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United Nations Development  
Programme, the United Nations  
Population Fund and the  
United Nations Office for  
Project Services**

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**Evaluation**

**Annual report on evaluation, 2024**

*Summary*

The annual report on evaluation, 2024, provides an overview of evaluation activities undertaken by UNDP, the United Nations Capital Development Fund, and the United Nations Volunteers programme. It presents key lessons learned from decentralized, thematic, and country programme evaluations, alongside syntheses and insights from the *Reflections* series. The report documents the efforts of the Independent Evaluation Office to strengthen evaluation capacity, enhance decentralized evaluations, and improve their quality. It includes highlights from the UNDP evaluation policy review, advancements in knowledge management, and a new engagement strategy aimed at increasing the use of evaluations. The report underscores the global leadership of the Independent Evaluation Office in evaluation partnerships through initiatives such as the Global Sustainable Development Goals Synthesis Coalition, the Global Evaluation Initiative, and the United Nations Evaluation Group, reinforcing the UNDP commitment to evidence-based decision-making and strategic learning.

*Elements of a decision*

The Executive Board may wish to: (a) take note of the annual report on evaluation; and (b) request UNDP management to address the issues raised.



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## Contents

I.	Introduction .....	3
II.	Evaluation at UNDP .....	3
A.	Engagement with the Executive Board.....	3
B.	Engagement with UNDP senior management .....	3
C.	The evaluation policy review and revision .....	4
III.	Independent Evaluation Office key outputs, 2024.....	4
A.	Independent evaluations .....	4
B.	Special report: Key lessons from UNDP evaluations on adapting to climate change.....	5
IV.	Oversight and support to decentralized evaluation .....	7
A.	Investment in evaluation.....	7
B.	Regional presence of the Independent Evaluation Office.....	7
C.	Decentralized evaluation support.....	8
D.	The implementation, quality and use of decentralized evaluations.....	8
V.	Use of evaluations.....	11
A.	Stakeholder engagement with Independent Evaluation Office outputs .....	11
B.	Implementation of evaluation recommendations .....	13
C.	New engagement and communication approach .....	13
VI.	Advancing national evaluation culture and practice .....	14
A.	National evaluation capacity development .....	14
B.	The Global Sustainable Development Goals Synthesis Coalition .....	14
C.	The United Nations Evaluation Group .....	15
D.	Global Evaluation Initiative.....	15
VII.	Knowledge management .....	15
VIII.	Staffing and finances, 2024 .....	16
A.	Independent Evaluation Office staffing .....	16
B.	Independent Evaluation Office budget .....	16
C.	Implementation of the multi-year workplan, 2025 .....	17
IX.	The United Nations Capital Development Fund and the United Nations Volunteers programme .....	18
A.	United Nations Capital Development Fund.....	18
B.	United Nations Volunteers programme .....	19

## I. Introduction

1. The annual report on evaluation, 2024, provides an overview of evaluation activities undertaken by United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), and the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV). The activities undertaken by the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office in 2024 as part of its multi-year workplan for 2021-2025 are described, including updates on independent evaluations and syntheses, efforts to strengthen evaluation capacity within UNDP, and its support to other United Nations funds and programmes.
2. In line with its mandate, the Independent Evaluation Office continued to strengthen the oversight and accountability functions of UNDP. In 2024 the office presented to the Executive Board three thematic evaluations of UNDP support to: the digitization of public services (DP/2024/6); private sector development and structural transformation (DP/2024/17); and ecosystem management and biodiversity conservation (DP/2024/19). Conducted in 2024 and presented to the Board in 2025, the evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022-2025 (DP/2025/15) examined the vision and direction of the organization over the past four years and assessed the extent to which UNDP adapted to the changing contexts influencing progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.
3. The Independent Evaluation Office collaborated with the Bureau of Policy and Programme Support and regional bureaux to extend its support to strengthening capacities for decentralized evaluations. In line with the UNDP evaluation policy, the Office recruited three regional evaluation advisors to implement a programme of evaluation work and provide support to regional and country office capacities from Addis Ababa, Bangkok, and Istanbul.
4. Evaluation use formed a major focus of the year, and the launch of the new engagement and communications approach encapsulates how the Independent Evaluation Office will advance this further with its partners in the coming years. The Evaluation Resource Centre holds over 6,800 quality-reviewed evaluations, and further enhancements to the ‘artificial intelligence for development analytics’ tool make evaluative insights directly accessible to UNDP, member states, and external partners. Leveraging these resources, the Office continued to produce *Reflection* papers and synthesis reports on critical areas of UNDP support, which were featured at the Summit of the Future, 2024, the National Evaluation Capacities Conference in China (2024), and various webinars.
5. In 2024, Independent Evaluation Office collaborated with key partners, including the United Nations Evaluation Group, the Global Sustainable Development Goal Synthesis Coalition, and the Global Evaluation Initiative. These partnerships strengthened the role of the Office in enabling evidence-based decision-making and national evaluation capacity.
6. The Office conducted a review of the UNDP evaluation policy to inform an update of the policy for 2026-2030, when the organization will support the remaining five years of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## II. Evaluation at UNDP

### A. Engagement with the Executive Board

7. The Independent Evaluation Office maintained regular interaction with the Executive Board throughout 2024. The Director had the opportunity to present her vision for the Office at a special informal session of the Board, setting the stage for productive collaboration. As mentioned above, the Office presented three thematic evaluation reports to the Board, covering our assessments of UNDP support for digitalization of public services; private sector development and structural transformation; and ecosystem management and biodiversity conservation.

### B. Engagement with UNDP senior management

8. Throughout 2024, the Independent Evaluation Office sustained strong engagement with UNDP management, including the Executive Group, fostering open dialogue and collaboration. For the Strategic Plan evaluation, the Office organized regional focus groups, alongside discussions with the Evaluation Reference Group – comprising members of the Organizational Performance Group and representatives of the Executive Office. At the country level, independent country programme evaluation teams conducted debriefings with UNDP, governments, donors, and national and international partners to share findings and

recommendations. Those interactive sessions enabled Office engagement and facilitated dialogue among UNDP and its partners, providing valuable insights to inform UNDP programming and operations.

### **C. The evaluation policy review and revision**

9. The Independent Evaluation Office conducted its regular review of the UNDP evaluation policy, the foundational document that guides its evaluation processes. The review responded to the Executive Board request for an independent appraisal of the 2019 evaluation policy four years after its approval, which was adjusted to accommodate a leadership transition within the Office and to align with the UNDP Strategic Plan cycle and the multi-year programme of work of the Office.

10. The 2024 review assessed the continued relevance of the policy in four key areas: evaluation architecture; procedures and quality assurance; implementation; and evaluation results. It considered recent developments from the Independent Evaluation Office regarding impact assessment, evidence synthesis, artificial intelligence, and support to country offices through regional evaluation advisors.

