

# ANNUAL REPORT ON EVALUATION

## Independent Evaluation Office

**Additional documents for this item:** *Case study of the Joint Programme's work with and for key populations in Thailand* UNAIDS/PCB (51)/CRP3; *Independent evaluation of the Joint Programme's work with and for key populations* UNAIDS/PCB (51)/CRP4.

**Action required at this meeting—the Programme Coordinating Board is invited to:**

56. *Recall* decision points 7.3 and 7.4 of the 49th session Programme Coordinating Board, which *inter alia*
  - a. welcomed continued progress in the implementation of the Evaluation Policy and,
  - b. taking into account the financial situation of the organization, reiterated decision point 9.3 of the 47th session of the Board requesting the Executive Director to ensure that the evaluation function remains adequately resourced and staffed in accordance with the Evaluation Policy approved by the Board in decision 6.6 of its 44th session,
  - c. approved the 2022–2023 Evaluation Plan (UNAIDS/PCB (49)/21.28) and looked forward to the annual report on evaluation to be presented to the Programme Coordinating Board in 2022;
57. *Welcome* progress in implementing the Evaluation Plan notwithstanding constraints faced due to UNAIDS's financial situation;
58. Take note of the management response UNAIDS /PCB (51)/22.35;
59. Take note that the Executive Director has considered options to resource the Evaluation Office in the current context of UNAIDS funding situation; and
60. *Look forward* to the next annual report on evaluation and UNAIDS next Evaluation Plan to be presented to the Programme Coordinating Board in 2023.

**Cost implications for the implementation of the decisions:** none

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## Executive summary

1. This document presents an overview of the implementation of UNAIDS 2022–2023 Evaluation Plan. The Evaluation Plan was approved by the Programme Coordinating Board (PCB) at its 49th meeting in December 2021 and the Board requested an annual report on evaluation to be presented in 2022 (decision points 7.3–7.4).
2. The PCB is invited to review the annual report and take note of progress made and constraints faced in implementing the 2022–2023 Evaluation Plan. Key challenges are related to the fact that the evaluation function has not been resourced in accordance with the Evaluation Policy, which calls for 1% of organizational expenditures to be allocated to the evaluation function—see decision point 7.3 from the 49th meeting and decision point 9.3 from the 47th meeting of the PCB.
3. In light of UNAIDS's financial situation, the budget for the Evaluation Office in 2022 was reduced by 30% at the beginning of the year and the number and scope of evaluations and activities to be conducted were adjusted accordingly. Notwithstanding the resource constraints, two major Joint Programme evaluations were completed: on key populations and on efficient and sustainable financing. Two Joint Programme evaluations were initiated, on the country envelopes and social protection, and will be completed in the first quarter of 2023. In addition, two evaluations of the work of the Joint Programme at country level were conducted, in Lesotho and Mali.
4. Questions on the impact and implications of COVID-19 on the work of the Joint Programme were included in evaluations conducted during the year, replacing an evaluation specifically focusing on how COVID-19 affected the work of the UNAIDS Secretariat. An evaluation of the UNAIDS Secretariat data hubs was completed in the second half of the year, while an evaluation of the policy work of UNAIDS Secretariat was postponed until 2023.
5. To ensure follow-up to evaluations, the Evaluation Office supported the development management responses to evaluations and tracked the implementation of recommendations. The UNAIDS website was regularly updated with the latest evaluation reports and management responses. As part of efforts to ensure the quality of evaluations and continuously improve the utility of evaluations, all evaluations once completed were assessed externally.
6. To learn from the experience of others, the Evaluation Office participated actively in the work of the UN Evaluation Group, which brings together the evaluation offices of more than 40 UN entities. Two virtual meetings of the UNAIDS Expert Advisory Committee on evaluation were held. They focused on strengthening the utility, credibility and independence of evaluations, as well as the resourcing of the evaluation function in UNAIDS.
7. As of 1 November, approximately 95% of the revised and reduced budget had been mobilized. The overall implementation rate at the end of the year is expected to be 92% of the revised budget. Non-core funds were mobilized to fill part of the funding gap. The main constraint has been on the staffing side. As a unit with two professional staff, without administrative support, the Evaluation Office is stretched and completing all evaluations planned for 2022–2023 will be a challenge.
8. Joint Programme evaluations to be initiated in 2023 include one on integration of HIV into Primary Health Care and one on Human Rights, provided sufficient resources can be mobilized, as well as evaluations of the work of the Joint Programme at country level.

UNAIDS Secretariat evaluations to be conducted in 2023 include one each on community-led monitoring, the partnership with the Global Fund, UNAIDS policy influence, the Programme Review Committee, as well as regional and country-level work. Implementation of evaluation recommendations will be monitored closely and independent assessments of evaluations will continue to be conducted. Opportunities for evaluations to contribute to organizational learning through UNAIDS's new knowledge management strategy will be actively explored.

