

Terms of Reference:

System-wide evaluation on the UN development system's approach to key transitions for SDG acceleration

Draft: 22 December 2025

Long-Term Agreement (LTA) secondary bidding	<i>RFPS-3100006378 – Provision of Evaluation Services for OCHA and SWEO</i> <i>Lot 3: System-wide evaluations of the United Nations development system</i>
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1. Background

1.1. Introduction

1. The United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-Wide Evaluation Office (SWEO) is responsible for the provision of independent evaluation evidence to strengthen learning, transparency, and accountability, to incentivize joint work and collective learning, and to conduct system-wide evaluations and advance evidence on the United Nations development system's contribution towards achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.
2. To ensure independence, impartiality, and credibility, SWEO is a standalone independent office within the United Nations Secretariat based at UNHQ in New York. It provides leadership and



strategic guidance for the system-wide evaluation function in accordance with the [UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Policy](#). The Office is led by the [Executive Director](#), reporting directly to the Secretary-General, but exercising operational independence in the performance of the evaluation function. The Office reports to UN Member States through an Annual Report of the Executive Director, presented to the [Operational Activities Segment of the Economic and Social Council](#) since 2025 (in accordance with General Assembly resolution 79/226 on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR)).

3. System-wide evaluation is the systematic and impartial assessment of the results and performance of the United Nations development system to provide integrated and comprehensive support to address the challenges of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs. Independent system-wide evaluations are focused on collective development results and performance of UNSDG entities that cannot be adequately addressed through existing accountability mechanisms. Independent system-wide evaluations are distinguished from other types of joint and inter-agency evaluations undertaken by two or more United Nations entities, because they encompass the entirety of the United Nations system. UNSDG system-wide evaluations are not expected to evaluate the performance of individual entities. As with all evaluations, the purpose of UNSDG system-wide evaluation is to promote accountability and learning. The evaluations should provide credible, useful, evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of their findings, recommendations and learning into the decision-making processes of the United Nations development system.
4. These Terms of Reference (ToR) are for a **system-wide evaluation on the United Nations development system's approach to key transitions for SDG acceleration** (also referred to as “six transitions”, “transformative pathways”, or “investment pathways” in UN documentation). They have been prepared by SWEO based upon an initial document review and consultation with UN development system stakeholders. Their purpose is to provide information to stakeholders about the proposed evaluation and to set out expectations to be fulfilled by the evaluation team. The ToR is structured as follows:
 - Section 1: introduction and information on the context;
 - Section 2: the rationale for the system-wide evaluation, its objectives and stakeholders;
 - Section 3: an overview of the evaluation subject, with more detailed stakeholder analysis, and its scope;
 - Section 4: the evaluation questions, approach, and methodology;
 - Section 5: how the evaluation will be organised; including management, governance and communication.
5. The evaluation is scheduled to be conducted in phases, with modular deliverables, between Q4 2025 and Q1 2027, so as to inform preparations for the 2027 SDG Summit.¹ It will be managed by SWEO and conducted by an independent evaluation team comprised of consultants mobilised under Long Term Agreements (LTA) for Provision of Evaluation Services for OCHA and SWEO (RFPS-3100006378 – Lot 3 – System-Wide Evaluations of the UN development system) as well as SWEO staff.
6. The evaluation's products will be presented to a variety of UN development system stakeholders, and feed into SWEO's formal reporting to the Economic and Social Council in 2026 and 2027. The

¹ Every four years the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development meets under the auspices of the General Assembly at the level of Heads of State and Government (the SDG Summit). The next SDG Summit will be held in September 2027. Previous SDG Summits were held in 2019 and 2023.



UNSDG and other relevant stakeholders will provide a Management Response to the recommendations contained in the final evaluation report (Q1 2027), in accordance with the provisions of the UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Policy relating to management response and follow up.

1.2. Context

7. [The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development \(A/RES/70/1\)](#)², with the [17 Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) at its core, was adopted by all United Nations Member States at the [UN Sustainable Development Summit](#) in September 2015. The early years of SDG implementation saw slow but steady progress on some critical SDG indicators. However, achieving the Goals by 2030 faces significant challenges and bottlenecks; especially since 2019, national efforts have faced severe global headwinds.
8. At the mid-point to 2030, only 15 per cent of SDG targets were on track. Close to half showed progress but remained moderately to severely off track. Some 30 per cent had seen no movement or regressed below their 2015 baselines.³ The financing gap for developing countries to achieve the SDGs is estimated to be USD 4 trillion per year.⁴ In this context, academic scholarship, the UN development system and UN Member State governments have converged, to varying degrees, on a need to identify and pursue more transformative or accelerating actions for SDG progress.
9. A major feature of preparations, inputs and follow-on from the [2023 SDG Summit](#) has been high-level discussion and promotion, within the UN system, of the concept of “transformative entry points” or “key transitions” that can have catalytic and multiplier effects across the SDGs. At the Summit, six key transitions (listed in section 3 below) were presented by UNSDG entities among a broader set of “[high impact initiatives](#)”. Key transitions have also featured as a framework for the Secretary-General’s reporting to Member States on the [work of the UN development system \(implementation of the QCPR 2024 and 2025\)](#) and on “[reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)” (2024)⁵.
10. There is no clear intergovernmental mandate that specifically endorses this approach or the UNSDG’s prioritization of key transitions in specific areas. However, Member States have called broadly for “bold, ambitious, accelerated, just and transformative actions, anchored in international solidarity and effective cooperation at all levels” in the 2023 SDG Summit Political Declaration ([A/RES/78/1](#)). The political declaration is recalled, and further operationalised in terms of expectations for the UN development system, by the 2024 QCPR ([A/RES/79/226](#)).

2. Reasons for the evaluation

2.1. Rationale

11. In 2024, UNSDG Principals requested that SWE0 consider options for ‘an initial evaluation to assess how the UN development system’s approach to the transitions is set up to support SDG acceleration, with a view to informing any future system-wide evaluations focused on achievements and results for the SDGs’ in the run up to 2030.

² [A/RES/70/1 - Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)

³ [Sustainable Development Goals Report – 2023: Special Edition](#)

⁴ [Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2024](#)

⁵ 2025 QCPR Report: [A/80/74-E/2025/53](#)

2024 QCPR Report: [A/79/72-E/2024/12](#)

2024 HLPF Report on Reinforcing 2030 Agenda: [E/2024/52](#)

12. Several contextual factors provide further rationale for a formative and learning-focused system-wide evaluation on this topic between 2025 and 2027. Most importantly, considering the 2030 deadline for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, an evaluation is timely to provide learning and recommendations ahead of the final quadrennial SDG Summit (HLPF under auspices of the General Assembly) in September 2027 and for the remaining years to 2030. Furthermore, there is strong political momentum and Member State focus on SDG acceleration and strengthening the “means of implementation” (or engine rooms) as evidenced by *inter-alia* the 2023 SDG Summit outcomes, 2024 Pact for the Future, 2021 Food Systems Summit (and subsequent biennial stock-takes) and 2025 *Compromiso de Sevilla* (FFD4).
13. Other factors and considerations that make such an evaluation timely include:
 - **UN development system repositioning:** the articulation of key transitions approach notes that, with the reforms of the UN development system, UN Country Teams, led by Resident Coordinators, are now “optimally positioned to act as catalysts to propel progress on the six transitions”. A key intended reform benefit is to better connect relevant entry points for SDG acceleration to national priorities and ambitions, with Common Country Analyses and Cooperation Frameworks as central tools, and to enable neutral RCs to leverage the expertise and networks of the whole UN development system at the country-level and broker/convene partnerships between governments and other development partners for SDG acceleration. In the context of an ongoing review of the UNSDG Cooperation Framework guidance, **a standalone review evaluation of the growing body of Cooperation Framework evaluations⁶ will be a key module of the wider evaluation on UN development system support for key transitions.** It will extract key lessons from a as well as review and adapt how these evaluations are conducted and used.
 - **The UN80 Initiative:** seeks to build on and accelerate the implementation of the existing reform agenda, with UN development system entity business models, presence and configuration under consideration. This evaluation presents an opportunity to review how the reforms and UN80 outcomes have, or could better, support SDG acceleration at country level.
 - **Joint SDG Fund:** the Joint SDG Fund has been positioned as the UN system’s flagship global pooled fund for transformative actions in key transition areas. The current Joint SDG Fund strategy, influenced by the adoption of the transitions approach in 2023, runs to the end of 2026. The Joint SDG Fund was last independently evaluated at the fund level in 2021-22. A system-wide evaluation in 2025 and 2026 provides an opportunity to inform the next strategy of the Fund to be implemented from January 2027 onwards. Furthermore, system-wide evaluation focus on this flagship fund aligns with the UNSDG’s commitment in the 2024 Funding Compact to ensure that flexible funding to the UN development system is independently evaluated. **A standalone fund-level evaluation of the Joint SDG Fund will be a key module of the wider evaluation on UN development system support for key transitions (see Annex 3).**
 - **UN Food Systems Coordination Hub:** the Hub was established to provide support to the implementation of outcome of the UN Food Systems Summit convened by the Secretary-General in 2021. After several years of operation, the Hub’s Oversight Steering Group have requested an independent evaluation of the Hub’s work to date. While this standalone evaluation has been requested in parallel, it is being undertaken within the context of and as key a module of the

⁶ This exercise is being undertaken by SWEO staff and directly engaged consultants and began in Q4 of 2025. As such, as explained by subsequent sections it is complementary to but outside of the scope of SWEO’s request for LTA proposals. The successful LTA firm will be expected to collaborate with the Cooperation Framework Learning Exercise team as required.

wider system-wide evaluation on UN development system support to key transitions for SDG acceleration, to which food systems transformation is central.⁷

2.2. Objectives

14. The evaluation will have a dual purpose of accountability and learning, with a particular focus on identifying best practices and emerging lessons from the UN development system's operationalisation of key transitions approach to SDG acceleration to date. The evaluation has three overarching objectives:

- Highlight emerging best practices and opportunities for improvement in the UNSDG's shift to a systems-approach with focus on supporting key transitions
- Enhance accessibility and use of existing UN evaluation evidence on key transitions areas and engine room actions (including through evidence summaries/syntheses)
- Strengthen the basis for more in depth and comprehensive evaluation of overall UN results in supporting key transitions in the years to 2030 (including improved accountability and learning mechanisms)

2.3. Evaluation users and stakeholders

15. The evaluation will seek the views of, and be useful to, a broad range of United Nations development system stakeholders. It will present opportunities for learning at global, regional and country levels.

16. The main categories of internal and external stakeholder, their interest in and how they should be engaged in the evaluation are summarised on table 1. Further detail on specific stakeholders in each key transition or engine room area is presented in section 3 of this ToR. Comprehensive stakeholder analysis will be an important feature of the scoping/formative aspects of the evaluation (as explained in section 4).

