



## SECTION 3

# EVALUATION PLAN DEVELOPMENT

**UNDP EVALUATION GUIDELINES**

June 2021 update



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### 3. DEVELOPING AN EVALUATION PLAN

Section 3 provides guidance on how to develop and use an evaluation plan that will provide appropriate evaluative coverage of a programme (e.g., a country programme, in the case of country offices). This section details what should be included in an evaluation plan, how to cost the plan, the review and approval process, and how the evaluation plan can be updated.



An evaluation plan is a mandatory and strategic document outlining the evaluations planned for a country programme, and is used to monitor progress. As the evaluation plan and its evaluations support management decision-making, they should reflect programmatic priorities.

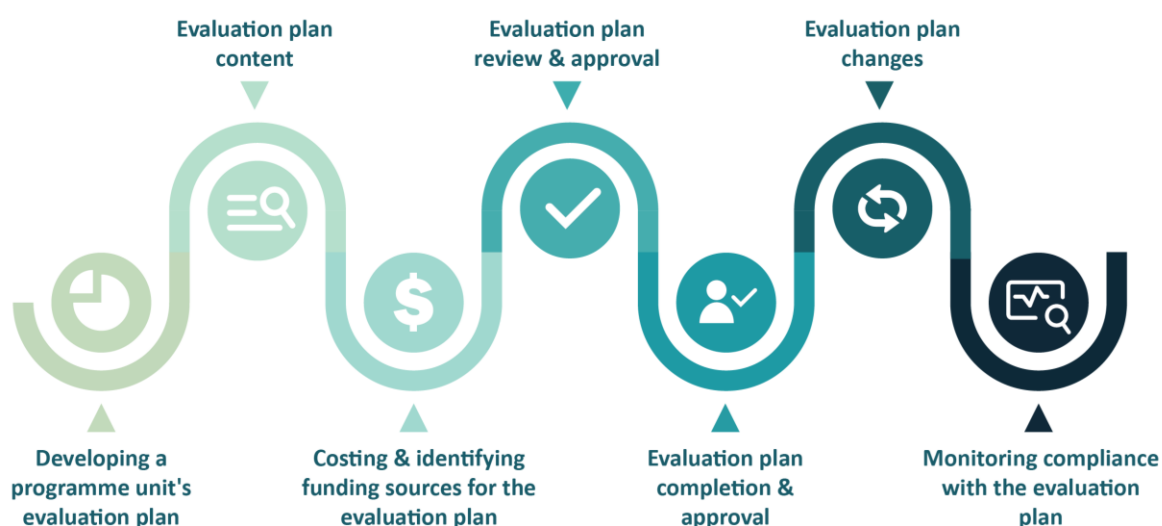


Figure 1. The steps in evaluation plan development

#### 3.1 Introduction

This section gives details on how a programme unit (such as a country or regional office) can develop its mandatory evaluation plan, including who should be involved, what the plan should contain, budget considerations, and how the plan is managed throughout the programme cycle.<sup>1</sup>

As a programme unit plans its activities over a strategic period (for example, the country programme period), it is important also to plan how it will **check its progress towards agreed development goals and outcomes** at all levels (project, programme, outcome, etc.). Evaluation planning is necessary in

<sup>1</sup> This section refers to the country office as the key programme unit, but the guidance is equally applicable to other programme units such as regional offices.

order to: i) support course correction if needed; ii) check progress (in the case of midterm evaluations and reviews); or iii) capture results (in the case of final or terminal evaluations).

An evaluation plan is a strategic document that is constantly used to check progress towards agreed evaluation commitments, produce evaluation findings to support change, aid knowledge-gathering and inform the work of UNDP. The evaluation plan accompanies the draft country programme document (CPD) as an annex when it is submitted to the Executive Board for approval.<sup>2</sup> Programme units should ensure that the evaluation plan is an effective learning and accountability tool, not just a compliance document containing only mandatory evaluations.

The evaluation plan should be reviewed annually and refined and adjusted as needed. The annual country office **business planning meeting** at the beginning of the year offers a good opportunity to review the evaluation plan. A formal **midterm review of the evaluation plan** is also highly recommended.