9. UNAIDS next Evaluation Plan will be developed through a consultative process in the second half of 2023 and will be discussed with the evaluation offices of the Cosponsors and the UNAIDS Expert Advisory Committee on evaluation before being presented to the Board for approval. The Evaluation Plan will draw on a review of UNAIDS evaluation function by MOPAN (Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network), as well as an independent review of UNAIDS Evaluation Policy. To ensure that the Evaluation Plan includes a critical number of evaluations that can influence policies, programmes, processes, decision-making and governance, the Evaluation Office will need to be appropriately and adequately staffed and resourced.
10. In addition to recalling previous decision points, the PCB is invited to: *welcome* progress in implementing the Evaluation Plan, notwithstanding constraints faced due to UNAIDS financial situation; *request* the Evaluation Office to consider findings and recommendations of the external reviews of the evaluation function and Evaluation Policy in its work and future plans; *request* the Executive Director to consider findings and recommendations of these external reviews as well as the financial situation, when deciding on the resourcing and staffing of the Evaluation Office; *look forward* to the next annual report on evaluation and UNAIDS next Evaluation Plan to be presented to the PCB in 2023.

## Introduction

11. This document provides an overview of the implementation of UNAIDS Evaluation Plan for 2022–2023. The Evaluation Plan was developed based on the UNAIDS Evaluation Policy<sup>1</sup> and inputs from UNAIDS Secretariat and Cosponsors, including the evaluation offices of the Cosponsors. The Evaluation Plan was reviewed by the UNAIDS Expert Advisory Committee on evaluation before it was presented for approval to the PCB in December 2021.
12. At its 49th session in December 2021, the PCB approved the UNAIDS Evaluation Plan for 2022–2023.<sup>2</sup> Taking into account the financial situation of the organization, it requested the Executive Director to ensure that the evaluation function remains adequately resourced and staffed in accordance with the Evaluation Policy approved by the Board (decision points 7.3 and 7.4). Board members expressed appreciation for the important work done by the Evaluation Office and commended efforts to reinforce the independence, credibility and usefulness of evaluations (UNAIDS/PCB (49)/21.35).<sup>3</sup>

## Evaluations and other activities carried out

13. To take account of UNAIDS's tight financial situation and the resource outlook for 2022, the Evaluation Office reviewed the Evaluation Plan early in 2022 and reduced the number and scope of evaluations and activities to be conducted. As a result, the budget of the Evaluation Office for the year used for planning purposes was reduced from US\$ 997 000 to US\$ 694 000 (Table 1).

**Table 1: Budget for evaluations and activities in 2022 (US\$)**

Evaluations initiated in 2021	Original budget	Revised budget
<b>Joint Programme evaluations</b>		
Key populations*	30 000	30 000
Efficient and sustainable financing*	38 000	38 000
<i>Total for evaluations initiated in 2021</i>	<i>68 000</i>	<i>68 000</i>
Evaluations initiated in 2022	Original budget	Revised budget
<b>Joint Programme evaluations</b>		
Country envelopes	210 000	210 000
Social protection**	260 000	120 000
Country-level work**	100 000	60 000
<i>Total for evaluations initiated in 2022</i>	<i>570 000</i>	<i>390 000</i>
<b>UNAIDS Secretariat evaluations</b>		
UNAIDS data hubs	60 000	60 000
The impact and implications of COVID-19***	90 000	(60 000)
UNAIDS Secretariat policy influence****	120 000	(60 000)
Regional and country-level work	40 000	20 000
<i>Total for evaluations initiated in 2022</i>	<i>310 000</i>	<i>200 000</i>
Activities	Original budget	Revised budget
<b>Design, capacity development, management</b>		
Design, management and follow-up**	15 000	10 000
Evaluation culture and professionalisation**	10 000	5 000
Quality assessment of evaluation reports	24 000	21 000
<i>Estimated total for activities</i>	<i>49 000</i>	<i>36 000</i>
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>997 000</b>	<b>694 000</b>

\* Initiated in 2021; completed in the first half of 2022; budget refers to funding in 2022.

\*\* Number of countries and scope of activities reduced due to UNAIDS financial situation.

\*\*\* No evaluation conducted; instead, questions on Covid-19 included in other evaluations.

\*\*\*\* Evaluation postponed due to financial constraints and pending organizational alignment.

### Joint Programme evaluations

- The Joint Programme's work with and for key populations.** This evaluation was managed by the UNAIDS, WHO, UNODC and UNESCO Evaluation Offices and conducted by a team of independent evaluators and representatives of key populations. All Cosponsors as well as global networks of key populations and people living with HIV participated in the evaluation as members of a reference group. The evaluation covered the period 2018–2021 and combined a global consultation and document review with six in-depth country case studies (in Cameroon, Kenya, Peru, Thailand, Tunisia and Ukraine), engaging key populations throughout the evaluation.
- Despite people left behind being a central focus of Agenda 2030, key populations still lack adequate access to HIV services and are often victims of stigma, discrimination

and other human rights abuses. With approximately two thirds of new HIV infections globally occurring among key populations and their sexual partners, an evaluation of the relevance, coherence, effectiveness and equity of the support of the Joint Programme to key populations was identified as a priority.