Table 1 Summarised stakeholder analysis

	Interest and engagement in the evaluation
UNSDG entities (HQ)	The evaluation has been requested by the UNSDG Principals. UNSDG entities at HQ/global level will use the results of the evaluation to: - Inform the design of UNSDG policies, system-wide strategies and multi-entity initiatives and partnerships related to SDG acceleration - Further implement the "repositioning" of the United Nations development system and other reforms that may be adopted as a result of the UN80 Initiative Evaluation recommendations may be addressed to the UNSDG collectively or to individual UNSDG entities. UNSDG entities will be invited by SWEO to nominate subject matter experts in the transition areas to participate in an engaged, advisory Evaluation Reference Group. Smaller sub-reference groups for each transition area examined in detail may also

⁷This exercise is being undertaken by SWEO staff and directly engaged consultants and began in Q4 of 2025. As such, as explained by subsequent sections it is complementary to but outside of the scope of SWEO's request for LTA proposals. The successful LTA firm will be expected to collaborate with the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub evaluation team. See Terms of Reference for this evaluation at Annex 1.



	be formed, as required. HQ staff will be important key informants during data collection.
UNSDG entities (Regional)	UNSDG entities at regional and country levels will implement changes that may result from UNSDG/HQ level acceptance of evaluation recommendations. The evaluation may also provide important learning for UNCT members, Regional Collaborative Platform members and regional Issue-Based Coalitions on regional level approaches and initiatives for SDG acceleration. Entities at regional and country level will be important key informants during data collection.
UNSDG entities (country level) UNCTs	
UNSDG evaluation functions	UNSDG evaluation functions will be invited to nominate Senior Evaluation Officers (or equivalents) to participate in an inter-agency Evaluation Management Group with a quality assurance and advisory role. Entities that have a leading role in the key transitions on which the evaluation will focus (and development financing) are particularly encouraged to participate in the management group. All UNSDG evaluation functions will be an important source of secondary data (including existing evaluations).
DCO / RC system	DCO and the RC system will have an important liaison role with SWEO and the evaluation team, providing access to system-wide data sources, connections to interagency coordination structures, and facilitation of country level data collection (conducted as part of the modular evaluations on key transitions initiatives in sample of countries), as well as being key informants themselves. DCO will also be invited to nominate Reference Group members. As UNSDG Secretariat, DCO will facilitate preparation of the eventual UNSDG management response to recommendations. DCO itself may be responsible for the implementation of certain evaluation recommendations. DCO and the RC system more broadly will have an important role in disseminating and using learning/best practice identified in the course of the evaluation, particularly as it relates to the role of RCs, development coordination, Cooperation Frameworks and Cooperation Framework evaluation.
Joint SDG Fund (and other funding instruments)	The Joint SDG Fund has been positioned as the UN development system's flagship funding vehicle to support a key transitions approach. The Fund Secretariat and Operational Steering Committee will use the results of the evaluation to inform an updated Fund strategy for the period 2027-2030. The evaluation may also generate learning on pooled funding as a modality which can be utilised by other instruments within the UN system or external.
UN Member States	Member States will have an interest in and be engaged by the evaluation in three key capacities: programme country governments, members of UNSDG entity governing bodies, and donors to the UN development system. Evaluation products may be made available as background documentation to intergovernmental meetings as relevant to their agendas. The results of the evaluation will formally be presented to Member States in the Annual Report of the SWEO Executive Director to ECOSOC (Operational Activities Segments 2026 and 2027).

	Member States will be invited to participate in the conduct of the evaluation as key informants representing a sample of host/programme country governments, governing body members, and donor countries.
Non-UN development actors	The approach encourages the UN development system help the wider ecosystem of development actors in a country to overcome bottlenecks and create an enabling environment for a transition. Non-governmental development actors (country/regional/global) will participate in the evaluation as important key informants during primary data collection. They will provide an important external and comparative perspective on UN system partnerships, approaches and initiatives for SDG acceleration.

17. SWEO will develop a Communication and Learning Plan for the evaluation overall and each specific module, which provides detail on how internal and external stakeholders will be engaged throughout the evaluation process.

3. Subject of the evaluation

18. The overarching subject of the evaluation is the UN development systems' operationalisation of new approaches to support SDG acceleration at country level in the remaining years of the 2030 Agenda.
19. Since 2023, the UNSDG has committed to an operational shift that embraces a systems approach with a focus on "key transitions" for SDG acceleration. The approach calls for increased UN delivery of and engagement in "engine room actions" as a means of implementation to support key transitions by addressing common bottlenecks to SDG progress, including by:
- i) Helping drive shifts across **policy and regulatory frameworks**
 - ii) Facilitating identification of **pipelines of bankable and market-ready national initiatives** with participation of both public and private sectors
 - iii) Convening all relevant actors and forging partnerships to attract the needed **financing from all sources** to help develop the 'deal room' – a financing mix with innovative instruments – for each transition
 - iv) Committing to efforts on **capacity-building at scale** to support public institutions and civil society in this process, ensuring a steady increase in capacities over time to reinforce and sustain these investments.

Box 1: Defining "transition"

The 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report provides definitions and examples of what a successful key "transition" may look like, noting that historically transitions follow three phases:

1. An *emergence* phase for a new system is instigated by an innovation – technological, organizational, behavioural – that creates political impetus for a shift to the new technology or behaviour or organization.
2. When a 'tipping point' is reached, a phase of *acceleration* sees rapid uptake of the new technology or modality. This is supported by government incentives, innovation, rapid deployment and scale-up of technology, and increased demand by voters and consumers.
3. A period of *stabilization* where the new technology or system is entrenched and becomes an accepted part of life.

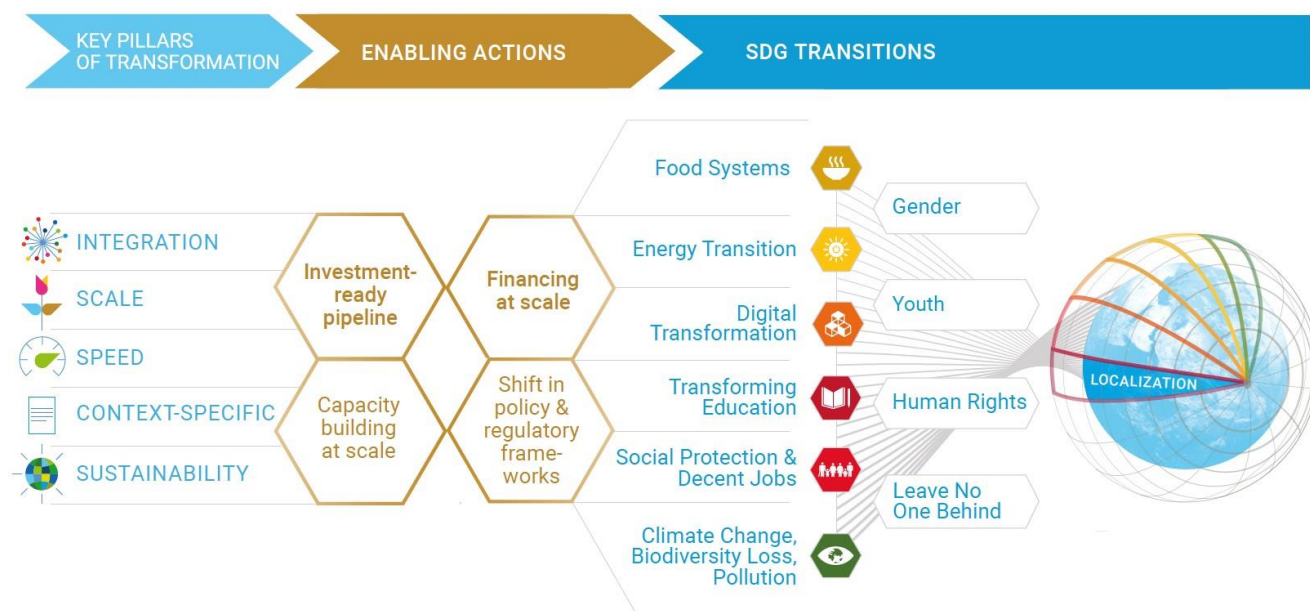


To harness transitions for the SDGs, interventions should support promising solutions that are tailored to country context and attuned to the current phase of transition that the country is in. A successful transition not only accelerates progress across multiple SDGs but avoids backlash and unsustainable new norms by advancing gender equality, human rights and leaving no one behind.

20. The thematic focus of the “transitions” or “entry points” may vary by context. In 2023, the UNSDG set out six key transitions that the UN development system could support at country level. The [key transitions set out](#) included:
- i) food systems;
 - ii) energy access and affordability;
 - iii) digital connectivity;
 - iv) education;
 - v) jobs and social protection (which has subsequently expanded to include health, for example in Secretary-General reports on the QCPR); and
 - vi) climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.
21. The concept suggests a reconstitution of the UN country team offer in key areas through systems-thinking and integrated approaches geared towards strengthening investment pathways for SDG acceleration. It encourages the UN development system at the country level to focus its efforts on supporting a wider eco-system of actors to overcome bottlenecks and create an enabling environment for key transitions. It implies a shift away from sector-based planning and project implementation to an approach that leverages the UN's convening role; normative agendas; and integrates policy, financing, and capacity-building efforts, to support an enabling environment for transitions that maximise SDG progress to take place. The concept is visualised in figure 1.
22. At the global level, the Joint SDG Fund has been positioned as the UN's flagship financing mechanism for transformative actions in key transition areas⁸ and enabling “engine room” actions, with dedicated windows on digital transformation, food systems, energy transition, jobs and social protection, as well support to Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs).

⁸ See the 2023-2026 Strategy of the Joint SDG Fund at: <https://jointsdgfund.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/Joint%20SDG%20Fund%20Strategy.pdf>

Figure 1 Graphic illustration of a transitions approach to SDG acceleration (Source: Joint SDG Fund)



23. The remainder of this section of the ToR provides further detail on the key transition areas and engine room actions, with details on the following:

- Key intergovernmental processes/mandates – existing and upcoming
- Existing system-wide or multi-agency strategies, policies, flagship initiatives or coordination mechanisms (including those at global level and regional “issue-based coalitions)
- Key funding mechanisms support UN operationalization of a transitions approach

24. As noted in section 2.3, this can be understood as a more detailed stakeholder analysis for key transition and engine rooms areas. Documents and other sources referenced with hyperlinks and footnotes in sections 1 to 3 of this ToR are listed in Annex 8 – Bibliography.