### 3.2 Step One: Developing an evaluation plan

Programme units must **present a timed and fully costed evaluation plan to the Executive Board** with each country, regional and global programme document considered for approval. The plan should be strategic, practical, cost-effective and include evaluations of different types (project, programme, outcome, etc.) that will generate the most critical and useful information for UNDP and its partners in future programming. The plan should ensure accountability and learning from implementation.

When submitted to the Programme Appraisal Committee (PAC) for review, all evaluation plans **must be accompanied by an evaluation rationale**: a brief text (maximum 300 words) explaining the justification for the evaluations included in the plan. This is for internal use only and should not be submitted to the Executive Board. The evaluation rationale should explain:

- How the evaluations contribute to learning and accountability, and the achievement of strategic results.
- How the evaluations provide sufficient and balanced coverage of the programme unit's areas of engagement.

As with the country programme development process, government, partners and stakeholders need to be included in the development of the evaluation plan. **Therefore, the evaluation plan should be developed through the same process as the country programme.**



**The programme unit senior management leads the development of the evaluation plan and is accountable for its implementation. Typically, the programme unit monitoring and evaluation (M&E) focal point coordinates with programme teams and other stakeholders in the development of the evaluation plan, in order to identify which evaluations should be carried out and why. Regional evaluation focal points should also be included in the review of draft country office evaluation plans.**

### 3.3 Step Two: Evaluation plan content

In deciding what to evaluate, programme units should first determine the purpose of proposed

<sup>2</sup>[https://popp.undp.org/\\_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/UNDP\\_POPP\\_DOCUMENT\\_LIBRARY/Public/PPM\\_Formulate%20Programmes%20and%20Projects\\_Evaluation%20Plan%20Template.docx&action=default](https://popp.undp.org/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/UNDP_POPP_DOCUMENT_LIBRARY/Public/PPM_Formulate%20Programmes%20and%20Projects_Evaluation%20Plan%20Template.docx&action=default)

evaluations, as well as other factors (such as country office priorities, emerging areas of engagement or potential scale-up opportunities) that may influence the relevance and use of evaluations.

The evaluation plan should reflect the goals and outcomes of the country programme and take a balanced approach, ensuring evaluation of all programmatic areas to provide the broadest accountability and learning.

The contents of the evaluation plan should be checked against the following criteria:

**1. Planned evaluations are strategic:**

- (a) Evaluations that provide substantive information for decision-making and learning;
- (b) Evaluations that address the programme unit priorities, emerging areas of engagement, potential scale-up opportunities and cross-cutting issues.<sup>3</sup>

**2. Evaluation coverage is as inclusive and balanced as possible:**

- (a) **A range of evaluations (outcome, project, thematic and others) are included in the evaluation plan** to provide comprehensive evaluation coverage of the programme.<sup>4</sup> Any revisions should ensure that a comprehensive evaluation focus is retained.

**3. All mandatory evaluations are included<sup>5</sup>:**

- (a) Global Environment Facility (GEF) terminal evaluations for all GEF-financed medium-size projects and full-size projects;<sup>6</sup>
- (b) GEF midterm reviews for full-size projects;
- (c) Adaptation Fund and Green Climate Fund projects as required;
- (d) Donor/cost-sharing agreement evaluations.

**4. Inclusion of project evaluations meeting the following criteria:<sup>7</sup>**

- (a) Projects with a planned budget or actual expenditure of over US\$ 5 million must plan and undertake both a midterm and final evaluation;<sup>8</sup>
- (b) Projects with a planned budget or actual expenditure between \$3 million and \$5 million must plan and undertake either a midterm or final evaluation;<sup>9</sup>
- (c) Projects with a duration of more than five years<sup>10</sup> must plan and undertake either a midterm or final evaluation;
- (d) Projects entering a second phase should plan and undertake an evaluation;<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For example, gender, crisis prevention and recovery, youth empowerment, HIV/AIDS, human rights or governance.

<sup>4</sup> For instance, if a programme unit has a strong focus on/ large portfolio of disaster risk management, then its evaluation plan should reflect this.

<sup>5</sup> UNSDCF evaluations do not need to be included in the UNDP evaluation plans (as of June 2022). These evaluations will not be quality assessed by UNDP IEO.

