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Evaluation

**Independent Evaluation Office multiyear programme of work
(2022-2025)**

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I. Introduction

1. The UNDP Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, was approved at the second regular session 2021 of the Executive Board. The plan outlines a pivotal role for UNDP in response to the global challenges of our time: recovery from COVID-19; mitigating the harmful effects of climate change; accelerating achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals; and leaving no one behind. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP is tasked with providing unbiased, timely and influential evaluations of UNDP work. The purpose of this multi-year programme of work is to describe how the Office intends to evaluate UNDP performance and achievements under its new Strategic Plan.
2. The multiyear workplan has been developed in accordance with Executive Board decision 2017/21, which requested the Independent Evaluation Office to “ensure adequate and comprehensive coverage of all aspects of the UNDP mandate”. The workplan takes as its foundation the UNDP evaluation policy (DP/2019/29), which established the purpose and principles of evaluations and defined the institutional architecture for UNDP and its associated funds and programmes. The Independent Evaluation Office is defined as a functionally independent unit that supports the oversight and accountability functions of the Executive Board and the management of UNDP, the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme.
3. In 2021, the Independent Evaluation Office developed an overarching strategy for its work through 2025, setting out a vision for a renewed evaluation function with a systemic view that more directly addresses the particular challenges of this age. The Office is rethinking development evaluation and aims to be a progressive leader in the field, trusted by stakeholders to generate evidence that supports UNDP in advancing inclusive and sustainable development. To implement its vision, the Office has revised its strategy, to be operationalized through the present workplan, and commits to adopting a systems approach to evaluation, strengthening both decentralized and independent evaluation functions, and adhering closely to United Nations values.
4. The global context in which UNDP operates must be considered in carrying out this programme of work. The impact of COVID-19 will continue to be felt for years to come. UNDP is front and centre in the recovery, rebuilding and reimagining what will be needed, and the IEO has an important role in assessing this work. The Human Development Report 2020, ‘Human Development and the Anthropocene, articulates well the relationship between COVID 19 and another existential issue humanity now faces – climate change – and makes the case for “embarking on bold new paths that expand human freedoms while easing planetary pressures”. The new Strategic Plan carries this effort forward, seeking to develop multidimensional approaches to solving complex systemic development challenges for people and the planet. This programme of work is designed for the Anthropocene age, and the Independent Evaluation Office will consider the social and environmental dynamics of UNDP work in its evaluations.
5. The strategy of the Independent Evaluation Office includes a theory of change (see annex II) that envisions an intended impact for UNDP to help countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and improve people’s lives. Through its evaluative work, the Office aims to strengthen the culture of results and learning within the organization and focus on the work of UNDP in support of countries to achieve internationally agreed development goals.
6. The UNDP evaluation policy cements a resource base for the Independent Evaluation Office corresponding to 0.3 per cent of total programme expenditure. As noted in the UNDP integrated resource plan and integrated budget estimates, 2022-2025 (DP/2021/29 para 38 (d)), \$64 million is planned to be allocated for the work of the Independent Evaluation Office over the period, representing an increase of 52 per cent over the 2018-2021 resource allocation for the Office.
7. Over the next four years, the Independent Evaluation Office will carry out an extensive set of activities as set out in the following sections of this workplan:
 - (a) Institutional and thematic evaluations
 - (b) Independent country programme evaluations
 - (c) Evaluation capacity development

- (d) Knowledge and data management
- (e) Other activities
- (f) Budget

II. Corporate and thematic evaluations

8. The Independent Evaluation Office conducts thematic programmatic and other independent evaluations, ensuring strategic and representative coverage of UNDP programmes and results against national, regional and global scales. Each year the Office presents a set of evaluations to the Executive Board for decisions that cover the key thematic, programmatic and operational activities of UNDP as set out in the Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, including its ‘directions’, ‘enablers’, and ‘signature solutions’. The work culminates in a comprehensive evaluation of the Strategic Plan to be presented in 2025. The Board established a new way of working in 2019, reducing the agenda for second regular sessions in order to reduce workload at the time when delegates are preparing for the General Assembly. Accordingly, Independent Evaluation Office evaluations are considered at the first regular and the annual sessions of the Board in January and June, respectively. The Office intends to present three corporate/thematic evaluations each year, two at the first regular session and one at the annual session, in addition to an annual report on evaluation.