11. In response, the Independent Evaluation Office, in collaboration with UNDP management, will revise the evaluation policy to enhance the evaluation function of UNDP. The revisions will specifically address ways to further strengthen decentralized evaluations. The Office will support UNDP in positioning impact evaluation within the organization, promoting mixed methods tailored to UNDP-specific needs, and developing guidance to facilitate this work. There will be further emphasis on using evaluative evidence through evidence synthesis. The revised policy will incorporate ‘leave no one behind’ as a cross-cutting principle of the policy. The revised policy will be presented to the Executive Board at its second regular session 2025.

## **III. Independent Evaluation Office key outputs, 2024**

### **A. Independent evaluations**

12. Consistent with Executive Board decision 2017/21, the Independent Evaluation Office aims to ensure comprehensive evaluation coverage of all aspects of the UNDP mandate. As part of its multi-year programme of work, 2022-2025, the Office conducted two global thematic evaluations in 2024:

13. *The Evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022-2025*, which assessed the vision guiding the organization over the past four years and illustrated the shifting contexts influencing the final push towards the Sustainable Development Goals. This global evaluation covered all components of the Strategic Plan, including its directions of change, signature solutions and enablers; and reviewed components of its operational effectiveness.

14. *The Independent Evaluation of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation support to the G-77 and China*, which assessed the capacity strengthening, funding management, and demand-driven support provided by the Office since 2017.

15. In addition, the Independent Evaluation Office concluded thematic evaluations of UNDP support to digitization of public services (DP/2024/6), UNDP support to private sector development and structural transformation (DP/2024/17), and UNDP support to ecosystem management and biodiversity conservation (DP/2024/19).

16. The Independent Evaluation Office undertook 27 independent country programme evaluations during the year, with many aligning with the conclusion of country programmes. Regionally, the greatest number of evaluations (11) was conducted in the Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States region (see table 1).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Independent country programme evaluations for Azerbaijan, Guatemala, Lebanon, Myanmar, South Sudan, and Sudan were deferred to later points in their respective programme cycles.

**Table 1. Independent country programme evaluations, 2024**

<i>Region</i>	<i>Country</i>	
<b>Africa</b>	Côte d'Ivoire	South Africa
	Eswatini	Uganda
	Ethiopia	
<b>Arab States</b>	Libya	Tunisia
	Somalia	
<b>Asia and the Pacific</b>	China	
	Indonesia	
	Malaysia	
	Timor-Leste	
<b>Europe and the CIS</b>	Armenia	North Macedonia
	Belarus	Türkiye
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Turkmenistan
	Georgia	Serbia
	Kazakhstan	Uzbekistan
	Kosovo	
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	Argentina	
	Mexico	
	Panama	
	Uruguay	

17. The Independent Evaluation Office continued to synthesize evaluative evidence to support learning and inform programme decision-making. In 2024, the Office launched five *Reflections* papers covering access to renewable energy; the humanitarian-development-peace nexus; mobilizing men for gender equality; integrated approaches to health, climate and energy; and jobs and livelihoods.

18. Three regional syntheses were completed in collaboration with the regional bureaux for the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The Latin America and the Caribbean synthesis focused on the implementation capacities of country offices, while the Asia and the Pacific synthesis concentrated on climate action. The regional evaluation synthesis for the Arab States emphasized job creation in the micro, small, and medium enterprise sectors. These syntheses were designed to contribute to regional programming and policy priorities in their respective areas.

## **B. Special report: Key lessons from UNDP evaluations on adapting to climate change**

19. This section brings together insights from 33 publications produced by the Independent Evaluation Office in 2024, which together depict the reality of the climate threat, but also provide insights into what works. Adapting to climate change was shown to be an ongoing process of building capacities and managing uncertainty, and determining which strategies were likely to be effective was crucial to avoid investing in development pathways that may become untenable in the future.

20. **Climate change impacts were experienced in all regions, and were exacerbating existing challenges.** The independent country programme evaluations of 2024 highlighted the impacts of climate change. In arid areas of Uganda and semi-arid zones of Ethiopia the evaluations drew attention to the experience of pastoralist groups whose livelihoods are threatened by increasing water scarcity. In South Africa, flooding in KwaZulu-Natal and the eastern and western Cape regions in 2022-2023 disproportionately affected marginalized communities, particularly those living in informal housing.

21. In 2024 the Independent Evaluation Office assessed the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, and noted the relevance of the UNDP approach to building resilience in countries experiencing a “polycrisis”, where institutions, communities, and households were undermined by a combination of environmental, health, economic and other shocks. The country programme cycle in Paraguay was marked by the worst drought in half a century, large-scale forest fires, the COVID-19 pandemic, and

flooding. Evaluations in Colombia, Iraq, Mali, and Yemen highlighted even more serious threats, directly linking climate impacts with diminishing natural resources and the catalysts of conflict in those countries.

22. **The ability to adapt to climate change lay primarily with the people exposed to its effects.** Households and communities have to make decisions about their livelihoods, assets, and security, often in the face of uncertainty about weather patterns, seasonal conditions, and hazard events. Several evaluations showed how those at risk of climate change drew on local support structures to reduce uncertainty, and indicated ways in which UNDP could strengthen the connection.

23. The independent country programme evaluation in Uruguay showcased the power of connecting groups at risk of being left behind, forming a rural women's climate network of 70 women across regions, equipping them with technical knowledge, and fostering their participation in decision-making. In Cuba, UNDP connected communities with local government to restore natural flood defences while integrating risk analysis and community assessments, and in Georgia the organization supported 200 communities in disaster-prone areas in adopting localized risk and development plans.

24. However, enhancing local capacities requires consistency. In Colombia, the closure of territorial offices weakened climate programming, though Bogotá-based focal points helped to link local and national plans. In North Macedonia, UNDP improved community access to risk maps but lacked a strategic approach to public consultations on climate planning.

25. **Improving country capacity to localize climate forecasts provided a more comprehensive lens on future risks.** Accessing granular climate data often remained a challenge, slowing the shift of countries from disaster response to resilience-building. The 2024 evaluations highlighted how UNDP enhanced forecasting and risk management. In Ethiopia, UNDP upgraded weather stations and improved hazard communication, while in Indonesia it refined climate hazard estimates for adaptation planning. Enhancing risk management capacities was used as an opportunity to identify specific adaptation needs. UNDP climate support in Cambodia, for example, led to the creation of a 'women's resilience index'.

26. UNDP has strengthened country capacity to assess the influence of climate change across several pre-existing threats, supporting policy-screening tools in Uganda and multi-hazard planning in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo. In Paraguay, forest fires underscored the need for a multi-risk approach.

27. The public health impacts of climate change were also gaining attention. A *Reflections* paper showcased UNDP work with the World Health Organization in Asia, helping to factor climate risks into health planning, vaccine storage, and disaster preparedness.

