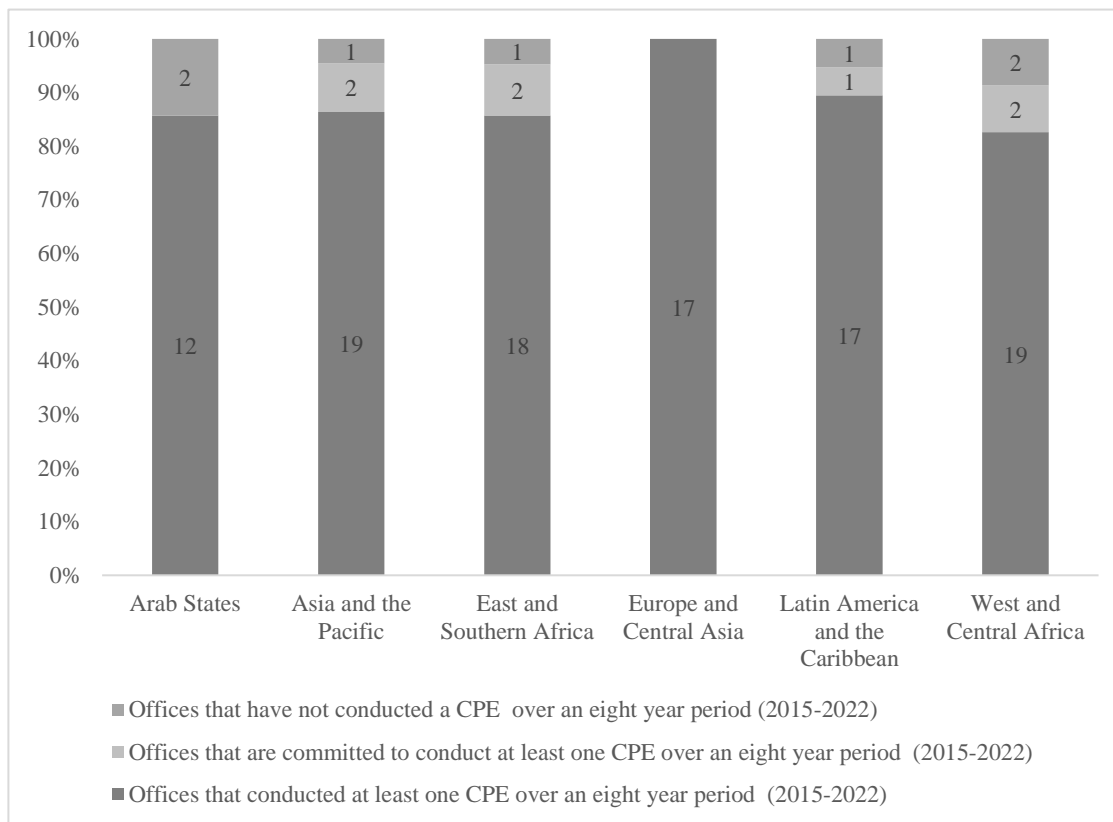
Source: Evaluation Office

Abbreviation: M&E: monitoring and evaluation

**Key performance indicator 3: coverage of decentralized programme level evaluations**

29. 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 key performance indicator remained strong, with 95 per cent of country offices completing or on track to completing at least one CPE over the last eight-year period (the typical length of two country programme cycles).<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 2**  
Evaluation coverage by region, 2015-2022 (\*)



**Key performance indicator 4: implementation rate of planned decentralized evaluations**

30. The implementation rate of planned decentralized evaluations remains robust. In 2022, 100 per cent of decentralized programme-level evaluations were implemented. A record 23 centralized and decentralized programme-level evaluations completed in 2022 (same as in 2021), compared to 10 in 2018. The technical guidance and quality-assurance support provided to country offices, in addition to the ringfencing mechanism, has helped the implementation of planned evaluations. West and Central Africa stood out for producing the highest number of reports (six) in 2022, compared to a cumulative total of five over the previous three years.