<sup>6</sup> GEF medium-size projects are those with up to \$2 million in grant funds, GEF full-size projects are those of over \$2 million in grant funds.

<sup>7</sup> Country offices may request the regional evaluation focal point waive evaluations based on reasonable justification. At the same time, if a project is due to be evaluated as part of an outcome, portfolio or thematic evaluation, a separate project evaluation may not be necessary.

<sup>8</sup> If the project has a duration of under four years, only one evaluation is required.

<sup>9</sup> This covers projects and not development services. While it is recommended that programme units evaluate large development service projects, delivery efficiency can be covered through audits.

<sup>10</sup> Projects exceeding five years should be evaluated within six months if they have not yet been evaluated.

<sup>11</sup> A project is entering a second phase when it is proposed to scale up results through a substantive project revision or a new project.

- (e) Development initiatives being considered for scaling up should be evaluated before expansion.

#### 5. Timing, costs, resources and sequencing are realistic:

- (a) The evaluation plan should consider the timing of evaluations across a full **evaluation calendar**. When developing an evaluation calendar, it is important to ensure that timing allows for completion and contribution to key planning activities and other evaluations being undertaken by the implementing unit, such as outcome evaluations, UNSDCF evaluations, and independent country programme evaluations conducted by IEO;
- (b) The calendar should ensure that evaluations are not ‘bunched together’ for completion at the same time, such as the end of the country programme period or the end of a calendar year (when other reporting is required), which will overstretch human resources and impact oversight;
- (c) Evaluation plans and calendars should consider that evaluations should be completed and uploaded to the Evaluation Resource Center (ERC) by December;
- (d) Evaluation costs should be realistic and funds for evaluations made available. For further detail, see subsection 3.4 (costing).

#### 6. Influencing and constraining factors have been fully considered:

Socioeconomic, political and environmental risks should be considered when outlining the evaluation plan and calendar. Examples include elections (national and local), cultural and religious festivals, rainy seasons (which can impact travel) and planting and harvesting times, when community members can be extremely busy. All of these could impact on the availability of interviewees and the scope of data collection.

### 3.4 Step Three: Costing and identifying sources for the evaluation plan

Costing of the evaluation plan is important and should be realistic, in relation to the requirements and scope of the evaluation, as well as the realities of the country office budget. The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) annual report on evaluation gives average annual costs for different types of evaluations across the globe, as well as at regional level (in the annexes), which should be used as a guide, although there will be differences between country offices.

Programme units should estimate and indicate financial requirements and financing sources for each evaluation in the evaluation plan. When estimating the cost for an evaluation, it is important to consider the scope, depth and duration of the evaluation, as well as the composition of the planned evaluation team.



**The greater the complexity and scope of an evaluation, the longer time and more detailed work will be needed for preparation by the responsible programme unit, and for data collection by the evaluation team, which will increase evaluators’ overall fees and therefore total evaluation costs.**

A further consideration is the cost of the travel by the evaluation team. Programme units should be realistic in terms of the scope and complexity of the evaluation vis-à-vis available resources. Finally, programme unit should consider communication and dissemination costs for wider dissemination of the evaluation report.



**Underfunding evaluations will seriously constrain their scope, results, quality and credibility. When identifying the sources of funds for evaluations, the following should be considered:**

- **Decentralised country programme evaluations/ outcome evaluations** should have resources set aside in the country programme budget. Alternatively, related projects should contain a budget line to allow for sufficient resources for an outcome evaluation.
- **Project evaluations** should have a budget line for evaluation activities, exclusive of monitoring activities.
- **Portfolio and thematic evaluations** could take funds from across related projects to evaluate results.
- **GEF terminal and midterm evaluation** guidelines give suggested budget outlines.

Individual evaluation budget considerations include:

- **Professional fees** for all evaluators or thematic experts undertaking the evaluation (international and national). There are often additional management costs when hiring a professional firm.
- **Travel** to and from the evaluation country, where applicable
- **Additional and non-professional costs** such as daily subsistence allowance for time in country for data collection and terminal expenses.
- **Translation costs** for interviews, field visits, validation and dissemination workshops.
- Travel costs within the country during the evaluation (evaluator, translator, UNDP accompanying staff and other participants).
- Any focus group meeting or data-collection **meeting costs** (venue hire, snacks, participant transport costs etc.).
- **Communication costs** including editing, publication and dissemination costs.
- Stakeholder, validation, or evaluation reference group workshop costs.
- Additional **contingency costs** for any unknown expenses during the evaluation.