28. **Country-level climate adaptation plans faced financial and institutional constraints.** The 2024 evaluations showed that UNDP continued to provide valuable assistance as countries set their national climate adaptation priorities and planned a coherent response across sectors. However, in several countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini, Kosovo, Serbia, and Uganda), positive policy changes faced significant institutional implementation hurdles.

29. Financing adaptation remained a major obstacle, as resilience projects often serve poorer communities and lack clear revenue models. In Côte d'Ivoire, UNDP helped develop a portfolio of 300 climate projects, but further support was needed to mobilize investment. Similarly, a public-private climate partnership in Liberia had yet to generate significant funding.

30. Evaluations showcased the role of UNDP in pioneering climate finance mechanisms. In Uruguay, UNDP supported the launch of the region's first sovereign sustainability-linked bond, helping establish governance frameworks and a mechanism for verifying environmental outcomes – key for unlocking financial commitments. While these instruments focused primarily on emissions reductions and resource protection rather than direct adaptation, they demonstrated the ability of UNDP to leverage its national presence and development expertise to expand climate resilience efforts.

31. **Businesses, large and small, supported climate resilience when the incentives and value-chains were in place.** Larger businesses can offer innovations and services that help people adapt to climate change, but value chains remained underdeveloped, especially in developing countries, where

resource protection efforts often struggled against extractive industries. Thematic evaluations in 2024 highlighted UNDP work with agribusinesses to improve land use, but stressed the need to better understand agribusiness incentives.

32. Micro-enterprises faced even greater climate challenges as water scarcity and extreme weather disrupted production. The 2024 synthesis of the Independent Evaluation Office on job creation in the Arab States emphasized regulatory reform, value-chain support, digitalization, and tailored financial services. Reliable markets for climate-smart products were able to boost household resilience, but enterprises struggled with finance and market access. UNDP supported producer collectives in Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini, Ethiopia, and Uganda. In Ethiopia, it helped 1,400 households form cooperatives linked to credit unions, securing \$600,000 in funding.

33. **Advances in the evaluation of climate resilience.** In 2024, the Independent Evaluation Office co-developed the first United Nations Evaluation Group norm on integrating environmental and social impacts into United Nations evaluations, emphasizing climate change, unintended consequences, and the perspectives of indigenous and local communities. The Beijing Action Plan, which was endorsed by representatives from over 100 countries at the National Evaluation Capacities Conference, 2024, in China, called for integrating climate and resilience strategies into evaluations. Given the uncertainty of climate impacts, evaluating resilience requires assessing the ability of a population to anticipate, absorb and adapt, rather than measuring individual improvements. Evaluators were guided to identify who needs resilience support and for what shocks, considering factors such as financial, natural, and social assets, as well as vulnerabilities linked to disability, location, or gender norms.

## IV. Oversight and support to decentralized evaluation

### A. Investment in evaluation

34. Spending on decentralized evaluations increased from \$23.04 million in 2023 to \$26.72 million in 2024, and was reflected in an increased number of evaluations. Evaluation expenditure increased across all regions with the exception of Asia and the Pacific. Headquarters, bureaux and country offices had an expenditure of \$10.18<sup>2</sup> on evaluation (an increase from \$8.46 million in 2023); staff costs rose to \$13.68 million (from \$11.75 million in 2023), and other evaluation-related costs increased to \$2.86 million<sup>3</sup> (from \$2.83 million in 2023).

### B. Regional presence of the Independent Evaluation Office

35. The deployment of the regional evaluation advisors marked a significant advancement in the UNDP evaluation function and responded to a commitment to the Executive Board to strengthen decentralized evaluation capacities. In May 2024, three regional evaluation advisors took up new roles at regional centres in Bangkok, Istanbul, and Addis Ababa. The arrival of the advisors followed productive discussions between the Independent Evaluation Office and the bureaux management in establishing the new function focused on enhancing the evaluation capacity of UNDP. To maintain independence, the advisors report to the Director of the Independent Evaluation Office and provide support informed by its assessment of evaluation quality in their respective regions.

36. The regional evaluation advisors established and began delivering on their priority areas: training, advice and support for country office and bureau staff; and engagement in regional evaluation capacity development forums and networks. In their first year, each advisor led and supported several independent country programme evaluations in the respective regions. Their proximity to country and regional offices proved valuable for the global evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, conducted by the Office.

<sup>2</sup> Based on Evaluation Resource Centre data downloaded on 3 February 2025.

<sup>3</sup> Staff time allocations for evaluation and additional evaluation costs were self-reported through the results-oriented annual reports. Staff costs for evaluation were calculated by UNDP based on those self-reported figures.

37. The Independent Evaluation Office continues its practice of regional focal points in regions that do not have advisor positions, namely, the Arab States and Latin America and the Caribbean.

### **C. Decentralized evaluation support**

38. Evaluations directly commissioned by country offices, regional bureaux, and headquarters provided the vast majority of evidence of UNDP support. Ensuring the quality of this information remained a priority for Independent Evaluation Office and, in 2024, the office supported various UNDP functions to foster an evaluation culture, strengthen the capacity of monitoring and evaluation focal points, and improve the recruitment processes for evaluation consultants.

39. The Office continued to provide quality assessment across UNDP-commissioned evaluations, as well as those of UNCDF and UNV. While the method of assessing the quality of decentralized evaluation remained constant, the Office undertook several measures to increase the efficiency of the process. The quality assessment tool introduced in 2017 was streamlined, and the new version was introduced to UNDP regional bureaux and country offices throughout the year. The Evaluation Resource Centre, which holds all UNDP evaluations and provides a robust evaluation management system – including the quality assessment system – was made more user-friendly, making it easier to track evaluation plans, management responses, evaluation quality, and the implementation of key actions.

40. Capacity-building efforts were prioritized, with the Office and regional evaluation advisors supporting webinars to enhance the capacities of monitoring and evaluation officers and focal points in the regional bureaux for Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the Arab States, and Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Additionally, the Office participated in the Programme Appraisal Committee processes for all regions, ensuring that country programme documents and their evaluation plans were aligned with the recommendations of the independent country programme evaluations and the UNDP evaluation guidelines.

41. The annual report on evaluation, 2023, highlighted that country offices and regional bureaux experienced difficulties in sourcing strong evaluators, leading to repeated advertisements and delays, and impacting evaluation quality. As part of efforts to address this in 2024, the Independent Evaluation Office expanded the breadth of evaluation expertise available to UNDP through a large-scale ongoing vetting process. To date, the Office has vetted over 560 evaluation consultants and facilitated their inclusion in the Global Policy Network roster. UNDP personnel can also use the Evaluation Resource Centre to review past work and quality scores for prospective evaluators.

