UNFPA
EVALUATION POLICY
2019

SUMMARY

The revised evaluation policy of UNFPA was developed in accordance with Executive Board decision 2018/11, and is the result of extensive consultations with key stakeholders. The policy is informed by the General Assembly resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, and by the UNFPA Strategic Plan and is aligned to the 2016 norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group. It outlines evaluation principles and procedures; sets out roles and responsibilities; describes contributions to system-wide evaluations and national evaluation capacity development; highlights human and financial resource requirements; and concludes with a note on the implementation, reporting and future review of the policy.

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PREFACE

UNFPA accords the highest priority to strengthening accountability to the people we serve. We are committed to evidence-informed decision making, to improving learning and to sharing knowledge. Above all, we are committed to delivering transformative results on the ground and in the lives of women and girls. A strong evaluation function is critical. That is why I welcome the Executive Board's endorsement of the revised Evaluation Policy 2019, which provides clear direction for the scope of, and approaches to, evaluation at UNFPA. I commend the independent Evaluation Office for leading a comprehensive, consultative, evidence-based revision of our evaluation policy, informed by the findings and recommendations of the external strategic review of the evaluation function.

To ensure relevance, evaluation must evolve in alignment with the fast-changing external environment. Since the endorsement of the 2013 Evaluation Policy, the landscape in which evaluations are conducted has been transformed by wide-ranging global accords, including the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Climate Change Agreement and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development. The revised Evaluation Policy reflects these new global normative frameworks.

In 2019, we mark the 25th anniversary of International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action and 50 years of UNFPA operations. As we commemorate these milestones, I believe the revised Evaluation Policy will strengthen the evaluation function at UNFPA for the path ahead, contributing to stronger results that advance the implementation of the ICPD agenda and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals and help make rights and choices a reality for every woman and girl. I urge UNFPA senior leadership and staff to implement this policy and to invest adequate human and financial resources for the evaluation function.

As we strive to reach zero unmet need for family planning, zero preventable maternal deaths, and zero violence and harmful practices against women and girls, evaluation helps us zero in on and clearly understand what works, and why. This is essential to enable us to deliver more and deliver better, and to leave no one behind.

Dr. Natalia Kanem
Executive Director, UNFPA

FOREWORD

The revised Evaluation Policy 2019 sets out to improve and strengthen accountability, evidence-based decision making and learning at UNFPA by articulating a clear roadmap and priorities for the evaluation function. It builds upon the 2013 Evaluation Policy to reflect the current internal and external environment in which we operate. The policy provides up-to-date definitions, principles, and norms and standards on evaluation as well as clarifies the various roles and responsibilities for the evaluation function at UNFPA.

The revised Evaluation Policy aligns with internal strategic frameworks, including the current UNFPA Strategic Plan, and reflects the updated norms and standards of UNEG (2016) and the standards for evaluating humanitarian assistance.

The revised Evaluation Policy also reflects outcomes of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review that emphasizes the importance of strengthening national evaluation capacities and United Nations joint and system-wide evaluations. The policy is also aligned with the UN Reform agenda and 2018 UNGA resolution on repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda, that emphasizes improving monitoring and reporting on system-wide results.

The revised Evaluation Policy prioritizes enhancing the use of evaluations, to inform ongoing programme implementation, support programme design, and contribute to evidence-based decision making. The policy stresses that the timely implementation of evaluation recommendations and integration of lessons learned in programming and decision-making is key to making UNFPA stronger to deliver rights and choices for all.

The policy affirms UNFPA commitment to enhanced coherence and collaboration of the organization with other UN entities, through joint evaluations, system-wide evaluations, UN Evaluation Group and Interagency Humanitarian Evaluation Group initiatives, and multi-stakeholder partnerships to strengthen national capacities to evaluate SDGs. The revised policy further articulates UNFPA commitment in enhancing youth capabilities in meaningfully engaging in evaluation, as well as strengthening national evaluation capacities by enhancing national evaluation systems and supporting generation of evaluative evidence to inform national progress toward the achievement global and national goals.

Finally, the revision of the Evaluation Policy is a result of a transparent and participatory process, including extensive consultations with key stakeholders. I thank all colleagues and partners who contributed to this process. We continue to count on your support to implement the vision set forth in this policy.

Marco Segone
Director, UNFPA Evaluation Office

1. OVERVIEW

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION POLICY

The evaluation policy sets out the purpose and use of evaluation in UNFPA, provides definitions, principles and norms, and outlines roles and responsibilities for the evaluation function. It guides UNFPA staff and partners regarding the organization's requirements for the conduct and use of evaluations. The policy applies to all levels of the organization.

The evaluation policy serves the mission of UNFPA as set out in its strategic plan and pursuant to the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development. The policy supports the development of a culture of evaluation for better performance, continuous learning, and strengthened accountability.

The policy is aligned with the Charter of the United Nations[1] and with humanitarian principles[2] and has a commitment to human rights and gender equality. It responds to the call for rigorous, timely and reliable evaluative evidence to support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The policy also fulfils the requirements of the 2016 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR).[3] Finally, the policy supports efforts to further strengthen national evaluation capacity development in compliance with United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution 69/237.

The policy is guided by the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and international good practices in evaluation, including evaluation of humanitarian assistance. These norms and practices ensure independence, impartiality, credibility and usefulness, as well as full engagement with stakeholders in transparent evaluation processes.

The policy is also aligned to the UNFPA Oversight Policy,[4] which aims to encourage good governance, create the necessary environment of accountability and

1 United Nations, Charter of the United Nations, 24 October 1945, Chapter IX, art. 55 c.
2 General Assembly resolutions 46/182 and 58/114.
3 General Assembly resolution 71/243.
4 UNFPA Oversight Policy, (DP/FP/2015/2), January 2015.

transparency in UNFPA and ensures that UNFPA operates effectively and efficiently while continuously improving its performance.

