

Evaluation is a powerful tool that UNHCR can use to demonstrate results, advocate for persons of concern, drive innovation and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions; ultimately ensuring a greater and more lasting impact on refugees, internally displaced and stateless persons.

In line with the renewed commitment by the High Commissioner towards increased use of evidence in UNHCR's policy, strategy and programme formulation, this 2018-2022 Evaluation Strategy sets out a clear **vision** for evaluation in UNHCR with a strong focus on improving results for persons of concern, strengthening accountability and learning, increasing quality, ensuring utility and a field orientation for all evaluation activities.

UNHCR envisions a future where the use of evaluative evidence is normal and habitual in designing, targeting and delivering strategies, policies, and programmes that provide protection, assistance and solutions to refugees, internally displaced, stateless persons and other persons of concern.

With a Theory of Change (see below) focused on increasing both demand and supply of evaluations, the strategy suggests a gradual and consistent strengthening of the evaluation function over a five-year period as a path to this vision. The aim is to build positive evaluation practice across the organization in undertaking and using evaluative evidence more systematically; raising awareness and stimulating demand for more reflective and evaluative analysis; and, building buy-in, capacity and ownership for evaluation.

1. Context

The Evaluation Strategy builds on the 2016 Evaluation Policy which applies the **UN Evaluation Group** definition of evaluation as a tool that should provide credible, useful, evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders. Evidence generated through evaluations can be used in a proactive way to manage risks associated with innovation and complexity in the environment in which UNHCR operates. Evaluations do so by clarifying intervention logic and design of interventions and programmes, identifying and explaining unintended results; and analysing how programme delivery interacts with contextual factors to affect results.

The 2016 Policy introduced a dedicated and independent Evaluation Service, reporting to the High Commissioner. The policy provides for a stronger, evidence-informed, quality evaluation function in the Organization which will be responsible for enhancing the independence, utility, credibility and impartiality of evaluations. Some key shifts introduced through this policy are that all evaluations will now be placed in the public domain, require a management response, which will also be made public, and will be conducted by contracting external consultants to carry out the evaluations, based on the principles of independence, impartiality, credibility and utility. It further sets out that evaluation is distinct from other oversight functions, such as audit and inspection, in that the purposes of evaluation are not purely compliance-driven, and are focused on both accountability and learning.

Implementation of the UNHCR's 2016 Evaluation Policy takes place against the changing landscape in which UNHCR works, and recent organizational shifts are taken into account and reflected in the strategy. The New York Declaration and the Grand Bargain transform work with partners, especially with national governments and stakeholders, and there is increasingly a focus on demonstrating evidence of results, and value for money. Internally,

several efforts are underway to strength UNHCR's process to better respond to this changing landscape. A strengthened evaluation function in UNHCR can contribute to a longer-term vision for UNHCR's accountability and learning.

As pointed out in findings from entities including the Board of Auditors (BoA), the Independent Audit and Oversight Committee (IAOC), the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and the Office of Internal Oversight Services/Inspection and Evaluation Division (OIOS/IED), there is currently an identified need for enhancing the use of evaluations in the organization and to build stronger capacity at all levels of the organizations, and greater investment in and commitment to evaluation. This strategy describes how we will strengthen the evaluation function in the coming years based on these recommendations and needs.