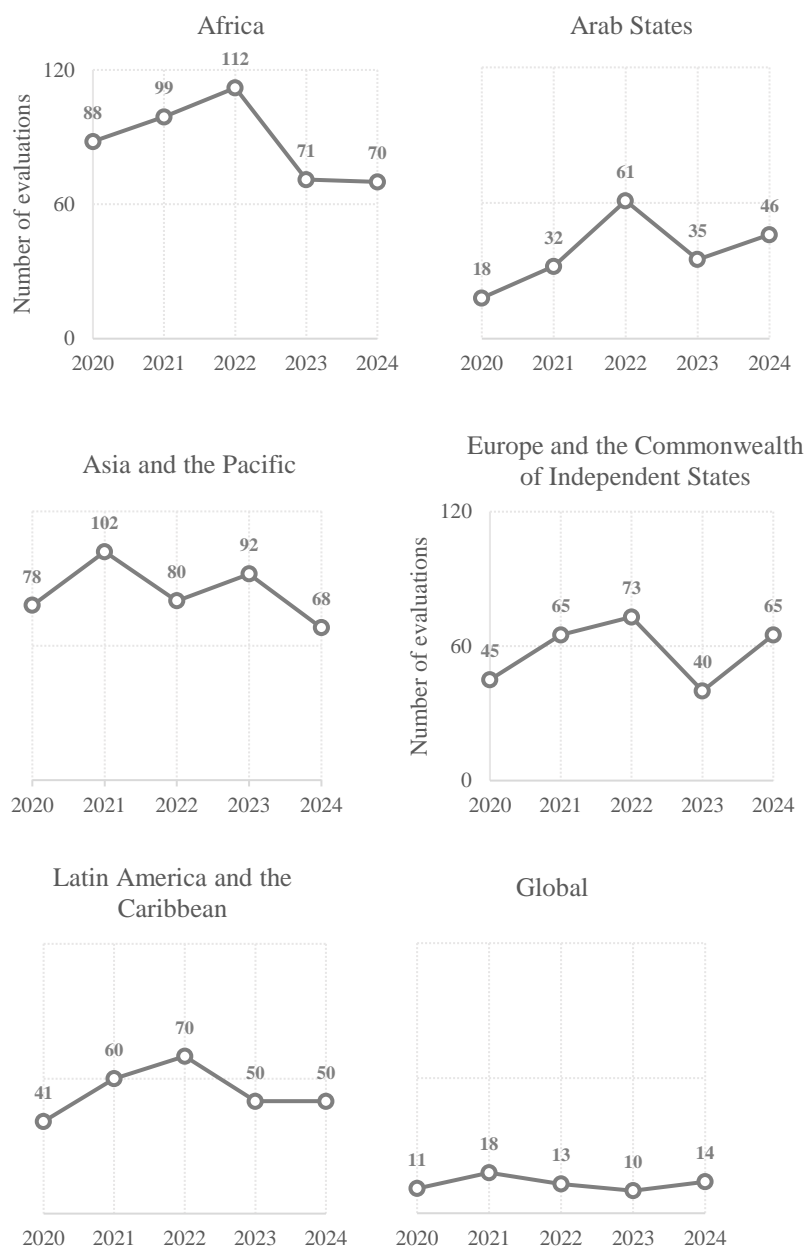
### **D. The implementation, quality and use of decentralized evaluations**

42. Of 457 decentralized evaluations planned for 2024, 68 per cent (313) were completed.<sup>4</sup> This represents an increase from 2023, when 65 per cent of planned evaluations were completed. There was an increase in the number of evaluations conducted from headquarters and in the Arab States and Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States regions compared to the previous year, while Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean maintained close to their 2023 levels. Asia and the Pacific was the only region to see a marked reduction in the number of evaluations (see figure 1).

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<sup>4</sup> This data is from the Evaluation Resource Center. The data on planned evaluations is set as of 15 April 2024, while the data on completed evaluations is current as of 1 February 2025.



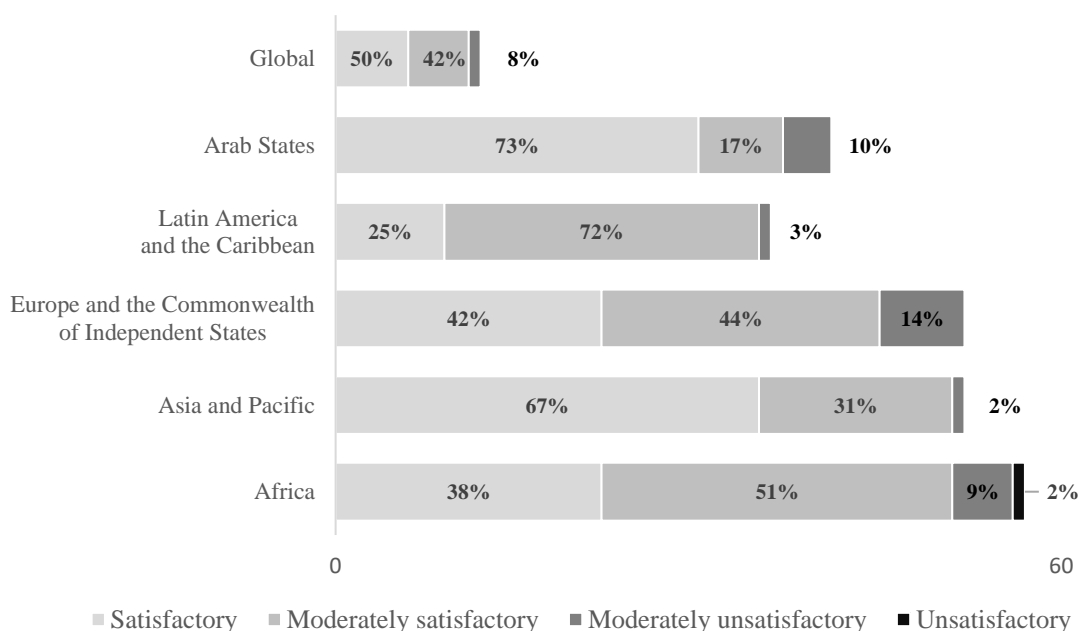
**Figure 1. UNDP decentralized evaluations conducted, 2020-2024**

Source: UNDP Evaluation Resource Centre

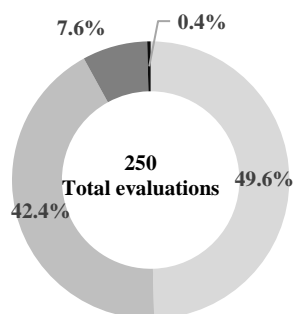
43. The quality of decentralized evaluations improved in 2024 compared to previous years. Of the 250 evaluations quality-assessed by the Independent Evaluation Office, 49.6 per cent were highly satisfactory or satisfactory, compared to 40.5 per cent in 2023. There was also a decline in the number of evaluations with lower-quality scores – in 2024, 42.4 per cent were moderately satisfactory, and 8.0 per cent were moderately unsatisfactory or unsatisfactory, compared to 48.0 per cent and 11.5 per cent, respectively, in 2023. Quality increased across all major evaluation components in 2024, with the greatest improvement in the number of evaluations having highly satisfactory and satisfactory scores for their findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

44. Regionally, evaluations from country offices in the Arab States region continued to show a high level of quality and improvement compared to 2023, with 73 per cent considered satisfactory. The Asia and the Pacific region also registered notable improvements. Evaluation quality remains more of a challenge in other regions.