3.1. Food systems

Relevant intergovernmental processes/ mandates	Recent global political momentum and follow-up on food systems transformation, as a means to accelerate progress across all 17 SDGs, has been generated by the Food Systems Summit (FSS). The Summit was convened in 2021 by the UN Secretary-General. Its outcomes are followed up by biennial stocktake summits. These have been held to date in 2023 (UNFSS+2) and 2025 (UNFSS+4). By 2025, 128 countries had developed National Food Systems Pathways and 155 countries have appointed National Convenors to lead and coordinate efforts⁹. Alongside these processes are longer-established intergovernmental mechanisms such as the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) (supported by FAO, IFAD and WFP) - the foremost intergovernmental platform for food
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⁹ [UN Food Systems Summit +4 Stocktake | UN Food Systems Coordination Hub](#) – Secretary-General Report



	security and nutrition, developing and endorsing global policy recommendations. The 2024 QCPR (A/RES/79/226) included a new request (absent in 2020) for the “United Nations development system to strengthen actions to accelerate progress on ending hunger and malnutrition in all its forms, and to contribute in a coherent manner to achieving food security and building inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems”.
UN system strategies, policies, initiatives and coordination mechanisms	The foremost UN development system initiative emerging from and support follow up in relation to commitments made at the Food Systems Summit is the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub. The Secretary-General’s FSS 2021 Chair Summary and Statement of Action called for the creation of the hub under the leadership of FAO, IFAD and WFP to support follow up to the Summit by: strengthening synergy and integration of food systems in intergovernmental for a (e.g. HLPFs and FFDs); coordination and facilitating technical and policy support by the UN system to develop and implement national food systems pathways (leveraging the RC system); engaging non-state constituencies in summit follow up (particularly Youth, Indigenous Peoples, Producers, Women and Private Sector); and strengthening the science-policy interface for food systems including by collaborating with the HLPE of the CFS at the global level. The Hub was established in 2022, hosted by FAO with an Oversight Steering Group comprising the Principals of FAO, WFP, IFAD, UN-DCO and the UN “Food Systems Task Force” Leads (WHO and UNDP), with participation from the UN Deputy Secretary General. Its mission is “to serve countries through systemic, country-driven, customized support in translating their commitments into effective actions to reach sustainable food systems by 2030, leveraging the wider UN system’s capacities”. The Hub’s work is guided by Biennial Work Plans. The current Biennial Work Plan (2024-26) presents the work of the hub across five “coordination clusters”: ‘Landing the vision’ (overarching); policy & governance; science & knowledge; strategic partnerships & collaboration; and finance & investment. Across its activities the hub has provided support to food systems pathways in 66 countries to date, in coordination with UN entity country offices and Resident Coordinators. The Hub’s Convergence Initiative responded to calls by the Secretary-General and 159 Member States in the COP28 UAE Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems, and Climate Action (2023) to align food systems transformations (national pathways) with climate change mitigation and adaptation (Nationally Determined Contributions and National Action Plans) in 16 pilot countries. Separate analytical UN food systems initiatives, include: • Financial Flows to Food Systems – 3FS (IFAD/World Bank) • Food Systems Countdown Initiative (FAO)



Regional issue-based coalitions (IBCs)	At the regional level, UNSDG Issue-Based Coalitions with a titular focus on Food Systems have been established in Europe & Central Asia (convened by FAO, UNICEF and WHO) and the Arab States region (convened by WFP and FAO). Food systems transformation is a significant component of work for a broader IBC on Climate Action and Resilience in Africa (convened by UNEP, FAO, UNDP and UNECA). In Asia-Pacific a Regional Working Group on Food Systems has been established (co-convened by FAO). See Annex 5 on IBCs by region and focus.
Key funding mechanisms	The Hub was established with an initial grant of USD 250,000 from FAO and has since mobilized approximately USD 40 million either directly from donor countries or from the Food Systems Window of the Joint SDG Fund (USD 20 million). The 2023-26 strategy of the Joint SDG Fund aims to build on the Food Systems Summit momentum and support networks of National Conveners, national food systems transformation pathways and the “global ecosystem of support”. The Food Systems Transformation window launched its first funding round in February 2024, allocating USD 16.7 million plus USD 7.6 million in co-funding across 24 joint programmes. Key donors to the window include Spain, Germany, Ireland and Italy. The Green Climate Fund and Global Environment Facility also provide funding to the UN development system related to food systems transformation/activities that may support the implementation of a national food systems pathway.

3.2. Energy access and affordability

Relevant intergovernmental processes/ mandates	In its 2019 resolution 74/225 (Ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all) the General Assembly emphasized universal energy access as an integral part of poverty eradication and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The resolution: (i) invited the Secretary-General to convene a high-level dialogue in 2021 to promote the implementation of the energy-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (op.30); and (ii) connected energy transition to the repositioning of the UN development system by encouraging UN-Energy to: <i>support coherence and coordination among the energy-related activities of the entities of the United Nations development system, within their respective mandates, in line with the implementation of resolutions 71/243 of 21 December 2016, 72/279 of 31 May 2018 and Economic and Social Council resolution 2019/15 of 8 July 2019, in order to assist countries, in particular at the country level, upon request by their Governments, by explicitly leveraging partnerships with other international organizations, donors and relevant stakeholders, including in their efforts to achieve universal access to sustainable energy and to accelerate its deployment (op.31)</i>
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	The High-Level Dialogue on Energy in September 2021 resulted in the Secretary-General's Global Roadmap for Accelerated SDG7 Action in Support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The roadmap calls upon the UN System, supported by UN-Energy, to “significantly scale up its efforts towards attaining SDG 7 and net zero emissions”. The 2024 QCPR noted, in particular, the need to strengthen assistance to achieve universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all in Africa.
UN system strategies, policies, initiatives and coordination mechanisms	UN-Energy is the United Nations’ mechanism for inter-agency collaboration in the field of energy established by the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) to which it reports through the HLCP. It consists of 30 members: 27 UN entities (of which 22 are UNSDG members), the World Bank, the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL). It is co-chaired by UNDP and SE4ALL, with a Secretariat provided by UN-DESA. In response to the 2021 Global SDG7 Roadmap, UN-Energy organizations made an ambitious pledge of support to Member States on SDG7 progress and net zero emissions. A strategy to support the implementation of this pledge and the Global Roadmap is set out in UN-Energy’s Plan of Action Towards 2025. A key component of this plan is the Energy Compacts initiative; the promotion and tracking of voluntary commitments relating to SDG7 by governments, the private sector, international organisations and civil society. The plan includes commitments to scale up Energy Compacts and further support their implementation through an Energy Compact Action Network as a “marketplace” to connect offers of support to requests for SDG7 action. Energy Compacts was also presented as a high impact initiative at the 2023 SDG Summit. Several UN entities have submitted their own Compacts (inc. ESCAP, FAO, UN-Habitat, UNDP, UNIDO, WMO) The plan also promises to scale up UN-Energy collective action by strengthening energy-related policy alignment and coherence across different UN entities and scaling up joint programmes to: 1. ‘Close the energy access gap’ through technical assistance, elevating energy access as a priority, and promoting investments (especially in LDCs) 2. “Ensure just, inclusive and equitable transitions to leave no one behind” by increasing modern renewables capacity and ensuring that countries receive technical assistance and financing that helps adopt clean energy technologies, phase out coal and redirect fossil fuel subsidies 3. “Promote energy’s linkages to employment, gender, intergenerational equality, health, food, education and all other SDGs” by adopting integrated approaches that leverage the UN system’s competencies (e.g. gender, youth, and “nexus” between energy and other sectors).

Regional issue-based coalitions (IBCs)	At the regional level, an Issue-Based Coalition on energy access and affordability have been established in the Arab States (co-convened by UNIDO and ESCWA), while the Asia-Pacific IBC to “Raise Ambitions on Climate Change” is largely focused on energy transitions. See Annex 5 on IBCs by region and focus.
Funding/financing mechanisms and external partnerships	Joint SDG Fund: the 2023-2026 Strategy of the Joint SDG Fund aims to “promote integrated policy and financing solutions for just and green energy transitions, focusing on renewable energy production, transmission, storage deployment and access, especially for many energy-poor people, which have been left behind”. The Fund’s Just Energy Transition portfolio allocated USD 6.3 million across 25 joint programmes in 2024 in 12 month grants of 250,000 USD to support the UN system wide push for NDCs 3.0 that strengthen collective efforts to enhance countries’ climate commitments while ensuring sustainable energy transitions. The Joint SDG Fund seeks to connect to and build on national strategies and plans, including NDCs as well as “Just Energy Transition Partnerships” (JETPs). The JETP concept, first launched at COP 26, is a new funding model created to support emerging economies (to date, Vietnam, South Africa, Indonesia and Senegal) to transition away from fossil fuel energy in a way that also addresses social issues associated with energy transition with financing from an International Partners Group of G7 countries and multilateral development banks. Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL) is an independent organization closely connected to the UN system in a number of ways. SEforALL was established by Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon in 2011. Its CEO concurrently serves as a Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sustainable Energy and the co-chair (with UNDP) of UN-Energy. Since 2024 the organization is hosted by UNOPS. The Green Climate Fund and Global Environment Facility also provide funding to the UN development system for energy transition projects.

3.3. Digital connectivity

Relevant intergovernmental processes /mandates	The potential of digital connectivity as an accelerator of multiple SDGs and the role of the UN system in supporting enhanced digital connectivity is framed by the Global Digital Compact (2024) ¹⁰ . The Compact is the result of the UN Secretary-General’s recommendations set out his Report of the High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation (2019), Roadmap for Digital Cooperation (2020), Our Common Agenda report (2021) and policy brief (2023), followed by an intergovernmental process (2023-2024) that led to the Compact’s adoption at the 2024 Summit of the Future (as an annex to the Pact for the Future).
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¹⁰ The Compact builds on the previous intergovernmental framework for digital cooperation established by the [World Summit on the Information Society](#) in 2003 and 2005 (op.5), and connects to the WSIS+20 review process ongoing in 2025 (op.68 and 71).

	It contains intergovernmental commitments and actions to achieve five overarching objectives by 2030: 1. <i>Close all digital divides and accelerate progress across the Sustainable Development Goals;</i> 2. <i>Expand inclusion in and benefits from the digital economy for all;</i> 3. <i>Foster an inclusive, open, safe and secure digital space that respects, protects and promote human rights;</i> 4. <i>Advance responsible, equitable and interoperable data governance approaches;</i> 5. <i>Enhance international governance of artificial intelligence for the benefit of humanity¹¹.</i> Regarding the contributions of the UN system, the Compact: a. recognizes the contribution of all UN agencies, funds and programmes in advancing digital cooperation (in particular, ITU, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNESCO, OHCHR, the regional economic commissions and UN country teams) (op.69) b. recognizes a role for the Digital Window of the Joint SDG Fund in pooling an appropriate financing mix to support implementation (op.67) c. requests the Secretary-General present a roadmap for implementation (reflecting the contributions of the UN system) and make proposals for the establishment of an office to strengthen UN system-wide coordination on digital cooperation (op. 71-72) The Global Digital Compact's follow up and review section invites various existing intergovernmental for a (e.g. WSIS+20, Commission on Science and Technology for Development, Internet Governance Forum) to consider how they can contribute to Compact implementation, and decides to convene a high-level review of Compact in the 82nd Session of the General Assembly (2027) with the input and participation of these stakeholders (op. 74). The 2024 QCPR (A/RES/79/226) encourages the entities of the UN development system to support programme countries to "harness digital technologies to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and to close all digital divides" while considering the relevant commitments of the Compact.
UN system strategies, policies, initiatives and coordination mechanisms	OSET to ODET: Following the recommendation of the Global Digital Compact, and a subsequent decision of General Assembly the Office of the SG's Special Envoy on Technology (OSET) transitioned to a new UN Office for Digital and Emerging Technologies (ODET) on 1 Jan 2025. A key focus of the new Office is supporting the implementation of the Compact, within this it has a role in strengthening UN system wide coordination on digital and emerging technologies¹².

