

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE 2021 ANNUAL EVALUATION REPORT AND 2022-2023 EVALUATION PLAN

Additional documents for this item: UNAIDS/PCB (49)/21.27; UNAIDS/PCB (49)/CRP1

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

See draft decision points in the paragraphs below:

14. Recalls decision 11 of the 45th session of the Programme Coordinating Board approving UNAIDS 2020–2021 Evaluation Plan as well as decisions 9.1 and 9.2 of the 47th session of the Programme Coordinating Board welcoming progress in the implementation of the Evaluation Policy and Evaluation Plan, recognizing the important work done by the Expert Advisory Committee in support of the UNAIDS Evaluation Office, and requesting the next annual report to be presented to the Programme Coordinating Board in 2021;
15. Takes note of the summary of the main findings of the Evaluations conducted in 2021 and the management response to the annual report on evaluation and the evaluation plan 2022-2023;
16. Welcomes continued progress in the implementation of the Evaluation Policy and the 2020–2021 Evaluation Plan and, taking into account the financial situation of the organization, reiterates decision 9.3 of the 47th session of the Programme Coordinating Board requesting the Executive Director to ensure that the evaluation function remains adequately resourced and staffed in accordance with the Evaluation Policy approved by Programme Coordinating Board in decision 6.6 of its 44th session;
17. Agrees to the composition of the Expert Advisory Committee on evaluation proposed by the PCB Bureau for the period 2022-2023 as mentioned in annex 1 of the 2021 annual report (UNAIDS/PCB (49)/21.28), approve the 2022–2023 Evaluation Plan (UNAIDS/PCB (49)/21.28) endorsed by the Expert Advisory Committee and look forward to the next annual report on evaluation to be presented to the Programme Coordinating Board in 2022;

Cost implications for the implementation of the decisions: none

Introduction

1. UNAIDS management expresses appreciation to the Evaluation Office for its work in implementing the 2020–2021 Evaluation Plan and acknowledges its consistent efforts to produce high-quality and relevant evaluation evidence, adapting its methods as necessary in response to the challenging context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Evaluation Office, together with the Cosponsor Evaluation Group, and supported by the Expert Advisory Committee, makes important contributions to the Joint Programme's collective learning and performance, towards attaining the indicators of the *UNAIDS 2016-2021 Strategy: On the Fast Track to End AIDS* and the UNAIDS Unified Budget, Results and Accountability Framework 2016–2021. Management remains committed to sustaining the investment in the evaluation function, taking into account the overall financial situation of the Joint Programme.
2. The UNAIDS Executive Director recognizes her responsibilities as laid out in the Evaluation Policy, para 56, to safeguard the integrity and independence of the evaluation function; to guarantee the necessary human and financial resources for evaluation; to foster an enabling environment for evaluation; to promote a culture of learning, accountability and results-based management; to ensuring that evaluation recommendations are acted upon; and to provide opportunities for the use of evaluation findings and evidence. Management has actively applied evaluation findings and recommendations in the work of the Joint Programme, notably those outlined in the Independent Evaluation of the UN System Response to AIDS 2016-2019.¹ These have informed the development of the new Unified Budget, Results and Accountability Framework, and continue to be implemented. Management is grateful for the continued collaboration and follow up of the Evaluation Office with regards to this flagship, joint evaluation, for example through the planned evaluation of the country envelope funding mechanism in 2022 – one of the follow up actions outlined in the management response.
3. UNAIDS welcomes the 2022–2023 Evaluation Plan and recognizes the value of a strong evaluation plan and office and the importance of its contributions towards the achievement of the new targets outlined in the Global AIDS Strategy 2021-2026 and the UNAIDS Unified Budget, Results and Accountability Framework 2022-2026.

Reinforcing a culture of learning and continuous improvement, to strengthen UNAIDS' results for people and maximize contributions to the new Global AIDS Strategy

4. Seven evaluation themes were addressed by the Evaluation Office in 2021 – four related to the Joint Programme, and three focused on the Secretariat. The table below summarizes the findings and key areas of focus, and includes links to the relevant reports where these have been finalized. Evaluations and Joint Programme responses can be found on the UNAIDS website at:
<https://www.unaids.org/en/whoweare/evaluation>

¹ See UNAIDS/PCB (47)/20.32. Available online at:
https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/Independent_Evaluation_UN_Response_AIDS_EN.pdf
See also Management Response to the Independent Evaluation of the UN System Response to AIDS 2016-2019 (UNAIDS/PCB (47)/20.32), available online at
https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/Management_Response_Independent_Evaluation_EN.pdf