RATIONALE FOR A REVISED POLICY

Since the endorsement of the 2013 evaluation policy, the environment in which the organization operates has changed significantly. The landscape in which evaluations are conducted has been transformed by wide-ranging global accords, including those on sustainable development (2030 Agenda); disaster risk reduction (Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030); climate change (Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change); and financing for development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development). The 2016 QCPR emphasizes the importance of strengthening national evaluation capacities and United Nations joint and system-wide evaluations. In addition, the 2018 UNGA resolution on repositioning the United Nations development system in the context of the QCPR stresses the need to improve monitoring and reporting on system-wide results. It also welcomes the strengthening of independent system-wide evaluation measures by the Secretary-General, including measures to improve existing capacities. Together with efforts to strengthen the delivery of humanitarian action and the reform agenda on repositioning the United Nations development system, these resolutions and accords provide key directions for the scope of, and approaches to, evaluation going forward.

Evaluation norms and standards and related methods and approaches are enhanced on a continual basis to address emerging needs. The evaluation policy reflects the 2016 updated norms and standards of UNEG and standards for evaluating humanitarian assistance. In addition, it aligns as much as possible to the latest evaluation policies of sister United Nations agencies.

In 2017-2018, UNFPA undertook an external, independent strategic review of the UNFPA evaluation function as set out in its evaluation policy. The review concluded that the evaluation policy is fundamentally sound, but also highlighted the need to update the policy in order to, inter alia, align it with internal strategic frameworks, including the UNFPA strategic plan, and global normative and strategic instruments.

Sets the vision and purpose of evaluation at UNFPA

Positions evaluation function to contribute to UNFPA priorities, ICPD agenda, SDGs and UN reform

Enhances key priorities of the evaluation function at UNFPA

Result **of an evidence-based, transparent and consultative process**

2. DEFINITIONS

Evaluation at UNFPA serves three main purposes.

ACCOUNTABILITY | **EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION-MAKING** | **CONTRIBUTES LESSONS LEARNED**

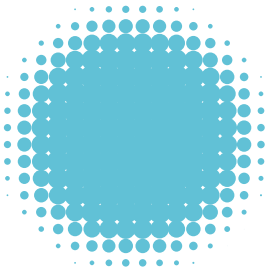
- **First**, evaluation is a means to demonstrate accountability to stakeholders on its performance in achieving development results and invested resources.
- **Second**, evaluation supports evidence-based decision-making: utilization-focused evaluations (which enhance the utility and use of evaluations) provide credible information to support decision-making by management on planning, budgeting, implementation and reporting, as well as improvements in policies and programmes.
- **Third**, evaluation provides important lessons learned, expanding the existing knowledge base on how to accelerate implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. In particular, evaluation provides important lessons on how best to advance sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, and on how UNFPA can effectively support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

UNFPA applies the UNEG definition of evaluation: "An evaluation is an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders."[5]

5 United Nations Evaluation Group: Norms and standards for evaluation (2016).

Consistent with the UNFPA Oversight Policy (DP/FPA/2015/2), evaluation is distinct and separate from other oversight functions, such as audit and investigation.

UNFPA evaluations, which cover activities funded by both regular and other resources, fall to two main categories:



CENTRALIZED EVALUATIONS

Centralized evaluations are commissioned by the independent Evaluation Office. These evaluations are undertaken by external independent evaluators. However, the independent Evaluation Office may decide to conduct selected evaluations itself.

Centralized evaluations are undertaken to assess issues of corporate strategic significance that contribute to achieving the goals of the strategic plan with regard to development effectiveness and organizational performance. Centralized evaluations have a strategic scope or address organization-wide issues.

In order to ensure that corporate strategic issues are well covered, at least one evaluation will be focused on each outcome of the strategic plan during its implementation cycle. The results of centralized evaluations are presented to the Executive Board.

DECENTRALIZED EVALUATIONS

Decentralized evaluations of country, regional and global programmes are managed by the business unit responsible for the programme being assessed, and are conducted by independent, external evaluators pre-qualified by the independent Evaluation Office.

Decentralized evaluations are key inputs for centralized evaluations and for evaluations of United Nations development assistance frameworks.

To ensure the highest possible quality and credibility of decentralized country programme evaluations, the independent Evaluation Office approves their terms of reference.

UNFPA is fully committed to supporting independent, system-wide evaluation mechanisms as well as joint evaluations with other United Nations organizations both at centralized and decentralized levels. Project-level evaluations requested by donors should comply with this policy.

The following criteria and questions, in order of priority, guide the selection of centralized and decentralized evaluations:

- **Strategic relevance of the subject**. (i) Does the evaluation cover issues of corporate strategic significance that contribute to the achievement of the strategic plan? (ii) Is the subject of the evaluation a socioeconomic or political priority? (iii) Is the subject of the evaluation part of the annual priorities of UNFPA? (iv) Is the subject of the evaluation a priority for UNFPA in a specific geographical region where, for example, there is high maternal mortality, low contraceptive prevalence, or high teenage pregnancy rates?
- **Risk associated with the subject.** Are there political, economic, funding, structural or organizational factors that present a potentially high risk for the non-achievement of results or for which further evidence is needed for decision-making by management?
- **Potential for system-wide, joint or United Nations development assistance framework evaluations.** Does the evaluation present an opportunity to evaluate jointly with other partners (United Nations country teams, national governments, donors, etc.) or contribute to a United Nations development assistance framework evaluation to avoid duplication and promote coordination?
- **Significant investment.** Is the subject considered significant in relation to the portfolio of activities of UNFPA?
- **Feasibility for implementing the evaluation**. (i) Is the evaluability of the intervention sufficient to conduct an in-depth study that can provide sound findings, recommendations and lessons learned? (ii) Does the commissioning office (the independent Evaluation Office, the regional office or the country office) have the resources available to conduct or manage a high-quality evaluation within the time period indicated?
- **Potential for replication and scaling-up**. (i) Would an evaluation provide the information necessary to identify the factors required for the success of an intervention and determine the feasibility of its replication or scaling-up? (ii) Is the intervention a pilot and/or an innovative initiative?
- **Knowledge gap.** Will the evaluation help to fill a vital knowledge gap in relation to the thematic focus of UNFPA?
- **Formal commitments to stakeholders.** (i) Are stakeholders requesting the evaluation (for example, through donor requirements in co-financing arrangements or through partner countries requesting the evaluation to inform national programmes)? (ii) Can the request for the evaluation be satisfied through an evaluation that is already planned?