16. The evaluation concluded that the Joint Programme is recognized and valued for supporting key population responses. However, advocacy to defend human rights needs to be stepped up and programming needs to prioritize inequalities and pockets of high incidence. Inclusive planning processes are needed to enhance the relevance of Joint Programme activities and the monitoring and reporting system requires strengthening. To ensure financial sustainability, there is a need for more investments for key populations, as well as integration of HIV services and making Universal Health Coverage work for different key population groups.
17. The evaluation looked into the practical implications of supporting community-led responses and examined the extent to which the Joint Programme supports service provision and strategically engages with governments to improve policies and the enabling environment for key populations. It assessed how the Joint Programme brokers space for key population-led groups and networks in decision-making processes. The evaluation analyzed how well UN agencies are equipped in terms of human and financial resources to provide the support needed. It also highlighted good practices and lessons learned.
18. A joint management response to the evaluation recommendations was developed under the leadership of UNFPA, UNDP and UNODC, with support from the UNAIDS Secretariat. The response identified priority actions, with timelines and responsibilities across Cosponsors and the Secretariat to address the priority challenges identified by the evaluation. Events have been organized to disseminate the evaluation and increase awareness and ownership at the various levels of the Joint Programme. The Evaluation Office will track implementation of the management response until June 2023.
19. ***The Joint Programme's work on efficiency and sustainability.*** The evaluation of the Joint Programme's work on efficient and sustainable financing was managed by the UNAIDS and UNFPA Evaluation Offices, with support from the World Food Programme. The evaluation combined a global consultation and document review with case studies in Côte d'Ivoire, Kazakhstan, the United Republic of Tanzania and Viet Nam. With the world experiencing a major economic crisis, funding for the HIV response plateauing and many countries still coming to grips with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the evidence and lessons from the evaluation are timely for promoting sustainable and efficient resourcing for the HIV response.
20. The evaluation found that the Joint Programme has made important contributions to improving the allocative and technical efficiency of the HIV response. At the country level, UNAIDS convening power, political advocacy and role as a neutral broker have directly contributed to enhancing Global Fund and PEPFAR funding processes and domestic commitments to HIV. The Joint Programme's inclusiveness of civil society, community-based organizations and key populations has directly contributed to funding key population services and community-led responses.
21. The evaluation recommended improved coordination and the integration of HIV financing into Universal Health Coverage and the health financing agenda more broadly. Allocative and technical efficiency, particularly focused on domestic financing, should be a priority for the Joint Programme going forward. More is also needed to strengthen the capacity of civil society, community-based organizations and key populations to engage

in the financing agenda. The development of a management response was led by the equitable financing practice area in the UNAIDS Secretariat and the Evaluation Office will track implementation of the management response for one year.

22. ***The Joint Programme country envelopes.*** An evaluation of the UNAIDS country envelopes was initiated in the first half of 2022 and will be completed in the first quarter of 2023. The country envelopes were introduced in 2017 as part of a refined operating model to incentivize joint planning and action and to drive impact as part of UN Joint Plans on HIV and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs). The country envelope funds amount to approximately half of the Cosponsors' total core Unified Budget Results and Accountability Framework (UBRAF) funds. The country envelopes are one component of an integrated UN system response to HIV at country level, comprising country capacity assessments and standardized Joint Plans on HIV.
23. The country envelopes were reviewed in 2018 through six country case studies. Since then, there has, however, not been a systematic assessment of the country envelopes as a resource allocation mechanism, of how funds have been used, or of the results achieved. This evaluation is expected to fill this gap by assessing past and present use and results of country envelopes with a view to informing the implementation of future activities in the UNAIDS 2022–2026 UBRAF. The evaluation is designed to help the Joint Programme better prioritize, allocate funds more efficiently and enhance evidence-based actions and results towards the Global AIDS Strategy 2021–2026 goal of ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.
24. ***The Joint Programme's work on social protection.*** An evaluation of the work of the Joint Programme on social protection was initiated in the first half of 2022 and will be completed early next year. It is jointly managed by the evaluation offices of UNAIDS, ILO, WFP and UNICEF. Other Cosponsors and external partners are part of a reference group for the evaluation. The evaluation covers the work of the Joint Programme to promote HIV sensitive social protection at the global level and across regions and countries over the period 2018–2022. The evaluation takes stock of the extent of HIV (and TB) integration into social protection programmes, participating partners and how integration has been carried out, as well as coverage and access to social protection across population groups and epidemic profiles, and who is being left behind.
25. The evaluation will provide recommendations to the Cosponsors and the Secretariat for maximizing the contribution to HIV-sensitive social protection, taking stock of what is working well, where efforts are needed to address existing gaps, and what, if anything, the Joint Programme should stop doing or do less of. The evaluation will contribute to future planning of social protection interventions to strengthen their reach and inclusion of people living with, at risk of or affected by HIV.
26. ***Country-level evaluations.*** Joint Programme evaluations were conducted in Lesotho and Mali in the first half of 2022. The purpose of the evaluations was to assess the role and contributions of the Joint Programme in these countries and to assist in the strategic positioning of HIV within UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. In both countries, there is a clear sense among UN agencies, government representatives and partners that HIV remains a key area of work for the UN and that the Joint Team is a good mechanism for enhancing the coordination, coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of the UN system. The support provided by the UNAIDS Country Office and the Cosponsors is much appreciated by national authorities, though further harmonization and simplification of reporting is encouraged.