¹¹ Commitments under this objective set in motion and subsequent [intergovernmental process](#) on AI governance co-facilitated by Spain and Costa Rica which may consider options for a AI capacity building networks and Global Fund on AI (as recommended by the [Secretary-General's High Level Advisory Body report on "Governing AI for Humanity"](#))

¹² <https://www.un.org/digital-emerging-technologies/content/press-release-new-un-office-digital-and-emerging-technologies>



	UNGIS: The United Nations Group on the Information Society is a system-wide (CEB) mechanism for policy coherence and programme coordination on matters relating to ICT in support of development goals formed in 2006 to contribute to the achievement of WSIS objectives. It is comprised of 39 UN entities with a permanent secretariat provided by ITU.¹³ ITU and ODET also co-chair an interagency Pact for the Future Working Group on Digital Technologies. A UN “High Impact Initiative” on Digital Public Infrastructure was presented to the 2023 SDG Summit, with five key pillars: (i) development of a universal safeguards framework to ensure that DPI is people-centric and respects human rights/fundamental freedoms; (ii) innovations for last mile inclusion (partnering with the private sector and community organizations to create local digital ecosystems that ensure DPI benefits those left furthest behind); (iii) awareness raising and knowledge sharing on DPI potential; (iv) use of open standards, shared data, and reusable digital building blocks to enhance transparency, data sharing, and innovative green financing. The co-sponsoring organisations of the HII are ITU and UNDP. ODET and UNDP co-launched the Universal DPI Safeguards Framework in September 2024. A major, existing, multi-agency, connectivity initiative, referenced in the Global Digital Compact itself is Giga. This global ITU-UNICEF initiative, established in 2019, aims to connect every school in the world to the internet by 2030 through: 1. Mapping every school in the world and its connectivity status/level 2. Mobilising the necessary capital investment 3. Working with governments to design regulatory frameworks and procurement processes needed to connect schools
Regional issue-based coalitions (IBCs)	At the regional level, two issue-based coalitions with a specific digital transformation/connectivity focus have been established: in Asia-Pacific (IBC 5 co-convened by ITU, ESCAP and UNESCO) and the Arab States region (co-convened by ITU and ESCWA). ITU also co-convenes, with UNECE, a UN Digital Transformation Group for Europe and Central Asia. In Africa, UNESCO, UNFPA and ILO lead the OIBC 3 on “education, innovation digitalization, and youth”. See Annex 5 on IBCs by region and focus.
Funding/financing mechanisms and external partnerships	Joint SDG Fund: in its 2023-2026 Transitional Strategy, the Fund aims to “support promotion of systems change and leverage broader funding for key areas such as government services, digital connectivity, digital financing, e-trade, and digital standards to protect the planet” as well as cross-cutting initiatives to advance digital public goods, digital human rights and digital capacity building. The resulting Digital Transformation Window approved 22 joint programmes in its first funding round (to end of 2024) with a total budget of USD 66.5 million¹⁴. Programmes are divided into high impact JPs (up to USD 3m) and seed funding JPs (up to USD 250k).

¹³ <https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/ungis/>. 2025-26: Chair: UNCTAD. Vice-chairs: ITU, UNDP, UNESCO and ESCWA.

¹⁴ USD 40.3 million from the fund itself, and USD 26.1 million in co-funding by partners.

3.4. Education

Relevant intergovernmental processes/ mandates	As part of “Our Common Agenda”, the Secretary-General convened the Transforming Education Summit in 2022, with the aim of elevating education to the top of the global political agenda and to mobilise actions to recover COVID pandemic-related learning losses and transform education within economies and societies that are rapidly evolving as a result of digital/technological change. The outcomes of the TES include the Secretary-General’s Vision Statement and Calls to Action, and more than 130 national commitments¹⁵ to transform education. The Vision Statement and report on the summit describe a role for UN country teams and the RC system in supporting said national commitments. Follow up to the TES is the responsibility of the existing SDG4 Global Education Cooperation Mechanism in particular the High Level Steering Committee (HLSC) and the Global Education Meetings. A TES follow-up Strategy was jointly developed by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and UNESCO (as the TES Secretariat and SDG4 HLSC Inter-Agency Secretariat respectively), and endorsed by the SDG4 HLSC at its December 2022 meeting. The 2024 QCPR, broadly calls upon the UN development system to provide support to education systems in programme countries and recognizes education as driver of progress across the SDGs. This language was unchanged from the 2020 resolution, except for a new reference to “early childhood education”. The 2024 QCPR does not reference the 2022 TES summit and its outcomes.
UN system strategies, policies, initiatives and coordination mechanisms	Previously, in 2019, the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) endorsed the “United Nations system-wide strategic approach for achieving inclusive, equitable and innovative education and learning for all” to provide a framework for the UN system to support Member States in delivering future-oriented learning for all. Under the leadership of UNICEF and UNESCO, it outlined a roadmap for a strategically prioritized light-touch UN system-wide approach to the future of education and learning that complement existing frameworks and mechanisms. The Transforming Education Summit (2022) resulted in five “Global Initiatives” including “Greening Education”, “Foundational Learning”, “Education in Crisis Situations”, “Gender Equality and Girls’ and Women’s Empowerment in and through Education” and a “Global Youth Initiative”. These are generally coalitions of partners making shared commitments and statements of intent and concern “political momentum”, intergovernmental discussion and advocacy. Specific resulting “operational activities” of UNSDG agencies and/or major new multi-UN agency initiatives (comparable to FSCH or the Global Accelerator) have been less evident. A possible exception is the Gateways to Public Digital Learning initiative launched by UNESCO and UNICEF at the Summit in 2021 which maps digital public learning platforms, assesses their quality, showcases good practices and sets norms and standards.

¹⁵ UNESCO dashboard to track commitments: <https://www.unesco.org/sdg4education2030/en/knowledge-hub/dashboard?hub=30>



	A UN “High Impact Initiative” on Transforming Education was presented at the 2023 SDG Summit by SG’s Special Adviser on TES follow up, UNESCO and UNICEF, promising to (i) sustain and strengthen momentum on TES commitments by engaging political leadership, (ii) support ongoing discussions on global and national education financing and fiscal space, and (iii) support movements that advocate for education transformation. There is no specific UN system coordination mechanism on education, however, the majority of the members of the Multilateral Education Platform (MEP) (a component of the SDG4 Global Education Cooperation Mechanism) are UN entities¹⁶.
Regional issue-based coalitions (IBCs)	At the regional level, two IBCs focus explicitly on education transformation. In Africa, UNESCO, UNFPA and ILO lead the OIBC 3 on “education, innovation digitalization, and youth”, with stated aims of following through on TES outcomes. The Arab States region has also established an IBC on education (co-convened by UNESCO and UNICEF). See Annex 5 on IBCs by region and focus.
Funding/financing mechanisms and external partnerships	The Joint SDG Fund Strategy for 2023-26 envisages catalytic investments in education transformation in five key TES follow-up areas: education system transformation; digital learning and education solutions; school to-future-work transition; greening education; and financing education. However, this “window” of the fund, envisaged in the TES summary report, has not been sufficiently capitalized to date. There are well established global funds for education in the form of the development-focused Global Partnership for Education (hosted by the World Bank) and the education-in-emergency/humanitarian-focused Education Cannot Wait (hosted by UNICEF). The International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd) was launched at the 2022 Transforming Education Summit as a mechanism to multiply scarce donor resources for education transformation in lower-middle income countries (often not eligible for grant-based funding from the likes of GPE and ECW). The IFFEd combines donor guarantees to leverage increased MDB lending for education, with grants to effectively subsidise the interest rate, thus creating a pool of highly concessional capital dedicated to education.

3.5. Jobs and social protection

Relevant intergovernmental processes/ mandates	Global standards and policy recommendations for social protection (social security) and guidance to the multilateral system for supporting them are provided by resolutions of the International Labour Conference. Recommendation No.202 issued in 2012 provides guidance to members on “social protection floors”, defined as “nationally defined sets of basic social security guarantees which secure protection aimed at preventing or alleviating
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¹⁶ The MEP (established 2019) consists of a group of multilateral agencies and funds (UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR, WFP, ILO, UN Women, UNDP, World Bank, GPE, ECW, OECD) and some standing participants (Office of the Special Envoy/Education Commission, European Commission). The MEP is currently convened and chaired by UNESCO and meets twice a year.



	poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion”. Follow up to the recommendation was provided by ILC.109/Resolution III, which emphasises the importance of multilateral cooperation to support and complement national efforts. In the 2020 QCPR (A/RES/75/233) Member States requested that the UN development system “support programme countries in implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including social protection floors, and by 2030 to achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable” (op.26) This request was reiterated in the 2024 QCPR (A/RES/79/226 – op.31) along with Member State appreciation for the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions (see below). While not directly and specifically mandating the UN development system other recent international agreements have strengthened global commitments to social protection. In the 2024 Pact for the Future (A/RES/79/1) Member States committed to the promotion of universal access to social protection and securing an ambitious outcome at the “Second World Summit for Social Development” in October 2025. The Compromiso de Sevilla adopted at FFD4 strengthens global commitments to social protection (in comparison to the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda). It encourages countries to integrate financing of social protection into country-led plans and strategies, suggests prioritization of support for developing countries that aim to increase social protection coverage by 2 percentage points per year, calls upon the international community to ensure continuity of social protection spending in times of crisis, and encourages consideration of social protection within IMF- supported macroeconomic adjustment programmes.
UN system strategies, policies, initiatives and coordination mechanisms	UN inter-agency coordination on social protection originates in the system-wide response to the 2008 global financial crisis. The ILO/WHO-led Social Protection Floor Initiative developed within the UN System Chief Executives Board (CEB) brought together 19 UN agencies in 2009. ILO recommendation 202 was followed by the formation of the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B) to improve the coordination and coherence of technical advisory services offered by the multilateral system. UNSDG entities also participate in broader international coalitions such as the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (USP2030).¹⁷ In 2021, the SG’s Our Common Agenda report called for the establishment of universal social protection floors. To support this, and with the aim of fast-tracking global actions to promote recovery from the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the SG launched the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions. The initiative aims to support the creation (or formalisation) of 400 million decent jobs and the extension of social protection coverage to the 4 billion people currently excluded. It also aims to achieve more effective and coordinated multilateral cooperation. The GA has three pillars:

¹⁷ See: ILO, FAO, UNICEF (2022) [UN collaboration on social protection: Reaching consensus on how to accelerate social protection systems-building | International Labour Organization](#) for an overview of previous and existing fora and initiatives.