**Figure 2. Regional breakdown of evaluation quality in 2024**



**Total evaluations with quality assessment**



Source: UNDP Evaluation Resource Centre

45. Evaluations are an important tool for assessing whether and how different groups can access and benefit from development support. Each year, the Independent Evaluation Office assesses decentralized evaluations using indicators from the United Nations Women's System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, and our centralized evaluations are externally reviewed for their gender-responsiveness. Analysis of 193 UNDP evaluations yielded an

aggregate score of 9.80, indicating that the organization had exceeded requirements for the fifth consecutive year.

46. The Independent Evaluation Office recognized high-quality evaluation across UNDP in April 2024 with the fourth Evaluation Excellence Awards. The awards recognized two outstanding evaluations, from Cambodia and Yemen, for their robust evidence-based analysis, and two exceptionally gender-responsive evaluations from Chad and Ukraine. The winners were chosen by an evaluation advisory panel based on quality of evidence-based analysis and utility for management decision-making. Special recognition was awarded to 10 country offices for their consistent production of high-quality evaluations from 2020 to 2024.

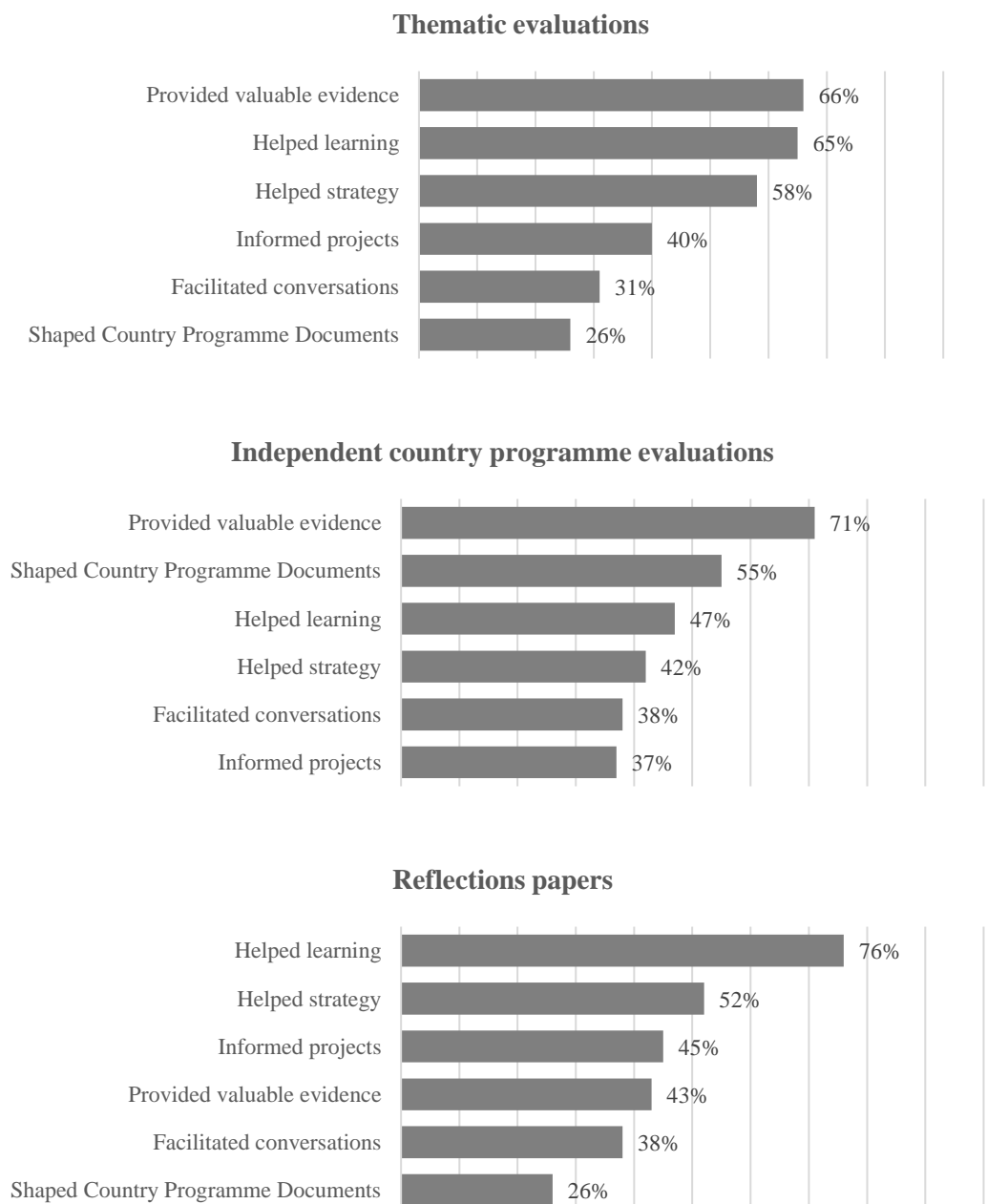
## V. Use of evaluations

### A. Stakeholder engagement with Independent Evaluation Office outputs

47. Understanding how stakeholders view and use our products underpins our ability to improve our work. In December 2024, the Office conducted a revised annual stakeholder survey to collect better feedback on the quality and utility of our reports and capacity support. The response reflected positively on our work and provided insights to take forward into 2025. Internal and external stakeholders appreciated the quality, rigour, and clarity of the work, which had improved compared to 2023. Evaluations and the *Reflections* papers were considered easy to read, reliable, and objective in their content. Our capacity development resources and services were widely praised for being relevant, user-friendly, and impactful – often inspiring new approaches to planning and conducting decentralized evaluations.

48. Respondents provided insights about the Independent Evaluation Office products they were most familiar with. Both the thematic and country programme evaluations were considered valuable sources of evidence for the decision-making of their respective audiences (see figure 3). The *Reflections* series was valued for its contribution to learning and was appreciated by staff from United Nations organizations, in particular. The survey highlighted the need to consider how global evaluations could be designed for better use in country programmes, and the Independent Evaluation Office is improving its engagement processes to increase the use of all its products in UNDP knowledge discussions.