3. PRINCIPLES AND NORMS

The guiding principles of evaluation at UNFPA emanate from decisions taken by the General Assembly, from the Executive Board, and from UNFPA executive management's commitment to nurture an evaluation culture. The principles also emanate from the United Nations Evaluation Group's norms and standards and code of conduct for evaluation. These principles are as follows:

- 1. Evaluations are planned and conducted ensuring **national ownership and leadership** of evaluation processes by both rights holders and duty bearers. They are undertaken with a view to strengthen national evaluation capacity and to increase the participation of national counterparts, including beneficiaries, through inclusive and participatory approaches in accordance with principles of aid effectiveness, specifically the principles of national ownership and mutual accountability.
- 2. Evaluations abide by universally shared values of **equity, justice, gender equality and respect for diversity.** The UNEG Guidelines on Integration of Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation are also part of this guiding principle.
- 3. Evaluation provides evidence to "**manage for results"** by assessing the extent to which UNFPA contributes effectively to: (i) achieving results in its own mandate areas, including in humanitarian and fragile contexts, and (ii) accelerating progress on the International Conference on Population and Development programme of action agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Evaluations depend on the quality of the design of programmes so that results are clear, measurable, and capable of being monitored and evaluated. Through the generation of evidence, evaluation enables more informed management and better decision-making.
- 4. Management ensures that evaluation is an integral part of the **organizational standards** of UNFPA. As part of a broader culture of accountability and managing for results, UNFPA seeks empirical evidence on the results achieved, using lessons learned to improve programme design and effectiveness and meet the needs of its beneficiaries.

5. Following the United Nations Secretary-General's report on repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/72/684-E/2018/7), UNFPA is committed to **harmonizing and aligning its evaluations with the evaluation efforts of United Nations system partners** (in the context of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and Delivering as One) and other development partners to better support countries to achieve sustainable development. This support includes working together more effectively at all levels, and enhancing multi-stakeholder partnerships.

6. Management, through the budget approved by the Executive Board, ensures that **adequate human and financial resources** are allocated for evaluations.

UNEG
United Nations Evaluation Group

UNFPA evaluations adhere to the following norms, as outlined in the United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016):

- Internationally agreed principles, goals and targets
- Utility
- Credibility
- Independence
- Impartiality
- Ethics
- Transparency
- Human rights and gender equality
- National evaluation capacities
- Professionalism

INTERNATIONALLY AGREED PRINCIPLES, GOALS AND TARGETS

Within the United Nations system, it is the responsibility of evaluation managers and evaluators to uphold and promote, in their evaluation practice, the principles and values to which the United Nations is committed. In particular, they should respect, promote and contribute to the goals and targets set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

UTILITY

In commissioning and conducting an evaluation, there should be a clear intention to use the resulting analysis, conclusions or recommendations to inform decisions and actions. Evaluations are manifestly useful: they make relevant and timely contributions to organizational learning, they inform decision-making processes and they provide accountability for results. Evaluations can also be used to contribute beyond the organization by generating knowledge and empowering stakeholders.

CREDIBILITY

Evaluations must be credible. Credibility is grounded on independence, impartiality and a rigorous methodology. Key elements of credibility include transparent evaluation processes, inclusive approaches involving relevant stakeholders and robust quality assurance systems. Evaluation results (or findings) and recommendations are derived from — or informed by — the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of the best available, objective, reliable and valid data and by accurate quantitative and qualitative analysis of evidence. Credibility requires that evaluations are ethically conducted and managed by evaluators who exhibit professional and cultural competencies.

INDEPENDENCE

To be credible evaluations must be independent. This influences the ways in which an evaluation is used and allows evaluators to be impartial and free from undue pressure throughout the evaluation process. The independence of the evaluation function comprises two key aspects — behavioural independence and organizational independence. Behavioural independence ensures the ability to evaluate without undue influence by any party. Evaluators must have full freedom to conduct their evaluative work impartially, without the risk of negative effects on their career development and they must be able to freely express their assessment. The independence of the evaluation function underpins the free access to information that evaluators should have on the evaluation subject. Organizational independence requires that the central evaluation function is positioned independently from management functions; the Evaluation Office is responsible for setting the evaluation agenda and should be provided with adequate resources to conduct its work. Organizational independence also ensures that evaluation managers have full discretion to directly submit evaluation reports to the appropriate level of decision-making and that they can report directly to an organization's governing body. Independence is vested in the evaluation head to directly commission, produce, publish and disseminate duly quality-assured evaluation reports in the public domain without undue influence by any party.

IMPARTIALITY

The key elements of impartiality are objectivity, professional integrity and absence of bias. The requirement for impartiality exists at all stages of the evaluation process, including: planning an evaluation, formulating the mandate and scope, selecting the evaluation team, providing access to stakeholders, conducting the evaluation, and formulating findings and recommendations. Evaluators need to be impartial, implying that evaluation team members must not have been (or expect

in the near future to be) directly responsible for the policy setting, design or management of the evaluation subject.

ETHICS

Evaluations must be conducted with the highest standards of integrity and respect for: the beliefs, manners and customs of the social and cultural environment; human rights and gender equality; and the "do no harm" principle for humanitarian assistance. Evaluators must respect the rights of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence. They must also ensure that sensitive data is protected and cannot be traced to its source. They must validate statements made in the report with those who provided the relevant information. Evaluators should obtain informed consent for the use of private information from those who provide it. When evidence of wrongdoing is uncovered, it must be reported to the Office of Audit and Investigation Services.

