

# EVALUATION HANDBOOK

HOW TO DESIGN AND CONDUCT A  
COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION  
AT UNFPA



#### **Updated features of the Evaluation Handbook**

- Aligned with latest international development frameworks such as SDGs and internal UNFPA strategies and policies
- Updated guidance on mainstreaming human rights and gender equality in UNFPA country programme evaluations
- Increased focus on methodologies to evaluate UNFPA country programmes in humanitarian contexts
- Enhanced attention to facilitating use and communication of evaluation results

Please note systems and mechanisms evolve over time. Therefore please adapt the guidance presented in the handbook to your context, and to the latest systems and tools provided by UNFPA.

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Any enquiries about this publication should be addressed to [evaluation.office@unfpa.org](mailto:evaluation.office@unfpa.org)

The handbook is available at [www.unfpa.org/EvaluationHandbook](http://www.unfpa.org/EvaluationHandbook)

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# Foreword

This handbook is an update of the 2013 *Handbook on How to Design and Conduct a Country Programme Evaluation at UNFPA*. It is designed as a practical guide to help evaluation managers apply methodological rigour to evaluation practices in decentralized units.

While the primary audience of the handbook is UNFPA staff who manage country programme evaluations, it also contains practical tools and hands-on advice that may be of interest to a greater range of users, including evaluators who carry out evaluations commissioned by UNFPA and other stakeholders involved in evaluation processes.

Taking stock of lessons learned from five years of implementing the methodology in decentralized country programme evaluations – which has contributed to continued and steady progress in the quality of evaluation reports – the update of the handbook aims to meet two main objectives. First, it acknowledges important changes in the global context in which UNFPA operates, such as the multiplication of humanitarian crises and the increased emphasis placed on the mainstreaming of human rights and gender equality, as well as the new strategic orientations embodied in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Second, this update provides a revised set of evaluation criteria and offers a better articulation of the link between the evaluation criteria and the issues and topics to be assessed through evaluations.

The handbook is part of a broader initiative aimed at the professionalization of evaluation at UNFPA, which also includes the development of an E-learning course on Results Based Management and Evaluation. Along with the 2018–2021 Evaluation Strategy, the 2018–2021 Evaluation Capacity Development Action Plan and the Evaluation Policy, the handbook also contributes to promoting a culture of evaluation that ensures the active use of evaluation results for programming and decision-making.

The handbook builds on the collective efforts of the UNFPA Evaluation Office, together with critical inputs from regional monitoring and evaluation advisers and external experts. It is our hope, within the Evaluation Office, that the handbook will sustain and improve the quality as well as the usability of evaluation reports at UNFPA, and that it reinforces the ability of the organization to account for results achieved and better respond in order to create a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

**Marco Segone**

Director, UNFPA Evaluation Office

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# Introduction to the handbook

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. UNFPA supports countries in using population data for policies and programmes to end gender-based violence (GBV) and all harmful practices, to end preventable maternal deaths and to end the unmet need for family planning.

UNFPA is a subsidiary organ of the United Nations General Assembly. It plays a unique role within the United Nations system: to address population and development issues, with an emphasis on sexual and reproductive health (SRH), reproductive rights (RR) and gender equality, within the context of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDGs 3 and 5.

The constant improvement of evaluation practices is essential for UNFPA. In addition to contributing to the greater accountability and transparency of the organization, high-quality evaluation processes and reports also respond to the need to learn lessons from past interventions and support evidence-based decision-making. The purpose is to continuously improve and enhance the quality and credibility of evaluations at UNFPA, in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards, code of conduct and ethical guidelines for evaluations, as well as UNEG guidance on gender- and human rights-responsive evaluations, and in line with international best practice.

The UNFPA evaluation policy sets out the role of evaluation in the organization and highlights the three main purposes of evaluation: demonstrating accountability to stakeholders on achieving development results; supporting evidence-based decision-making; and contributing key lessons learned to the existing knowledge base on how to accelerate implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. In pursuit of these aims, the Evaluation Policy issues guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of the UNFPA organizational units, on quality assurance and capacity development and on the dissemination of evaluation findings. The UNFPA Evaluation Office is the custodian of the evaluation function; it has overall responsibility for the implementation of the policy, and develops methodological guidance and tools as well as quality assurance mechanisms.

This handbook was first developed in 2013 through a participatory approach, and has now been updated to accommodate for changed realities both globally and internally at UNFPA.

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## STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS OF THE HANDBOOK

The handbook is structured as follows:

**Chapter 1.** The **overview of country programme evaluation (CPE) in UNFPA** presents the evaluation process step by step. It is intended for those readers interested in obtaining an understanding of the key stages involved in conducting a CPE. It also includes a presentation of the tools, resources and templates to be used throughout the process. Special emphasis is placed on the evaluation matrix as a central tool for the design and conduct of a CPE.