**Figure 3. According to stakeholders, Independent Evaluation Office products provided valuable evidence, aided learning and strategy, and informed projects.**



*Source:* Independent Evaluation Office, Stakeholder survey 2024

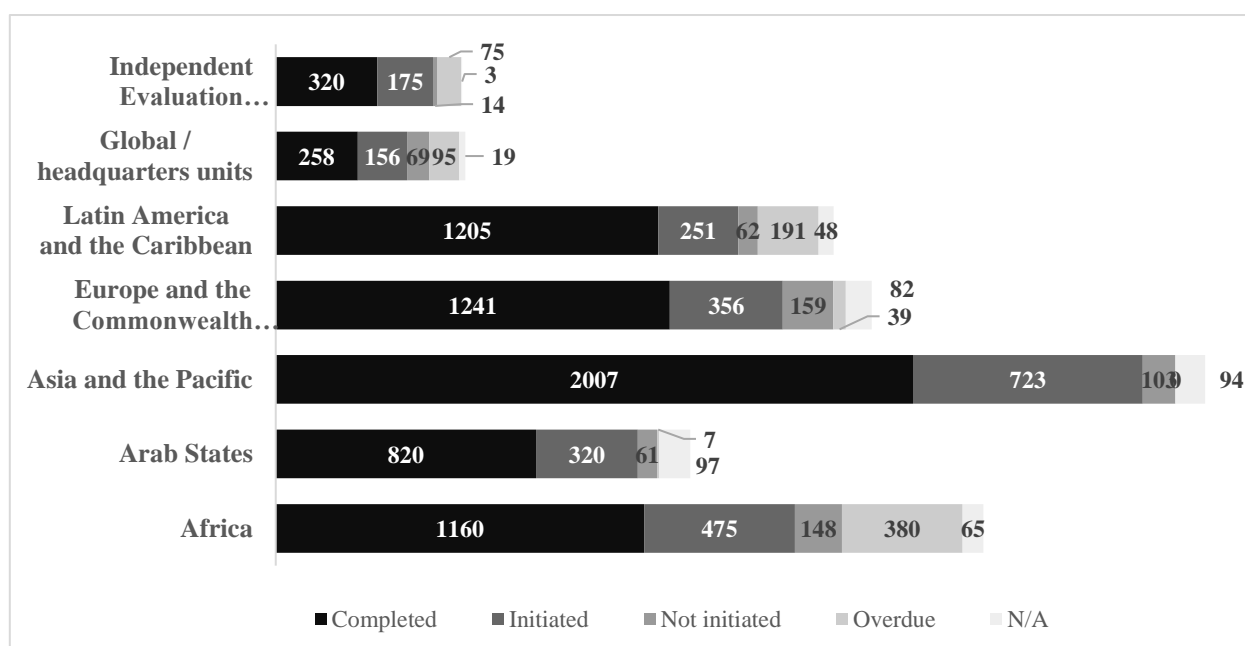
49. The Independent Evaluation Office asked survey participants for areas in which it could further improve the relevance, utility, and use of its work. The most common groups of recommendations were to: enhance the UNDP evaluation culture and emphasize the benefits of evaluations as knowledge tools; strengthen the clarity and actionability of recommendations; support country-level platforms, including non-state stakeholders, for systematic reflection and learning from evaluation; and conduct more impact evaluations.

### B. Implementation of evaluation recommendations

50. As in previous years, all evaluations conducted in 2024 were required to have management responses to recommendations, indicating whether the evaluands accepted, partially accepted, or rejected them. By the close of 2024, 95 per cent of all evaluations in the Evaluation Resource Centre had posted a management response outlining next steps.

51. The Evaluation Resource Centre recorded all key actions of management responses (figure 4), tracking their implementation as reported by the country offices. Overall, 88 per cent of key actions were completed or under initiation. Only 7 per cent were overdue or had yet to be initiated, while 5 per cent were no longer applicable due to changing contextual circumstances.

**Figure 4. According to self-reported data by the programme units, a vast majority of recommendations were completed or initiated.**



Source: Independent Evaluation Office Evaluation Resource Centre

### C. New engagement and communication approach

52. The utility of evaluations depends on factors that extend beyond analytical rigour. At the core is meaningful stakeholder engagement from the outset, paired with effective communication to build trust and make complex insights accessible. In an era of information overload, evaluations must be concise, well-structured, and integrated into decision-making processes to effectively drive performance improvements. By embedding engagement and communication throughout the evaluation process, the Independent Evaluation Office aims to further foster trust, encourage learning, and strengthen the link between evaluation findings and evidence-based decision-making.

53. In 2024, the Independent Evaluation Office launched its new **Engagement and Communication Strategy** to enhance the utility and reach of its evaluations and knowledge products. The strategy leverages insights from behavioural science to ensure that evaluations resonate with target audiences and are used effectively. The Office will support collaborative efforts to shape the way forward in areas identified for recommendation and will strengthen connections with the UNDP communities of practice.

## VI. Advancing national evaluation culture and practice

### A. National evaluation capacity development

54. The Independent Evaluation Office hosted the eighth biannual National Evaluation Capacities Conference from 14 to 18 October 2024, in Beijing, China, under the theme “Responsive Evaluation: For Government, For Inclusion, For the Future”. With over 500 participants from 106 countries, it was the largest event in the 16-year history of the conference, bringing together representatives from governments, civil society, international financial institutions, and United Nations organizations.

55. Co-hosted by the China International Development Cooperation Agency, the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office, and the Global Evaluation Initiative, the conference emphasized the vital role of evaluation in creating inclusive and future-ready governance. Participants engaged in 21 sessions and nine workshops on topics including integrating evaluation into governance, using innovative approaches such as artificial intelligence, and ensuring local relevance in evaluations.

56. The event concluded with participants agreeing on the **Beijing Action Plan**, for which the Global Evaluation Initiative is the steward, and which builds on the 2022 Turin Conference Agenda by laying out five priority areas to increase the responsiveness of evaluation systems:

- (a) **Embed country-led evaluation** into the development of public policy and the management of the public sector at key formal stages of the programming and policy cycle, and when ‘windows of opportunity’ arise in advisory and decision-making processes.
- (b) **Promote a learning culture** that balances the role of evaluation in learning and accountability by aligning with stakeholder needs, building capacity, sharing findings, integrating into policy processes, and fostering evaluator-decision-maker collaboration.
- (c) **Foster knowledge-sharing** and capacity-building by exchanging best practices, systematizing evidence use for Sustainable Development Goals, leveraging evaluation syntheses for contextual learning, and ensuring equitable access to evaluation tools and evidence.
- (d) **Leverage technology** and build on indigenous knowledge. The Plan calls for ethical and equitable use of artificial intelligence, the adoption of people-centred approaches to evaluation, and empowering young evaluators through skills development and mentorship.
- (e) **Integrate climate, environmental, and resilience-building strategies** into evaluations to: enhance insights on sustainability and human – nature connections, to strengthen crisis response adaptation, and to address inclusiveness and sustainability across all dimensions.