**Key performance indicator 5: quality of evaluation reports**

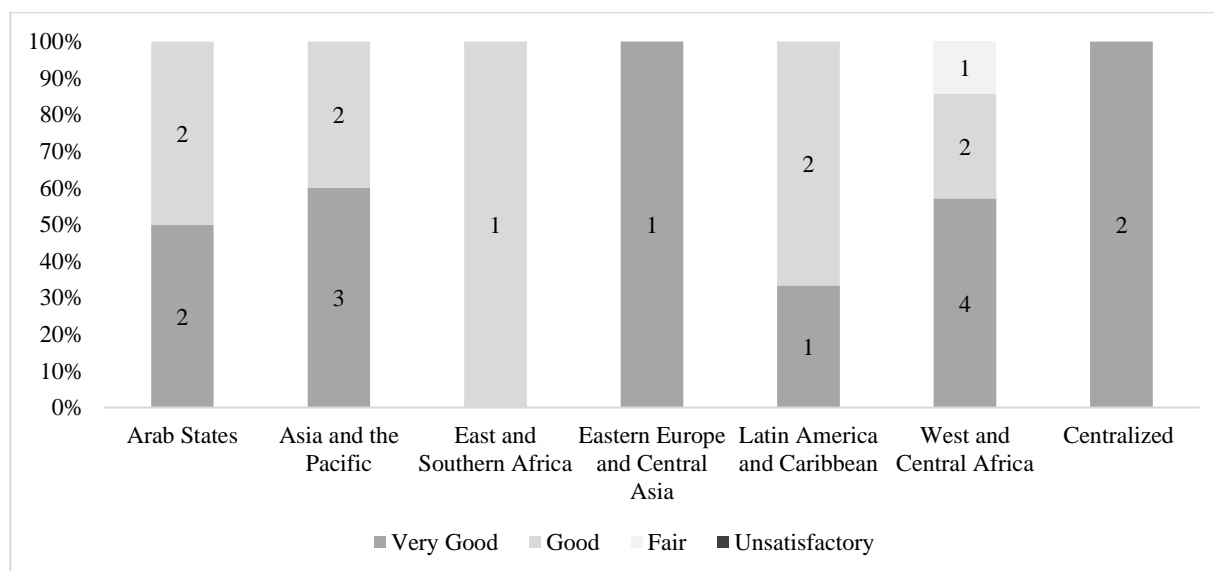
31. Despite a nominal decline of 4 percentage point (one report), the quality of centralized and decentralized evaluations remains robust, with 96 per cent of reports externally assessed as ‘good’ or higher, a significant improvement from 50 per cent in 2014. Of the 23 evaluation reports, 13 (57%) were rated as ‘very good’ and

<sup>5</sup> This captures an eight-year interval (2015-2022) of completed, ongoing and planned country programme evaluations.



nine (39%) as ‘good’. The quality of evaluations was maintained through deployment of a multi-pronged approach consisting of robust quality-assurance, pre-qualification of external consultants, availability of tools and guidance, and a myriad of internal evaluation capacity-development initiatives.

**Figure 3**  
**Quality of evaluations, by region, 2022**



Source: Independent assessment of the quality of evaluation reports

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

32. As in previous years, all completed centralized and decentralized programme-level evaluations, together with their external quality assessment, 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***