**Chapter 2.** The **preparatory phase** covers definitions of the terms of reference (ToR) for the evaluation, the selection of the evaluation team, the establishment of the CPE reference group, the preparation of all pertinent documentation, the list of UNFPA interventions, and the stakeholders map. It walks the reader through all of the initial steps and instances required to lay the groundwork for the evaluation design.

**Chapter 3.** The **design phase** delves into components such as contextual analysis; understanding of programmatic and financial frameworks; the selection of evaluation criteria, questions and relevant stakeholders; and the identification of tools for data collection and processing. It also takes a deeper look at the different sources of information that can be used – interviews, desk reviews, focus groups and others – the necessary human and financial resources (including the division of labour), and the definition of a work plan.

**Chapter 4.** The **field phase** connects all of the preparation and design work with the actual context or programmatic interventions to be assessed. That includes the deployment of the evaluation team, data collection (via interviews and other mechanisms), site visits and preliminary analyses.

**Chapter 5.** The **reporting phase** involves the analysis of all data and observations gathered throughout the evaluative exercise, transforming key insights into findings, conclusions and actionable recommendations. This body of knowledge is then consolidated into briefings and reports to be shared with key internal and external stakeholders.

**Chapter 6.** The **facilitation of use and dissemination phase** focuses on the release of evaluation reports, but also encourages a more strategic approach to communicating evaluation knowledge for learning, decision-making and accountability.

**Chapter 7.** Finally, the handbook contains a **toolkit** that offers practical tools, checklists, templates and tips for designing and conducting a CPE.

## HOW TO NAVIGATE THE HANDBOOK

The handbook offers step-by-step practical guidance to the evaluators throughout the different stages of the evaluation process. It also provides the evaluation manager with the information required to be able to supervise the evaluation process and ensure the quality of deliverables. The evaluation managers and evaluators should gain an in-depth knowledge of several crucial topics as a prerequisite to designing and conducting CPEs.

Evaluators and evaluation managers who are not well versed in evaluation methodologies (terminology, methods, tools and processes), who have little evaluation practice (notably in conducting data collection and analysis, and drafting reports) and who are not yet familiar with the UNFPA programming and operational framework,

should read the entire handbook in the chronological order of the evaluation process. Conversely, those who are well acquainted with evaluation concepts and the CPE process may prefer to go directly to [Chapter 7](#) which provides tools and templates, as well as guidance on how to structure the design and final reports.

**TABLE 1** *How to navigate the handbook depending on the profile of the reader*





The reader is the evaluation manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the entire handbook in a sequential way, i.e., the overview, the five phases, then the toolkit.</li> <li>• S/he can omit <a href="#">sections 1.1</a> if already well acquainted with the UNFPA evaluation framework.</li> <li>• S/he should pay particular attention to the <i>Detailed outline of reports</i>, in <a href="#">section 7.2</a>.</li> </ul>
The reader is the team leader
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S/he should be familiar with the entire handbook, so s/he can direct the evaluation team members to relevant specific sections and/or tools for their respective tasks.</li> <li>• S/he should pay particular attention to the <i>Detailed outline of reports</i> in <a href="#">section 7.2</a>.</li> </ul>
The reader has previous experience in evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S/he should nonetheless read <a href="#">sections 3.2</a>, <i>Drafting and selecting the evaluation questions</i>, <a href="#">3.3</a>, <i>Selecting a sample of stakeholders</i>, and <a href="#">3.4</a>, <i>Planning data collection and analysis</i>.</li> </ul>

**TABLE 2** *Evaluation topics of particular importance*

The topics and their location in the handbook	
Topics	Where to find them in the handbook
Drafting the terms of reference	<a href="#">Template 1</a>
Selection of consultants	<a href="#">Template 2</a>
Drafting evaluation questions	<a href="#">Section 3.2</a>
The evaluation matrix	<a href="#">Sections 1.3.1</a> , <a href="#">4.3.1</a> , <a href="#">5.1</a> , and <a href="#">Tool 1</a>
Stakeholders sample selection	<a href="#">Sections 3.3</a> , <a href="#">2.6</a> , and <a href="#">Tools 1</a> , <a href="#">3</a> , <a href="#">4</a> , <a href="#">6</a> , <a href="#">7</a> and <a href="#">10</a>
Drafting agendas	
Ensuring the evaluation is evidence-based, logical and coherent	<a href="#">Sections 5.2</a> , <a href="#">7.3</a> , and <a href="#">Tool 1</a> and <a href="#">Template 5</a>
How to draft the design and the final reports	<a href="#">Section 7.2</a>

## Visual aids to navigate the handbook

The handbook uses a set of visual aids so that the reader can navigate between different parts of the handbook, be alerted to particularly important topics, and can access additional information on certain topics that go beyond the scope of this handbook:

-  Refers to sections and chapters of the handbook where the reader can find more information on a particular topic.
-  Provides references to external documents and sources on particular topics.
-  Presents information on practical issues related to the implementation of UNFPA CPEs.
-  Refers to tips and reminders that include practical suggestions, advice and/or warnings.