2. Overall approach

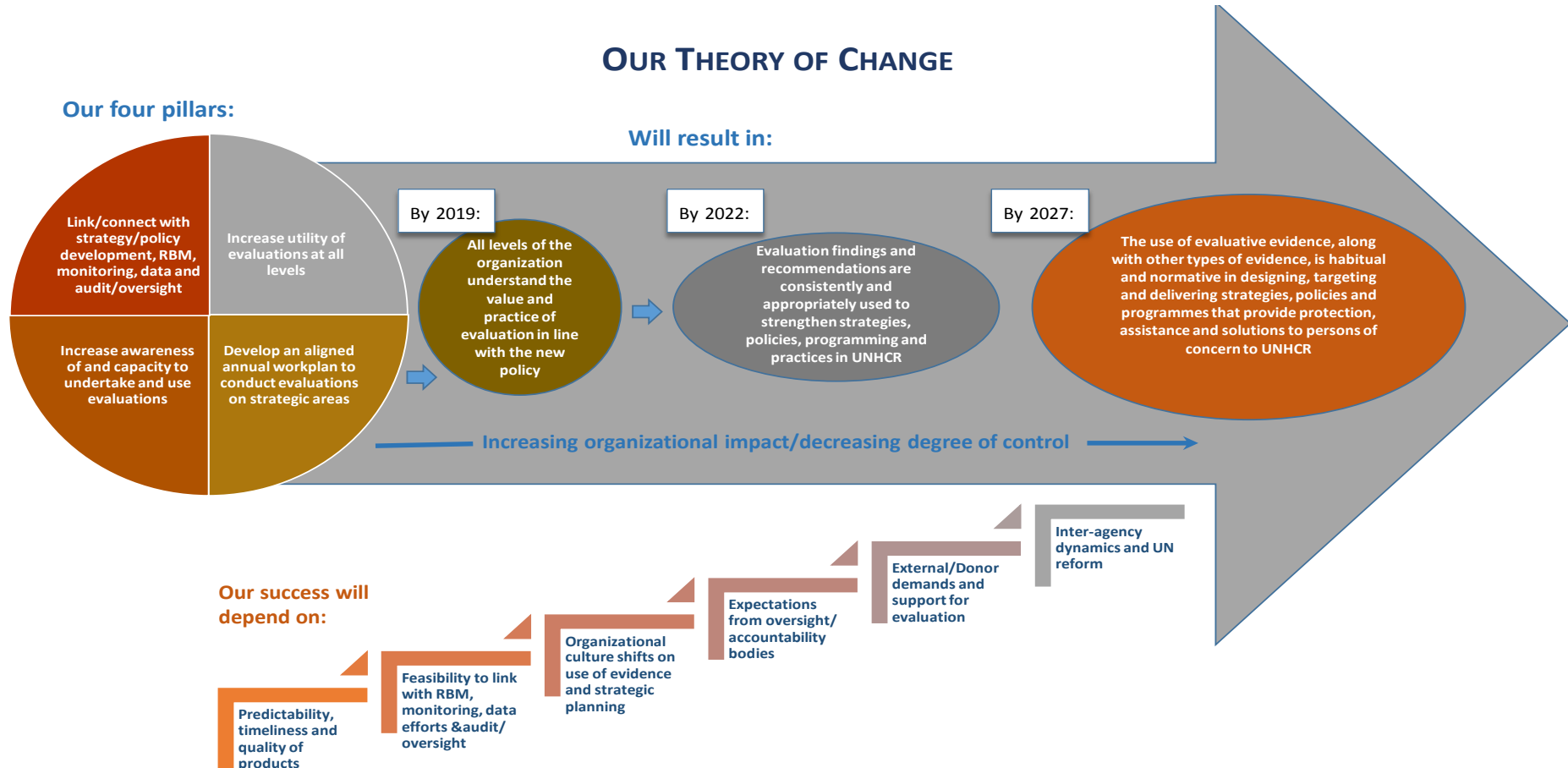
Below we describe a five year strategy to contribute to achieving this vision. The strategy has been developed after broad consultations with Bureau and Division staff and sets out six steps for how to change evaluation practice in UNHCR.

1. Gradually increasing the number of centralized evaluations each year between 2018-2022, including undertaking some evaluations as longitudinal evaluations;
2. Introducing a systematic annual consultative approach to topic generations;
3. Launching rapid evaluations – more focused and lighter than traditional centralized evaluations, and with involvement of UNHCR staff to build capacity;
4. Building field proficiency in undertaking decentralized evaluations;
5. Hiring a roving, surge capacity on an interim basis to support the field in carrying out decentralized evaluations;
6. Substantially engaging with RBM, monitoring, data, oversight, multi-year strategic planning, and policy development efforts to link better with evaluation.

The overall approach to implementing UNHCR's evaluation policy have two aspects: ***promoting an evaluative culture across the organization*** and ***ensuring accountability for the effective use of funds***. This will be achieved through the following.