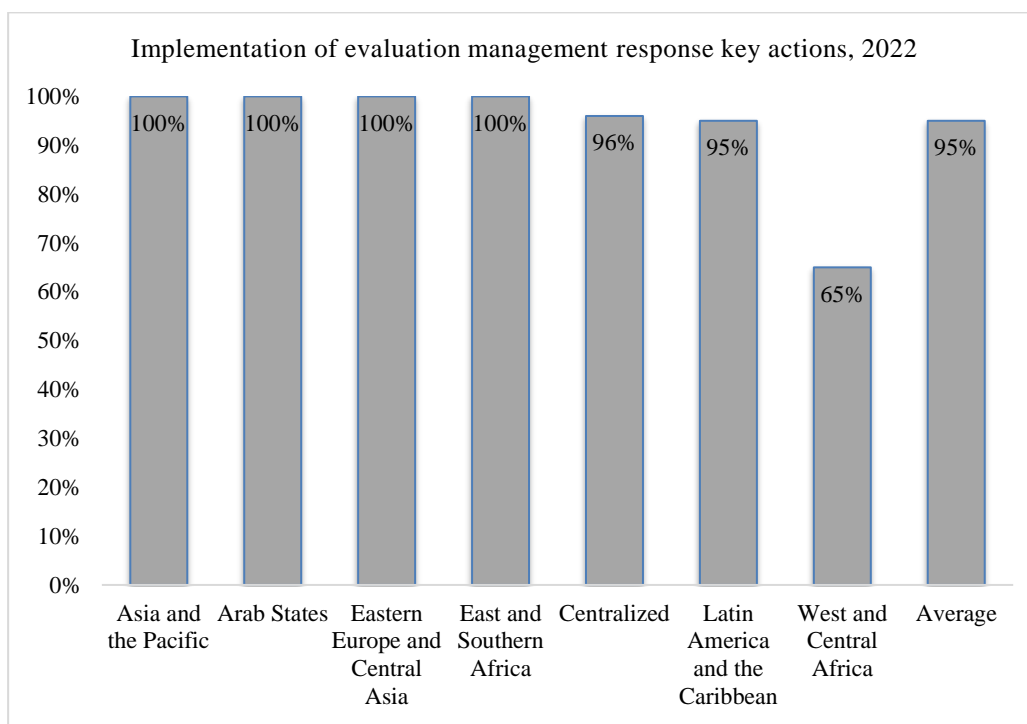
33. The evaluation management response provides a key mechanism for taking action on evaluation recommendations at various levels, aiming to improve programme performance, effectiveness and efficiency. Continuing the trend, management responses were submitted for all (100 per cent) of corporate and decentralized programme evaluations, demonstrating the consistent achievement of the target since 2014.

***Key performance indicator 8: implementation of management responses***

34. Thanks to numerous measures that the UNFPA Policy and Strategy Division has put in place over the years – including (a) the addition of two evaluation follow-up indicators in the corporate dashboard; (b) a strengthened corporate guidance; and (c) a more individualized follow-up approach, UNFPA achieved the annual implementation rate of 95 per cent in 2022 – five percentage points over the Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, target.

35. Further, the implementation rate of centralized recommendation actions, which, for many years, lagged behind the overall rate for the regions and the organization, reached 96 per cent in 2022, the highest in 10 years.

**Figure 4**  
**Implementation of evaluation management response/key actions, 2022**



Source: UNFPA management response tracking systems

**Key performance indicator 9: Use of evaluation in programme development**

36. Learning from evaluations continued to inform actions and decisions, including the development of new country programmes. In 2022, the interdivisional Programme Review Committee noted that all 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 over 2018, when 78.9 per cent of country programme documents met this requirement.

37. To facilitate evidence-based strategic dialogue informing new programming, the EO contributed to bringing the findings and lessons of evaluations to bear on the strategic orientation and formulation of new country programmes through its participation in strategic dialogues and Programme Review Committee deliberations. As evidenced by recent strategic dialogue white papers and country programme documents, CPEs generated useful insights to shaping the strategic direction and priorities of country programmes. However, further efforts are needed to systematically respond to evidence in areas where UNFPA needs to either do more or work differently towards the three transformative results.

**Key performance indicator 10: Percentage of centralized joint and system-wide evaluations**

38. Confirming the active EO commitment to enhance evaluation coherence within the United Nations system, 61 per cent (11 out of 16) of centralized evaluations were either joint or system-wide evaluations.

**D. Centralized evaluations**

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

***Full and timely implementation of centralized evaluations***

40. In accordance with the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, the EO undertook a wide range of evaluations covering an adequate diversity of specific areas of interest to inform corporate perspectives.

41. As of December 2022, the implementation rate of centralized evaluations was 100 per cent, with all evaluations completed or on track as per schedule. The status of planned centralized evaluations is presented in table 3 below.