TRANSPARENCY

Transparency is an essential element of evaluation. It establishes trust, builds confidence, enhances stakeholder ownership and increases public accountability. Evaluation products should be publicly accessible.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

The universally recognized values and principles of human rights and gender equality need to be integrated into all stages of an evaluation. It is the responsibility of evaluators and evaluation managers to ensure that these values are respected, addressed and promoted, underpinning the commitment to the principle of "no one left behind".

NATIONAL EVALUATION CAPACITIES

The effective use of evaluation can make valuable contributions to accountability and learning and thereby justify actions to strengthen national evaluation capacities. In line with General Assembly Resolution A/RES/69/237, on building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level, national evaluation capacities within the UNFPA mandate should be supported upon the request of Member States.

PROFESSIONALISM

Evaluations should be conducted with professionalism and integrity. Professionalism should contribute towards the credibility of evaluators, evaluation managers and evaluation heads, as well as the evaluation function. Key aspects include: access to knowledge; education and training; adherence to ethics and to these norms and standards; utilization of evaluation competencies; and recognition of knowledge, skills and experience. This should be supported by an enabling environment, institutional structures and adequate resources.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All organizational units of UNFPA have distinct roles and responsibilities in ensuring that evaluation supports accountability, evidence-based decision-making and learning. Working together, the organizational units contribute to a coherent and effective evaluation function. Roles and responsibilities are delineated below.

EXECUTIVE BOARD

The Executive Board is the custodian of the evaluation policy. The Executive Board approves the evaluation policy and the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan and considers the annual reports on evaluation, which the independent Evaluation Office submits to the Executive Board. The Executive Board also considers the Executive Director's annual report on the use and follow-up of evaluation recommendations. The independent Evaluation Office consults the Executive Board in a timely manner on evaluation priorities and plans. The Executive Board uses and draws on the findings and recommendations of evaluations for its oversight and approval of UNFPA policies, strategies and programmes.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Executive Director is accountable for the work of UNFPA and is the principal champion of evaluation in UNFPA. The Executive Director provides the political support and enabling environment to enhance the evaluation culture in UNFPA. He or she is responsible for safeguarding the independence of the Evaluation Office by appointing - through an external competitive recruitment process and in consultation with the Executive Board - the director of the Evaluation Office and by renewing the contract of, or dismissing, the director of the Evaluation Office. The Executive Director ensures that the independent Evaluation Office is adequately staffed and that sufficient resources are available to allow it to fulfil its role. The director of the Evaluation Office is appointed for a fixed term of five years, renewable once, and is thereafter barred from working for UNFPA.

The Executive Director ensures the development and implementation of management responses and action plans that result from evaluations. The Executive Director also ensures that the managers of business units respond to and utilize evaluation in their operational, strategic, policy and supervisory functions, and that the relevant units take appropriate follow up action on evaluation findings and recommendations. The Executive Director reports regularly to the Executive Board on the use and follow-up of all evaluations as part of his or her annual report to the Executive Board.

OVERSIGHT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Oversight Advisory Committee assists the Executive Director in fulfilling the Executive Director's responsibilities with regard to the evaluation function. The detailed description of the committee's roles and responsibilities is included in the oversight policy approved by the Executive Board.

EVALUATION OFFICE

The independent Evaluation Office is the custodian of the evaluation function at UNFPA. It reports functionally to the Executive Board and administratively to the Executive Director. The office is independent from the operational, management and decision-making functions in the organization, and is impartial, objective and free from undue influence. The independent Evaluation Office has the authority to determine the scope, design, conduct and commissioning of evaluations, and to submit reports directly to the appropriate decision makers, including the Executive Board. Management cannot impose restrictions on language or on the content of evaluation reports. To avoid conflicts of interest, remove biases and maximize impartiality and objectivity, evaluators must not be directly involved in policy setting, design, implementation or management of the subject of the evaluation before, during and for at least two years after the evaluation. In addition, evaluation teams must demonstrate relevant expertise and should have gender and geographical balance.

The main functions of the independent Evaluation Office are to:

- Prepare, review and update the UNFPA evaluation policy;
- Develop the UNFPA quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan for centralized and decentralized programme level evaluations, based on inputs from and consultations with the Executive Board, senior management, UNFPA offices and other stakeholders;
- Report directly, on an annual basis, to the Executive Board on the evaluation function at UNFPA;
- Directly manage and decide upon resources – human (including consultants), and financial – required for centralized evaluations and

the implementation of the Evaluation Office work plan;

- Conduct or commission centralized evaluations;
- Approve the terms of reference and pre-qualify evaluators for decentralized programme-level evaluations;
- Present the results of centralized evaluations;
- Regularly alert senior management to emerging evaluation-related issues of corporate significance, without taking part in decision-making;
- Set evaluation standards and criteria;
- Develop methodological guidance and maintain evaluation quality-assurance mechanisms in order to continuously improve and enhance the quality and credibility of UNFPA evaluations and the overall evaluation function;
- Promote system-wide and joint evaluations, national ownership and leadership of evaluations, and capacity development in evaluation;
- Plan and provide the necessary training for UNFPA staff on issues related to evaluation policy, standards, criteria, quality assurance, and the design and management of evaluations;
- Provide support and technical advice to business units managing decentralized evaluations;
- Actively disseminate and share knowledge generated by evaluations;
- Maintain a publicly accessible repository of evaluations;
- Engage in partnerships with professional evaluation networks, such as UNEG, and support the harmonization of the evaluation function in the United Nations system;
- Assess the quality of evaluation experts and consultants, and maintain a roster of qualified evaluation professionals.

