

Management Response to the Evaluation of UNAIDS Joint UN Programme Country Envelopes: 2018-2022

Year of the report: 2023

Overall response to the evaluation	<p>Please include an assessment of the process and outcomes of the evaluation, adequacy of evidence and concurrence with findings. Were there limitations in the process and/or outcomes? Are there any additional insights not articulated in the recommendations?</p>	<p>Good engagement of all stakeholders at different levels and compelling country case studies. Appreciate integration of comments and corrections in the final evaluation report, for more specific and focused findings with realistic recommendations. Welcome the recommendation to establish a clear mutual accountability mechanism and need to find consensus building within the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS while focusing on impact. Regret not having an analysis and related recommendations on the Country Envelope formula (basis for original allocation per regional and country) mentioned for an evidence-based allocation, nor the necessity to analyse other elements that would need to be taken into consideration in the Country Envelope allocation including the availability and magnitude of other funds for HIV (e.g., PEFAR, Global Fund...) available at country level. Conflicting findings on gender equality/human rights/community engagement: the evaluation highlights the impossibility to tag activities to different cross-cutting outputs, while policy markers are allowing activities to be tagged to gender equality, human rights and community engagement (and are being disregarded as solely indicating the extent to which the design of an activity considers these areas). There are contradictions between some of the recommendations and the actual reduced country capacities at global, regional and country level (as a result of the cumulative Joint Programme funding shortfall since 2016) and the clear and consistent call for greater streamlining/consolidation/synergies on joint planning, monitoring and reporting processes and products from the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, Donors, Cosponsors and the Secretariat).</p>
Planned use of evaluation	<p>Please describe the process to facilitate the intended use, focusing on how evaluation findings will affect the programme and contribute to evidence-based decision making</p>	<p>Informs and guides efforts to further improve the current Country Envelope mechanism and impact thereof for the 2024-2025 biennium</p>

Recommendations and responses

Recommendations and responses						Tracking	
No	Recommendation	Management response	Actions planned	Responsible	Timeframe	Mid-point (end 2023)	End point (mid 2024)
	<i>Recommendations from the Evaluation Report</i>	<i>Please indicated if: - Accepted - Partially accepted (please report reasons) - Not accepted (please report reasons)</i>	<i>Please indicate the concrete actions planned by UNAIDS Secretariat and its Cosponsors to implement the recommendations</i>	<i>Please be specific and indicate who (UNAIDS Secretariat unit, Cosponsors or Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS) is responsible for the actions.</i>	<i>Please be specific and indicate a completion date (the overall timeframe is usually one year)</i>	<i>Please indicate status of implementation and actions taken. If an action is no longer relevant due to a changed context, please provide a justification and indicate if it should be cancelled or reformulated.</i>	<i>Please indicate status of implementation and actions taken</i>
Recommendation on options	<p>Discuss and choose among alternative models for the Country Envelopes (please refer to pros and cons as provided in the evaluation report):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Option 1 Status quo—retain current Country Envelope model Option 2 Refined Country Envelope model Option 3 Regional model Option 4 (preferred option as per evaluation findings and evaluation team recommendations) Country Results Fund (CRF) 	Accepted	<p>A hybrid Country Envelope model that combines options 2, 3 and 4 is being developed. The model includes mutual accountability at country level to support the work of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS and catalytic joint activities/ deliverables that contribute to the national strategic plans/priorities. Fragmentation of financial resources is addressed by reducing the number of countries that will receive Country Envelopes. In the hybrid model, Joint UN Teams on AIDS at regional level have an increased role in identifying regional priorities, reviewing and approving country proposals including allocations, and oversight/monitoring during the implementation phase of those proposed joint activities.</p>	UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director - Programme Branch.	30 Sep 2023		

Recommendations 1-8 are relevant for all options presented above (more detail on the recommendations is provided in the evaluation report)