**Table 3**  
**Implementation status of planned centralized evaluations and other evaluative studies, 2022-2023**

#	Title	Status	Management response issued	Presentation to Executive Board/ steering committees
1	Evaluation of UNFPA engagement with United Nations development system reform	Completed	Yes	Presented to the Executive Board at the 2023 first regular session
2	Evaluation of UNFPA support to adolescents and youth	Completed	Yes	Presented to the Executive Board at the 2023 annual regular session
3	Evaluation of UNFPA support to population dynamics and data: including links to ageing, low fertility, the demographic dividend and demographic resilience	Completed	Yes	Presented to the Executive Board at the 2023 annual regular session
4	<u>System-wide</u> meta-synthesis to support the Implementation of the United Nations Youth Strategy (part 2 on peace and resilience building)	Completed	No*	To be presented to the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth technical working group in 2023
5	<u>Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE)</u> of the humanitarian response to the COVID-19 pandemic	Completed	Not yet	To be presented to IASC in 2023
6	<u>Joint Impact Feasibility Study of UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme to End Child Marriage</u>	On Track	No*	To be presented to the Child Marriage Steering Committee in 2023
7	<u>System-wide</u> synthesis on SDG 5	On Track	No*	To be completed in 2023
8	Formative evaluation of the organizational resilience of UNFPA in light of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2023
9	<u>System-wide</u> evaluation on integration of HIV into primary health care	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2023
10	<u>System-wide</u> evaluation of SDG 3 – global action	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2024

11	<u>System-wide</u> humanitarian evaluation – crisis-specific (Ukraine <sup>6</sup> )	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2024
12	Evaluation of UNFPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025	On track	Not yet	To be completed in 2024
13	<u>System-wide</u> synthesis of evidence of SDG – Partnership pillar	On track	No*	To be completed in 2024

\* 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 and exploration of artificial intelligence to enhance efficiency***

42. In the spirit of the UNFPA Evaluation Policy to engage youth in a meaningful manner, the EO piloted a Youth Steering Committee to accompany the formative evaluation of UNFPA support to adolescents and youth. This innovative approach helped to ensure young people participated in all phases of the exercise as co-advisors and co-decision makers, which greatly helped to enhance the relevance, quality and credibility of the exercise. The engagement of young people also helped to amplify youth voices and perspectives while also strengthening the leadership capacities of young people by creating a space for them to influence decision-making. In addition, the EO partnered with EvalYouth to recruit young evaluators to participate in the data collection for the country case studies. Working alongside senior evaluators, the young evaluators were able to strengthen their own technical capacities in evaluation while contributing to the global exercise in a substantial way.

43. The EO is exploring innovative ways of leveraging artificial intelligence to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the entire evaluation function, including the conduct, management, communication and facilitation of use of evaluations and for efficient, robust and timely evidence extraction and synthesis. Together with other business units, the EO is preparing for a feasibility study in this area.

44. With its strong learning and utilization-focused approach, the EO has experimented with a workshop-style discussion to co-create and validate recommendations for centralized evaluations. This approach has proven effective in ensuring that recommendations are relevant and actionable while ensuring that they logically stem from independently collected, analysed and presented conclusions.

## **E. Use of centralized evaluations to foster change**

45. 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.

### ***Evaluation of UNFPA support to the HIV response (2016-2019)***

46. The evaluation, completed in 2020, guided the development of "Safe and Satisfying: A UNFPA strategy to improve sexual health by integrating HIV/STI prevention in programming and services 2022-2025," and underpinned the UNFPA role within the UNAIDS division of labour and its inputs into the Global AIDS Strategy, 2021-2026. In an environment of declining HIV resources, the evaluation has helped to focus the HIV and AIDS-related work of staff at global, regional and country levels, including in forging partnerships and supporting networks. The focus has deepened on interlinking and integrating sexual and reproductive health and rights/HIV/sexual and gender-based violence within the context of the comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights package and positioning of HIV/AIDS status as one of the most significant factors