9. An annual report on evaluation is presented to the Executive Board at each annual session, providing salient information on Office activities and achievements from the previous year. The reports summarize accomplishments and lessons from the previous year, identify current activities, and provide analysis of the quality of decentralized evaluations. As of 2021, the reports offer an expanded discussion and synthesis of independent evaluation findings. In 2022, the format will be revised to include a separate technical annex on the quality of decentralized evaluations, allowing a deeper analysis of issues related to quality and coverage. The annual reports will continue to be refined to provide more analytical and results- and lessons-oriented information. An additional planned feature, in response to Board interest, is to provide analysis on the uptake of evaluation recommendations and how evaluations have brought added value to the organization and its development results. Aside from the main report, the Independent Evaluation Office will provide occasional analysis and ad hoc supplementary reports for the information of the Board throughout the year.

10. The following corporate and thematic¹ evaluation topics are set out to cover key aspects of the Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, recognizing also the expectations set out for United Nations system reform in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and the UNDP COVID-19 offer 2.0, “Beyond Recovery: Towards 2030”. The new UNDP Strategic Plan carries forward from the previous one the six signature solutions, business models and enablers, and the Independent Evaluation Office will focus its attention on these structural building blocks for the global work of the organization. Since the development strategies of the United Nations and UNDP will continue to evolve, the array of corporate and thematic evaluations identified below will be subject to refinement pursuant to Executive Board and UNDP management discussions.

11. The evaluation topics are as follows:

¹ Corporate evaluations focus on organizational effectiveness aspects such as business processes; thematic evaluations refer to programme.

Evaluation	Executive Board session
<p><i>Evaluation of UNDP support to youth economic empowerment (SS 1 – poverty, SS 2 – governance)*</i></p> <p>Across countries, a sizable share of youth is prevented from accessing education and job opportunities. This has rippling effects on their current and future well-being, economic empowerment, and livelihood perspectives, reinforcing inequality patterns. Despite their economic potential, youth (aged 15-24) are around three times more likely to be unemployed than adults above the age of 25. In 2019, an estimated 67.2 million youth were unemployed globally, and around 123 million are underemployed.</p> <p>The UNDP approach to youth economic empowerment is anchored in its organizational mandate and strategic plans operationalizing that mandate. The last two Strategic Plans, 2014-2017 and 2018-2021, position youth economic empowerment as straddling the UNDP focus areas of ‘poverty reduction’ and ‘good governance’. UNDP investment in youth economic empowerment is estimated at between \$200 million and \$400 million per annum.</p> <p>This is the first comprehensive attempt to gather and analyse evidence about the contribution of UNDP to decent work and livelihoods creation for youth in programme countries. The evaluation assesses the extent to which its various approaches have contributed to enhancing the psychological, behavioral, and economic empowerment of youth and creating an enabling environment for poverty reduction and livelihood improvement. It considers the influence of contextual factors (assumptions and drivers) on programme and project interventions.</p>	First regular session 2022
<p><i>UNDP support to energy access and transition (SS 5 – energy)</i></p> <p>Although progress has been made in the past decade, 789 million people around the world lack access to electricity, and 2.8 billion lack affordable clean cooking options. Of those without access to electricity, 590 million (75 per cent) live in sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, the energy sector remains the dominant contributor to global warming, producing approximately 60 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>The UNDP signature solution on energy focuses on three objectives: increasing energy access, promoting renewable energy, and enhancing energy efficiency. UNDP defines its support towards these as: reducing the energy access gap; increasing the global rate of improvements in energy efficiency; and increasing the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.</p> <p>This evaluation offers a comprehensive analysis of evidence about the contribution of UNDP to energy access and transition. The evaluation is expected to inform UNDP positioning vis-à-vis the United Nations system-wide energy strategy and relevant sustainable development goals, the operationalization of the Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, and the planning and implementation of country programmes and partners’ work in this area.</p>	First regular session 2022
<p><i>Financing the pandemic recovery: building forward better for a decade of delivery (under way) (E 3 – development financing)</i></p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a prolonged health and socio-economic crisis and regression in Sustainable Development Goals achievement. In addressing the social and economic aspects of the pandemic, governments face fiscal and financial constraints that impair their ability to provide needed services.</p> <p>This formative evaluation explores the level to which UNDP has been able to support and will continue to support governments in delivering the Goals. While UNDP is not a major provider of financial or fiscal funding, it is</p>	Annual session 2022