27. Country evaluations have proved to be a way to strengthen not only the evaluation culture, but also planning, monitoring and results-based management. A case in point is the Joint Programme evaluation in Mali, which included a two-day workshop for the UN Joint Team on AIDS to reconstruct a theory of change for the UN system to support efforts to end AIDS as a public health threat in the country.

### **UNAIDS Secretariat evaluations**

28. **UNAIDS Secretariat data hubs.** The evaluation was designed as a formative evaluation, to take stock of efforts to establish data hubs in different regions with a particular emphasis on learning from the experience of the first data hub (established in Asia and the Pacific).
29. The evaluation assessed the relevance of the data hubs, the purposefulness of the set-up, management arrangements, results and sustainability. It identified critical elements and functions for their success, while recognizing that they may assume different shapes and perform distinct roles across regions due to differing epidemic contexts and organizational needs. In a context of scarce resources, the evaluation has generated recommendations that contribute to making the most of investments in data hubs in the context of UNAIDS's overall strategic information and knowledge management strategies.
30. **The impact and implications of COVID-19.** Given the budget constraints and following a review of analyses and reports prepared and presented to the PCB on HIV and the COVID-19 pandemic, it was decided that a separate evaluation focusing on COVID-19 would not constitute an optimal use of resources. Instead, specific questions on the impact and implications of COVID-19 were included in other evaluations, such as the country envelope evaluation. In parallel, possibilities of collaborating with other UN agencies on a COVID-19 evaluation have been explored within the context of the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG).
31. **UNAIDS Secretariat policy influence.** Given the financial constraints and in order to focus on other evaluations and their follow-up, an evaluation of the policy influence of the UNAIDS Secretariat was postponed until 2023, when the UNAIDS Policy, Advocacy and Knowledge branch is expected to be fully established.

### **Enhancing the quality of evaluations**

32. While evaluation approaches and methods had to be adjusted and evaluations conducted remotely at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, country missions involving in-person interviews, focus group discussions and site visits restarted in the second half of 2021 and continued in 2022. This has facilitated and enhanced the quality of data collection and evaluations more generally amid fatigue with virtual meetings and online key informant interviews (even though those were necessary and worked well during the pandemic).
33. In addition to assuring the quality of evaluations throughout each exercise, the UNAIDS Evaluation Office assesses all evaluations once these are completed with the aim of improving the overall quality of evaluations over time. The assessments are conducted by an independent academic institution—Mannheimer Zentrum für Evaluation und Entwicklungsforschung (C4ED)—using a tool developed in collaboration with the UNAIDS Expert Advisory Committee on evaluation and drawing on the UNEG quality-of-evaluation checklist and the OECD/DAC quality standards for the development of evaluations.

34. UNAIDS Evaluation Office is an active member of UNEG and it participates in UN system-wide and joint evaluations, working groups and meetings of UNEG. Collaboration and sharing of knowledge and experience with the evaluation offices of the Cosponsors is particularly close and beneficial.

### **Follow-up to evaluations**

35. To ensure that evaluations are used, and evaluation recommendations are implemented, the Evaluation Office ensures that managers in UNAIDS Secretariat and the Cosponsors have a chance to contribute to and co-create evaluation recommendations. Once an evaluation is completed, the Evaluation Office supports the development of a management response, with a clear indication of activities to be implemented, responsibilities and timelines. For joint evaluations, a management response is developed jointly by UNAIDS Secretariat and Cosponsors.
36. The Evaluation Office monitors implementation of management responses, which are posted on the UNAIDS website along with the evaluation reports, and tracks changes prompted by and in response to an evaluation. The status of evaluations and the corresponding management responses is tracked using a dashboard (see extract in Annex 1), which captures evaluation recommendations that were accepted or partially accepted, along with progress in implementing them.
37. To enhance communication about findings, conclusions, recommendations and follow-up to evaluations, the UNAIDS website includes a dedicated and regularly updated page on evaluation. Webinars are organized with Regional Support Teams and Country Offices, as well as with other offices, departments and Cosponsors to share findings, conclusions and recommendations of evaluations. Future plans include identifying, synthesizing and disseminating recurring, systemic or crosscutting issues and lessons learned that are relevant to the UNAIDS Secretariat and the Joint Programme.