<sup>6</sup> When the Executive Board approved the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, 2022-2025, at the first annual session in 2022, the specific crisis to be evaluated was yet to be confirmed. In early 2023, the Interagency Humanitarian Evaluation Group identified Ukraine as the crisis to be evaluated.

in the UNFPA ‘leaving no one behind’ framework. The evaluation has guided the overall relationship of UNFPA with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and other key partners. For instance, its recommendation that UNFPA should assert leadership in comprehensive condom programming has informed the Condom Strategic Initiative undertaken by UNFPA and UNAIDS for the Global Fund. Based on the evaluation findings on coordination and sustainability, UNFPA has also continued to co-convene the Global HIV Prevention Coalition with UNAIDS.

***Joint Evaluation of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation: Accelerating Change Phase III (2018-2021)***

47. The evaluation, completed in 2021, guided the development of phase IV (2022-2030) of the Joint Programme, including the integration of a strong humanitarian-development-peace approach. In response to the evaluation recommendations, innovative financing was introduced as one of the focus areas of the Joint Programme. The evaluation also led to a strengthening of the use of human rights mechanisms as one of the overarching principles to advance stakeholders accountability for eliminating female genital mutilation, including assessing and documenting the effectiveness of public declarations of female genital mutilation abandonment and community-level surveillance systems.

## **F. Decentralized evaluation system**

48. In 2022, some 21 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, the EO, the Policy and Strategy Division 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***

49. The EO maintained an effective evaluation quality assurance and assessment system, contributing to the improvement in the quality and credibility of evaluations. Given the diversity, in terms of complexity of contexts and capacity of offices, the EO provided targeted technical backstopping and quality assurance support at key phases in country programme evaluation processes. In addition, the EO intensified its support to promoting and communicating results of CPEs through a range of activities, strengthening organizational learning and knowledge sharing. The EO also continued to sharpen a human rights-based and gender-responsive approach in evaluations through its latest guidance on integrating dimensions on ‘leaving no one behind’<sup>7</sup> and reaching those left furthest behind, and on integrating social and environmental standards<sup>8</sup> in UNFPA evaluations.

50. To ensure strategic planning of decentralized evaluations, UNFPA continued to plan evaluations through multi-year costed evaluation plans aligned with country programme cycles. In 2022, all new country programmes presented to the Board were accompanied by costed evaluation plans reviewed by the EO.

51. The ring-fencing mechanism established to safeguard a sustainable financing mechanism for country programme evaluations was maintained, allowing implementation of all country-programme evaluations as planned. 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 valuable in ensuring a secure and adequate funding for decentralized programme level evaluations.

***Internal evaluation capacity development***

52. To provide detailed guidance on the design and management of country programme evaluations, the EO has, over the years, built up a comprehensive methodological framework consisting of a handbook, a management kit, issue-based thematic guidance notes, an evaluation e-learning training course and a strategy to enhance evaluation use through communications and knowledge management.

7 <https://www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/guidance-integrating-principles-leaving-no-one-behind-and-reaching-furthest-behind>

8 [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/admin-resource/Guidance\\_integrating\\_SES\\_in\\_eval.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/admin-resource/Guidance_integrating_SES_in_eval.pdf)

53. In 2022, the EO, together with the regional offices, employed customized solutions to further strengthening evaluation capacity, with special attention given to offices with capacity gaps. As part of the enhancing methodologies and capacity development, the EO, together with regional offices, rolled-out a country programme evaluation management kit and organized a series of workshops to equip country offices staff with practical knowledge of how to use the kit templates, tools and guidelines. The kit succeeded in providing a common package of ready-to-use guidance and tools, with demonstrated adaptation in several country programme evaluations. Concurrently, the EO embarked on revamping the methodological framework for country programme evaluations aimed at providing a more user-friendly and practical guidance to monitoring and evaluation officers/focal points and independent evaluators in conducting country programme evaluations. The revised methodology framework and the CPE management kit, coupled with a targeted evaluation capacity development support, are expected to further raise the quality and utility of evaluation reports.