POLICY AND STRATEGY DIVISION

Policy and Strategy Division promotes and supports evaluation as part of its mandate of strengthening results-based management and improving organizational effectiveness and efficiency by:

- Promoting and supporting the evaluability of programmes, including those it manages;
- Conducting capacity-building activities for UNFPA staff and promoting knowledge on theories of change, results frameworks, results-based management and performance-monitoring frameworks and indicators;
- Developing and implementing systems and tools in support of results-

based management;

- Establishing programme documentation systems;
- Integrating evaluation findings, recommendations and lessons learned into the UNFPA performance-management system.

As a custodian of the UNFPA global management response tracking system (MRTS), the Policy and Strategy Division:

- Advises country and regional offices on the planning, resourcing, quality assurance and implementation of decentralized evaluations;
- Works, together with the Evaluation Office, with the monitoring and evaluation staff of UNFPA units to ensure that evaluation plans are properly implemented;
- Provides technical support, capacity building and, where necessary, coordination of the preparation of management responses, ensuring their timeliness, high quality and the engagement of all relevant/responsible business units;
- Monitors the implementation of management responses to centralized and decentralized evaluations;
- Maintains the MRTS, ensures it is updated, and improved as needed, generates the organizational effectiveness and efficiency performance indicators related to the use of evaluation, monitors these indicators and provides management with an analytical report on its performance and suggestions for corrective actions;
- Prepares an organizational management response to the annual report of the evaluation function to the Executive Board;
- Provides guidance to UNFPA units on the use of evaluation findings and lessons to improve organizational decision-making, accountability and institutional learning;
- Coordinates the preparation of the annual report of the Executive Director to the Executive Board, which includes follow-up actions to evaluation and integration of evaluation evidence into strategic policy, planning and decision-making at the global level.

Further, the Policy and Strategy Division maintains, manages and promotes the policies and procedures manual for the organization and in this capacity ensures that decentralized evaluation in UNFPA contributes to and remains consistent with other related policies, procedures and programme manuals.

SENIOR MANAGEMENT

Senior management (including deputy executive directors, division directors, regional directors and country representatives) considers and provides inputs

to the quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan; monitors follow-up on evaluation recommendations as outlined in the management responses; promotes the use of information from evaluations in decision-making; and ensures that adequate human resources are available to support evaluations. Senior managers are responsible for creating an enabling environment to strengthen the evaluation culture. Senior management at decentralized level is also responsible for: (a) managing decentralized evaluations; (b) contributing inputs to reports on the use and follow-up of evaluations; (c) ensuring that, at the programme planning stage, adequate results frameworks are developed for programmes, including, where appropriate, a component for national or regional capacity-building in evaluation; (d) promoting the full and active participation of implementing partners and national, regional and global counterparts in the evaluation process; (e) increasing the involvement in joint evaluations with partners, donors and programme countries; and (f) supporting centralized evaluations, as necessary.

REGIONAL OFFICES

Regional offices perform a leadership role in promoting the UNFPA agenda at the regional level. They provide integrated technical, operational and programmatic support and quality assurance to country offices in programming process in order to ensure alignment between global, regional and country levels in strategic planning, policy application and the attainment of key results.

Regional monitoring and evaluation advisers provide overall technical support to monitoring and evaluation, as they:

- develop and lead the implementation of annual work plans for regional programme and/or thematic evaluations;
- advise on the evaluability of regional and country programmes. This advice could include providing technical assistance to country offices in their regions in establishing robust monitoring frameworks to ensure the collection of high-quality monitoring data, through partnerships with national partners and through capacity-development;
- provide technical support and quality assurance to country offices in their region for the planning, management, conduct, follow-up and use of evaluations. This includes assisting country offices in preparing high-quality costed country evaluation plans, as well as terms of reference for evaluations prior to their approval by the Evaluation Office. Regional monitoring and evaluation advisers also help to identify evaluators for pre-qualification by the Evaluation Office;
- provide guidance to, and quality assurance for, the preparation of management responses to decentralized evaluations, to ensure their timely and quality preparation and follow up. This includes the use of evaluation lessons learned and evidence for the organizational decision-making and improved programming;
- prepare and disseminate information notes on the management of the

evaluation function to the regional leadership team and the Evaluation Office;

- contribute to efforts by the Evaluation Office to strengthen technical oversight for evaluation management processes across the organization to promote greater responsiveness, improved timeliness and quality and the better utilization of evaluation products in the region;
- contribute to reinforcing the strategic involvement of UNFPA in national evaluation capacity development and UNDAF evaluation as well as joint evaluations with governments and other development actors;
- provide UNFPA inputs and coordinate effectively with regional inter-agency evaluation mechanisms, intergovernmental forums and other regional partnerships and organizations relevant to the evaluation function; (i) contribute to efforts by the Evaluation Office to develop and facilitate the utilization of innovative products and processes in the area of evaluation methodology, evaluation management and the use of evaluations;
- contribute to efforts by the Evaluation Office to implement initiatives towards the professionalization of the evaluation function;
- keep abreast of developments in the field of evaluation and knowledge management; and
- provide/coordinate regional contributions and recommendations in connection with the development and implementation of the evaluation policy, quadrennial budget evaluation plan and global evaluation strategies and guidance.

5. EVALUATION PROCEDURES

EVALUATION PLANNING

Evaluations should be properly planned and managed, effectively conducted and quality assured, and the quality of evaluation reports should be assessed systematically. Evaluation plans are prepared at various levels of the organization, specifically:

- The quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan, a multi-year costed corporate evaluation plan, is prepared by the independent Evaluation Office and approved by the Executive Board. The plan includes centralized and two types of decentralized evaluation: country programme evaluations and regional programme evaluations;
- Regional costed evaluation plans are prepared by regional offices; they are costed, and identify all regional and country-level evaluations with a view to responding to the evaluative evidence needs of the region;
- Country costed evaluation plans are prepared by country offices, with the participation of national governments and approved by the Executive Board concurrently with country programme documents.