- Pivoting from primarily retrospective evaluations that look back and set out what is known to more **forward-looking, longitudinal** evaluations that build cumulative evidence to in order to learn and allow for course correction. While systematic evidence generation on what have been achieved and how well we performed will be retained for some evaluations, this will be rounded out by a **field-oriented**, prospective approach generating more useful and timely evidence that adds utility for operations. This includes adopting a **fit-for-purpose** methodology that allows for a combination of techniques based on the context in which an evaluation takes place.
- A **collaborative** approach to evaluation topic selection will be used, while maintaining the Evaluation Service's structural independence, coordination and quality assurance responsibility. As such, the roles for Bureau, Division and field colleagues will be aimed at transforming the way UNHCR generates and makes use of evaluation evidence for both decentralised and centralised evaluations.
- While the majority of evaluations will be conducted by external entities in line with the Policy, the Service will trial a new, light-touch methodology called rapid evaluations for a small sub-set of evaluations. For these evaluations, a **hybrid** team of UNHCR staff and external consultants will be used to leverage the advantages of complementary competencies. The participation of internal colleagues will promote cross-fertilization between regions, build excitement around evaluation and generate agency capacity and ownership of results.

Within five years (2022), we expect to have significantly increased **supply of and demand for evaluations**, consolidated a more **consistent use of evaluations in our decisions**, and seen **better and more concrete linkages/connections** across different functions related to evaluation. See below for a graphical representation of the theory of change.



3. Areas of Work

The Evaluation Strategy deploys four, inter-related pillars of work that will a) increase **utility**, b) increase **coverage**, c) improve **capacity and awareness** and d) strengthen **linkages** with change efforts (for further details see table below). A detailed work plan is developed each year based on a consultative approach.

The focus will be firstly on **improving usefulness of evaluations**. Evaluations will focus on where there is a knowledge or evidence gaps and ensure that they generate feasible, timely, and relevant findings and recommendations. Secondly, UNHCR will **increase the number, quality and types of evaluation** undertaken each year, grounded in a consultative approach to generate the most important topics for evaluations. Expanding coverage of both centrally and field commissioned evaluations is critical to ensure that there is significant positive experience built across the organization with actual evaluations.

Third, the Evaluation Service will work to **build evaluation capacity and awareness** through strengthening existing staff, combined with the proposed establishment of a small, roving, surge workforce focused on providing field support. Finally the strengthening of the evaluation function should not be seen in isolation from other initiatives such as results-based management, data, monitoring, multi-year strategic planning, and policy development that are focused on better use of evidence for accountability, programme design and learning. The Evaluation Service will also continue to engage with and contribute to whenever appropriate inter-agency, joint and IASC-commissioned evaluations.

4. Independence

Evaluation in UNHCR is founded on the interconnected principles of independence, impartiality, credibility and utility. The Evaluation Policy sets out both the behavioral and organizational independence.

- *Behavioural independence*, refers to the ability to initiate evaluations and communicate evaluation results without undue influence by any stakeholder, including management, and to carry out evaluative work without fearing negative effects on career development.
- *Organizational independence*, requires the Evaluation Service to be positioned independently from management functions to carry out the responsibility of setting the evaluation agenda for UNHCR and be supported by adequate resources to execute it.

By ensuring engagement and consultation on evaluation topics and by building capacity to undertake decentralised evaluations, this strategy ensures that independence is maintained while also focusing on evaluation utilization and ownership.

5. Resourcing

The strategy and shift in approach will lead to increased budget requirements. As per the recommendations from the Board of Auditors and the IAOC, additional predictable investment in evaluation is required. The five-year budget proposal has a **starting point of 0.07% of total expenditure in 2017 and plans a gradual increase starting in 2018**.