54. The EO, in collaboration with regional offices, also organized a series of regional learning events and webinars, bringing together representatives, deputy representatives, monitoring and evaluation officers and focal points, as well as communication officers from country offices in the regions. Overall, over 300 staff benefited from these learning opportunities in the various regions.

### **III. Enhancing coherence in the United Nations system evaluation functions**

55. 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.

#### **G. System-wide and joint evaluations**

56. UNFPA continued to leverage the opportunities brought by the ongoing implementation of the United Nations reform by sustaining its engagement in system-wide and joint evaluations at the global and decentralized levels. The EO has continued to co-manage the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the COVID-19 humanitarian response, together with a range of global partners – ALNAP, InterAction, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response, UNHCR, UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (as Chair).

57. The EO also continued to support system-wide coordination and exchange of good practices on adaptation of the evaluation function to the COVID-19 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 organizations.

58. UNFPA is an active member of the SDG Global Evidence Coalition, established by UNDP in 2022. The Coalition is made up of 37 United Nations, bilateral and multilateral organizations and evaluation networks. As a member of the management group, the EO will participate in four of the five evidence synthesis ‘pillars’ – on partnerships, people, planet and peace. The syntheses are aimed at offering evidence and lessons learned with a view to provide policy recommendations to accelerate the SDGs ahead of 2030. The first synthesis – on partnerships, starting in 2022 –will be used as a pilot for the other four exercises. The synthesis reports, containing findings and recommendations, are expected to be presented to the 2023 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. In addition, UNFPA is also a member of the management group of the UN-Women-led synthesis of SDG 5 on gender equality.

59. Reflecting the UNFPA mandate on youth, the EO co-led, together with the Evaluation Office of UNICEF, – and with involvement of the EvalYouth Global Network, the Office of the United Nations Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, the Peacebuilding Support Office of the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, IOM, UNDP, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, as well as youth-led organizations, the United Network of Young Peacebuilders, the children and youth constituency (YOUNGO) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – the second system-wide synthesis of the United Nations Youth Strategy (Youth 2030), capturing what works and what does not work in United Nations youth interventions, focusing on peacebuilding

and resilience building. The report will inform and guide future youth programming in peacebuilding and resilience building to accelerate the implementation of Youth 2030, a system-wide framework for how the United Nations should programme for, with and alongside youth.

60. UNFPA continued to perform well against the key performance indicators set in the United Nations Funding Compact, by making 100 per cent of centralized evaluations available on the UNEG website. Regarding joint or system-wide evaluation, UNFPA continued to significantly exceed its commitment (collaborating in at least one), as 61 per cent (8 out of 13) of centralized evaluations are either joint or system-wide evaluations.

## **H. The United Nations Evaluation Group and regional evaluation groups**

61. The EO continued to participate in UNEG, including actively contributing to the implementation of the UNEG annual programme of work. As a member of the working group on gender, disability and human rights, the EO contributed to the review of the proposal to revise the guidance on integrating human rights and gender equality, based on the gap analysis undertaken in 2022. Led by consultants and a core group that includes the EO, the work on the revision of the guidance is underway and expected to be finalized by the end of 2023.

62. The Evaluation Office co-chaired the UNEG Synthesis Interest Group and, as part of its drive to foster exchanges on good practices, presented its capacity development approach and related methodological framework for country programme evaluation to the UNEG Decentralized Evaluation Interest Group. The EO also participated in several other working groups such as partnership, evaluation use and professionalization. To better coordinate and exchange practices among UNEG members on data and use of artificial intelligence, the EO is co-convening, together with UNDP, a UNEG working group on this topic and, together with UNICEF, one on young professionals in evaluation.

63. At the regional level, UNFPA continues to co-lead or actively contribute to the United Nations regional evaluation groups.

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

64. For a fourth year in a row, UNFPA ‘exceeded requirements’ of the evaluation performance indicator on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, with a composite score of 10.5. The majority of the evaluations reviewed in 2022 ‘met requirements’ (83%, 20 reports), with only three reports ‘approaching requirements’ and none ‘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. Although there was variation in how disability was addressed, all evaluations in 2022 included some level of analysis on the extent to which the programme under review considered persons with disabilities.