**Table 1. Budget considerations and calculation for evaluations**

A. EVALUATION TEAM COSTS		# DAYS	DAILY RATE	TOTAL COST
Professional fees	Team Leader/ Evaluator 1			
	Evaluator 2			
	<b>TOTAL</b>			
Flights (international)	Evaluator 1			
	Evaluator 2			
	<b>TOTAL</b>			
Per diem costs (time in the field)	Evaluator 1			
	Evaluator 2			
	<b>TOTAL</b>			
<b>TOTAL A</b>				
B. EVALUATION IMPLEMENTATION AND DATA-COLLECTION COSTS		#	COST	TOTAL
Internal flights				
Car hire				

Translation				
Focus group and workshop-related costs				
Other costs				
<b>TOTAL B</b>				
<b>C. EVALUATION DISTRIBUTION COSTS</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>COST</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	
Report production (editing, design, printing)				
Report dissemination (outreach, shipping etc.)				
Stakeholder meeting				
<b>TOTAL C</b>				
<b>TOTAL EVALUATION COSTS A+B+C</b>				

Where an individual or a group of individuals is hired to undertake an evaluation, most of the costs cited above will be managed by UNDP. Where UNDP engages a firm to undertake an evaluation, some of the costs (such as flights and per diems) may be managed by the firm on behalf of UNDP.

It is important that an evaluation be fully costed and budgeted for, to allow for adequate scope and duration of the evaluation, and also to ensure that additional incidental costs are included.

In all cases, whether an individual or a firm is engaged, the budget and financing expectations and responsibilities must be clarified and agreed prior to the evaluation starting.



**Evaluation budgets are separate to monitoring budgets and should be detailed under a separate budget line. Delineation of monitoring and evaluation budgets is required under the 2019 Evaluation Policy.<sup>12</sup>**

**Joint evaluations** require evaluation partners to agree whose procedures should be used, both for the evaluation and for procurement, the funding modalities and contributions from different parties, and how the process is managed and reported to all parties. Section 2 Annex 1 outlines these considerations and others related to joint evaluations.

<sup>12</sup> Access at: <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/policy.shtml>



### 3.5 Step Four: Evaluation plan template

The completed evaluation plan template (see Table 2)<sup>13</sup> accompanies the draft CPD as Annex 2 Fully Costed Evaluation Plan.<sup>14</sup>

**Table 2. Evaluation plan template**

UNSDCF (or equivalent) outcome	UNDP Strategic Plan outcome	Evaluation title	Partners (joint evaluation)	Evaluation commissioned by (if not UNDP)	Type of evaluation	Planned evaluation completion date	Estimated cost	Provisional source of funding
Copied verbatim from the UNSDCF/ equivalent/ CPD	Cite relevant Strategic Plan outcome	E.g., Midterm outcome evaluation: Energy and Environment Portfolio	List all partners, e.g., United Nations organizations; government partners such as national ministries; donors etc.	E.g. Ministry of Environment; GEF	E.g., country programme, outcome, thematic, programme / project, GEF, etc.  <b>Note:</b> Evaluative exercises may vary in size and scope, but they should all help produce information towards outcome- level. All evaluations should meet the United Nations Evaluation Group evaluation and gender standards	E.g., June 2015  <b>Note:</b> Timing and nature of evaluation will be determined by learning and performance needs based on testing the theory of change that underpins each outcome	Consider the following expenses:  Evaluators and external advisers, and expenses related to their duties; expert advisory panel members (if any); travel; stakeholder consultations; data collection, and analysis tools and methods; supplies (office, computer, software, etc.); communication costs; publication and dissemination	E.g., project budget; donor; M&E budget; etc.

<sup>13</sup> This template should be accompanied by a brief text explaining the rationale behind the plan.