	1. <i>Integrated national strategies</i> – support countries to implement integrated policies for job creation, universal social protection, economic growth, public revenue generation and reinvestment in key sectors 2. <i>Integrated national financing strategies</i> – support to develop and operate financing strategies across the full range of available sources (tax, social contributions, ODA, debt reduction/restructuring, private investment etc.) 3. <i>Enhanced multilateral cooperation</i> – harmonisation of actions national actors, UN agencies, IFIs to implement the Accelerator and advance social justice Participating countries in the Accelerator (“pathfinders”)¹⁸ develop national roadmaps that: identify key sectors of the economy that can create decent jobs, investments needed in social protection to achieve universal coverage, complementary public investment projects, a financing strategy, national coordination mechanisms, and the highest level of political support/will. UNSDG entities provide support to countries across all three pillars and aspects of a national roadmap through the Technical Support Facility (at global and country levels). The TSF is coordinated by ILO, UNICEF, UNDP, WFP, FAO and UN-Women, and draws in other entities as relevant. The Accelerator was presented as a UN high impact initiative at the 2023 SDG Summit. The work of the Global Accelerator is guided by an implementation strategy, that was developed by a UN Inter-Agency Task team and endorsed in 2022¹⁹. A first progress report was published in 2024²⁰.
Regional issue-based coalitions (IBCs)	At the regional level, issue-based coalitions with a specific, singular social protection focus have been established in the Arab States (co-convened by ILO and UNICEF) and Europe and Central Asia regions (ILO, UNICEF, UNDP and WHO). The Asia-Pacific IBC 3 has a broader focus of inclusive economic growth and recovery (convened by UNICEF and UNDP), while the Latin America and Caribbean region has established an IBC on “Equitable Growth and Financing for Development, convened by UNDP, ECLAC and ILO. See Annex 5 on IBCs by region and focus.
Funding/financing mechanisms and external partnerships	In 2023, the TSF outlined a total required budget of USD 600 million to support at least 30 pathfinder countries over a period of four years, to be mobilized from a combination of sources, including the budgets of participating UN agencies, country/global level pooled funds, specific project funding etc. The Joint SDG Fund “Window on Decent Jobs and Universal Social Protection” provides funding for the TSF itself and for joint programmes at the country level (with a particular focus on job creation in the green, care and digital economies).²¹ By May 2025, the window had designed and approved 23 joint

¹⁸ [Pathfinder countries | UN Global Accelerator](#): Albania, Bhutan, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Indonesia, Malawi, Namibia, Nepal, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, Rwanda, Senegal, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam.

¹⁹ [Global Accelerator Implementation Strategy.pdf](#) (2022)

²⁰ [1st Progress Report.pdf](#) (2023-2024)

²¹ [Joint SDG Fund Strategy.pdf](#); [Investment Strategy of the Global Accelerator Window .pdf](#)

	programmes with a total budget of USD 27.7 million (including fund investments and co-funding by partners).²² The Multistakeholder Engagement to implement the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions and the World Bank Social Protection Compass (M-GA) is a joint mechanism created by the Joint SDG Fund and the World Bank Rapid Social Response Adaptive and Dynamic Social Protection Program (RSR-ADSP) Trust Fund. With support from donor countries, it funds joint UN-World Bank projects that support the implementation of the Accelerator in pathfinder countries. Its first funding round allocated USD 500,000 grants to 9 pathfinder countries²³ for two year projects beginning in late 2024.
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3.5.1. Health

25. Key transitions articulated in 2023 did not include health. However, health has subsequently been presented as either a seventh key transition or within a broad interpretation of social protection in Secretary-General reporting on the implementation of the QCPR.

Relevant intergovernmental processes/ mandates	In the political declarations that resulted from high-level meetings on universal health coverage (UHC) in 2019 (A/RES/74/2) and 2023 (A/RES/78/4) the General Assembly has unanimously recognized that UHC is fundamental to achieving all of the SDGs, not just those that relate directly to health and well-being (SDG 3), but also those related to poverty eradication, access to education, gender equality, climate change, and building peaceful and inclusive societies. These resolutions call upon the relevant entities of the UN development system, under the coordination and direction of the World Health Organisation, to support countries in achieving UHC and all health related targets of the SDGs by 2030. A further high-level meeting in UHC will be convened in the 82nd session of UNGA (2027).
UN system strategies, policies, initiatives and coordination mechanisms	In 2018, leaders of Germany, Ghana and Norway requested that WHO and other organizations coordinate efforts to better support countries to accelerate their work towards health-related SDG targets. In response WHO and 12 other multilateral organizations²⁴ launched the Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-Being for All (2019–2025) at the General Assembly high-level meeting on UHC in 2019. It was not mandated by the governing bodies of any of its signatory agencies. In 2024, a joint independent evaluation found that the GAP framework had not delivered as intended and could not be sustained, indicating a need for fundamentally new approaches in the current global health landscape. Signatory agencies agreed to accept the recommendation of the joint independent evaluation and sunset the GAP in 2025. The evaluation and subsequent lessons learned paper produced by WHO, may

²² A previous Joint SDG Fund “Integrated Social Protection portfolio” provided 101M (69M through the Joint SDG fund and 32M through co-funding) for 35 Joint Programmes.

²³ Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Colombia, Indonesia, Nepal, Paraguay, Philippines, Uzbekistan, Vietnam

²⁴ GAVI, GFF, Global Fund, ILO, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, Unitaids, UN Women, World Bank Group and WFP



	facilitate comparative analysis with other multi-agency SDG acceleration initiatives.
Regional issue-based coalitions (IBCs)	Only the Europe/Central Asia region has an Issue-Based Coalition on Health and Wellbeing (chaired by WHO). WHO established the Regional Health Alliance (RHA) in 2019 as a collaborative platform of 18 UN entities to address health-related SDGs in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.
Funding/financing mechanisms and external partnerships	There are few specific financing mechanisms for UN development system joint and system-wide initiatives relating health SDG acceleration. There are very few UN MPTFOs focusing specifically on health. The SDG3 GAP was funded by grants totalling just 13 million USD over seven years.

3.6. Climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution

Relevant intergovernmental processes/ mandates	UN system support to Member States in the areas of climate change, biodiversity and pollution (and distinct but related disaster risk reduction) is framed and mandated by numerous international agreements including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992) and the Paris Agreement (2015), the Convention on Biological Diversity (2011) and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (2022), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (1994), the Sendai Framework (2015). Each calls directly or indirectly upon the UN system to support implementation. The QCPR (2024) recalls these conventions, agreements and frameworks and calls upon the entities of the UN development system support programme countries to implement them, emphasizing nationally determined contributions (NDCs), national adaptation plans, and support for all decisions taken at COPs.
UN system strategies, policies, initiatives and coordination mechanisms	United Nations system coordination mechanisms include: • Environmental Management Group (EMG) – established in 2001 pursuant to A/RES/53/242 as the system-wide coordination body for environment and human settlements. Consists of 51 UN entities, chaired by Executive Director of UNEP with a Secretariat based in Geneva. ◦ EMG Issue Management Group on Biodiversity – established in 2021, co-chaired by UNDP, UNEP and UNESCO to prepare the ground for UN-system collaboration on the GBF ◦ Proposed EMG Issue Management Group on Pollution – EMG Senior Officials agreed to establish a consultative process on the issue of pollution and prepare a UN system-wide approach in 2021. • UN Senior Leadership Group on DRR for Resilience (UN SLG) – established in 2016, includes more than 40 UN entities and meets annually, chaired by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on DRR. System-wide strategies and plans include:



	• United Nations System Strategic Approach on Climate Change Action – adopted by the CEB in 2017 • United Nations System-wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment – adopted by the EMG in 2016 • The United Nations Common Approach to Biodiversity – adopted by the CEB in 2021 • United Nations plan of action on disaster risk reduction for resilience adopted by the CEB in 2016 Multi-agency initiatives may include: • The UN Partnership for Action on the Green Economy (PAGE) through which UNEP, UNDP, ILO, UNIDO and UNITAR provide demand-driven policy advice, assessments, capacity building and analytical tools to support countries to transition to inclusive green economies • A high-impact initiative on “Nature Driving Economic Transformation” presented by UNEP at the 2023 SDG Summit (in collaboration with UNESCO, UN Habitat, FAO, UNDRR, CBD, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP and WIPO) • The Early Warnings for All initiative, launched by the SG in 2022, under which UNDRR, WMO, ITU and IFRC work together to support countries in building and operating effective and inclusive multi-hazard early warning systems. • The NDC Partnership, co-hosted by UN Climate Change and UNOPs with the World Resources Institute, aims to match government NDC implementation priorities and support requests to organisations that can offer the required expertise, technical assistance and funding. 19 individual UN entities are members of the partnership. • The UNDP Climate Promise 2025 (building on the original 2019 Promise) is presented as a UN System-wide effort to help countries align their NDC pledges with the 1.5C goal, strengthen their quality and investability, and accelerate their implementation to drive sustainable development, including by coordinating the extensive ongoing UN System support to developing countries on climate actions and their NDCs.
Regional issue-based coalitions (IBCs)	All five UN regions have established at least one IBC with a focus on climate change (some also covering biodiversity and pollution): • <i>Africa</i>: OIBC-4 - Fostering climate action and resilience (co-chairs: UNDP, FAO, UNEP, UNECA) • <i>Arab States</i>: IBC on Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss and Pollution (UNEP, UNDP) • <i>Asia-Pacific</i>: IBC 1 - Raising Ambition on Climate Action (ESCAP, UNEP) and IBC 2 on Building Resilience (UNDP, UNDRR) • <i>Europe-Central Asia</i>: IBC on Environment and Climate Change (UNEP, UNESCO, UNECE) • <i>Latin America-Caribbean</i>: IBC on Climate Change and Resilience (UNDRR, UNEP)

	See Annex 5 on IBCs by region and focus.
Funding/financing mechanisms and external partnerships	The Joint SDG Fund Strategy for 2023-26 envisages support for collective actions for a just green transition (including innovations in climate financing, sustainable blue economy development etc.). However, this “window” of the fund has not been sufficiently capitalized to date. Key funding mechanisms to the UN system in these areas therefore remain the Global Environment Facility, Green Climate Fund and Adaptation Fund. More narrowly focused UN multi-partner trust funds include: UN-REDD Programme Fund, the Global Fund for Coral Reefs, the Systematic Observations Financing Facility; the Partnership for Action on the Green Economy, and Nature4Health. In May 2024, UNEP established the Kunming Biodiversity Fund with a contribution of more than USD 200 million from China.