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

EVALUATION COVERAGE

Adequate evaluation coverage is key to providing a representative, unbiased picture of UNFPA performance and ensuring that policies, strategies and programmes are informed by relevant evidence at all levels of the organization. The design of new country programmes must be informed by an adequate and relevant body of evaluations, including by country programme evaluations, to be conducted at least

once in every two programme cycles, unless the quality of the previous country programme evaluation was unsatisfactory and/or significant changes in the country contexts have occurred.

To ensure the highest possible quality and credibility of the decentralized evaluations, regional offices, Policy and Strategy Division and the independent Evaluation Office will review country costed evaluation plans within the country programme review mechanisms before presentation to the Executive Board.

MANAGEMENT AND CONDUCT OF EVALUATIONS

UNFPA is committed to excellence in evaluation and strives for rigor in the design, management and conduct of evaluations. Evaluations should be designed, conducted and managed in line with UNEG norms and standards, as well as those set out in the present policy. Staff responsible for designing, managing and conducting evaluations should conform to UNEG ethical standards and UNEG guidance on integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluation. The Evaluation Office will ensure that staff responsible for designing, managing and conducting evaluations have been trained in UNEG norms and standards and the ethics of the profession.

Steps for ensuring useful and credible evaluation results:

- Management shall take all necessary actions to ensure the objectivity, independence and impartiality of the evaluation process and persons hired to conduct evaluations. Members of the external evaluation team should not have been part of the team that designed and/or managed the implementation of the assessed policy, plan or programme. The designated evaluation manager should supervise the selection, management and performance assessment of the evaluation team and manage the evaluation throughout the process. The country representative, with the support of the evaluation manager, is ultimately responsible for the quality of the evaluation. Regional monitoring and evaluation advisors provide technical assistance, and the independent Evaluation Office pre-qualifies external consultants and approves the terms of reference.
- Key stakeholders, including vulnerable and marginalized groups and, as appropriate, young people, should be engaged throughout the evaluation process, starting with the design phase.
- The evaluation team should be selected through an open and transparent process, with balance in terms of geographical and

gender diversity, and should include professionals from the region or country concerned in the evaluation, as appropriate.

- Terms of reference should conform to UNEG standards, make provision for the eventual use of the evaluation and be shared with stakeholders to promote transparency and engagement.
- The evaluation design and methods should be clearly presented in the inception report, which should be approved by the regional monitoring and evaluation advisor.
- The evaluation report must meet the reporting standards of UNFPA and, in the interest of accountability, be made publicly available.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO EVALUATION

UNFPA is committed to developing and implementing management responses for all evaluations. In this regard:

- Management should prepare management responses to all centralized and decentralized evaluations, developed within six weeks of the submission of the evaluation reports. Management responses to evaluation recommendations should include specific, time-bound actions with clearly assigned responsibilities to implement them. These responses are discussed with stakeholders and made public through the online evaluation database. Furthermore, management responses to centralized evaluations are submitted to senior management and the Executive Board for review and discussion;
- The implementation status of all evaluation recommendations (centralized and decentralized) is monitored by the Policy and Strategy Division through the corporate management response tracking system, This is reported to senior management and the Executive Board: (i) through the strategic plan indicators in the annual report of the Executive Director; and (ii) periodically in progress updates on the management actions undertaken to address evaluation recommendations, and on any implications of these recommendations on systemic issues, strategic planning, policy development, programming process and key management areas.

6. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ASSESSMENT

The UNFPA Evaluation Quality Assurance and Assessment (EQAA) system has two basic elements to ensure the quality of evaluations at UNFPA – quality assurance and quality assessment:

Key elements of the EQAA system include: (a) guidance and tools for conducting and managing evaluations that are consistent with the UNEG norms and standards; (b) approval by the independent Evaluation Office of terms of reference for regional and country programme-level evaluations and pre-qualification of evaluators; (c) approval by the regional monitoring and evaluation advisor of the inception report; (d) organization-wide quality criteria for assessing evaluation reports; (e) quality assessment of evaluation reports, commissioned by the independent Evaluation Office.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance takes place throughout the evaluation process. Its purpose is to promote quality, starting with the evaluation terms of reference and ending with the evaluation report, as well as the preparation of management responses and follow up/verification of their implementation.

Quality Assessment

Quality assessment takes place after an evaluation is completed (ex post), whereby the final evaluation report is quality assessed by an external assessor for reporting and accountability purposes. In addition, feedback is provided to the commissioning office in order to strengthen its capacity to deliver better quality evaluations in future.

7. ENHANCING THE USE OF EVALUATIONS

Evaluations that are not properly used represent wasted investment and missed opportunities for learning and improving performance.

The use of evaluation findings and recommendations is driven by the examination of appropriate questions at the appropriate time. This means clearly linking decentralized programme-level evaluations to the country programme and UNDAF cycles; linking country-led evaluations to government planning cycles and the timing of advocacy initiatives; and linking centralized evaluations to the UNFPA planning and budgeting cycle and the mechanisms established by Member States to review progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Use is also dependent upon the credibility of the evaluation, which in turn is dependent upon rigour, impartiality, independence and professionalism.

The use of evaluations is enhanced by the selection of the appropriate type of evaluation for the needs at hand. The Evaluation Office and regional monitoring and evaluation advisors offer guidance on the appropriate types of evaluation for the diverse contexts in which UNFPA works and the diverse purposes of evaluation.

UNFPA will publish final evaluation reports concurrently with the corresponding management responses, which senior management will provide within six weeks of the submission of the evaluation reports. However, UNFPA will not delay the posting of a final evaluation report if it has not completed the management response to that report. UNFPA will post other dissemination products upon their finalization, and will disseminate lessons learned from evaluations through various knowledge-management platforms. In addition, UNFPA will maintain a publicly accessible repository of evaluations and management responses and will highlight good evaluation

practices and lessons learned. This repository will be an integral part of the UNFPA public website.