UNHCR EVALUATION – PILLARS OF WORK

COVERAGE	<p>UNHCR retains two 'levels' of evaluation – decentralized (managed outside ES) and centralized evaluation (managed by ES). UNHCR will expand its existing evaluation coverage through an increased number of decentralized evaluations (2019 target: 20). Decentralized evaluations will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be commissioned and managed by country operations, Bureaus and Divisions; • Be conducted by external consultants; and, • Receive technical advice and quality assurance from ES. <p>UNHCR will significantly expand its existing evaluation coverage by introducing four types of centralized evaluation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rapid evaluations (2019 target: 8) are focused and lighter touch than traditional centralized evaluation, and will address a strategic need to respond to a clearly articulated problem. They will be undertaken by 'hybrid' teams including external consultants, ES team members and suitable internal UNHCR staff to promote cross fertilization and promote wider organizational learning. 2. Strategic evaluations (2019 target: 10) are larger scale, and only undertaken by independent consultants. Topic selection will be collaborative and will be operations or thematic focused; region or country specific; and global or strategic in nature (such as policies or high-level strategies at mid-term or end of cycle). 3. Institutional evaluations (2019 target: 2) are on topics determined by the SET, and only undertaken by external consultants. These may be thematic focused or cover a single operation or situation, an L3 emergency response or a management/systems area. 4. Longitudinal evaluations (either decentralized or strategic) will reflect on an intervention from start to finish, providing forward looking insights and recommendations during implementation, and culminating in a summative assessment of what has been achieved.
UTILITY	<p>In order to strengthen the utility and utilization of evaluations, UNHCR will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link evaluative thinking with our programme planning and budgeting processes (see linkages pillar below) • Undertake evaluation preparatory work in-house, including front-loading scoping studies (e.g. literature review); evaluability assessments and horizon/issues scanning to help define strategic questions. • Strengthen the crafting of TORs with colleagues—particularly in unpacking programme logic, identifying key evaluation questions, and thinking about methodologies. • Build stronger relationships with evaluation firms and consultants and follow them more closely on content and process. • Integrate evaluative thinking with our programme planning and budgeting processes • Undertake more efforts to disseminate evaluation findings through a range of communication approaches. • Ensure that actionable recommendations are co-created where possible and are vetted for feasibility and fit for the organization, e.g. build in stakeholder workshops to co-create recommendations in all evaluations. • Continue to institutionalize management responses and improve how we craft and manage them.
CAPACITY	<p>UNHCR will build its evaluation capacity through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Evaluation Service and the GLC will provide training to key staff on the evaluation function, including selecting topics, commissioning and managing evaluations and following up on evaluation findings. In most cases, this will be through integrating evaluation into existing learning programmes. • The Evaluation Service will work with PASS/DPSM to finalize practical, concise guidance oriented particularly at field colleagues managing decentralized evaluations. Key elements of this guidance will then be integrated in the Programme Manual (Chapter 4). • UNHCR colleagues will be invited to provide peer assistance by participating in a rapid evaluation in a region outside of their current duty station, increasing interest and skills in evaluation within the agency. • Field, Bureau and Division staff will be requested to co-manage selected evaluations, together with an ES colleague. • Implementation of this ambitious strategy requires additional staffing, particularly in the field. However, we also recognize that evaluation is only one piece of a broader effort to strengthen capacity in operations management, including strategic planning, monitoring and information management. Pending the outcome of various change processes, an interim measure is proposed of four evaluation advisors to be recruited on a consultancy basis for an initial period of twelve months (January to December 2018). These evaluation professionals would be deployed on a 'surge' basis to support the field in carrying out and following up on the results of decentralized evaluation, strengthen field evaluation skills and facilitate the field component of centrally commissioned evaluation.
LINKAGES	<p>The linkage of evaluation with other key UNHCR initiatives, as well as partnerships with external stakeholders, is crucial to the sustainability of this evaluation strategy. Key linkages have been identified as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noting that the availability of quality monitoring data is a key condition for effective evaluation, ES intends to establish a close working relationship with colleagues leading UNHCR's efforts to improve data quality in line with the UNHCR's commitment in Global Strategic Directions to become "more adept in analyzing data and presenting data in the form of evidence". • ES will continue its close cooperation with the team leading UNHCR's Results-Based Management (RBM) revision project, given that the success of a revamped evaluation function rests in large measure on the success of a more solid, flexible and pragmatic RBM system in the agency. • ES will collaborate with colleagues leading the effort to institutionalize UNHCR's Multi-Year Multi-Partner Approach to strategic planning and budgeting which will necessarily include an evaluation component. • When policies / high-level strategies are formulated, ES will make sure that "evaluability considerations" are embedded.