1	<p>Have a strategic discussion between UNAIDS Secretariat and its Cosponsors regarding the positioning and support to Country Envelope in the changing context of overall funding, UBRAF budgets and resource mobilization. Discussions should focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forecasting, scenario planning and assessing support for the continuation of the Country Envelope. • Determining a clear purpose for the Country Envelope—essentially, what does UNAIDS Joint Programme want to achieve with these funds? • Assessing the options presented to remodel the Country Envelopes in conjunction with the purpose. • Determining the next steps. 	Accepted	<p>Organize strategic discussions between UNAIDS Secretariat and the Cosponsors to redefine the Country Envelope allocation model, define the process to further improve the current Country Envelope model in light of the evaluation findings and of the tight overall funding environment. The objectives of the Country Envelope should be redefined clearly.</p>	UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director - Programme Branch.	30 Sep 2023		
2	<p>Retain Country Envelope funding. The evaluation team recommends keeping the Country Envelope funding in some form as findings suggest that: a) it is enabling to reinvigorate the joint planning and working together by the members of the Joint UN Team on AIDS; b) to continue keeping HIV on the national political agenda where other sources of funding for AIDS response are not available; and c) to jointly plan and implement catalytic activities jointly at country level through Country Envelope funding by the members of the Joint UN Team on AIDS.</p>	Accepted	<p>Retain and further improve the Country Envelope funding mechanism as it is a greatly appreciated source of funding at country level that supports joint planning and implementation of catalytic HIV activities and keeps HIV on the national political agenda, and sustains and incentivizes joint planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS at country level. Strengthen mutual accountability processes to further promote efficient use and results/deliverables, especially with enhanced role for the Joint UN Team on AIDS at regional level.</p>	UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director - Programme Branch.	30 Sep 2023		

No	Recommendation	Management response	Actions planned	Responsible	Timeframe	Mid-point (end 2023)	End point (mid 2024)
3	<p>Determine a clear institutional home for the Country Envelopes at Global level. Placing the Country Envelope funding within a clear institutional home at global level will foster to increase responsibility, transparency and accountability for the performance of such funds among UNAIDS Secretariat and its Cosponsors at Global level.</p>	Accepted	<p>There is already a clear institutional home for the Country Envelopes with clear responsibilities. Since end 2022, after restructuring of UNAIDS Secretariat, responsibility of the Country Envelope is placed under UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director - Programme Branch, in close collaboration with the Department of Finance and Accountability. Decisions are taken in close consultation with all Cosponsors at global level. Decision making on country proposals, oversight and accountability of the Regional Joint UN Team on AIDS will also be further strengthened. This institutional home and clarified respective responsibilities at all levels including on ownership, decision making, and accountability will be made more explicit and detailed in planning and reporting guidance documents.</p>	UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director - Programme Branch.	30 Sep 2023		
4	<p>Ensure Joint UN plans on HIV/AIDS are anchored in a theory of change (aligned with national strategic plans and local UNSDCF) and the UBRAF theory of change. In line with the 2022 guidance note on the New Generation of Joint UN Programmes, that Joint UN Plans on HIV/AIDS develop a theory of change which is anchored in the wider UBRAF theory of change and national HIV/AIDS frameworks. Within this context, the assumptions for how to prioritize, plan and use the Country Envelope funds to bring the change should be made clear and explicit. This responds to the need to increase the strategic intent of the Joint UN Plans on HIV/AIDS and use of Country Envelopes and Joint UN Team on AIDS should coalesce around towards a Joint Vision for a longer term, and enable Joint UN Team on AIDS to clearly identify specific areas/ opportunities that are catalytic and where they can work together to leverage their comparative advantages to produce joint results and deliverables.</p>	Not accepted	<p>The guidance for and the Joint UN Plan on HIV/AIDS will indicate more explicitly the linkages to the expected sustainable changes that the Joint UN Plan contributes to. Joint UN Plans on HIV/AIDS are developed by Joint UN Teams on AIDS after reflections on the national HIV priorities, targets and gaps in the HIV response, and with clear linkages to the country's UNSDCF (i.e., linkages to UNSDCF outcomes are captured in the Joint Programme Monitoring System), which is itself developed informed by a UN Country Assessment of needs and a theory of change. Joint UN Plans on HIV/AIDS are also built in full alignment with the Global AIDS Strategy and the 2022-2026 UBRAF, whose development was anchored in a theory of change. Finally, through their quality assurance review, the Joint UN Teams on AIDS at regional level ensure alignment of the Joint UN Plans on HIV/AIDS with their respective region's priorities in UNAIDS Workplan and Budget. While the alignment and analysis of expected more sustainable changes will be more strongly referred to in planning guidance, the creation of specific theories of change for each Joint UN Plan on HIV/AIDS would thus be doubly redundant, and would imply a high transaction costs.</p>	UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director - Programme Branch.	30 Sep 2023		