3.7. Engine room actions

26. The transitions approach articulates four categories of “engine room action” that can and should be mobilised by the UN system and development partners to support key transitions for SDG acceleration: (i) an uplift in the provision of policy/regulatory advice to governments; (ii) preparation of pipelines of bankable and market ready projects for public and private investment; (iii) convening all relevant actors to bring together an appropriate and innovative development financing mix to support a transition; and (iv) capacity building at scale within public institution and civil society.
27. While such engine room actions will often be specific to national context and particular transition areas in their design, there are examples of UN initiatives that aim to support these engine room actions across different sectors and contexts. The following bullets provide a non-exhaustive list of global level examples:
 - **INFF Facility** – [Integrated National Financing Frameworks](#) were developed as a tool to support implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (2015) at the country-level. INFFs help countries strengthen planning processes and overcome existing impediments to sustainable development financing, through analysis of the full range of financing sources – domestic, international, public and private – and developing strategies to finance sustainable development priorities as identified in national development strategies. The INFF Facility is a joint initiative of UNDP, DESA, UNICEF, the EU, Italy, Spain and Sweden which responds to programme country demands for assistance in designing and implementing INFFs. Since 2019, more than 80 countries have conducted put in place INFFs.
 - **Joint SDG Fund SDG Financing Portfolio** – supported the development of INFFs in 80 countries under its “SDG Financing Enabling Portfolio” with a total value of USD 70 million. A further USD 70 million “SDG Financing Catalytic Investment Portfolio” provided design grants and de-risking capital to unblock SDG finance in 10 countries. An evaluation of the enabling portfolio was commissioned in 2024.²⁵
 - **Local2030 Coalition** – serves as a platform to strengthen the partnership of local governments and other actors and stakeholders with the UN system in an effort to realize the 2030 Agenda at the local level. Local2030 was presented as a [high impact initiative](#) at the 2023 SDG Summit and has been supported by a [Joint SDG Fund “localization window”](#) that has

²⁵ <https://jointsdgfund.org/publication/thematic-global-evaluation-joint-sdg-funds-sdg-financing-enabling-environmental>

allocated USD 10.5 million to localization initiatives in 30 countries. The leading UN entities within the coalition are UN Habitat, UNDP and FAO, with participation by UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO, ESCAP, UNECE, UNEP, UN DESA, IOM and the Joint SDG Fund;

- **FutureGov** – presented as a [high impact initiative](#) at the 2023 SDG Summit, by UNDP and DESA, FutureGov aims to accelerate SDG progress by strengthening public sector capacity in programme countries by building skills, shifting mindsets to systems-thinking/foresight and promoting innovations in the policymaking ecosystem, all to improve the ways in which public policies/services are designed, financed, delivered and evaluated.
- **Power of data** - presented as a [high impact initiative](#) at the 2023 SDG Summit aims to harness the convening power of the UN system to bring together the required political support, technical expertise and financing for strengthen data systems through national data partnerships at the country level²⁶. The co-leads are UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Statistics Division (DESA), the Committee of Chief Statisticians of the UN System (UN-CCS), the World Bank, Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, with support from the Resident Coordinator system.
- **Transforming4Trade** - presented by UNCTAD, DESA and UNIDO as a [high impact initiative](#) at the 2023 SDG Summit aims to leverage multi-sector economic analysis (in the form of National Productive Capacity Gap Assessments) and domestic policy analysis/development to design and finance Holistic Productive Capacities Development Programmes in 20 countries by 2030.
- **Technology Bank for the LDCs** – was established by the General Assembly in 2017 to assist Least Developed Countries in harnessing science, technology and innovation for sustainable development through technology needs assessments, technology transfer programmes and capacity building in agriculture/food systems, environment/climate change, health, education and digital skills development. The establishment of the Bank, in 2018, based in Türkiye, represents itself the achievement of SDG target 17.8.

28. Several regional-level Issue Based Coalitions of UN entities align directly with cross-cutting engine room actions, including:

- **Data/statistical capacities:** Africa OIBC 1 on Strengthened Integrated Data and Statistical Systems (co-convened by UNECA and UNFPA), the Europe-Central Asia Regional Coordination Group on Data and Statistics (UNECE and UNEP), and the Arab States cross-cutting IBC on Data and AI tools (ESCWA)
- **Trade:** Africa OIBC 2 – “Ensuring effective and efficient macroeconomic management and accelerated inclusive, economic transformation and diversification” with a particular focus on trade and the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), co-convened by UNECA, UNDP and UNCTAD.
- **Financing for development:** Arab States cross-cutting IBCs on Macroeconomic Growth (ESCWA and UNDP); Asia-Pacific IBC3 on Inclusive Economic Growth and Recovery (UNICEF and UNDP); and the LAC IBC on Equitable Growth and Financing for Development (UNDP, ECLAC and ILO)

29. See Annex 5 on IBCs by region and focus.

3.8. Evaluation scope

²⁶ Countries engaged: Bangladesh, Botswana, Cabo Verde, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Paraguay, Rwanda, Somalia, Togo, with initial funding from the United Kingdom

30. The evaluation's overall scope will be broad and flexible, encompassing the following:

- *Substantive/thematic scope:* The evaluand is the UN Sustainable Development Group²⁷, including its 38 member entities and secretariat (DCO) at country, regional and global levels. As the evaluation will be to some extent formative, learning-focussed and modular, the depth of analysis will not fall evening across UN entities or thematic areas. Preliminary scoping and evaluability assessment by SWEO (see sections 3.2 to 3.7) suggests greater evaluability in food systems, energy transition, jobs and social protection, digital connectivity, and some engine room actions, with lesser evaluability in transforming education and climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. In view of the recently completed evaluation of the Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-Being for All (2019–2025) is it not envisaged health SDG acceleration will be a priority area for this evaluation.
- *Temporal scope:* While the momentum for SDG acceleration provided by the SDG Summit in 2023 is a starting point for certain initiatives, much relevant UN system activity predates this. As such the evaluation will have a flexible temporal scope covering the period since the repositioning of the UN development system (2019) up to the present.
- *Geographic scope:* The evaluation will be global in scope. It will include UNSDG entities' programming in all countries covered by a UN Country Team and Resident Coordinator's Office (or Multi-Country Office), as well as all regional office and HQ locations. It will cover different types of context in which UN development cooperation occurs (e.g. MICs, LLDCs, LDCs and SIDS). The scope of each evaluation module (see section 4.2) will be more narrowly defined and based on appropriate sampling approaches to be defined during the inception phase based on inclusion criteria. Initial criteria that have informed the evaluation design to this point are presented in section 4.

4. Evaluation approach and methodology

4.1. Indicative evaluation questions

31. Evaluation questions will be refined during system-wide consultations and finalised in an Inception Report. Preliminary questions are as follows:

Relevance

1. To what extent does the key transitions approach to SDG acceleration meet Member States expectations of the UN development system in the context of Agenda 2030 and UN development system repositioning?
2. To what extent have entities of the UN development system demonstrated buy-in to the key transitions approach to SDG acceleration and adopted it as an organising framework in their global, regional and country-level work?

Coherence

3. To what extent has the UN development system adopted clear system-wide strategies and established coordination mechanisms to maximise the internal coherence of the UN system in key transition areas (and engine room actions)?
4. To what extent does the key transitions approach (and the identified six entry points for SDG acceleration and engine room actions) align with the strengths and comparative advantages of the UN development system vis a vis non-UN development partners? [external coherence]

²⁷ <https://unsdg.un.org/about/who-we-are>



Effectiveness

5. What are the emerging lessons learned and identifiable best practices from the UN development system's operationalisation of key transitions approach to SDG acceleration to date, at global, regional and country levels, in the following areas:
 - A. Creation of appropriate accountabilities and incentive structures
 - B. Organisation and pooling of UN system expertise and capacities
 - C. Leveraging of the required means of implementation and resources
 - D. Establishment of new partnerships with national and international actors

32. These strategic level questions are designed for relevance across all modules of the evaluation, and to service as a high level overarching analytical framework for the facilitation of comparative analysis and evidence synthesis in the context of the final overarching report. Each evaluation module should develop evaluation questions that are more specific and contextually relevant, but can contribute findings to this overarching framework. Ensuring consistency and comparability between modules and ensuring that they are together, "greater than the sum of their parts" will be an important task for the selected Team Leader (see section 5).

4.2. Evaluation approach

33. The key transitions are not a programme, policy or clearly articulated system-wide strategy, rather they are an 'organizing frame that can spotlight investment pathways to accelerate SDG progress' and they are situated within an existing SDG agenda and crowded landscape of ongoing related activity that predates their high-level articulation. Therefore, the subject matter is not well suited to traditional strategic evaluation approaches which lead to the publication of a single final evaluation report with findings, conclusions and recommendations.
34. This system-wide evaluation will be conducted as series of distinct but related modules of analysis, many of which will lead to the publication of standalone evidence products to be presented throughout the evaluation period, ahead of a final report to be released in time to inform preparations for the 2027 SDG Summit (Q1 2027). Table 2 presents the different "blocks" of evidence that the evaluation will build and draw together in its final report. Figure 2 provides a visual overview and clarifies which modules are outside of the scope of the call for proposals from LTA firms.



Table 2 Evaluation evidence modules, products, evaluation question coverage

and scope/sampling criteria

Evidence block(s)	Purpose/EQ focus/products	Scope/sampling criteria
Evaluability assessment	Assessment of the availability and quality of information/data sources for evaluation modules and future evaluation of UN support to key transitions from 2027 (based on detailed mapping and evaluability assessment). A summary of the evaluability assessment findings will be included in the preliminary strategic assessment report.	
Preliminary strategic assessment	Preliminary strategic assessment of progress in the UN development system's SDG acceleration offer since 2023, focusing on evaluation questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 – strategic level relevance and coherence. Considers: the extent to which the transitions concept and “operational shift” was conceptualised, communicated, adopted by UN entities (at global and UNCT levels), resonates with Member States and other stakeholders etc.	Strategic level, covering full breadth of the transitions concept, with purposive sampling of secondary and primary sources.
UN evaluation evidence summaries²⁸	Provide summary of existing evaluation evidence/learning on the UN development system's adoption of a “key transitions-supporting” approach to date (including before 2023) identification of SDG acceleration entry points and support with engine room actions. Focus on selected areas to surface learning on good practices, enablers and challenges. Contributes evidence for overarching evaluation questions 3, 4 and, in particular, 5. Summaries may be informed complemented by evidence gap maps which may also contribute to the scoping and evaluability assessment.	3 standalone evidence summaries on key transition areas/engine rooms actions where a body UN evaluation evidence exists and can be summarised to surface key insights (2020 - 2025). Avoiding overlap with other ongoing system-wide synthesis work. Annex 8 provides an initial list of repositories/databases containing evaluations and studies that may be relevant for inclusion.
<i>Review of Cooperation Framework evaluations²⁹</i>	Extract and summarise key insights from Cooperation Framework evaluations, on the contribution of the repositioning of the UN development system to the operationalisation of a key transitions approach at country-level. Review the quality of Cooperation Framework evaluations and provide recommendations for improved evaluation practice. Focus on evaluation question 5, in particular part A on the strength of incentives and accountability mechanisms to support the operational shift (at country level).	All published Cooperation Framework evaluations to date
Evaluations of UN key transition initiatives	Examine, in-depth, a limited number of key initiatives adopted by the UN development system to support key transitions to date to identify lessons learned, good practices and key considerations	3 key transition (or engine room) initiatives meeting the following criteria:

²⁸ Example evaluation evidence summary products on RC system, UN development system at regional level, HDP linkage, food systems and funding quality (2024) available on the SWEQ website: <https://www.un.org/system-wide-evaluation-office/en>

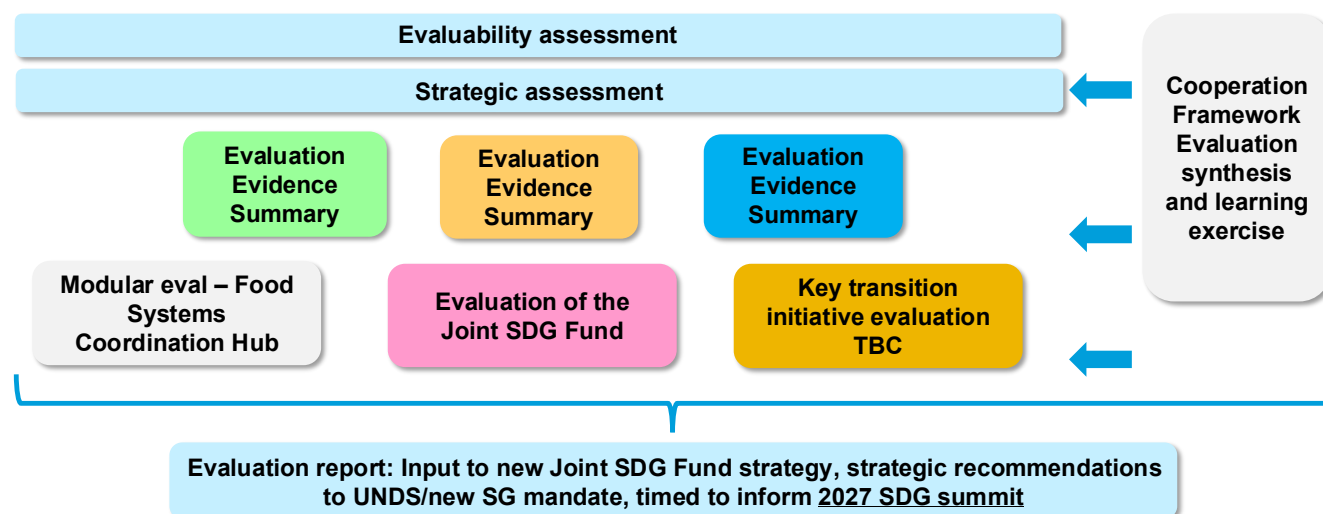
²⁹ This exercise is being undertaken by SWEQ staff and directly engaged consultants beginning in Q4 2025. It is outside of the scope of the call for proposals by LTA firms. See Annex 2.



