Evaluation planning and implementation (UPDATE: June 2020)

> This is an update to the March 2020 guidance on decentralised evaluation implementation. All UNDP guidance for undertaking evaluations during COVID-19 can be found here.
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> Underlying this guidance is a principle of "do no harm", and a consideration that the safety of staff, consultants, stakeholders and communities is paramount and the primary concern of all when planning and implementing evaluations during the COVID-19 crisis.

The global COVID-19 situation remains varied with some countries showing signs of having emerged from the pandemic with the loosening of restrictions, while others are planning transitions from "lockdown" to some level of opening, while others remain in lockdown with uncertainty when opening will start.

Programme units should review evaluation plans for the year to understand how a continuation of the pandemic and restrictions will impact evaluations planned, and may consider delaying, rescheduling or combining evaluations. This is subject to individual country situations and government strategies to address the pandemic.

In addition, consideration should be given to current project implementation delays or reprogramming and their likely impact on evaluation plans. Rescheduling evaluations to later in the year may result in a backlog of evaluations and this should also be considered when reviewing the evaluation plan and rescheduling evaluations. Programme units should be realistic in implementation expectations not only for the short-term but also for the remaining year and should strongly consider the use of remote and virtual methodologies for the implementation of ongoing, contracted and future evaluations.

Going forward programme units should:

- *Review evaluation plans should through July* to assess the possibility of implementation considering the current situation in the country, the **criticality of evaluations** and possibility of rescheduling if necessary. Programme units should:
    - Carryout **evaluability assessments** of all forthcoming evaluations to support reprioritization, rescheduling and preparing for forthcoming evaluations.
    - *Identify and plan for the implementation of evaluations remotely* (virtually) if necessary and possible, depending on the situation in-country, through **remote data collection and the remote interviewing of stakeholders**. Guidance is available here.
    - *Combine evaluations, where possible*, into outcome, thematic or portfolio evaluations to more efficiently implement evaluations. *(This is not possible for GEF TE or MTR evaluations. Guidance for GEF TE and MTR below).*
    - Implement evaluations using highly *qualified national evaluators* if possible.

- Do not place any consultant, stakeholders or beneficiary in harm's way and evaluation methodologies proposed should limit the exposure of stakeholders to the pandemic.

- Changes to evaluation plans and evaluations should follow normal procedures with programme/steering committee/ project boards being informed of evaluation plan changes.
- Changes should be approved by country office management and continue to be verified and approved basis by M&E regional focal point.

Mid-term Reviews/Evaluations (MTRs/MTEs) and Terminal Evaluations (TEs) for projects financed by environmental Vertical Funds (GEF, GCF, AF)[1]

- Ongoing MTRs/MTEs/TEs of Vertical Fund financed projects should be completed virtually where possible.
- Planned MTRs/MTEs/TEs of Vertical Fund financed projects should proceed as scheduled using virtual means where possible. If not possible or desirable, these evaluations can be delayed with the agreement of the Regional Technical Advisor (RTA).
- Please note that Vertical Fund project evaluation budgets cannot be reprogrammed for other activities without the approval of the Governing Board of the Vertical Fund.

Looking ahead: evaluating UNDP's response to the COVID19 crisis

- Monitoring and evaluation should be planned for from the outset of all COVID-19 programmes and projects.
- Country Offices and Regional Bureaus should be systematically recording the initiatives undertaken in support of the response to and recovery from the crisis. Clear theories of change need to be developed for all COVID-19 response projects and re-programming activities, linking UNDP support with that of Government responses as well as other UN agencies and donors.
- Documentation needs to be complete and available. Existing integrated results and resource frameworks will need to take into account COVID-19 support and/ or reprogramming and monitoring systems and frameworks established for his new area of UNDP support to ensure monitoring of COVID-19 interventions as well as supporting future evaluations of our response to COVID-19.

June 2020

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[1] Guidance from UNDP GEF RBM team, 26th March 2020