### **Expert Advisory Committee**

38. In approving the UNAIDS Evaluation Policy in June 2019, the PCB approved the establishment of an expert committee as an independent, external body to provide advice and guidance on evaluation. The role of the Expert Advisory Committee as part of the overall architecture of UNAIDS evaluation function and its composition are presented in Annex 2.
39. Since its establishment, the Expert Advisory Committee has focused on strengthening the utility, credibility and independence of evaluations in UNAIDS. Its importance was reiterated by the PCB in December 2021 (UNAIDS/PCB (49)/21.35). In 2022, the Committee continued to play a key role by providing advice on the scope and focus of evaluations to ensure their relevance and utility. The Committee has repeatedly expressed concerns regarding the under-resourcing of the evaluation function and calls for the Evaluation Office to be funded in accordance with the Evaluation Policy and decision point 7.3 of the 49th meeting of the PCB in December 2021 (Annex 3 presents a letter from the Committee to the Executive Director on this matter).

### **Budget implementation**

40. Approximately US\$ 2 million per year has been budgeted for the implementation of UNAIDS Evaluation Plan in 2022–2023. This is based on the UNAIDS Evaluation Policy, approved by the PCB in June 2019, which established that 1% of resources mobilized by UNAIDS should be allocated to evaluation. As shown in Table 2,

evaluations and activities to strengthen evaluation culture, capacity, stakeholder engagement and management represent 50% of the budget. Staff costs, envisaged for a unit with three staff, represent 45% of the Evaluation Office budget. Approximately 5% has been kept as a reserve for evaluations or other emerging needs that could not be envisaged at the time of the development of the evaluation plan.

41. As noted earlier, given UNAIDS's funding situation, the Evaluation Office reduced the number and scope of evaluations to be conducted in 2022, with the effective budget for evaluations and activities reduced from US\$ 997 000 to US\$ 694 000 (Tables 1 and 2). As filling a third position in the Evaluation Office has not been possible, the effective budget for staff costs of the Evaluation Office has been reduced to US\$ 676 000.

**Table 2: UNAIDS evaluation budget in 2022 (US\$)**

Main categories	Original budget*	Revised budget**	Resources secured***
Evaluations and activities	997 000	694 000	608 900
Staff costs	879 000	676 000	676 000
Emerging needs	90 000	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 966 000</b>	<b>1 370 000</b>	<b>1 284 900</b>

\* Amount representing 1% of operational expenditures as per UNAIDS evaluation policy.

\*\* Revised planning budget to take into account the financial situation of the organization.

\*\*\* Includes non-core funds for data hubs, key populations and social protection evaluations.

42. The last column in Table 2 shows the funds secured from the core budget for evaluations and activities, as well as staff costs. Of the US\$ 608 900 mobilized for evaluations and activities, US\$ 108 900 represents non-core funds for the data hub and key population evaluations and cost-sharing by the World Food Programme towards the social protection evaluation. As of 1 November 2022, US\$ 1 284 900 (almost 95% of the revised budget) had been mobilized. Accordingly, it has been possible to implement the Evaluation Plan with some adjustments, as described above.
43. Table 3 shows projected expenditures, as well as firm commitments against the budget for evaluation expected as of 31 December 2022.

**Table 3: Implementation against UNAIDS evaluation plan in 2022 (US\$)**

Main categories	Original budget*	Total funding**	Expenditures***	%
Evaluations and activities	997 000	608 900	504 480	83%
Staff costs	879 000	676 000	671 520	99%
Emerging needs	90 000	0	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 996 000</b>	<b>1 284 900</b>	<b>1 176 000</b>	<b>92%</b>

\* Amount representing 1% of operational expenditures as per the UNAIDS Evaluation Policy.

\*\* Total funding allocated from UNAIDS core budget plus non-core funds secured (for biennium).

\*\*\* Projected actual expenditures and firm commitments expected as of 31 December 2022.

44. As shown in Table 3, expenditures against the budget for evaluations and other activities stand at 83% of total funding mobilized for evaluations and other activities.

Meanwhile, expenditures for staff costs stand at almost 100% of funding allocated for staff costs in 2022. No funds kept for unanticipated needs have been utilized and the overall implementation rate stands at 92% of the revised budget. Operating as a unit with two staff, without administrative support, the Evaluation Office is stretched, and completing all evaluations planned for 2022–2023 will be a challenge.