All levels of the evaluation system should invest in technologies to advance evaluation usage. The demand for evaluation can be enhanced by the provision of evaluation results in forms that are usable by decision-makers, including, for example, communication tools tailored to their specific needs. Key to this is the effective communication and dissemination of evaluation results. All evaluations should have a dissemination plan at the outset and, in accordance with UNEG guidance, evaluation reports and management responses should be made public.

Evaluations are of limited value unless timely steps are taken to implement their recommendations and incorporate lessons into decision-making systems. UNFPA offices must prepare a formal management response to evaluation recommendations and make arrangements to maximize the use of evaluation results. Managers within UNFPA should also create opportunities to feed evaluation recommendations into key decisions taken in UNFPA offices. This includes ensuring that the design of new country programmes is informed by evidence produced by evaluations.

8. SYSTEM-WIDE EVALUATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

In the common chapter of their respective strategic plans for 2018-2021, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women committed to working better together, characterized by stronger coherence and collaboration. The four entities welcomed the United Nations Secretary-General's report on repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and committed to step up joint efforts, with a sense of urgency, to better support countries to achieve sustainable development. These joint efforts should include working together more effectively at all levels, and enhancing multi-stakeholder partnerships.

The evaluation function at UNFPA, which is aligned to UNFPA strategic plans, is also fully committed to the above-mentioned principles and seeks to enhance coherence in the evaluation function in the United Nations system in the following four areas:

Enhanced focus on UN coherence

- **Joint evaluations**
- **System-wide evaluations**
- **UNEG and Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) initiatives**
- **UN partnerships for national evaluation capacity**

Joint evaluations

Joint evaluations. UNFPA will seek out opportunities with other United Nations agencies and, at the country level, in consultation with national governments, for joint evaluations, including of joint programmes, the common chapter of the strategic plans for 2018-2021 and UNDAFs, recognizing the benefits of promoting learning within the United Nations system, including shared accountability and reduced transaction costs. UNFPA will contribute to applying UNEG norms and standards in all joint evaluations;

System-wide evaluations

UNFPA will collaborate with other United Nations entities (including through UNEG, the inter-agency humanitarian evaluation steering group and UNDAF evaluations), to respond to the decisions of Member States regarding system-wide evaluation. Recognizing the strategic importance of evaluating the United Nations system response to humanitarian crises, UNFPA will engage in system-wide evaluations within the framework of the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) group

UNEG and IAHE initiatives

Enhancing coherence of evaluation functions among different entities in the United Nations system, through actively supporting the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and IAHE steering group.

Partnerships

UNFPA will join forces with other United Nations entities in multi-stakeholder partnerships for strengthening national capacities to evaluate national development agendas and localized Sustainable Development Goals, with a special focus on "no one left behind". UNFPA will continue to be an active member of multi-stakeholder partnerships for national evaluation capacities.

UNFPA remains committed to improving its performance against evaluation-related key indicators set out in the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, which aims to strengthen the utility of evaluation by integrating a gender equality analysis lens throughout the process.

UNFPA will maintain partnerships in support of the aims of the evaluation policy, including with United Nations agencies, international financial institutions, governments, evaluation associations, non-governmental organizations, foundations and academic institutions.

9. PARTNERSHIP FOR NATIONAL EVALUATION CAPACITIES

Evaluation in UNFPA follows the organization's commitment to the principles of national ownership and leadership of development processes at the country level. UNFPA seeks to help national stakeholders to evaluate their own programmes and to contribute to the strengthening of evaluation capacity in countries. Where possible, UNFPA evaluations should be planned and conducted in partnership with national stakeholders, addressing issues relevant to the national development agenda.

In line with General Assembly resolutions 70/1, (endorsing the 2030 Agenda), and 69/237, (building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level), and with the 2016 QCPR, UNFPA will continue to partner with other major stakeholders, including United Nations entities, in order to support national evaluation capacities. The organization will focus its support on: (a) strengthening national evaluation systems; (b) evaluating actions towards the Sustainable Development Goals, especially those related to the UNFPA mandate; (c) generating evidence to inform national processes and reports on progress towards the achievement of the SDGs and ICPD goals; and (d) advocating for country-led evaluations and the use of evidence from such evaluations.

UNFPA will also pursue partnerships with major stakeholders, including evaluation units of government departments and evaluation agencies, civil society organizations and academia, among others, to ensure the credible and timely country-led evaluation of national programmes relevant to the UNFPA mandate. In addition, UNFPA will also engage in partnerships to enhance the evaluation capacities of young evaluators.

When UNFPA is a partner in, but does not commission or manage, an evaluation, the specific provisions of the present policy do not apply. Nevertheless, UNFPA will promote adherence to international evaluation norms and standards in such situations.

10. RESOURCES

HUMAN RESOURCES

The evaluation function requires skilled human resources to manage evaluations and to provide effective quality assurance. The most significant human-resource requirement is at the country level, where the largest proportion of evaluations is carried out. The Evaluation Office and regional offices will support the identification of consultants by maintaining a quality-controlled roster of evaluators.

Country offices should establish adequate capacity for evaluation management. Evaluation responsibilities are often undertaken by staff members who also hold other responsibilities. In order to ensure monitoring and evaluation positions, country offices may decide (in large programmes) to establish a monitoring and evaluation specialist post, while smaller offices may pool resources to fund a multi-country or multi-agency post dedicated to monitoring and evaluation. Where such arrangements are not possible, offices should nominate monitoring and evaluation focal points with responsibility for evaluation, which should be supported by the country representative to devote adequate time to evaluation duties and to report on them to the country representative. Arrangements should be made by the country representative to ensure the integrity of the evaluation function, in particular the application of the provisions of the evaluation policy.

Regional offices will have at least one P5-level staff member fully dedicated to monitoring and evaluation activities. Incumbents must meet the requirements of the UNEG competency framework. A significant responsibility of the regional monitoring and evaluation adviser will be to provide technical assistance and quality assurance for decentralized evaluations.