Topic	Key findings (for completed evaluations) or areas of focus (for evaluations that are underway)	Full report	Management response
Joint Programme evaluations			
Violence against women and girls	The evaluation found that the Joint Programme is to some extent supporting countries to work collaboratively with women's and relevant civil society networks in addressing gender equality, HIV and violence against women and girls. However, inadequate attention is being paid to transformative approaches to address the structural and root causes of gender inequality, HIV and violence against women and girls.	https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2021/2021_joint-evaluation-preventing-responding-violence-women-girls	Finalized and to be published on unaids.org soon
Key populations	Underway – the evaluation will assess the extent to which the Joint Programme supports service provision and strategically engages with government stakeholders to improve policies and enabling environment for key populations, and how it brokers space for key populations-led groups and networks in decision-making processes. The evaluation also assesses whether UN agencies are adequately equipped, in terms of human and financial resources, to provide the needed support for different and intersecting key populations, including young people.	To be completed in early 2022	
Efficiency and sustainability	Underway – the Global AIDS Strategy includes “efficient and sustainable resources for the AIDS response” as one of its strategic results, focusing on transformative action in three areas: global solidarity and shared responsibility in mobilizing significant new resources; equality and strategic impact of resource allocations; and focus of resources on the settings, populations and game-changing approaches that will have the greatest impact. The evaluation is expected to provide actionable recommendations to Cosponsors and the Secretariat for maximizing their contributions to efficient and sustainable resources for the HIV response, taking stock of what is working well, what the Joint Programme should stop doing and what the main gaps are.	To be completed in early 2022	

Country level collaboration	Joint Programme evaluations have been carried out in Benin, Brazil, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon and Ghana. Reports under finalization.	Forthcoming	
UNAIDS Secretariat evaluations			
Gender Action Plan	The evaluation recommended a data-driven approach to build a picture of gender (and other) diversity dimensions and to develop a theory of change for the GAP, with key performance indicators. Training needs a gender transformative lens and opportunities should be for all. Technology, the use of which has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, seems to be a leveller and UNAIDS should sustain its benefits.	https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2021/evaluation-UNAIDS-Secretariat-Gender-Action-Plan	Management response drafted and with Cabinet for review and finalization
Resilient and sustainable systems for health	The review documented strong evidence from key informant interviews and documentary sources that external funding for the HIV response has made important contributions to supporting health system building blocks. HIV responses have pioneered programmatic innovations and people-centered approaches including through differentiated service delivery models (DSD) which demonstrate a shift away from the clinic-based 'one size fits all' model to ones which increasingly meet different client needs and contexts. UNAIDS has been instrumental in strengthening CSO capacity and representation in national HIV response governance, planning, and accountability mechanisms, and beyond HIV in some contexts.	https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2021/20210617_evaluation_RSSH	N/A (evidence review)
Regional, intercountry and country-level work	Ongoing – demand-driven support to UNAIDS Country Offices, Regional Support Teams, and departments and teams in the Secretariat's global centre. Promoting and supporting reviews and assessments contributes to a culture of learning, evaluation, and continuous improvement.	N/A	N/A

5. UNAIDS management appreciates the quality, country focus and inclusive methodologies used to implement the joint evaluations of the 2020-2021 Evaluation Plan, especially considering the ongoing, significant challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. External assessment of the five evaluations conducted in 2020 provides important validation and quality assurance, rating four reports as “good” and one as “fair”.²
6. The 2021 evaluations on preventing and responding to violence against women and girls, work with and for key populations, and efficient and sustainable financing of the AIDS response, are particularly timely and relevant in light of the new Global AIDS Strategy and its areas of focus. These areas also feature prominently in the alignment of the UNAIDS Secretariat and the design of the Secretariat’s four practice areas. The evaluation findings and recommendations will be used to inform the design of workplans in the 2022-23 biennium, within the overall context and objectives of the UBRAF, and further organizational learning and action through the development of new Joint Programme communities of practice, as well as deployment of country envelope resources.
7. With regards to planned evaluations in 2022-2023, UNAIDS management is grateful for the focus on the priorities of the Global AIDS Strategy and overall areas of comparative strategic advantage of the Joint Programme. These include strategic information (data hubs), policy and advocacy, community-led monitoring, and the UNAIDS partnership with the Global Fund. UNAIDS management is furthermore looking forward to the opportunity to learn from experience to date with the implementation of country envelope funding – one of the innovations to emerge from the Global Review Panel³ and revised operating model of the Joint Programme, in effect since 2018. As noted in the management response to the Independent Evaluation of the UN System Response to AIDS 2016-2019, management has committed to making structural changes to country envelope funding, as needed, based on and in line with the new Global AIDS Strategy and overall results framework of the new UBRAF.