## Looking ahead

45. Two evaluations, which are nearing completion, will continue into 2023 and should be completed in the first quarter of the year. These are the evaluation of the country envelopes and the evaluation of the work of the Joint Programme on social protection. The design of an evaluation of the work of UNAIDS Secretariat on community-led monitoring has started and the evaluation is expected to commence in the first quarter of 2023 in the context of a mid-term evaluation of a cooperative agreement between UNAIDS and the US Centers for Disease Control.
46. Other UNAIDS Secretariat evaluations due to commence in 2023 will assess the policy influence of UNAIDS Secretariat and the partnership between the Global Fund and the UNAIDS Secretariat, as well as of the UNAIDS Secretariat Programme Review Committee and regional and country-level work.
47. The Joint Programme evaluation of the integration of HIV into Primary Health Care will start in the first half of 2023, while the evaluation of the work of the Joint Programme on human rights is scheduled to start in the second half 2023 if sufficient resources can be mobilized. Both evaluations will have a management group comprising Cosponsor evaluation experts and the UNAIDS Evaluation Office. Both will also have a reference group which includes technical specialists from the Cosponsors, the Secretariat and civil society. Evaluations of the work of the Joint Programme at country level will be conducted in response to demand and opportunities for using them to position HIV in UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks at country level.
48. Follow up to evaluations and implementation of evaluation recommendations will continue to be an important focus in 2023. A knowledge management strategy, which is under development, is expected to provide additional opportunities for evaluations to contribute to organizational learning and strengthen the evaluation culture and appreciation of evaluation more generally.
49. Going forward, it will be important to build on efforts to strengthen evaluation capacity. The Evaluation Office needs to remain resourced and positioned in a way that enables it to contribute to the improvement of policies, programmes, processes, decision-making and governance, while remaining independent. As a global function reporting directly to the Board, the natural location of the Evaluation Office would seem to be in the UNAIDS "global centre" in Geneva.
50. Conclusions and recommendations of the MOPAN review of the UNAIDS evaluation function will be considered carefully to identify gaps or weaknesses and strengthen the evaluation function further. This is particularly important since evaluation was one of the weakest areas in the previous MOPAN review of UNAIDS in 2015–2016. A review of the UNAIDS Evaluation Policy is scheduled to be completed in the first half of 2023. This is based on the Evaluation Policy adopted by the PCB in 2019, which called for an independent review of the Evaluation Policy after four years to ensure the policy remains relevant.

51. An Evaluation Plan for 2024–2025 will be developed in the second half of 2023. The Evaluation Plan will take into account conclusions and recommendations of the MOPAN review as well as the review of UNAIDS Evaluation Policy and any adjustments that may be required following these reviews. The Evaluation Plan will be developed through a consultative process involving Cosponsor and Secretariat staff. It will be discussed with Cosponsor evaluation offices, as well as with the UNAIDS Expert Advisory Committee on evaluation before being presented to the PCB for approval.

## Conclusion

### Ensuring a robust evaluation function

52. Until 2019, an effective and independent evaluation function was a missing piece in UNAIDS's efforts to strengthen accountability, transparency, organizational learning and governance of the Joint Programme. Following a consultative process that involved Member States, civil society and the Cosponsors, the UNAIDS Evaluation Policy was presented to the PCB and approved by the PCB in June 2019. The policy was extensively discussed by a PCB working group and was peer reviewed by the evaluation offices of the Cosponsors before being presented to the PCB for approval.
53. The way in which the Policy was developed and moved forward was commended by the Joint Inspection Unit in its 2019 review of UNAIDS (JIU/REP/2019/7).<sup>4</sup> In 2020, the institutional architecture of the evaluation function was put in place. This included the establishment of the Expert Advisory Committee and the formalization of the Evaluation Office as a structurally and functionally independent unit, positioned independently from management functions and reporting directly to the PCB (see Annex 2).
54. Much progress has been made over the past five years in establishing a robust evaluation function in UNAIDS. To maintain the current momentum, the Evaluation Office needs to be positioned, resourced and staffed in accordance with the Evaluation Policy, which calls for 1% of organizational expenditures to be allocated to evaluation. This is essential for the UNAIDS Evaluation Office to be able to play a key role in knowledge management, organizational learning and efforts to enhance accountability, transparency and governance. Any weakening of the function would lead to a loss in recent gains whereby staff are increasingly using evaluative evidence in their work. It would also undermine UNAIDS credibility externally.
55. Conclusions and recommendations of an assessment of the evaluation function in the MOPAN review of UNAIDS will be available in the first half of 2023. An independent review of UNAIDS Evaluation Policy—called for in the policy after four years—will be conducted in the first half of next year to ensure the policy remains relevant. Both reviews will inform UNAIDS next Evaluation Plan and should also inform discussions on the resourcing, staffing, and ways of working of the Evaluation Office.

## Proposed decision points

### The Programme Coordinating Board is invited to:

56. *Recall* decision points 7.3 and 7.4 of the 49th session Programme Coordinating Board, which *inter alia*
- a. welcomed continued progress in the implementation of the Evaluation Policy and,
  - b. taking into account the financial situation of the organization, reiterated decision point 9.3 of the 47th session of the Board requesting the Executive Director to ensure that the evaluation function remains adequately resourced and staffed in

accordance with the Evaluation Policy approved by the Board in decision 6.6 of its 44th session,