### B. The Global Sustainable Development Goals Synthesis Coalition

57. The Global Sustainable Development Goals Synthesis Coalition is a partnership of 45 United Nations entities working to generate insights from existing evidence in support of Sustainable Development Goals. The UNDP Independent Evaluation Office is a co-chair of the Coalition with the Evaluation Office of the United Nations Children’s Fund and the United Nations System-wide Evaluation Office.

58. In 2024, the Coalition published several evidence papers framed by the four pillars of the Sustainable Development Goals. The *peace pillar* completed a report that highlighted the importance of economic progress in reducing violence and signalled that misunderstandings of the culture and context of targeted populations are a fundamental impediment to achieving peace-related outcomes. The *people pillar* completed a report on social protection, which will feed into the United Nations World Social Summit in 2025. The *planet pillar* completed a scoping review in December 2024, establishing priorities for future syntheses.

59. Working with partners, the Coalition helped secure an investment of \$74 million, from the United Kingdom Research and Innovation Agency and the Wellcome Trust, to fund syntheses on the Sustainable Development Goals, digital tools, and evidence platforms. This effort is intended to support decision-makers in accessing evaluative evidence on what works, why, and for whom. The resource will fund the operations of the Coalition, including its secretariat, staffing, and engagement functions, positioning it as a central hub for evaluation evidence with respect to the Sustainable Development Goals.

60. The Independent Evaluation Office is working with its partners to set the direction of the next phase of the Coalition, and intends to bring together stakeholders from the ‘demand’ side of evidence (for example, United Nations entities and governments), the ‘supply’ side (for example, evidence synthesis producers), evidence intermediaries (for example, scientific advisors), and funders.

### **C. The United Nations Evaluation Group**

61. The Independent Evaluation Office continued to be an active member of the United Nations Evaluation Group, and its Director was elected Chair of the Group in May 2024. Until his retirement in September 2024, the Deputy Director was a vice-chair and a member of the executive steering committee.

62. As Chair of the Group, the Director has led work to develop its new strategy, which was launched at its annual general meeting in February 2025. The vision laid out the role of the Group between 2025 and 2032, a period that will cover the realization of Agenda 2030 and discussions on a post-2030 development framework; the pursuit of ‘United Nations 2.0’ towards agile, diverse, responsive, and impactful organizations through the ‘Quintet of Change’; and implementation of the Pact for the Future (A/RES/79/1).

63. As the Group begins delivering its next strategy, the Independent Evaluation Office and other United Nations organizations will support initiatives to accelerate progress toward key development priorities while advancing their specific goals and interests. Independent Evaluation Office staff participate in 12 of the 17 working groups and serve as co-coordinators leading the work of the Evaluation Synthesis, Environment and Social Impacts, and Data and Artificial Intelligence working groups.

### **D. Global Evaluation Initiative**

64. Since its inception in 2019, the Independent Evaluation Office has provided support to the Global Evaluation Initiative to enhance global evaluation capacity, including dedicated staff in programming and advisory roles. The Office is an active member of the Partnership Council, which consists of 12 members guiding the Initiative.

65. In 2024, the Initiative continued to help governments assess their evaluation functions to target support effectively. Collaborating with six regional centres for ‘learning on evaluation and results’ across various regions, the Initiative assisted in preparing diagnostic analyses of evaluation readiness and facilitated training for 5,684 officials from 109 countries.

66. Key resources – such as the BetterEvaluation website, the International Programme for Development Evaluation Training, and the methods portal of the Independent Evaluation Office – provided accessible evaluation methods. The annual gLocal Evaluation Week promoted cross-sector learning through discussions on diverse topics. Additionally, the Initiative supported 69 officials at the International Programme for Development Evaluation Training in Bern, Switzerland, focusing on artificial intelligence in monitoring and evaluation.

## **VII. Knowledge management**

67. Improving accessibility to evidence and supporting data-driven decision-making remain key priorities for the Independent Evaluation Office, which continues to advance its knowledge platforms in step with increased demand and new technological developments. Central to such efforts are the Evaluation Resource Centre and the Artificial Intelligence for Development Analytics initiative.

68. The Evaluation Resource Centre (the corporate evaluation platform of UNDP and the primary data source for Artificial Intelligence for Development Analytics) underwent significant modifications in 2024 to improve access to its 6,800 evaluations. The artificial intelligence analytics capacity of the Independent Evaluation Office has also undergone continuous upgrades since its 2022 launch, and in 2024 the Office made significant enhancements to its insight generation model, which now categorizes outputs into findings, conclusions, and recommendations. A data feed was established to integrate the Evaluation Resource Centre with other UNDP systems, such as the performance application and ‘renewal engine’ of the Amman Regional Hub, which draws on Independent Evaluation Office products to build a systems approach to decision-making in policy and programming. Users can filter insights by evaluation quality, evidence sentiment, and programme attributes, enabling highly targeted insights from the evaluative evidence database. The Office conducted training sessions for UNDP staff and engaged with other United Nations organizations to share lessons on artificial intelligence systems for data synthesis and insights.

69. Looking ahead, the Independent Evaluation Office plans to further enhance its artificial intelligence capacity by aligning its initiative with modern large-language models and expanding it into a multi-institution platform for evidence-based decision-making.

## VIII. Staffing and finances, 2024

### A. Independent Evaluation Office staffing

70. The Office maintains adequate gender parity and geographical representation. In 2024, it had a staffing of 37 staff positions, composed of 31 international professionals and six general service staff. In addition, 13 long-term consultants with International Professional service contracts were part of the team. At the time of writing, the Office had eight vacancies across different levels and contractual modalities.

### B. Independent Evaluation Office budget

71. The budget for 2024 was set at \$13.86 million, of which the Office spent \$13.85 million (99 per cent) on evaluations and other institutional activities (see table 2).

**Table 2. UNDP evaluation resources (\$ million)**

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Independent Evaluation Office expenditures</b>	8.7	10.9	11.2	11.4	11.8	13.77	13.85
<b>Decentralized evaluations</b>	13.3	14.8	14.5	16.4	25.1	23.04	26.72
<b>Total resources UNDP evaluation function</b>	22.0	25.7	25.7	27.8	36.9	36.81	40.57
<b>Share of UNDP programme resources to evaluation</b>	0.48	0.58	0.57	0.58	0.77	0.75	0.83

*Source:* Independent Evaluation Office calculations of UNDP utilization and decentralized evaluation budget data.



72. In keeping with the UNDP evaluation policy stipulations and the approved integrated budget of the Strategic Plan,<sup>5</sup> the Office developed its 2025 work programme to utilize funding of \$14.03 million.

### C. Implementation of the multi-year workplan, 2025

73. In 2025, the Independent Evaluation Office will conduct two corporate evaluations for presentation to the Executive Board at its first regular and annual sessions in 2026. The evaluations will cover the thematic trust funds and UNDP support for electoral capacities (see table 3). Later in the year, the Office will launch an evaluation of the UNDP contribution to conflict prevention and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus for presentation to the Board in 2027. The Office will present its annual report on evaluation, 2025, at the annual session 2026. Independent country programme evaluations to be conducted in 2025 are listed in table 4.

