

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE ANNUAL REPORT ON EVALUATION AND EVALUATION PLAN 2024-2025

Additional documents for this item: Annual Evaluation Report (UNAIDS/PCB (53)/23.29), Evaluation of UNAIDS Joint Programme Country Envelopes: 2018-2022 (UNAIDS/PCB(53)CRP1)

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

See draft decision points in the paragraphs below:

- *Recall* decision 7.4 of the 49th session of the Programme Coordinating Board approving UNAIDS 2022–2023 Evaluation Plan, as well as decisions 9.1, 9.2 and 9.5 of the 51st session of the Programme Coordinating Board welcoming progress in the implementation of the Evaluation Policy and Evaluation Plan, and requesting the next annual report to be presented to the Programme Coordinating Board in 2023;
- *Recall* the intersessional decision of the PCB in June 2022, approving the nomination of the candidate from Eastern Europe to serve on the Expert Advisory Committee;
- *Welcome* continued progress in the implementation of the 2022–2023 Evaluation Plan and the role of the Evaluation Office in generating evidence of the UNAIDS Joint Programme’s contributions to results;
- *Take note* of the management response to the annual report on evaluation and the evaluation plan 2024–2025 (UNAIDS /PCB (53)/23.30);
- *Approve* the 2024–2025 Evaluation Plan (UNAIDS/PCB (53)/23.29) endorsed by the Expert Advisory Committee;
- *Agree* to the full composition of the Expert Advisory Committee on evaluation proposed by the PCB Bureau for 2024-2025, including the one-year reappointment of the candidate from Eastern Europe, as detailed in Annex 1 of the annual report on evaluation and evaluation plan 2024–2025 (UNAIDS/PCB (53)/23.29);
- *Approve* the exceptional reappointment of the candidate nominated by the PCB NGO delegation for one year;
- *Request* the Expert Advisory Committee to appoint a Chair from within its membership for 2024 and amend the Terms of Reference of the Committee accordingly; and
- *Look forward* to the next annual report on evaluation to be presented to the Programme Coordinating Board in 2024.

Cost implications for implementation of decisions: None

Summary

1. The UNAIDS management expresses appreciation to the Evaluation Office for its work in implementing the 2022–2023 Evaluation Plan and its consultative approach to developing the proposed 2024–2025 Evaluation Plan. Management acknowledges the sustained efforts of the Office to produce high-quality and relevant evaluation evidence, even under the continued constrained resource environment. The Evaluation Office, together with the Cosponsor Evaluation Group, and supported by the Expert Advisory Committee, plays an important role in deepening an evaluation and learning culture in UNAIDS, and in continually strengthening the Joint Programme’s contribution to country implementation of the Global AIDS Strategy.
2. UNAIDS management remains committed to supporting and sustaining the investment in the independent evaluation function, taking into account the overall financial situation of the Joint Programme. The Office has been strengthened with the addition of administrative support this year, and it is successfully implementing a transition plan. Management will continue to work with the Evaluation Office to explore avenues for raising additional resources and for increased cost-sharing with relevant stakeholders.
3. UNAIDS management has actively applied evaluation findings and recommendations in the work of the Joint Programme. It has worked with the Evaluation Office in the co-creation of the recommendations from the evaluations and in ensuring that the recommendations are acted upon. Detailed action plans are developed, outlining the response to each evaluation and a timeline for completion. These actions are incorporated in the workplans of the relevant departments and entities.
4. Management supports the topics being proposed for evaluation in 2024–2025. These evaluations will help in the further refinement of UNAIDS responses and in the development of 2027–2031 Global AIDS Strategy.
5. The selection process for the recruitment of the Director of Evaluation is underway. Candidates have been shortlisted and interviews will be conducted before the end of the year. Management is grateful for the leadership of the current Director of the Office and the work he has led to establish an independent, fully functional and quality-assured evaluation function in UNAIDS.

2023 completed evaluations

6. Three evaluations were completed and presented to UNAIDS in 2023. The table below summarizes the findings from these evaluations and, where management responses have been finalized, the actions being taken by UNAIDS management in accordance with the recommendations.