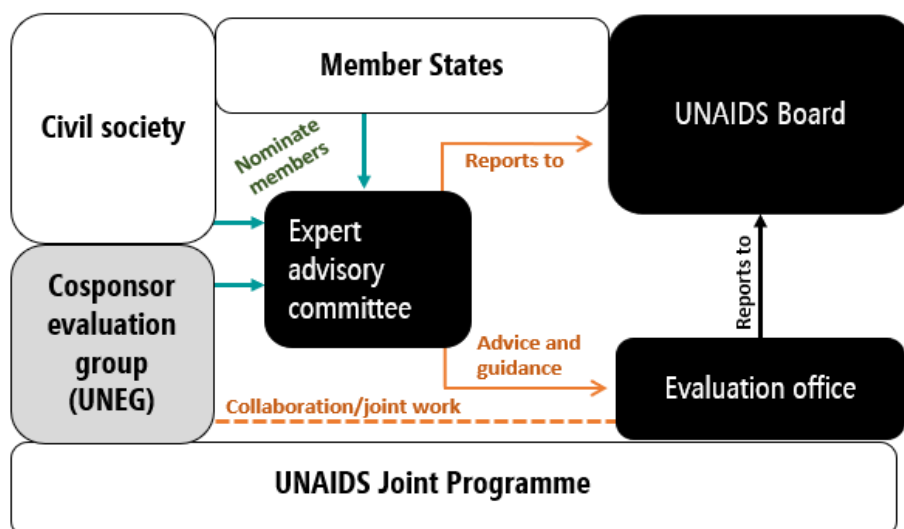
- c. approved the 2022–2023 Evaluation Plan (UNAIDS/PCB (49)/21.28) and looked forward to the annual report on evaluation to be presented to the Programme Coordinating Board in 2022;
57. *Welcome* progress in implementing the Evaluation Plan notwithstanding constraints faced due to UNAIDS's financial situation;
  58. Take note of the management response UNAIDS /PCB (51)/22.35;
  59. Take note that the Executive Director has considered options to resource the Evaluation Office in the current context of UNAIDS funding situation; and
  60. *Look forward* to the next annual report on evaluation and UNAIDS next Evaluation Plan to be presented to the Programme Coordinating Board in 2023.

## Annex 1: Evaluations carried out in 2020–2022

### Extract from UNAIDS evaluation dashboard

Evaluation title	Status of evaluation	Management response
<b>Evaluations conducted in 2022</b>		
Evaluation of the UNAIDS country envelopes	<i>ongoing</i>	<i>not started</i>
Evaluation of the Joint Programme's work on HIV and social protection	<i>ongoing</i>	<i>not started</i>
Evaluation of the UNAIDS Secretariat data hubs	<i>completed</i>	<i>not started</i>
Evaluations of the work of the Joint Programme at country level: Lesotho and Mali	<i>completed</i>	<i>under implementation</i>
Evaluation of the Joint Programme's role on efficiency and sustainability	<i>published</i>	<i>under development</i>
Evaluation of the Joint Programme's work with and for key populations	<i>published</i>	<i>under implementation</i>
<b>Evaluations conducted in 2021</b>		
Evaluations of the work of the Joint Programme at country level: Brazil, Gabon and the Democratic Republic of Congo	<i>published</i>	<i>under implementation</i>
Evaluation of the UNAIDS Secretariat Gender Action Plan 2018–2023	<i>published</i>	<i>tracking completed</i>
Evidence review of UNAIDS contribution to resilient and sustainable systems for health	<i>published</i>	<i>not applicable</i>
Evaluation of the Joint Programme's work to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls	<i>published</i>	<i>tracking completed</i>
<b>Evaluations conducted in 2020</b>		
Evaluation of the Country Health Situation Rooms	<i>published</i>	<i>tracking completed</i>
Evaluations of the work of the Joint Programme at country level: Mozambique and Viet Nam	<i>published</i>	<i>tracking completed</i>
Review of UNAIDS Secretariat support to Fast-Track the HIV response in cities	<i>published</i>	<i>tracking completed</i>
Independent evaluation of the UN system response to AIDS in 2016–2019	<i>published</i>	<i>tracking completed</i>
Evaluation of UNAIDS-US CDC collaboration on strengthening public health capacity and strategic information systems	<i>published</i>	<i>tracking completed</i>
Evaluation of the UNAIDS Technical Support Mechanism	<i>published</i>	<i>tracking completed</i>

## Annex 2: Overview of UNAIDS evaluation function



### Programme Coordinating Board

Approves the Evaluation Policy, evaluation plan and budget, considers annual reports on implementation and draws on evaluations for decisions.

### Cosponsor Evaluation Group

Brings together and leverages the resources of the Cosponsor evaluation offices for HIV-related evaluations and promotes system-wide and joint evaluations related to HIV.

### Expert Advisory Committee

External body which provides advice on evaluation consisting of seven members, nominated by Member States (5), NGO delegation of UNAIDS Board (1) and Cosponsor evaluation offices (1). Expert Advisory Committee members are appointed for two years and cannot be reappointed more than once. The Committee currently comprises:

1. **Dr. Elizabeth Moreira dos Santos**, researcher and independent consultant (Latin America and Caribbean), Chair;
2. **Mr. Raymond Yekeye**, Chair of the National AIDS Council of Zimbabwe (Africa);
3. **Dr. Zunyou Wu**, Chief Epidemiologist, Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Asia-Pacific);
4. **Ms. Sigrid Vorobjov**, Senior Researcher, National Institute for Health Development, Estonia (eastern Europe);
5. **Professor Till Bärnighausen**, Director of the Heidelberg Institute of Global Health (western European and other Countries);
6. **Ms. San Patten**, independent research and evaluation consultant (NGO Delegation); and
7. **Mr. Marco Segone**, Director of the UNFPA Evaluation Office (Cosponsor Evaluation Group).