<p>positioning itself to ensure that fiscal and financial tools are available for achievement of the Goals.</p> <p>The evaluation is being carried out in collaboration with parallel evaluations on this topic undertaken by the independent evaluation offices of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.</p>	
<p><i>Formative evaluation of UNDP integration of ‘leaving no one behind’ principles (D 2 – leave no one behind)</i></p> <p>‘Leave no one behind’ is a central transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. In practice, it means taking explicit action to address differential access; challenging power structures, social norms and beliefs hampering inclusion; confronting overt and covert discrimination; and fast-tracking progress for those left farthest behind. It requires the generation and disaggregation of additional data to ensure that all grounds of discrimination prohibited under international law and other root causes of inequality are identified and addressed. And it throws up many practical challenges in UNDP work, including the increasing marginal costs of reaching the last mile, and partnership and procurement models that hamper social contracting at the boundary of the state.</p> <p>The formative evaluation will assess the evolving conceptual and operational frameworks used by UNDP to translate the ‘leave no one behind’ principle into concrete action, and to make recommendations on how to strengthen UNDP contributions to results for those farthest behind.</p>	First regular session 2023
<p><i>Evaluation of UNDP support to strengthening social protection systems (SS 1 – poverty, SS2 – governance)</i></p> <p>Social protection systems help individuals and families, especially the poor and vulnerable, cope with crises and shocks, find jobs, increase productivity, invest in the health and education of their children, and protect the ageing population.</p> <p>This evaluation will assess UNDP strategies and programme performance in supporting well-designed and government-implemented social protection policies and programmes.</p>	Annual session 2023
<p><i>Evaluation of UNDP support to access to justice (SS 2 – governance)</i></p> <p>In the absence of access to justice, people are unable to have their voice heard, exercise their rights, challenge discrimination or hold decision-makers accountable.</p> <p>The proposed evaluation will examine how UNDP contributes to strengthening national capacities to develop policies and programmes for justice reform and service delivery, what results are achieved, for whom and under what circumstances.</p>	Annual session 2023
<p><i>Evaluation of UNDP digital transformation in support of access to public services (E 1 – Digitization)</i></p> <p>As countries adapt and grapple with the opportunities, challenges and risks offered by digitization and technology, UNDP has increasingly supported digitization and technology enhancement to governments for improving public service delivery and citizen engagement and participation.</p> <p>This evaluation will shed light on the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, and sustainability of the UNDP digital transformation support to governments.</p>	First regular session 2024

<p><i>Evaluation of UNDP nature-based solutions for development (SS 4 – environment)</i></p> <p>The UNDP strategic plan emphasizes the critical role that the protection and sustainable management of nature plays in economic growth and societal well-being.</p> <p>The evaluation will consider the current UNDP strategies and programming aimed at accelerating global, national and local transitions to greener economic pathways, and the preservation of healthy ecosystems.</p>	First regular session 2024
<p><i>Evaluation of UNDP strategic innovation pivot (E 2 – strategic innovation)</i></p> <p>Since 2014, UNDP has been taking steps to pioneer new ways of doing development that build the capacity of countries to deliver change at scale. This work continues to evolve, and ‘strategic innovation’ is identified as a key “enabler” in the UNDP strategic plan, 2022-2025.</p> <p>This will be an assessment of the UNDP innovation strategy and ‘flagship’ initiatives, including case studies of the work carried out through the UNDP Innovation Facility, Accelerator Labs and ‘deep demonstrations’. The evaluation will consider the extent to which UNDP strategy changes systems and tackles the toughest Sustainable Development Goals challenges through these innovative approaches.</p>	Annual session 2024
<p><i>Evaluation of UNDP Corporate learning, performance, and impact measurement (OE – knowledge management, impact measurement)</i></p> <p>Performance and impact measurement has been identified as needing strengthening in past evaluations of UNDP work. Results-based management has been partially implemented and linear, with insufficient attention to the need for adaptive management in response to organizational changes. The Strategic Plan, 2022-2025, highlights organizational learning as an organizational result that will see investment in systems to track transformative change and its enablers.</p> <p>This evaluation will assess the effectiveness of the corporate learning, performance and impact measurement architecture in UNDP, and will suggest avenues for strengthening impact measurement and learning to inform decision-making at all levels.</p>	First regular session 2025
<p><i>Strategic Plan evaluation</i></p> <p>As in previous strategic planning cycles, the Independent Evaluation Office will submit to the Executive Board a comprehensive evaluation of UNDP performance and results under its Strategic Plan, 2022-2025.</p>	Annual session 2025