The independent Evaluation Office staff, including its Director, will meet the requirements of the UNEG competency framework. The Director of the Evaluation Office will ensure that Evaluation Office staff and the regional monitoring and evaluation advisers have evaluation management and leadership skills and experience aligned with UNEG evaluation competencies.

All staff with evaluation responsibilities will undergo capacity-development training arranged by the Evaluation Office to improve their professional skills, including on gender-based analysis, human rights-based approaches to evaluation and results-based management. Additional opportunities for professional development will be identified with a view to ensuring that evaluation staff demonstrate core competencies as outlined in the UNEG evaluation competency framework.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

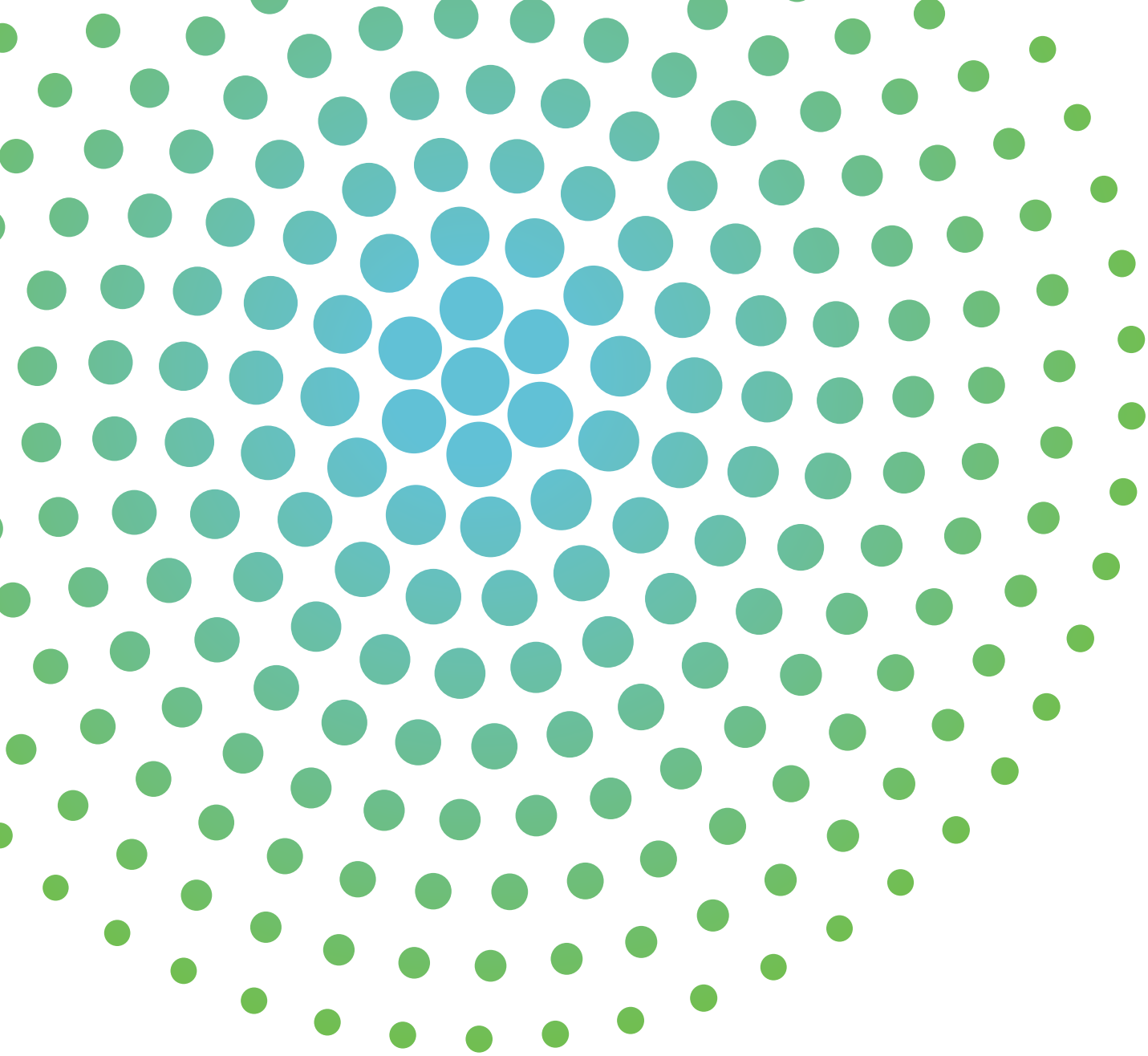
In order to produce high-quality evaluations, the evaluation function should be predictably and adequately resourced. UNFPA will allocate a minimum of 1.4 per cent of its total programme expenditure to the evaluation function, up to a maximum of 3 per cent. In country and regional offices, resource allocation decisions for evaluations are based on the country and regional costed evaluation plan.

UNFPA allocates funds for the independent Evaluation Office and the centralized evaluations using a separate budget line in the UNFPA integrated budget. The Evaluation Office will manage the budget for the staffing and operational costs of the office. The Executive Director will establish a mechanism to ring-fence funds to support conducting and managing evaluations in country offices facing financial constraints. Programmes that are funded by other resources rather than by regular resources will use the other resources for evaluation within their programme budgets. To achieve cost-effectiveness, UNFPA will undertake coordinated and joint evaluations with national partners, United Nations system partners and other development partners.

11. IMPLEMENTATION, REPORTING AND REVIEW

The Evaluation Office will issue guidance to complement the policy as appropriate. The status of implementation of the evaluation policy will be reported by the Director of the Evaluation Office to the Executive Board as part of the annual report on the evaluation function. The annual report on the evaluation function will be accompanied by a management response, also presented to the Executive Board.

An independent review on the performance of the policy will be undertaken in five years.



Ensuring rights and choices for all

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