| Summary of findings | Management response |
|--|--|
| The UNAIDS Joint Programme country envelopes | |
| <p>The evaluation assessed the effectiveness of the country envelopes as a mechanism to allocate and disburse funds for the Joint Programme at the country level. It documented and analysed results and explored alternative approaches for fund allocation.</p> <p>The evaluation found that, while country envelope funding is crucial, there is room for improvement in decision-making and fund monitoring. Regular funding has played a significant role in keeping HIV a priority for the UN and in promoting collaboration. However, it is necessary to prioritize and concentrate efforts on Global AIDS Strategy targets, while also striving for maximum efficiency, inclusion, and people-centred results at the country level.</p> | <p>This evaluation is informing and guiding efforts to further improve the current country envelope mechanism and its impact for the 2024–2025 biennium. The country envelope funding mechanism is a greatly appreciated source of funding at country level which supports joint planning and implementation of catalytic HIV activities and keeps HIV on the national political agenda. It also sustains and incentivizes joint planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting of the Joint Programme at country level. Management will strengthen mutual accountability processes to further promote efficient use of resources, with an enhanced role for the Joint UN Team on AIDS at regional level.</p> <p>https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/evaluation-country-envelopes-2018-2022-management-response_en.pdf</p> |
| The UNAIDS Joint Programme’s work on HIV-sensitive social protection | |
| <p>The evaluation findings point to several challenges that hinder the efficient and effective delivery, monitoring, and scale-up of HIV-sensitive social protection programmes in countries globally. Recommendations highlight the need to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthen collaboration between the UNAIDS Secretariat and Cosponsors regionally and nationally on HIV-sensitive social protection training, advocacy, data generation, and knowledge translation; 2. Enhance the Joint Programme’s efforts on activities to increase access of key populations—especially minority populations and people who use or inject drugs—to available social protection services; and 3. Refine the Joint Programme Monitoring System and UNAIDS assessment tool on HIV-sensitive social protection, associated training, and to invest more in the use of resulting data. | <p>The evaluation report is currently being finalized for publication and the management response is under development.</p> |
| HIV and Primary Health Care integration | |
| <p>The overall purpose was to conduct a forward-looking evaluation that identifies opportunities for the UNAIDS Joint Programme to strengthen HIV and Primary Health Care integration and linkages. The evaluation concluded that, while</p> | <p>The evaluation report is currently being finalized for publication and the management response is under development. In addition to informing workplans for the next biennium, management expects that the findings and</p> |

individual Cosponsors have supported integration of HIV with other services, there is limited evidence of an intentional or collective Joint Programme approach at country level.

Going forward, more discussion and guidance are needed on the role the Joint Programme can play in strengthening and sustaining the HIV response leading up to and beyond 2030. Careful consideration will be required in each country to determine whether, where, when or the extent to which to integrate HIV into Primary Health Care and broader health systems. It will be essential to ensure that achievements and gains in the response to HIV are not lost and that multisectoral responses, with communities at the centre, remain key elements of efforts to end AIDS.

recommendations will serve as useful contributions to broader discussions to prepare for the next Strategy period (2027–2031), following on the current Global AIDS Strategy.

7. UNAIDS management appreciates the collaborative and inclusive methodologies used to implement the Office’s evaluation plan, with close partnership between the Secretariat and relevant Cosponsors. Management is also grateful for the Office’s routine support and responsiveness to requests from various Secretariat units and offices, assisting them to carry out or commission assessments, reviews and self-evaluations. These activities constitute important contributions to a deepening culture of evaluation, learning and continuous improvement. Management also recognizes the important contributions of the Office to UN system-wide evaluations and working groups, as well as Cosponsor evaluations that focus on HIV. The Strategic Evaluation of the World Food Programme’s work on nutrition and HIV is an example of such an evaluation.

Proposed 2024–2025 Evaluation Plan

8. With regards to the proposed evaluations to be conducted in 2024–2025, UNAIDS management is grateful for the continued focus on the priorities of the Global AIDS Strategy and on the Joint Programme’s overall areas of comparative strategic advantage. The proposed themes cover three broad areas:
 - programmatic responses, including one evaluation focused on the important role of community systems in the achievement of HIV impact;
 - key UNAIDS partnerships to drive progress in the response; and
 - institutional dimensions of the Joint Programme.
9. Management is of the view that the proposed evaluations reflect an appropriate mix of Joint Programme evaluations, conducted in close partnership with Cosponsors, and evaluations focused on the Secretariat. Together, these evaluations will help in the further refinement of UNAIDS responses and will contribute to the development of the 2027–2031 Global AIDS Strategy.

Resourcing the evaluation function

10. UNAIDS management is committed to ensuring that the evaluation function in UNAIDS and its effective performance is sustained. UNAIDS will continue to work together with the Evaluation Office to find innovative ways to increase efficiency of investments and explore avenues for raising additional resources and increased cost-sharing with relevant stakeholders.

11. UNAIDS is facing acute financial constraints, despite the commitments that have been made to resource the Joint Programme at a base of US\$ 187 million per year in core funding and to pursue a fully-funded UBRAF at an annual level of US\$ 210 million. The staff costs and most of the activity costs for the Evaluation Office come from core funds as part of the UBRAF. Due to the financial constraints, the budget for evaluation, the staffing of the Office and the scope of activities have to be calibrated in line with the resources available to the Joint Programme. Some planned evaluations could not be implemented due to resource and capacity constraints in the Joint Programme. Notwithstanding those overall constraints, the Office has been strengthened with the addition of administrative support.
12. Management is committed to promoting a strong and enabling organizational “ecosystem” for evaluation and continuous learning. In this regard, management notes that the Secretariat’s knowledge management function, established as part of the alignment, continues to mature. As new capacities and systems are put into place for creating and sharing knowledge (e.g., communities of practice), management is working to ensure that the learning generated by evaluation activities and reports are fully capitalized upon, to the benefit of the Joint Programme’s performance and its continued relevance for countries and communities.