* UNDP Strategic Plan designations: D=Directions; SS=Signature Solution; E=Enablers; OE=Organizational Effectiveness

12. The scale and scope of Independent Evaluation Office evaluations will be adjusted to the topic under consideration, using methods suited to the questions addressed. In addition to primary data collection through field visits and interviews, the evaluations will mine the evidence gathered through programme and project evaluations at country and regional levels. Aside from the corporate and thematic evaluations identified above, the Office expects to identify topics where evaluability assessments are needed to determine whether there is sufficient data and information to go forward. Issues may arise in the coming years that suggest carrying out formative and ‘real time’ evaluations, providing UNDP with early guidance and recommendations on programme design and the results of pilot projects and programmes. The multiyear programme of work therefore has flexibility embedded in its design.

13. When the Executive Board approved the present evaluation policy in 2019, it set out expectations for an independent review of the evaluation policy in 2024. The Independent Evaluation Office will commission the independent review in 2024, for submission to the first regular session in 2025. If the Board decides that the policy review offers compelling reasons

to revise the evaluation policy, a draft revision will be introduced for consideration at the annual session in 2025.

Evaluation synthesis studies and reflection papers

14. Starting in 2020, the Independent Evaluation Office established two new evaluation products: evaluation synthesis studies and reflection papers. While evaluation synthesis studies emulate full evaluations in their setting out of evaluation criteria and consideration of development contexts, they do not generally entail case study missions to collect primary data. Evaluation synthesis studies collect secondary data, mostly from previous evaluations, and should be completed within six months. They aggregate evidence from evaluations within a geographic area, or on a specific topic, and the Office carries out the work either individually or in coordination with other United Nations organizations.

15. Reflection papers are rapid evidence assessments that quickly generate lessons on topics, triangulated from previous evaluations, that UNDP can take forward in response to urgent policy decisions. The Reflections series was launched in 2020, and the 17 papers developed to date – during the COVID-19 pandemic – have focused on learning from programming in crisis contexts. These rapid assessments, designed to be completed within three months, differ from evaluation synthesis reports in breadth of analysis and pace of delivery. They do not provide the background context for UNDP work in a particular development area, or build from a set of evaluation criteria and questions.

16. Both the evaluation synthesis studies and the reflection papers are slated for public dissemination but not intended for Executive Board decision. Their primary audience is UNDP itself, offering rapid and flexible analysis to foster organizational learning and help shape ongoing programming.

17. In 2021 the Independent Evaluation Office completed a synthesis study of the work of UNDP in Europe and Central Asia, and in early 2022 will complete a synthesis study of its work in the Sahel region of Africa. The list of identified synthesis reports for 2022 and 2023 is provided in the table below. Additional subregions and topics will be identified for the full strategic planning period, through 2025, following consultations with UNDP management. In addition, there are plans under development to carry out joint synthesis efforts with other United Nations organizations, focused on overlapping activities relating to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. An example of this type of partnership can be seen in the synthesis study of 2021, commissioned by the United Nations Children's Fund and involving UNDP and 14 other United Nations entities and development banks, on United Nations system and development bank work towards Goal 6, "Ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all".