**Table 3. Independent Evaluation Office work to be presented to the Executive Board in 2025/2026**

<i>Session</i>	<i>Independent Evaluation Office report</i>
<b>First regular session 2025</b>	Review of the UNDP evaluation policy
<b>Annual session 2025</b>	Evaluation of UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022-2025 Annual report on evaluation, 2024
<b>Second regular session 2025</b>	Revised UNDP evaluation policy
<b>Annual session 2026</b>	Formative evaluation of the UNDP funding windows

**Table 4. Independent country programme evaluations, 2025**

<i>Region</i>	<i>Country</i>
<b>Africa</b>	Benin Botswana Burkina Faso Cameroon Chad Comoros Congo (Republic of the) Eritrea Guinea-Bissau Kenya Mozambique South Sudan Togo Zimbabwe
<b>Arab States</b>	Syria (to be confirmed)
<b>Asia and the Pacific</b>	Bangladesh Lao PDR Maldives Thailand Viet Nam
<b>Europe and the CIS</b>	Albania Tajikistan
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	Barbados Belize Chile Ecuador El Salvador Guatemala Guyana Honduras Jamaica Peru Suriname Trinidad and Tobago Venezuela

<sup>5</sup> DP/2021/29, paragraph 38(d)

74. As the Independent Evaluation Office reviews its value proposition in what is expected to be an increasingly resource-constrained environment, it will work with the Executive Board and with UNDP to deliver high-quality country-level evaluative work. This may involve considering alternative ways to provide full coverage of country programmes, focusing on a tighter cycle of evaluations for high-priority, high-risk country programmes, and a reduced cycle of evaluations for stable, lower-risk country programmes. This will allow the Office to focus their efforts to provide more customized evaluative assessments for key countries, while providing UNDP and the Executive Board accountability for all country programmes over the course of at least two country programme cycles.

75. In addition to its evaluations, the Office will produce regional and global thematic syntheses and *Reflections*. Two syntheses will be conducted in conjunction with thematic evaluations planned for 2025. There will also be regional evidence syntheses on themes relevant for Africa, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, and Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Office will contribute to the peace and people pillar syntheses as part of the Sustainable Development Goals Synthesis Coalition.

76. The Office will continue its support to strengthening national evaluation systems, emphasizing the importance of planning for evaluations and ensuring appropriate evaluative coverage of UNDP work. This entails providing greater guidance on roles and responsibilities for evaluation, and linking to examples of good-quality evaluations to strengthen future decentralized evaluations.

77. As 2025 marks the last year of the present workplan for the Independent Evaluation Office, it will develop its plan for 2026-2029 for presentation to the Executive Board at the first regular session 2026.

## IX. The United Nations Capital Development Fund and the United Nations Volunteers programme

### A. United Nations Capital Development Fund

78. In 2024, reaffirming its commitment to robust evaluation, UNCDF allocated \$688,519 – representing 0.95 per cent of its programmatic resources – to evaluation, moving closer to the 1 per cent target outlined in the UNDP evaluation policy. Despite that progress, the Evaluation Unit faced challenges in meeting its ambitious four-year plan of 16 evaluations. Nine evaluations were completed within the period, but the complexity of multi-country interventions demanded significant managerial oversight, stretching available capacity. In response, UNCDF is bolstering its evaluation capacity and establishing a new long-term roster to meet its 2025 goals.

79. The UNCDF evaluation unit completed three evaluations in 2024 and presented the key findings and lessons learned.

80. **Midterm evaluation of the UNCDF strategic framework, 2022–2025.** This evaluation showcased the comparative advantage of UNCDF in piloting and demonstrating innovative financing mechanisms, including blended finance. It commended the ability of UNCDF to leverage its investment mandate in collaboration with other United Nations entities to meet host country development needs. However, the evaluation identified a lack of clear mission and vision statements as a barrier to strategic positioning within the broader development finance landscape. The recommendations encouraged UNCDF to undertake a comprehensive strategic planning process, establish good governance principles, and define its unique value proposition.

81. **Midterm evaluation of the Migration and Remittances Programme.** This programme aimed to enhance economic inclusion for migrants and their families through low-cost digital remittance services and remittance-linked financial products. While the evaluation noted strong achievements in digital financial literacy and private sector innovation, it highlighted challenges in sustaining the adoption and use of inclusive remittance products. Recommendations focused on transitioning from preparatory diagnostics to actionable reforms, fostering deeper collaboration with partners, and ensuring clear impact pathways for outcome attainment.

82. **Final evaluation of the UNCDF Africa Policy Accelerator Programme.** The goal of this programme was to contribute to inclusive digital economies that support women and men and their families toward financial inclusion, resilience, and equality. The programme was found to be relevant

and effective in deepening capacity among regulators and providing focused technical assistance, but with a weak monitoring system that limited its understanding of the impact on consumers. The recommendations encouraged the programme to deepen its interventions in certain countries, revise its theory of change, and explore philanthropic funding.

83. Looking ahead, UNCDF remains committed to enhancing the quality and utility of evaluations. Through engagement with the United Nations Evaluation Group, UNCDF seeks to integrate innovative methodologies and cross-cutting themes, including gender responsiveness and leave no one behind principles. By strengthening collaboration with the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office, UNCDF aims to foster a culture of learning and ensure that evaluation findings shape strategic decision-making and policy reforms.

## **B. United Nations Volunteers programme**

84. In 2024 UNV completed an evaluation of its volunteer categories that assessed their relevance and contribution to the United Nations Volunteers Strategic Framework, 2022-2025. The evaluation provided practical recommendations for how the organization could strengthen its engagement with its volunteers and its United Nations partners, and made specific suggestions on the role of youth, refugee and online volunteers. Despite the breadth of volunteer categories, the evaluation integrated cross-cutting priorities, including the leaving no one behind principle, gender equality and the empowerment of women, and disability inclusion, receiving a highly satisfactory rating in its management response.

85. As 2024 marked the penultimate year of the United Nations Volunteers Strategic Framework, 2022-2025, the Office embarked on its evaluation of the framework. The inception report and preliminary data collection processes were validated at the management team meeting in Mexico City in December 2024, where the participation of leadership and managers enriched the evaluation process. The report will be completed in the second quarter of 2025 and will feed into the development of the next strategic framework.

86. UNV continued to support evaluation across the United Nations system. Last year the organization, in collaboration with the Young Emerging Evaluators of the United Nations Evaluation Group, revived a joint initiative to integrate emerging evaluation talent as United Nations Volunteers within the evaluation function across organizations. To date, 12 evaluation capacities have been deployed as volunteers with eight United Nations entities, with more in the pipeline. This initiative aims to strengthen the evaluation function of United Nations entities and create a talent pipeline of young evaluation professionals.