<sup>14</sup>[https://popp.undp.org/\\_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/UNDP\\_POPP\\_DOCUMENT\\_LIBRARY/Public/PPM\\_Formulate%20Programmes%20and%20Projects\\_Evaluation%20Plan%20Template.docx&action=default](https://popp.undp.org/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/UNDP_POPP_DOCUMENT_LIBRARY/Public/PPM_Formulate%20Programmes%20and%20Projects_Evaluation%20Plan%20Template.docx&action=default)

### 3.6 Step Five: Evaluation plan review and quality assurance process

All evaluation plans go through a pre-Programme Appraisal Committee (PAC) and headquarters PAC review process. The reviewers use a checklist of requirements for the evaluation plan (see table 3),<sup>15</sup> to verify that the criteria and requirements for the content of the plan, as detailed above, have been fully considered and included.

**Table 3. Evaluation plan checklist**

#	Quality assurance criteria	YES	NO
1	<b>Is the evaluation plan complete, i.e., noting the following?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The commissioning unit</li> <li>▪ Evaluation partners (only for joint evaluations)</li> <li>▪ Evaluation type (programme, project, outcome, thematic, GEF, etc.)</li> <li>▪ Planned evaluation completion dates</li> <li>▪ Are evaluations aligned to UNSDCF and Strategic Plan outcomes?</li> <li>▪ Estimated budget and source of the funding</li> </ul>		
2	<b>Are all mandatory evaluations included?</b> <sup>16</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ GEF terminal evaluations for all GEF-financed medium-size projects and full-size projects</li> <li>▪ GEF midterm reviews for full-size projects</li> <li>▪ Adaptation Fund and Green Climate Fund projects as required</li> <li>▪ Donor/cost-sharing agreement evaluations</li> <li>▪ Projects with a budget or expenditure of over \$5 million - midterm <i>and</i> final evaluation</li> <li>▪ Projects with a budget or expenditure between \$3 million and \$5 million - midterm or final evaluation</li> <li>▪ Projects with a duration of more than five years - midterm or final evaluation</li> <li>▪ Projects entering a second or subsequent phase</li> <li>▪ Development initiatives being considered for scaling up</li> </ul>		
3	<b>Is there a brief text explaining the rationale for including the evaluations in the plan (maximum 300 words)?</b>		
4	<b>Is there inclusive and balanced coverage of the country programme content?</b>		
5	<b>Are the timing and sequencing of evaluations in the plan realistic?</b>		
6	<b>Does costing properly reflect the scope, depth and duration of each evaluation? Is it realistic?</b>		

A further template is used to check the scope and balance of the evaluation plan (see table 4). By categorizing evaluations by year, type or outcome, the reviewer can quickly identify evaluation gaps,

<sup>15</sup> Access at:

<https://intranet.undp.org/unit/office/exo/sp2014/SP201417/PAC%20Library/2018/New%20guidance%20note/Sec%203%20Template%20PAC%20Evaluation%20plan%20checklist.docx>

<sup>16</sup> Exceptions and further details can be found in section 2.6. UNSDCF evaluations do not need to be included in the UNDP evaluation plans. These evaluations are not under UNDP control and will not be quality assessed by UNDP IEO.

where lessons are not being captured or where a year may see significant bunching of evaluations and therefore pose implementation challenges.

**Table 4. Sample evaluation plan scheduling checklist**

		Number of evaluations planned					
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
		2019	2020	2021	2022	(if applicable)	
Outcomes	Outcome 1 evaluation			1			1
	Outcome 1 project evaluations	1		1			2
	Outcome 2 evaluation			1			1
	Outcome 2 project evaluations						0
	Outcome 3 evaluation			1			1
	Outcome 3 project evaluations						0
GEF	GEF terminal evaluation	4	3	1	2		10
	GEF midterm evaluations						0
	Other evaluations						0
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>15</b>

### 3.7 Step Six: Evaluation plan completion and approval



**The country office senior management team must review and endorse the evaluation plan before its submission to the headquarters PAC.**

Once the evaluation plan has been finalized and endorsed through the pre-PAC and headquarters PAC, it accompanies the CPD as an annex and submitted to the Executive Board for approval.