Subregional and thematic synthesis series	Year
Caribbean synthesis. The subregional synthesis of the Caribbean will consolidate and analyse existing evaluative evidence to capture and combine accumulated knowledge, lessons and common issues and solutions across the countries in the Caribbean for further reflection on the strategic directions, priorities and approaches for future UNDP engagement.	2022
Green Climate Fund impact meta-synthesis. This meta-synthesis will validate and interpret data across 10 decentralized impact evaluations conducted by UNDP and GCF to assess the internal and external validity of the results and approaches used	2022
Southeast Asia synthesis. This subregional synthesis of Southeast Asia will consolidate and analyse existing evaluative evidence to promote learning and collective reflection about key barriers and facilitators to achieving expected results, as well as opportunities and challenges for improving UNDP operations, institutional performance, and effectiveness in Southeast Asia.	2023
Maghreb synthesis. This subregional synthesis will identify and extract evaluative evidence available on UNDP performance in the Maghreb: what	2023

worked, what did not work, and under what circumstances to formulate lessons and good practices to improve overall UNDP performance in its programmes, generate knowledge and insights, and draw potential region-wide trends to inform UNDP strategies in the Maghreb.	
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18. In each of the next four years, the Independent Evaluation Office expects to produce six reflection papers focused on learning needs identified in the UNDP Strategic Plan, including its directions, signature solutions, enablers and organizational effectiveness. Some themes under consideration for 2022 and 2023 are identified below, with flexibility in the line-up to adjust to changes in context. The themes to be covered each year will be discussed and validated with UNDP stakeholders.

Proposed theme		Strategic plan alignment*
1	Sustainable local development	D 1
2	Civil society engagement into leave no one behind programming	D 2
3	Private sector engagement with a focus on fragile settings	D 3
4	Access to justice as a portfolio-based approach	SS 2 + E – strategic innovation
5	E-governance in the COVID era	SS 2 + E – digitization
6	Boosting women’s political participation, with a focus on financing	SS 6 + E – development financing
7	Monitoring and evaluation frameworks, with focus on utility	SS 6 + E – development financing, 3 OE – impact measurement
8	Knowledge management for programme improvement and learning	OE – knowledge management
9	Fiduciary role of UNDP	OE – Funding
10	Risk management related to elections (before, during and after)	OE – Risk management
11	Conflict prevention, with a focus on ethnicity	SS 3
12	Transformative justice	SS 2
13	Support to smart cities	SS 3
14	Alternative management of natural solutions	SS3, SS4
15	Climate change: UNDP support to nationally determined contributions	SS 4
16	Montreal Protocol: efforts to phase out ozone-depleting substances	SS 4

*Strategic Plan designations: D=Directions; SS=Signature Solution; E=Enablers; OE=Organizational Effectiveness

III. Independent country programme evaluations

19. The Independent Evaluation Office conducts independent country programme evaluations to assess the programmatic performance of UNDP and its contribution to development in a given country during a multi-year country programme period. These evaluations are typically carried out in the year prior to Executive Board consideration of the revised country programme documents to derive lessons for future programming.

20. In 2020, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated challenges, and in acknowledgement of the pressure country offices were under and the need to reorient methods

due to travel restrictions, the Office revised its country-level evaluation effort. It carried out country programme evaluations and reviews in 15 countries that had been selected based on operational feasibility and evaluation utility. The Office also provided technical and financial support to five country offices that commissioned decentralized country programme evaluations. Similarly, in 2021, it conducted 16 country-level evaluations, and an additional nine country offices received direct support to commission their end-of-cycle evaluations. The Office introduced the decentralized country programme evaluation concept as an ad hoc, short-term solution in response to COVID-19 complications. While existing support agreements with country offices will be honoured, the practice will be discontinued in 2022.