65. The EO launched in 2022 a guidance on “Integration of ‘leaving no one behind’ into evaluations”, aimed at deepening the meaningful integration of the ‘leaving no one behind’ principles and factors of vulnerability into all UNFPA evaluations.

## **J. Joint and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework evaluations**

66. In the spirit of the United Nations reform agenda, UNFPA, in collaboration with other agencies, United Nations country teams and regional mechanisms, actively supported United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) evaluations by providing technical assistance, quality assurance or financial support. Countries that received support in 2022 included Bhutan, Bolivia, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Colombia, Ecuador, Gabon, India, Indonesia, Malawi, Mauritania, Moldova, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and the Philippines, as well as the Pacific Island countries and territories. The EO also co-led the Cape Verde common country programme evaluation, together with the evaluation offices of UNDP and UNICEF. This joint collaboration was instrumental in piloting ways in which the different agencies can work together to implement an effective joint or common country programme evaluations.

67. Given the benefits of a common approach for collective accountability and learning, several evaluations were managed jointly with other United Nations agencies in 2022. Twelve decentralized evaluations were jointly conducted with ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNICEF, UNDP, the United Nations resident coordination offices, UN-Women, WFP and WHO. These include joint evaluations in Bangladesh, Gabon, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Indonesia, Malawi, Niger, Pakistan, the Philippines and Uzbekistan. In Nigeria, UNFPA participated in the evaluation of the United Nations ‘delivery as one’ programme implementation modality in selected states of the country. At the regional level, UNFPA, jointly with UN-Women engaged in the evaluation of the “EU 4 Gender Equality” initiative in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region. The UNFPA Pacific Subregional Office participated in the midterm review of the United Nations Pacific Strategy Fund.

68. In addition to being involved in UNSDCF and joint evaluations, UNFPA offices actively engaged in and provided leadership to monitoring and evaluation groups of United Nations country teams in 19 countries.

#### **IV. Multi-stakeholder partnerships for national evaluation capacity development**

69. 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.

70. The EO continued to be an active member of global evaluation coalitions, including (a) the EvalPartners Executive Committee, representing the United Nations system together with WFP; (b) the EvalGender+ Management Group, representing the United Nations system together with UN-Women; (c) the Global Evaluation Initiative Implementation Committee; and (d) the Global Evaluation Forum organizing committee.

71. The EO continued to co-lead the Eval4Action campaign at global and regional levels. In Asia and the Pacific, the EO and the regional office supported the Asia Pacific Evaluation Association, EvalYouth Asia and the Asia Pacific Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation in implementing the regional evaluation strategy. This included: (a) organizing a biannual summit and brown bag series with VOPEs on professionalization of evaluation; (b) surveys on national evaluation policies and systems and on the monitoring and evaluation practices for SDGs; (c) supporting a consortium of academic institutions in monitoring and evaluation education; (d) organizing the third winter school for young and emerging evaluators; and (e) organizing a regional dialogue on national evaluation policies and systems where 14 countries presented their status on national evaluation policies and systems.

72. The EO also continued to support strategic initiatives and events to mobilize a range of stakeholders and share good practices and lessons learned on strengthening inclusive national evaluation systems. In Africa, the EO supported the African Evaluation Association conference in enhancing the capacity of 100 young evaluators through their active participation in workshops and conference sessions. In Europe, the EO conducted three panels at the European Evaluation Society (EES) conference, including (a) a panel titled ‘The unusual suspects: From youth to parliamentarians to transform evaluation systems’, in partnership with EvalYouth, GPFE and EES; (b) a panel titled ‘Building a new generation of evaluators: career development as a tool for transformational evaluation’, in partnership with EvalYouth, Global Evaluation Initiative, P2p+ career advisory initiative and EES; (c) a panel titled ‘Making evaluation methods innovative to inform transformation: experience from United Nations agencies’, in partnership with WFP, UNICEF and UNDP. In Asia, the EO supported the EvalFestival, an event organized by Evaluation Community of India, at which 100 young evaluators were supported to participate in workshops and conference sessions.