### Annex 3: Letter from the Expert Advisory Committee

Ms. Winnie Byanyima  
Executive Director, UNAIDS  
20, Avenue Appia, 1211 Geneva 27 Switzerland  
ByanyimaW@unaids.org

October 20, 2022

#### **Re: the importance of an adequately resourced evaluation at UNAIDS**

Dear Ms. Winnie Byanyima:

We are the members of the UNAIDS Expert Advisory Committee on Evaluation, and we are writing to express our concerns regarding the under-resourcing of the UNAIDS Evaluation Office. First, we would like to thank the UNAIDS Board for the vision and support in establishing our committee as it is a clear demonstration of the value that UNAIDS places on evaluation functions and oversight. The Evaluation Office has a proven track record of identifying valuable evaluation questions and areas of focus, and leading quality evaluations that provide essential learning and quality improvement functions across UNAIDS programs at global and country levels. In addition, the UNAIDS Evaluation Office is playing a vital role in bringing together evaluation offices of all the other co-sponsor UN agencies to deliver high quality joint evaluations. We hope you will agree that the UNAIDS Evaluation Office provides rigorous assessment of processes and outcomes of the Joint Programme as well as the UNAIDS Secretariat programs that are a vital component of being a learning organization.

We feel compelled to underline that despite the important function of evaluation, only 1% of the UNAIDS core budget is allocated to evaluation, which itself is modest compared to small and mid-sized UN agencies with evaluation budgets ranging from 1.4–3%. However, even the modest 1% allocation for evaluation functions has not been realized in accordance with the evaluation policy (please refer to decisions 7.3 of the 49th meeting and decision 9.3 of the 47th meeting of the PCB). In fact, in 2022, only 67% of the target budget of 1% is expected to be mobilized (US\$1 322 000 instead of US\$1 996 000).

More specifically, the Expert Advisory Committee on Evaluation is concerned that the two full-time staff are overstretched. With only ad-hoc administrative support, completing the committed evaluation projects in 2022–2023 will be very challenging for these two talented, but overworked, staff. Evaluation informed evidence might be considered an abstract thing, but evaluation function requires sound knowledge, sophisticated abilities in networking and a strong commitment to equitably gather and hear the perspectives of diverse partners at negotiation tables from which they otherwise may have been excluded. It is a time-consuming and a critical enterprise since it deals with the implementation and ultimately, with the consequences of the UNAIDS policy and programs. We are concerned that understaffing makes the Evaluation Office vulnerable to loss of productivity and institutional memory, should one of these valuable staff members leave.

We therefore ask for your help in ensuring that UNAIDS allocates financial and human resources as per the evaluation policy endorsed by the Programme Coordinating Board. A

strong and productive Evaluation Office is necessary to take advantage of important opportunities to share lessons learned through effective and meaningful knowledge translation with stakeholders within and outside the HIV sector. We have seen how valuable evaluation functions are at country-level, with countries directly applying UNAIDS evaluation findings in designing their program plans. Country-level partners have expressed appreciation for evaluation information that is easily applied, gives credible evidence and legitimacy for civil society to push for allocating funds more effectively to priorities, and gives voice to diverse stakeholders and partners. Thus, the evaluation function is extremely useful for developing a collaborative and actionable evidence-based political agenda.

Finally, we respectfully request that decisions regarding resourcing and location of the Evaluation Office be deferred until after completion of the MOPAN review and evaluation policy review.

We look forward to your response and remain dedicated to our advisory role for you, the Programme Coordinating Board and the Evaluation Office.

Sincerely,

Members of UNAIDS Expert Advisory Committee on Evaluation

Elizabeth Moreira dos Santos, Independent expert (Latin America and the Caribbean)

Zunyou Wu, Chief Epidemiologist, Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Asia-Pacific)

Raymond Yekeye, Programme Director, National AIDS Council, Zimbabwe (Africa Group)

Till Bärnighausen, Director, Heidelberg Institute of Global Health (Western European & Other Countries)

Sigrid Vorobjov, Senior researcher, National Institute for Health Development (Eastern Europe)

San Patten, Independent Expert, Canada (NGO Delegation of UNAIDS Board)

Marco Segone, Director, Evaluation Office, UNFPA

cc. Joel Rehnstrom - Director, Evaluation

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> [UNAIDS Evaluation Policy](#)
- <sup>2</sup> [UNAIDS 2022-2023 Evaluation Plan](#)
- <sup>3</sup> [Report of the 49<sup>th</sup> PCB Meeting](#)
- <sup>4</sup> [JIU Review of UNAIDS Management and Administration](#)