21. The independent country programme evaluations planned for presentation to the Executive Board in 2022 and 2023 are shown in the table below. The 15 evaluations to be carried out in 2022 provide full coverage for the country programme documents up for renewal in 2023. The table also shows tentative Independent Evaluation Office lists of country programme evaluations to be implemented in 2023-2025 based on the current country programme cycles; these, however, are likely to change. During the remainder of the four-year period, the Office will continue providing full independent country programme evaluation coverage, but will assess whether this is achieved within one or two cycles. If a determination is made to cover all evaluations within an 8-year rather than a 4-year period, country selection in any given year will be based on the following priorities: (a) no previous Independent Evaluation Office-led evaluations in recent years; (b) crisis-affected context; (c) planned input for thematic evaluations; and (d) other relevant contextual factors. During the third quarter of each year, the Office will coordinate with regional bureaus and country offices on the process and timing of the evaluations to be carried out.

Year	Countries and territories
2021 (for 2022 country programme renewal)	Bolivia, Central African Republic, Cabo Verde, Ecuador, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, India, Kenya, Moldova, Nepal, Nigeria, Pacific Multi-Country Office, Peru, South Sudan, Ukraine
2022 (for 2023 country programme renewal)	Benin, Bhutan, Burundi, Cambodia, Equatorial Guinea, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Namibia, Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, Philippines, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo
2023 (To be confirmed))	Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Iraq, Kuwait, Liberia, Mali, Republic of the Congo, Paraguay, South Africa
2024 (To be confirmed)	Armenia, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Georgia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Malaysia, Mexico, North Macedonia, Panama, Serbia, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Uruguay, Uzbekistan
2025 (To be confirmed)	Albania, Barbados, Belize, El Salvador, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Montenegro, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago

22. The Independent Evaluation Office continues to refine its methodologies for country programme evaluations in 2022, including the introduction of a rating system to weigh performance in aspects of country programme planning, implementation, and results. The rating system is being piloted in independent country programme evaluations ongoing in 2021. Based on the piloting experience, the Office will engage with headquarters and regional and country office managers in a participatory approach to revise and launch the rating system for all country programme evaluations, enabling a systematic assessment and measuring of the performance of country-level UNDP work across the organization.

IV. Evaluation capacity development

23. The UNDP evaluation policy underscores the role of the Independent Evaluation Office in supporting and overseeing the implementation of decentralized evaluations, which are commissioned by UNDP bureaus and country offices. UNDP commissions around 300 decentralized evaluations a year. The quality, coverage and usability of the evaluations has shown improvement in recent years following the introduction of new evaluation guidance, training, and oversight. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement in the quality and scope of evaluations, which could be more widely used for decision-making across the organization.

24. *Strengthened decentralized evaluations.* The Independent Evaluation Office is coordinating with UNDP management to put in place additional oversight and support activities in 2022 to improve the quality and impartiality of decentralized evaluations. The Office provides technical support and guidance to the regional bureaus and country offices through its cadre of regional focal points. During the previous strategic planning period, the regional focal points began participating as observers in Programme Appraisal Committee meetings, where draft country programme documents are appraised against quality standards for programming. This engagement will continue across all regions.

25. In 2021 the Independent Evaluation Office presented its first annual Evaluation Excellence Awards, which are expected to continue in future years. The Awards are highly appreciated as an opportunity to showcase decentralized evaluations of exceptional quality, acknowledge the offices commissioning them, and model best practices for other offices.

26. The Office will continue to refine its guidance for decentralized evaluation, and expects to add a rating mechanism in 2022, following the current roll-out of a ratings scheme for independent country programme evaluations. Guidance will be developed for evaluating the implementation of the UNDP social and environmental safeguards policy, as well as on undertaking impact evaluations and the evaluation of innovation initiatives.

27. *Evaluation oversight.* The Independent Evaluation Office assesses the quality of decentralized evaluations of UNDP, UNCDF and UNV, and monitors compliance with best international evaluation and data collection standards, including United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards, code of conduct and ethical guidelines. The quality assessments are reported to the Executive Board at each annual session.