**Once the CPD and annexed evaluation plan have been approved by the Executive Board, the programme unit should upload the details of each evaluation to the ERC. The evaluation plan should also be uploaded as a supporting document under the “Plan details” heading of the programme unit evaluations plan on ERC.<sup>17</sup>**

<sup>17</sup> For more information, see the ERC user guide, <https://erc.undp.org/guidance>

### 3.8 Step Seven: Making changes to the evaluation plan

Plan detail (2016-2020)	
Commissioning unit:	Indonesia
Period:	2016-2020
Status:	Posted
Comments:	UNDP CO Indonesia Evaluation Plan 2016-2020
Plan document:	30 May Indonesia Evaluation Plan.docx

Once an evaluation plan has been approved, and is entered in the ERC for tracking, the regional bureau will use the plan as a basis for monitoring compliance.



**The evaluation plan is not a static document and may require adjustment as circumstances change.**

Adjustments to individual evaluations and the evaluation plan should be considered annually as part of the programme unit's stocktaking exercise. Changes that can be made with approval include:

- Extending the completion date for evaluations.
- Changing the scope and purpose of evaluations due to changes in the context (e.g., crisis settings).
- Addition of new evaluations. New projects may require new and additional evaluations that need to be included in the evaluation plan.
- Deletion (in exceptional circumstances).<sup>18</sup>

Any adjustments to the plans including date changes, deletions and additions need to be clearly supported with a detailed rationale validated and approved by the regional evaluation focal point. As changes are made to the evaluation plan, it is also important to ensure that the overall goals, scope, coverage and timing remain reflective of the programme unit's work, capture its results and are realistic for implementation.



**The evaluation plan should be reviewed annually and refined and adjusted as needed. The annual country office business planning meeting at the beginning of the year offers a good opportunity to review the evaluation plan.**

As part of the annual review, programme units should also ensure that all completed evaluations have been uploaded to ERC together with their management response, and that all management responses and key actions are up to date.

Programme units should discuss possible changes with regional evaluation focal points prior to making and requesting adjustments to plans through the ERC. Changes, particularly deletions, to individual project evaluations should be discussed, agreed and noted in minutes with project management

<sup>18</sup> Evaluations can be deleted in instances such as: (a) evaluations were mistakenly added to the plan or ERC, such as duplicates; (b) the planned completion date is out of the country programme period, in which case the evaluation is deleted and added to the next evaluation plan; (c) evaluations are combined into other evaluations such as outcome, thematic or regional evaluations; (d) the funds available are too limited to make an evaluation usable or credible; and (e) the security, political, environmental, health or social situation is such that the evaluation cannot occur safely or meet its goals.

boards or their equivalents such as a steering committee. Change requests can be made through the ERC by the M&E focal points. Regional evaluation focal points will review these requests and approve or reject as needed.

A formal **midterm review of the evaluation plan** is highly recommended. Changes to the evaluation plan during the midterm review ensure that:

- (a) the evaluation plan remains balanced and covers all aspects of the CPD in some way;
- (b) all completion dates are realistic and attainable;
- (c) all new evaluations have been included; and
- (d) all management responses and key actions are up to date.

Changes to evaluation plans are recorded and kept in the ERC and programme units can see a full picture of the changes and adjustments through the life of an evaluation plan. If a country programme period is extended, this change must also be reflected in the ERC.

### 3.9 Step Eight: Monitoring compliance

A programme unit M&E focal point, together with regional evaluation focal points, monitors the implementation of the evaluation plan to ensure that evaluations are completed, have management responses and that key actions are implemented.

BPPS monitors overall compliance with evaluation plans and implementation of management responses and key actions, and follows up with regional bureaux to ensure timely implementation and reporting.

Annually, IEO reports to the Executive Board on the number of evaluations planned during a given year, the number completed, the number of changes to evaluation plans and the reasons for those changes. IEO also reports on management responses to recommendations and key actions completed.

**Table 5. Examples of well-balanced evaluation plans**

Country	Decentralised Country Programme Evaluation	Outcomes	Other	Projects	GEF projects (terminal & midterm evaluations)	TOTAL
Cambodia, 2019 to 2023	1	3	1	8	5	18
Philippines, 2019-2023		2	1	7	10	20
Ukraine, 2018-2022	1	4		12	5	22
Kenya, 2018-2022	1	2		6	6	15