73. The EO, in partnership with Asia Pacific Evaluation Association, also conducted a panel titled ‘Institutionalization of evaluation at national level: strengthening political, social and professional systems’ at the Asian Evaluation Week organized by the Asian Development Bank and the People’s Republic of China. The EO also supported the Community of Evaluators – South Asia to strengthen the capacities of 90 young evaluators through participation at the Evaluation Conclave held in India. A presidential strand, ‘Reshaping evaluation by enhancing meaningful participation of youth in evaluation,’ was conducted at the American Evaluation Association (AEA) conference jointly organized by the EO, EvalYouth and AEA. In Latin America



and the Caribbean, the EO also supported the ReLAC evaluation conference 2022 on capacity building of young evaluators.

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

74. The EO continued to advance the meaningful participation of youth in evaluation and build the professional capacity of young and emerging evaluators, as articulated in the evaluation policy.

75. In partnership with the World Bank Global Evaluation Initiative, capacity building of young evaluators was undertaken across seven regions in Arabic, French, Russian, Spanish and Ukrainian. The EO also continued to support Global EvalYouth strategic priorities, including by supporting: (a) capacity building of young evaluators through training, technical sessions, pre-conference workshops and mentoring; (b) development of capacity building materials; (c) networking through participation in evaluation conferences and events; and (d) providing a platform to EvalYouth Global to co-lead various taskforces and steering committees, ensuring youth participation in planning and implementation of evaluation initiatives for youth.

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

76. In addition to the partnership with GPFE to co-lead the Eval4Action campaign, the EO continued to support GPFE in its outreach to parliamentarians, strengthen the capacity of individual parliamentarians, regional parliamentary fora and parliamentary staff on demanding and using evaluation for evidence-based decision-making. GPFE launched the Asia Pacific Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation in 2022 as a follow-up to the training conducted for parliamentarians in partnership with the International Program for Development Evaluation Training and the Asia Pacific Evaluation Association in 2021. The EO also supported the active participation of parliamentarians in evaluation conferences. At these events, parliamentarians and parliamentary staff from Kyrgyzstan, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Uganda joined the panels and shared their experience on the use of evaluation for policymaking.

## **V. The Evaluation Office programme of work in 2023**

77. In 2023, the EO will continue its work in four key results areas. In the post-pandemic transition to a new way of working, the EO will continue to make adjustments in evaluation processes and approaches. The peer review of the evaluation policy will be a critical exercise informing the revision of UNFPA Evaluation Policy; following a comprehensive consultative process with all key stakeholders, the revised Evaluation Policy will be presented to the Executive Board at its first annual session in 2024.

### **K. Centralized evaluations**

78. As detailed in its quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, the EO will manage 14 evaluations in 2023/2024.

### **L. Decentralized evaluation system**

79. The EO will continue supporting the strengthening of a 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 evaluators. In particular, the EO will roll-out the revamped CPE methodological framework to strengthen methodological validity to ensure that country programmes are evidence-based and can deliver on the ambition of the strategic plan towards the three transformative results.

### **M. Enhancing coherence in the United Nations system evaluation functions**

80. 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 ALNAP. To minimize overlaps and avoid overburdening stakeholders, UNFPA will seek opportunities for joint evaluations and enhance its involvement in UNSDCF evaluations through meaningful engagement with the UNEG working group.

**N. Multi-stakeholder partnerships for national evaluation capacity development**

81. The EO will continue to co-lead the Eval4Action campaign, including by supporting the implementation of the standards on enhancing the meaningful engagement of youth in evaluation as well as the implementation of regional evaluation action plans to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It will also continue its engagement in multi-stakeholder partnerships for national evaluation capacity development, including with EvalPartners, EvalYouth and GPFE.

**O. Budget for the 2023 workplan**

82. The total EO budget for 2023 is \$4,606,979; this include \$2,495,383 allocated for posts and capacity development and \$2,111,596 for operations and related operational costs.

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