28. *National evaluation capacity.* The UNDP evaluation policy recognizes that improved national evaluation capacities promote progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Working with partner governments, the Independent Evaluation Office will continue its long-standing support to strengthening evaluation capacities. In 2022, the Office will organize the next National Evaluation Capacities Conference, the most recent of which was held in 2019 in Egypt, in partnership with the Government of Egypt and the Regional Bureau for Arab States. The conferences primarily target national governments and evaluation institutions and offer a platform for sharing knowledge and experiences in developing sustainable and effective evaluation systems. The 2022 conference will focus on resilient national evaluation systems for sustainable development. It will be a hybrid (virtual and in-person) event, co-sponsored by the Global Evaluation Initiative (World Bank and UNDP, co-chairs).

29. *Global Evaluation Initiative.* The Independent Evaluation Office is further strengthening its support to national evaluation capacity over the next four years through the Global Evaluation Initiative. The initiative is an inclusive global partnership committed to developing country-owned, sustainable monitoring and evaluation frameworks and capacities to promote the use of evidence in public decision-making, enhance accountability, and achieve better results. Initiated in January 2020 by the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office and the Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank and launched in November 2020, the partnership brings together a diverse coalition of governments, evaluation entities of multilateral and bilateral development organizations, international and local development organizations, and monitoring and evaluation experts to pool financial and technical resources to coordinate and expand monitoring and evaluation efforts globally. The Global Evaluation Initiative seeks to expand the number of countries using evidence and evaluation in decision-making.

30. As part of the joint effort, the Independent Evaluation Office has seconded a senior staff member to the Global Evaluation Initiative global team, which has its offices in Brussels. The Office is also contributing financial resources and is working to ensure that UNDP and its governmental partners are included throughout the initiative, to strengthen their evaluation functions. The initiative will result in greater technical assistance, training and knowledge sharing on monitoring and evaluation good practices in programme countries.

V. Knowledge and data management

31. In 2021, the Independent Evaluation Office defined a new work stream on knowledge and data management, bringing together programming and support activities on the collection, use, presentation and archiving of Office communications on its evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations through multiple channels. In 2022 it intends to upgrade its web platform for mobile optimization and inclusion of responsive features for better design and delivery of evaluation content.

32. The Independent Evaluation Office maintains a searchable, publicly accessible repository of all UNDP, UNCDF and UNV evaluations, and the respective management responses and resulting actions. Its evaluation resource centre houses more than 5,000 evaluations of UNDP work stretching back 20 years, with 300 added each year (see the Evaluation Resource Centre snapshot²). The Office is improving the usability and utility of the Centre, including access to best-practice evaluations, a database of evaluators, and programmatic lessons learned.

33. In 2021, UNDP started the Artificial Intelligence for Data Analytics project, known as ‘AIDA’, to further tap the rich vein of evaluative information stored in the Evaluation Resource Centre. Supported by the UNDP information and technology office, the Office is establishing an artificial intelligence-based machine-learning algorithm for text extraction and analytics to synthesize data, identify lessons, and improve analytical capacity.

34. In 2021 the Office completed a review of its data platforms. As an output of that review, work is being done to establish an overall data architecture that will consist of section-specific ‘data marts’ for cataloguing and retrieving evaluation background data so it can be better used in subsequent evaluations and synthesis reports. In alignment with the UNDP digital strategy, the Office plans to revamp the Evaluation Resource Centre in 2022 to enhance its capability as a tool for planning and tracking evaluation implementation.

35. The Office develops evaluation standards, procedures, criteria and methodological guidance, and contributes to innovation in evaluation methodology and dissemination of good practices. Methodological innovation is increasingly in demand to better gauge UNDP impact. Leveraging geo-spatial techniques and geographic information system mapping, establishing more sophisticated survey mechanisms, expanding evaluation rating systems, and carrying out sentiment analysis – these are just a few of the methods to be further taken up by the Office and codified in an updated UNDP evaluation methods and procedures manual in 2022.

VI. Other activities

36. The UNDP evaluation policy notes that the role of the Independent Evaluation Office extends to the subsidiary entities, UNCDF and UNV. The Office will continue to support the evaluation functions of UNCDF and UNV in much the same way as it provides evaluation oversight to UNDP country offices. During the next four years, the Office will support the commissioning of evaluations covering the strategic frameworks of the two organizations. This will entail participation in steering committees established to oversee the commissioning of the

² <https://erc.undp.org>

evaluations and matching financial support. The decentralized quality assessment work of the Office includes assessments of UNCDF and UNV evaluations, and lead evaluators will be requested to include analysis of joint programming with UNCDF and UNV in their country programme evaluations.