Evidence block(s)	Purpose/EQ focus/products	Scope/sampling criteria
	for future approaches. Evidence to be drawn from multiple levels – country, regional and global and a range of sources/methods. Particular focus on all elements of evaluation question 5, as well as 3 and 4. Each exercise is to be considered a full-fledged, standalone evaluation of the subject it covers. It will have a published final report and make recommendations, while also contributing to the overarching final report.	• Clarity and maturity of intergovernmental mandate/request for collective UN action • Clearly defined global/corporate level partnership among multiple UN entities • Dedicated funding/financing platform(s) • Clearly defined country level activity/investments Country sampling based on a mapping of country-level initiatives. Confirmed (at time of ToR): - Evaluation of UN Food Systems Coordination Hub – ongoing November 2025 to May 2026 – not included in LTA secondary bidding (Annex 1)³⁰ - Evaluation of the Joint SDG Fund - see Concept Note at Annex 3 – included in LTA secondary bidding To be confirmed (at time of ToR): - Evaluation of one other UN system wide initiative(s) relating to either clean energy transition, decent jobs/social protection, digital connectivity. This third standalone modular evaluation will be confirmed in Q1 2026.
Final evaluation report	Draws together evidence from modular analyses combined with further strategic/qualitative data collection to answer all EQs and provide: 1. Strategic recommendations to the UNSDG and Member States on the UN development system's approach to SDG acceleration from 2027-2030 (inc. recommendations to inform the revised strategy of the Joint SDG Fund) 2. A roadmap for more in-depth evaluation work that provides more detailed assessment of the UN development system's achievements and SDG results in specific key transitions from 2027 onwards	

³⁰ An **evaluation of the Food Systems Coordination Hub** was requested by the Principals of the Hub's Oversight Steering Group (FAO, IFAD, DCO, UNDP, WFP, WHO) separately of the system-wide evaluation design. However, the Hub also meets the criteria for a modular evaluation of a UN key transition initiative presented in this Terms of Reference. It will proceed as planned (with standalone management and governance arrangements) but will feed in evidence and learning to the broader evaluation. See Annex 1 – ToR.

Figure 2 Graphic representation of evaluation evidence modules (full scope, including ongoing modules conducted internally by SWEO)



4.3. Methodology

35. In building different blocks of evidence and conducting data collection and analysis both within and across them, the evaluation will employ a mixed-methods approach. In line with this approach, data for each module and for the overarching evaluation may be collected through a typical mix of primary and secondary sources including desk review, semi-structured or open-ended interviews, closed answer questionnaires, focus groups and direct observation³¹. Systematic data triangulation across different sources and methods should be carried out to validate findings and avoid bias in the evaluative judgement.
36. Precise sources and methods will be defined in the inception phase, but key clusters of data collection will include:
37. **Evaluability assessment methods:** given the formative nature of the evaluation its early stages will involve data collection and analysis for the purposes of evaluation scoping, design, sampling, assessment of evaluability (at present and in future). As such, the evaluation will need to employ methods for stakeholder analysis, quantitative analysis of financial and indicator data sets, portfolio analysis/mapping etc. Artificial intelligence and machine learning techniques may also be used to process and analyse large volumes of text-based data (e.g. Cooperation Framework and Common Country Analysis documents).
38. **Evaluation evidence summary/synthesis:** In line with the key principles of complementarity and subsidiarity set out in the UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Policy, all system-wide evaluations aim draw on and make use of the large bodies of evaluation evidence produced by the existing evaluation architecture of the UN system. In this modular, partly formative, evaluation use of existing evaluation evidence through synthesis will be a key component. The evaluation will use best practice evidence synthesis methods as set out in the [UNEG Evaluation Synthesis Guidance \(2025\)](#) and may leverage artificial intelligence and machine learning techniques to accelerate

³¹ UN evaluation evidence summaries are an exception – all sources will be existing evaluations. Possible database sources are listed in Annex 8 – Bibliography.

quality screening, data extraction, analysis or to expand sample sizes (with due consideration of the [UNEG Ethical Principles for Harnessing AI in United Nations Evaluations \(2025\)](#))

39. **Country visits:** In the context of its modular evaluations of UN key transition initiatives, the evaluation will undertake data collection in a sample of programme countries. This will include in-person data collection and could be supplemented by remote data collection in further countries. Country data collection will include interviews with UN country team staff, representatives of the national government, other international development partners (e.g. donors/IFIs) and national stakeholders (civil society/private sector), as relevant. Countries for data collection will be selected based on concentration of key transition supporting initiatives and investments across food systems, energy, digital, social protection³² and/or clear evidence of innovative engine room actions. See the results of some preliminary analysis of initiatives by country in Annex 4. The expectation is that, with strategic sampling, country visits may present data collection opportunities across multiple modules.

4.4. Ethical considerations

40. In line with the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation³³, system-wide evaluations must be conducted with the highest standards of integrity and respect for: the beliefs, manners, and customs of all social and cultural environments; human rights and gender equality; non-discrimination, disability inclusion and 'do no harm' principles. They must ensure that sensitive data are protected, ensure anonymity as appropriate, and they must validate statements made in the reports with the sources of the relevant information. They must ensure that sensitive data cannot be traced to their source, while ensuring that evaluation findings are triangulated so as to avoid being based solely on evidence that cannot be disclosed or verified. System-wide evaluations are not expected to evaluate the performance of individuals. Evaluators should obtain informed consent for the use of privileged information from those who provide it. The evaluation manager and the evaluation team will sign the UNEG Pledge of Commitment to Ethical Conduct in Evaluation (Annex 7). When evidence of wrongdoing is uncovered (such as financial mismanagement, sexual exploitation, abuse and/or harassment), it must be reported to a competent body in line with guidance from SWEQ.

4.5. Quality assurance and assessment

41. Quality assurance will take place throughout the evaluation process at all levels. The key features of system-wide evaluation quality assurance are:
- a. Adherence to UNEG Norms and Standards
 - b. Establishment of evaluation management and/or reference groups to review the evaluation products from Terms of Reference to Final Reports;
 - c. Recruitment of evaluators, based on proof of qualifications, skills, and experience;
 - d. Use of standard UNEG checklists and quality criteria for review of evaluation products
42. The quality assurance process does not interfere with the views or independence of the evaluation team but ensures that the report provides credible evidence and analysis in a clear and convincing way and draws its conclusions on that basis.
43. The evaluation team, under the leadership of the Team Leader and the management of the contracted firm will have primary responsibility for quality assurance subject to the guidance of the

³² Particularly, Joint SDG Fund windows/portfolios

³³ https://www.unevaluation.org/uneq_publications/uneq-ethical-guidelines-evaluation

Evaluation Management Group. The Executive Director of the UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Office will be responsible for secondary quality assurance and approval of all deliverables.

44. Quality assessment by independent external assessors will take place once the evaluation report is finalized. The quality assessment will be made public for transparency purposes.

5. Organisation of the evaluation

5.1. Phases and deliverables

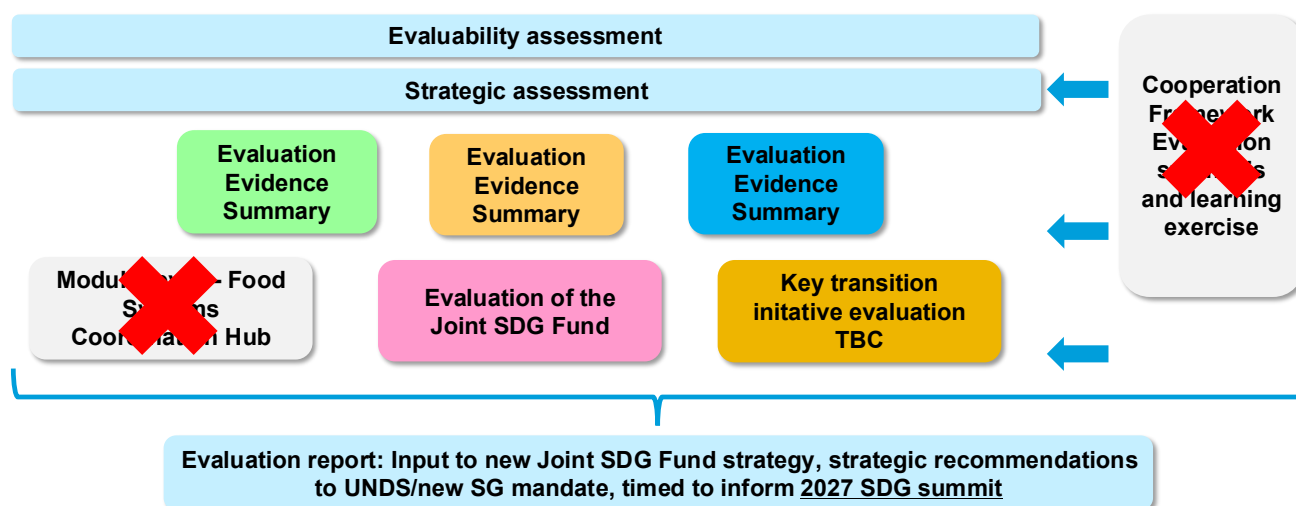
45. The following timetable is proposed to ensure that the final evaluation report is available in the preparatory period of the next quadrennial SDG summit scheduled for 2027.
46. The evaluation, with its modular deliverables, will be implemented in phases according to the timetable set out below. Within this timetable there is scope for, and likely benefit from, some overlapping of the phases or alternative sequencing of the deliverables (in particular in Phase 2 and Phase 3). Detailed delivery timeframes for each module should also be agreed during the inception phase, also taking account of windows/opportunities for dissemination presented by internal UN meetings and external intergovernmental meetings and summits.
47. Table 2 and Figure 2 (above) present all the modules of the evaluation, including those that are already being undertaken by SWEO staff and directly engaged consultants. Table 3 and Figure 3 (below) includes only the activities and deliverables within the scope of the request for proposals from LTA firms (excludes Evaluation of the Food Systems Coordination Hub and Cooperation Framework Evaluation Learning Exercise - Annex 1 and 2).