Enhancing coherence in the United Nations system evaluation function

8. UNAIDS management notes with appreciation the Evaluation Office’s engagement with and support to broader UN system evaluation processes. This engagement has highlighted the role and contribution of the Joint Programme in the implementation of UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks at country level, supporting achievement of HIV-specific objectives, enhancing the quality of joint programming, and, from a process perspective, bringing civil society to the table, among other contributions. The learning from these evaluations will enable UNAIDS to maximize its contribution to the strength and relevance of UN joint programming and support to countries reaching their Agenda 2030 goals and targets, including ending the AIDS epidemic.
9. UNAIDS management is grateful that the Evaluation Office plans to remain an active member of the UN Evaluation Group, contributing to various task forces (particularly in relation to joint and system-wide evaluations) and COVID-19 evaluations.

² Please refer to para. 32, UNAIDS/PCB (49)/21.28.

³ See Global Review Panel on the Future of the UNAIDS Joint Programme Model, Final Report. Available online at: https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/final-report_grp_en.pdf

Resourcing the evaluation function

10. This management response provides a brief overview of the contributions of the evaluation function to the work of the Joint Programme, and commits to ensuring that the evaluation function in UNAIDS and its effective performance is sustained.
11. UNAIDS management wishes to note that evaluation function capacity must be tailored and proportionate to the current financial space that is available to the Joint Programme. The ongoing alignment has had to take into consideration a new financial environment, with serious constraints imposed by recent funding cuts. In 2021, UNAIDS is projected to be US\$ 20 million below its resource mobilization target of US\$ 187 million, and looking ahead to 2022, there is a projected gap of US\$ 35 million in relation to the PCB-approved core approved budget of US\$ 210 million. The resourcing of the Evaluation Office is part of the core UBRAF, and in efforts to protect the overall core capacities of the Joint Programme in this current fiscal environment, management is of the view that the timing is not right to consider expanding the Evaluation Office by adding a third staff position – at a time when many other core functions in the Secretariat and Cosponsors are seeing their staffing complement reduced.
12. UNAIDS management recognizes the need to foster coherence and synergies among the cosponsors and therefore recommends that options for cost savings and efficiencies be explored, drawing on the leadership and capacity of cosponsors in the evaluation area, and building on the positive collaboration to date.

Conclusion

13. UNAIDS management welcomes continued work to operationalize and mature the evaluation function, based on the Evaluation Policy adopted by the PCB in 2019, and reaffirms its commitment to realizing ever greater accountability, transparency, evidence-based decision-making and organizational learning across the Joint Programme. 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. However, in light of UNAIDS' overall financial situation, management asks that the Board, while considering the draft decision point on adequate resourcing of the evaluation function⁴, considers qualifying that point by adding the phrase “taking into account the overall financial situation of the Joint Programme”.

Draft decision point: The PCB is invited to:

14. Recalls decision 11 of the 45th session of the Programme Coordinating Board approving UNAIDS 2020–2021 Evaluation Plan as well as decisions 9.1 and 9.2 of the 47th session of the Programme Coordinating Board welcoming progress in the implementation of the Evaluation Policy and Evaluation Plan, recognizing the important work done by the

⁴ See para. 79, https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/PCB49_Annual_Evaluation_Report_Plan2022-2023_EN.pdf. “[...] reiterate decision 9.3 of the 47th session of the Programme Coordinating Board requesting the Executive Director to ensure that the evaluation function remains adequately resourced and staffed in accordance with the Evaluation Policy [...]”.

Expert Advisory Committee in support of the UNAIDS Evaluation Office, and requesting the next annual report to be presented to the Programme Coordinating Board in 2021;

15. Takes note of the summary of the main findings of the Evaluations conducted in 2021 and the management response to the annual report on evaluation and the evaluation plan 2022-2023;
16. Welcomes continued progress in the implementation of the Evaluation Policy and the 2020–2021 Evaluation Plan and, taking into account the financial situation of the organization, reiterates decision 9.3 of the 47th session of the Programme Coordinating Board requesting the Executive Director to ensure that the evaluation function remains adequately resourced and staffed in accordance with the Evaluation Policy approved by Programme Coordinating Board in decision 6.6 of its 44th session;
17. Agrees to the composition of the Expert Advisory Committee on evaluation proposed by the PCB Bureau for the period 2022-2023 as mentioned in annex 1 of the 2021 annual report (UNAIDS/PCB (49)/21.28), approve the 2022–2023 Evaluation Plan (UNAIDS/PCB (49)/21.28) endorsed by the Expert Advisory Committee and look forward to the next annual report on evaluation to be presented to the Programme Coordinating Board in 2022.

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