Recruitment process and upcoming review of the UNAIDS evaluation policy

13. The position of Director, Independent Evaluation, was advertised internally and externally in March 2023, in line with standard UNAIDS hiring procedures. The vacancy notice was shared with the UN Evaluation Group and published on its website (unevaluation.org). The notice was also circulated by email to a list of more than 1,000 UN evaluation professionals and partners. A total of 45 applications were received (13 women, 32 men; 31 internal to the UN system, 14 external).
14. As communicated to the PCB Bureau at the time of advertisement, the selection of the Director will be based on professional evaluation expertise and competence, as defined in the UN Evaluation Group guidelines and competency framework for heads of evaluation and based on the selection criteria and process set out in the UNAIDS evaluation policy and approved by the PCB in June 2019 (UNAIDS/PCB (44)/19.7 para 48). At the time of preparing this report, the selection process for the recruitment of the Director of Evaluation was underway. Candidates have been shortlisted and interviews will be conducted before the end of the year.
15. In connection with and to support the leadership transition, stocktaking of the UNAIDS evaluation function was done. Management wishes to echo the assessment’s appreciation for the accomplishments of the Office and notes the positive performance ratings vis-à-vis independence, architecture and resources.
16. The UNAIDS Evaluation Policy calls for an independent review of the Policy every four years “to assess its continued relevance, adequacy, applicability and effect on the functioning and performance of the UNAIDS Evaluation Office”. With a change in leadership of the Office, the review of the policy is to occur in 2024, once the new Director of the UNAIDS Evaluation Office is in place.

Conclusion

17. UNAIDS management expresses appreciation to the Evaluation Office for its work in implementing the 2022–2023 Evaluation Plan and acknowledges its sustained efforts to produce high-quality and relevant evaluation evidence, even in the current constrained resource environment. The Evaluation Office, together with the Cosponsor Evaluation

Group and supported by the Expert Advisory Committee, plays an important role in helping UNAIDS engage in a rigorous exploration of key themes and areas of work, which informs UNAIDS's understanding of how it can be most effective in advancing global progress in the HIV response.

18. UNAIDS management welcomes the continued work to operationalize and mature the evaluation function, based on the Evaluation Policy adopted by the PCB in 2019, and taking into account the learnings and recommendations of the recently completed internal and external assessments of the evaluation function. Management reaffirms its commitment to realizing ever-greater accountability, transparency, evidence-based decision-making and organizational learning across the Joint Programme.
19. Management is committed to sustaining the investment in the evaluation function and ensuring that the findings and recommendations of the evaluations it commissions have maximum positive impact on the performance of the Joint Programme. Management looks forward to a smooth transition in the leadership of the Office in 2024 and to engaging with the review of the 2019 Evaluation Policy to ensure its relevance to the Joint Programme's evolving work and needs. Management is grateful for the leadership of the founding Director of the Office and the valuable work he has led to establish an independent, fully functional and quality-assured evaluation function in UNAIDS.

Proposed Decision Points

The Programme Coordinating Board is invited to:

20. *Recall* decision 7.4 of the 49th session of the Programme Coordinating Board approving UNAIDS 2022–2023 Evaluation Plan, as well as decisions 9.1, 9.2 and 9.5 of the 51st session of the Programme Coordinating Board welcoming progress in the implementation of the Evaluation Policy and Evaluation Plan, and requesting the next annual report to be presented to the Programme Coordinating Board in 2023;
21. *Recall* the intersessional decision of the PCB in June 2022, approving the nomination of the candidate from Eastern Europe to serve on the Expert Advisory Committee;
22. *Welcome* continued progress in the implementation of the 2022–2023 Evaluation Plan and the role of the Evaluation Office in generating evidence of the UNAIDS Joint Programme's contributions to results;
23. *Take note* of the management response to the annual report on evaluation and the evaluation plan 2024–2025 (UNAIDS /PCB (53)/23.30);
24. *Approve* the 2024–2025 Evaluation Plan (UNAIDS/PCB (53)/23.29) endorsed by the Expert Advisory Committee;
25. *Agree* to the full composition of the Expert Advisory Committee on evaluation proposed by the PCB Bureau for 2024-2025, including the one-year reappointment of the candidate from Eastern Europe, as detailed in Annex 1 of the annual report on evaluation and evaluation plan 2024–2025 (UNAIDS/PCB (53)/23.29);
26. *Approve* the exceptional reappointment of the candidate nominated by the PCB NGO delegation for one year;

27. *Request* the Expert Advisory Committee to appoint a Chair from within its membership for 2024 and amend the Terms of Reference of the Committee accordingly; and
28. *Look forward* to the next annual report on evaluation to be presented to the Programme Coordinating Board in 2024.

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