

# Adapting evaluations to the COVID-19 pandemic

UNFPA Evaluation Office  
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The COVID-19 pandemic is a health and a socioeconomic crisis, which has threatened global development outcomes adversely. As the pandemic spreads across the world, the impact of COVID-19 is unfolding in different ways among countries, with some countries and key populations being more affected than others.

The conduct and management of UNFPA evaluations must be adapted to the unique situation on the ground. To this end, UNFPA Evaluation Office has developed guiding principles for evaluation at the time of COVID-19. Each regional and country office should use these guiding principles to adapt the ongoing and forthcoming evaluations based on their unique response and recovery to the pandemic. Instead of a prescriptive guidance, these guiding principles should be approached as a framework that should be tailored to each context. As such, this a living document and will be updated based on real time lessons.

These principles were jointly developed by the Evaluation Office and the regional M&E advisors. The regional M&E advisor, in consultation with the Evaluation Office, will be responsible to guide each country office accordingly. The final decision on adaptation and adjustment of each evaluation must be approved by the Evaluation Office.

## Guiding principles



**Evaluation is even more critical at the time of a crisis**, as it provides evaluative evidence on what works, why, for whom and under what circumstances



Crisis affects different people in different ways, impacting disadvantaged populations disproportionately. **Human rights-based, equity-focused and gender responsive evaluations** are more important than ever, to inform interventions focused on leaving no one behind



Evaluation should always comply with the **“no harm” principle** for all stakeholders involved



**Learn, adapt and share** on an ongoing basis, with the evaluation community within UNFPA, the UN and beyond



Evaluation should explore the **opportunity to strengthen UN coordination, including enhancing national evaluation capacities**. In particular:

Explore opportunities for joint and UN system-wide evaluations (see ahead)

Engage national evaluators, including young evaluators and Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluations (VOPEs). This requires assessing your role, and potentially moving from being an evaluation manager only, towards taking on a mentoring role

Given the multi-dimensionality of the crisis, explore opportunity and call for joint/system-wide efforts to enhance national evaluation capacities for countries to evaluate its own response

# Practical implications

Adapt evaluation in a real-time and dynamic manner, based on the unique local context, following the best scenario option as much as possible



**Best scenario**

Adapt evaluation scope, methods and timeline and leverage UN coordination



## SCOPE

Focus the scope of the evaluation as necessary (geographically and/or programmatically)



## TIMELINE

If appropriate and if there are no other options, postpone data collection until the situation makes it possible. However, preparation (i.e. finalization of the ToR etc.) should be implemented as scheduled.



## UN COORDINATION

Leverage UN coordination, through UN system-wide and joint evaluations and/or clustering UNFPA country programme evaluations with UNSDCF evaluations, to create synergies and avoid overload/burden on stakeholders already stretched by the COVID-19 response



## METHODS

Explore the possibility of higher acceptability of limitations (but without affecting rigor). In addition, be fully transparent on the limitations.

Learn from experience in conducting and managing evaluation in humanitarian settings, for e.g.:

- ✓ Rebalance face-to-face interviews with remote interviews and desk-based methods, paying attention to:
  - Maximize use of technology (Skype, Whatsapp, mobile phone, social media analysis, satellite images and georeferenced photos and drones)
  - Secure engagement and not leave out the most marginalized populations
  - Enhance triangulation to validate remote data
- ✓ Explore use of third-party M&E organizations and community-based leaders
- ✓ Leverage data/evidence collected by centralized and regional evaluations, including country case studies
- ✓ Use social media and virtual meetings for dissemination

**Alternate scenario**

**Validated self-evaluation:** Conduct a self-evaluation led by external specialists and validated by the Regional M&E Advisor, or directly led by the Regional M&E Advisor

**Last resort**

**Postpone or cancel the evaluation:** This option should be exercised only if there is a very strong security and/or programmatic reason to do so