5	<p>Lengthen the planning timeframe, continue to promote two-year planning, and accompany this with two-year disbursements. The evaluation recognizes this recommendation will need to be discussed in the context of wider UNAIDS resource mobilization and funding strategies, for example, generating support for multi-year financial commitments.</p>	Partially accepted	<p>1) The Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS acknowledges the need for longer planning timeframes to promote more meaningful engagement and participation of national partners and communities in the development of biennial Joint UN Plans on HIV/AIDS and noting that investments towards societal enabler targets are by nature slower to yield measurable results. 2) The Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS agrees with continuing to promote two-year planning as currently practiced. In 2022-2023, the Country Envelope amounts have been decided for the full period of the Joint Plans (2 years). 3) However, by taking into account of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS's financial situation, the two-year disbursement of the country envelope funding is not practical and feasible. Since the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS is 100% voluntary funded, a 2-year disbursement would only be possible if there is sufficient UBRAF funding secured at the time of disbursement, with more funding predictability including multi-year donor agreements. In addition, while disbursements for 2 years would allow for continuity of activities by the Joint UN Team on AIDS, this would also limit flexibility of the funding to adapt and accommodate to new needs and priorities (e.g., conflicts and crises, rising/declining HIV epidemics, emerging pandemics, etc.).</p>	UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director - Programme Branch.	30 Sep 2023		
6	<p>Ensure guidance documents for the Country Envelopes provides clear instructions and transparent information on how to make use of the funds for its intended purpose Definitions and examples of key principles and terms such as joint, strategic, catalytic and tangible examples of the types of results expected from these funds should be included. Be clear how gender, human rights and community are expected to be addressed through these funds, including expectations for funds to address related structural causes.</p>	Accepted	<p>The Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS guidance for planning (including for Country Envelope funding) shared at every planning cycle already has details of these different elements. It is hereby understood that this recommendation is about further improving these existing guidance documents. The expectations in terms of joint results and deliverables for the Country Envelope funds (including related to gender, human rights and community engagement) will be further strengthened, noting however that the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS operates in quite diverse country contexts with different HIV epidemics and the UNAIDS Global AIDS Strategy calls for differentiated responses to better address the specific needs hence 'no one size fits all' approach.</p>	UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director - Programme Branch.	30 Oct 2023		
7	<p>Assign clear roles to support the allocation, oversight and learning resulting from the Country Envelopes. The following roles could be envisaged for the Joint UN Teams on AIDS at country level and at regional level, global coordinators from all Cosponsors and global thematic leads from UNAIDS Secretariat:</p> <p>a) Role of Joint UN Team on AIDS at country level: strategic oversight of the development of plans with joint and catalytic activities to use country envelop funds. b) Role of Joint UN Team on AIDS at regional level: technical advisory support to country Joint UN Team on AIDS, review and quality assurance (QA) of reports, and identification of strategic learning, proactive dissemination of learning as needed. c) Role of Global coordinators from all Cosponsors: work with the regions to determine which countries and regions would be best placed to receive Country Envelope funds. Perform quality assurance of Joint UN Team on AIDS reports (both countries and regional) for performance and accountability purposes. Facilitate timely internal communication on the Country Envelope within the respective Cosponsor agency to its country, regional and global levels as relevant. d) Role of global thematic leads from UNAIDS Secretariat: lead discussion around how Country Envelope funds should be used and in which thematic areas, based on knowledge of key gaps in global targets and areas of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS comparative advantages; review implementation reports to identify learning themes and innovative examples that can be shared across countries and regions to promote learning and adaptation; and commission evaluations of Country Envelope funds, as appropriate.</p>	Accepted	<p>General terms of reference will be established for Joint UN Teams on AIDS at country and regional level, highlighting their respective roles in terms of Country Envelope joint planning, implementation and accountability. The respective roles of UNAIDS Secretariat and the Cosponsors at global level will be better defined and agreed upon in line with the Division of Labor to ensure facilitated processes and strengthened accountability and transparency.</p>	UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director - Programme Branch.	30 Oct 2023		