37. During this strategic planning period the Independent Evaluation Office will continue to support the development of communities of practice and partner with professional evaluation networks to improve evaluation utility and credibility. This includes supporting the harmonization of the evaluation function in the United Nations system. In addition to the cooperation established through the Global Evaluation Initiative and the biannual National Evaluation Capacity Conferences, the Office will continue its leadership within the United Nations Evaluation Group, a voluntary network of 47 units responsible for evaluation in the United Nations system that includes funds, programmes, specialized agencies, and affiliated organizations. While no longer hosting the Evaluation Group secretariat, the Office will contribute to the network through leadership, expertise, and operational support.

VII. Budget

38. The Independent Evaluation Office has set out this programme of work based on the budget projections derived from the UNDP integrated resource plan and integrated budget, 2022-2025 (DP/2021/29, para. 38(d)). The budget plan estimates a resource envelope for the Office of \$64 million for the 2022-2025 period, which, if realized, will amount to an annual budget of \$16 million during the period.

39. Recognizing the uncertainties surrounding development funding during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Independent Evaluation Office budget for 2021 was set at \$12.1 million. In keeping with evaluation policy stipulations and the approved UNDP Strategic Plan integrated budget, the Office has developed its 2022 work programme to utilize funding of \$13.1 million, with anticipated step increases thereafter, to reach the \$16 million target in fiscal year 2024. The increased budget will enable the Office to better address the methodological and technological challenges of its comprehensive programme of work during this Anthropocene age, including an expansion of support to improving the quality and use of decentralized evaluations in UNDP.

Annex I. Submission timing of independent evaluations to the Executive Board, 2022-2025

	2022			2023			2024			2025		
	FRS	AS	SRS	FRS	AS	SRS	FRS	AS	SRS	FRS	AS	SRS
Institutional and programmatic reporting												
Independent Evaluation Office multiyear programme of work	●											
Annual report on evaluation		●			●			●			●	
Corporate and thematic evaluations												
Evaluation of UNDP support to youth economic empowerment	●											
Evaluation of UNDP support to energy access and transition	●											
Formative evaluation of COVID-19 and financing the pandemic recovery		●										
Formative evaluation of UNDP integration of 'leaving no one behind' principles				●								
Evaluation of UNDP support to strengthening social protection systems in LDCs and MICs					●							
Evaluation of UNDP support of access to justice					●							
Evaluation of UNDP digital transformation in support of access to public services							●					
Evaluation of nature-based solutions for development							●					
Formative evaluation of UNDP innovation for a new business model								●				
Evaluation of UNDP institutional learning, performance and impact measurement										●		
Independent review of the UNDP evaluation policy										●		
Strategic Plan evaluation											●	

FRS=first regular session; AS=annual session; SRS=second regular session; LDC=least developed country; MIC=middle-income country

Annex II. Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) theory of change

THEORY OF CHANGE

for the **IEO strategy**

APPROACHES

- ▶ Guided by United Nations evaluation norms and standards
- ▶ Credibility, independence and utility-focused evaluation
- ▶ Attention to UNDP focus areas in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- ▶ Engagement with UNDP staff, senior management, Executive Board and Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee
- ▶ Robust communication and knowledge management strategy
- ▶ Partnership with global evaluation community
- ▶ Digital transformation
- ▶ Strengthening IEO staff capacity

ASSUMPTIONS

- ▶ IEO maintains adequate human and financial resources
- ▶ UNDP organizational leadership and commitment to supporting evaluations
- ▶ UNDP employs adaptive management
- ▶ Stakeholders and partners willing for collaboration
- ▶ Availability of reliable data on UNDP performance

RISKS

- ▶ Emerging geopolitical and other country context changes
- ▶ Acceptance towards evaluation and potential evaluation fatigue
- ▶ IEO isolation from UNDP, limiting utility and uptake
- ▶ Speed and scope of United Nations reform efforts