No	Recommendation	Management response	Actions planned	Responsible	Timeframe	Mid-point (end 2023)	End point (mid 2024)
8	<p>Update the Joint Programme Monitoring System (JPMS) to improve joint results reporting and strengthen joint accountability and learning.</p> <p>In addition to the current country joint reports on HIV/AIDS, there is an opportunity for the reporting format to capture specific joint results achieved (as opposed to activities/deliverables) that can be tagged to the UBRAF Results Framework 2022-2026 for Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS at output and outcome levels. Planning and reporting should also allow Joint UN Team on AIDS to tag each entry (whether activity or deliverable) to several strategic results areas if relevant. A proportional allocation would be required to avoid the double counting of budget amounts.</p>	Partially accepted	<p>1) The Joint Programme Monitoring System (JPMS) reporting module was refined in 2022 to allow the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS at all levels to report on concrete results achieved (both joint and individual agency specific) with all the UBRAF resources (core and non-core). At country level, the JPMS already allows both for narrative reporting per UBRAF output and per outcome, allowing the collection of results that can be directly linked to the 2022-2026 UBRAF. 28 UBRAF indicators are also filled out by Joint UN Team on AIDS in JPMS to collect measurable and comparable information every year on Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS's performance in ending AIDS. However, this reporting is not Country Envelope specific nor Country Envelope-limited, allowing the Joint UN Team on AIDS to report the entire array of their HIV activities regardless of their funding sources, for a holistic HIV response at country level and related integrated reporting.</p> <p>2) Considering the cross-cutting nature of the UBRAF outputs, the possibility to tag an activity/ results to several outputs will be considered (principal output / contributing to several other outputs). However, this would make the planning and reporting more cumbersome while this is already quite complex compared to the level of funding. At a time of very tight human and financial Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS resources, analysis of the real added-value of new features is essential. It is also expected that in the future, the country planning and reporting will be further progressively streamlined into the UNSDCF mechanism and tools (e.g. UN Info) which is required by the UN Reform and would reduce the double processes but also imply simplification.</p>	UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director - Programme Branch.	30 Jun 2024		
Recommendations 9 and 10 are specific to the preferred option 4, the Country Results Fund (more details provided in the report)							
9	<p>Establish a Country Results Fund. The Country Results Fund will have two pillars of financial support:</p> <p>Pillar 1: Provide a fixed amount to all countries where there are Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS on a "no regrets" basis to strengthen the joint work of Joint UN Team on AIDS and the strategic intention of Joint Plans and enable HIV to remain on the agenda of national Governments as well as all UNAIDS Cosponsors (up to an indicative aggregate amount of US\$ 10 million).</p> <p>Pillar 2 provide funds to accelerate results. Key features of the Pillar 2 grants include:</p> <p>a) Support results-based proposals developed by country Joint UN Team on AIDS with a floor of US\$ 1 million and ceiling of US\$ 3 million over two years. Using an estimated pot of US\$ 32.5 million envisaged for Country Envelope funds this would allow between 11-32 country grants over two years.</p> <p>b) Focus proposals on one theme every two years to focus the achievement of results in specific/target areas. The need to enhance results in a thematic area would be based on evidence and learning and would be identified and criteria defined by global thematic leads from UNAIDS Secretariat, global coordinators from all Cosponsors and Joint UN Team on AIDS at regional level and other experts and community networks as appropriate.</p> <p>c) Enable flexibility in how funding can be used in proposals. This would mean that countries could propose use funds for additional human resources if there is a strong rationale for doing so. Proposals would also be able to re-programme and shift funds easily, for maximum flexibility. Funds would be disbursed for a two-year period to align with two-year plans.</p> <p>d) Establish a small independent panel to review and endorse proposals based on clear and transparent criteria and guidance. The independent panel would comprise a select number of independent experts and draw on the technical expertise of the global thematic leads from UNAIDS Secretariat, global coordinators from all Cosponsors and Joint UN Team on AIDS at regional level.</p> <p>e) Define roles to support the independent panel and the operationalization of Pillar 2 for the Joint UN Teams on AIDS both at country and regional level, roles of global coordinators from all cosponsors and global thematic leads from</p>	Partially accepted	<p>This recommendation contains key features that the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS can consider to develop a more suitable Country Envelope allocation model, while others are not acceptable. The Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS proposes a hybrid Country Envelope mechanism based on options 2, 3 and 4 in the evaluation report.</p> <p>While the proposed hybrid model takes on board many of the attributes of option 4, it highlights the importance of mutual accountability for all Country Envelope funding, provides funding based on the country needs (so not agreeing to a fixed amount for all countries and on a 'no regret' basis), and replaces the independent panel with Joint UN Team on AIDS at regional level, given their proximity to countries and better understanding of specific AIDS response needs at country level.</p> <p>Further details of the improved option/model will be developed through implementation of accepted recommendations, in particular also recommendation 1 and 10, through strategic dialogues in a Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS technical working group.</p>	UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director - Programme Branch.	30 Sep 2023		
10	<p>Establish a temporary technical working group to fully scope the design of the Country Results Fund. Draw on and align with UNAIDS Joint Programme thinking to ensure complementarity.</p>	Accepted	<p>An internal temporary Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS technical working group will be set up, composed of selected Cosponsors and Secretariat members at global, regional and country levels who have broad knowledge and experience in the development, implementation and accountability of the UBRAF, Joint UN Plans on HIV/AIDS and Country Envelopes.</p> <p>Recommendation #10 is to be read in conjunction with Recommendation #9. Thus, in defining the scope and nature of this "Country Results Fund", the technical working group should consider the management's decisions on specific features introduced in the hybrid Country Envelope model.</p>	UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director - Programme Branch.	30 Jun 2024		