Table 3 Phases and deliverables

Phase	Timeline	Tasks/deliverables
1: Inception / Scoping	Q4 2025 – Q1 2026	Final ToR Selection of LTA evaluation firm/team Inception Note – updates the ToR, and sets out methodology for evaluability assessment / early strategic assessment and preliminary scoping of other modules (summaries/evaluations) Evaluability assessment report Strategic assessment report
2: Evidence summaries	Q1-Q3 2026	Inception notes (detailing sample, analytical framework and methods) 3 evaluation evidence summary reports Presentations/briefings as required
3: Evaluations of UN key transition initiatives		Inception notes Country level data collection – including in-person visits 2 final evaluation reports (Joint SDG Fund & TBC) – with recommendations Presentations/briefings as required

4: Final analysis / reporting	Q4 2026 – Q1 2027	Analysis workshops (internal) Learning/recommendations workshops (external) Draft final report (and comments process) Final Report issuance to UNSDG
5: Dissemination	Q1-Q3 2027	Final report editing/design/publication Management response Dissemination activities

Figure 3 Graphic representation of modules in scope for secondary bidding by LTA firms



48. Word limits for final deliverables in each module will be discussed and agreed during the Inception Phase of the evaluation.

5.2. Evaluation management and governance

49. **Management:** The evaluation will be managed by the UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Office under the supervision of the Executive Director. SWEO will appoint an Evaluation Manager for the evaluation, who will also serve as an integral member of the evaluation team itself. The Executive Director and the Manager will be supported in their roles by an inter-agency Evaluation Management Group with a quality assurance and advisory role composed of Senior Evaluation Officers from UNSDG member evaluation functions. SWEO will invite UNSDG evaluation functions to nominate Senior Evaluation Officers (or equivalents) to participate in the management group³⁴. UNSDG entities that have a leading role in the key transitions on which the evaluation will focus (and development financing) are encouraged to participate in the management group.

50. **UN system reference group(s):** Given the modular and multi-sectoral nature of the evaluation, a two-tiered reference group structure will be used to engage UN entity subject matter experts in the evaluation process. The UNSDG Programme Development and Results Group (PDR) will be briefed and invited to feedback on the overall evaluation process at key intervals. For more in depth and

³⁴ The Food Systems Coordination Hub Evaluation will retain a previously agreed reference group and evaluation management group respectively representing participating agencies and evaluation offices. See Annex 1 for details.

technical discussions in specific transition areas in focus (energy, social protection, digital connectivity, SDG financing), smaller and more specialised sub-reference groups will be convened to engage in the relevant evidence summaries and/or specific evaluations of transition initiatives.

51. **External/independent advice:** Independent expert advisory groups may be formed by SWEO to provide advice and peer review in specific transition (or engine room) modules. These would be composed of a small number of individuals with extensive research or professional experience in the key transition areas and/or UN development system coordination and reform issues, who are currently fully independent of the UN system.
52. See Annex 6 for SWEO's standard/template Terms of Reference for members of Evaluation Management Groups, Reference Groups and Advisory Groups.

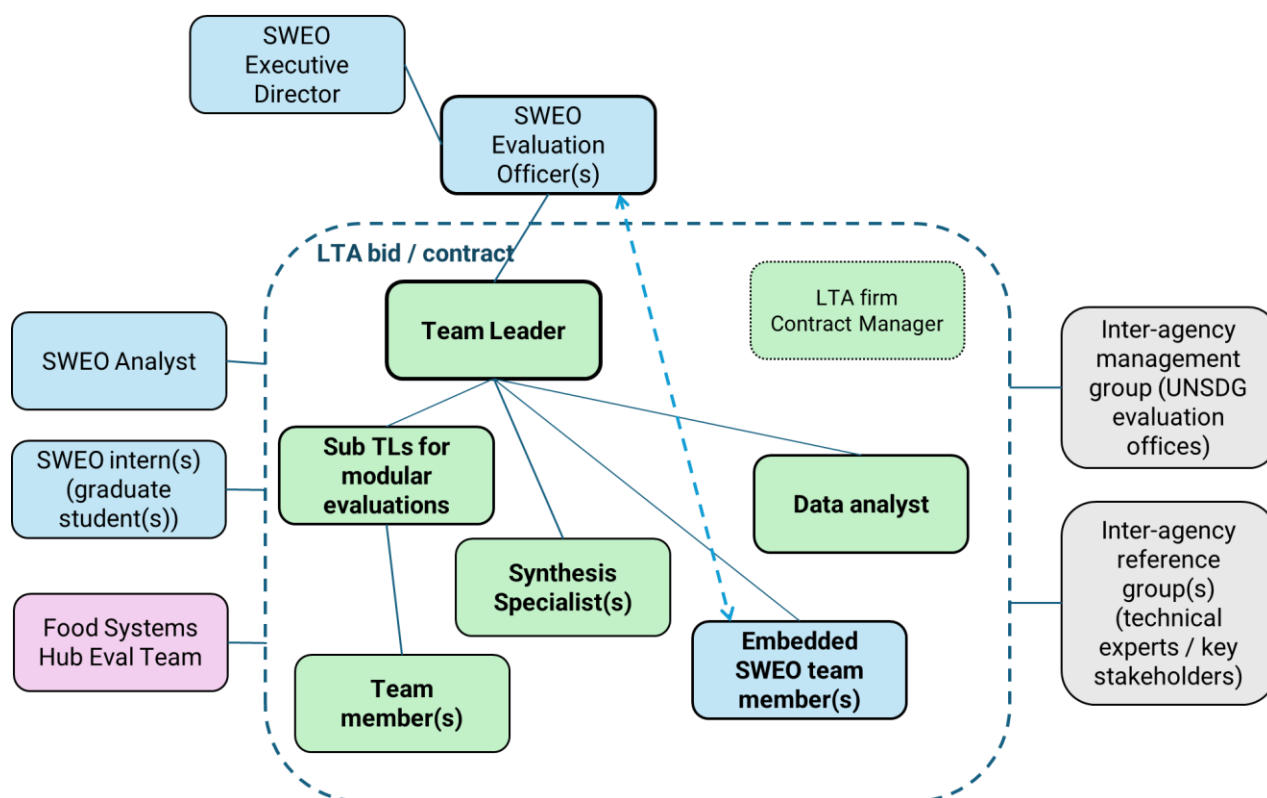
5.3. Evaluation team composition

53. Given its modular approach, the evaluation team will require "core" members that provide inputs across various modules and have responsibility for comparative and cross-cutting elements supplemented by team members that deliver within particular evidence modules.
54. The SWEO Evaluation Manager will also serve as an integral member of the core team, supporting the Team Leader in ensuring that modules enable comparative analysis and strategic, UN system-level learning. SWEO will also appoint a Research Analyst to provide research, organizational and logistical support throughout the evaluation. The Research Analyst may also be supported by graduate interns. Figure 4 provides an indicative illustration of the relationships and reporting lines between LTA firm team members and SWEO staff.
55. LTA firm team members will include a Team Leader, with overall responsibility for the technical leadership of the evaluation, in particular the production of the cross-cutting elements, comparative analysis and final reporting. The Team Leader and SWEO core team members will be supported by additional evaluation or thematic experts as appropriate to deliver different evidence modules. The positions included in the evaluation team by the LTA firm must match the roles and descriptions included in the **Long-Term Agreement (RFPS-3100006378 – Provision of Evaluation Services for OCHA and SWEO), Annex B – Terms of Reference, Table 5 – Requirements for each role (Lot 3)**. As an example, the Team Leader position requires a minimum of 10 years of experience in evaluation and experience of leading complex, strategic-level, multi-sectoral or mixed-method evaluations involving multi-disciplinary teams
56. The mix of skills/experience required within the overall team includes:
 - *Evaluation experience:* the Team Leader should have extensive experience leading/conducting complex, strategic-level, mixed-method evaluations in the UN/multilateral system. Other team members should have experience in complex/strategic evaluations of development cooperation, with UN evaluation experience being desirable.
 - *Technical/thematic knowledge:* collectively, the team will have relevant technical and thematic knowledge covering key transition areas, with priority to those proposed for syntheses and modular evaluations of transition initiatives (e.g. clean energy transition, jobs/social protection, digital connectivity). Team members should collectively bring knowledge and expertise in systems-thinking, development financing, private sector development and investment approaches. At least one member of the team should have deep technical knowledge in the area of development financing.

- *Analysis skills*: the team will require a mix of qualitative and quantitative analysis skills typically associated with mixed-methods evaluation. Skills/experience in evaluation synthesis methods and evaluability assessment will be of particular importance. Skills in artificial intelligence and machine learning for qualitative research and analysis are desirable. At least one team member should have quantitative analysis skills and experience in development financing/funding analysis.
- *Institutional knowledge*: knowledge and experience within the UN system and an understanding of UN development planning and coordination approaches, UN reforms, governance structures will be required within the team
- *Geographic experience*: the team should include diverse backgrounds and diverse geographic experience across different contexts in which the UN development system works (including LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS and middle-income countries)
- *Cross cutting issues*: team members should have an understanding of cross-cutting issues (gender, human rights, disability) and experience in mainstreaming in evaluations

57. An indicative breakdown of team members required by evaluation element/module by “LTA function category” and estimated number of days is provided in section 5.6.
58. The technical offer template provided to bidding LTA firms includes table formats for the presentation of the roles and suitability of the proposed team members.

Figure 4 Indicative organigram to illustrate relationships between LTA firm team members and SWEO staff³⁵



5.4. Communication, dissemination and follow up

59. The Evaluation Manager will prepare a communication plan for the evaluation, in consultation with the Evaluation Management Group. Feedback will also be sought from the Evaluation Reference Group(s). It will outline how evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations will be disseminated to all relevant audiences, through what channels and with what products.

60. The evaluation team will be responsible for delivering or supporting presentations, as requested, including inter alia:

- Exit briefings to the Resident Coordinator Office and UNCT following in-person data collection missions
- Presentations of emerging findings to the UNSDG Principals or other interagency bodies (if requested, prior to finalisation of deliverables)
- Presentations of the final, published reports to UN fora

61. A summary of the Terms of Reference and the Final Evaluation Report (including any supplementary products identified as necessary in the communication plan) will be made publicly available. Evaluation modules will also be released as standalone publications as appropriate.

62. The recommendations of the evaluation will be addressed through a formal Management Response. The preparation of the Management Response will be facilitated by the UNSDG

³⁵ Diagram may not represent the actual number of roles – see section 5.6 for team member categories and estimated LoE. The performance of multiple roles by the same individual is possible and encouraged where feasible to facilitate synergy and learning across different modules (e.g. Synthesis Specialist and Sub-TL or Team Member)

Secretariat (DCO) for final approval by the Chair of the UNSDG, in consultation with UNSDG Principals. Management responses to global system wide evaluations are presented alongside the evaluation report.

5.5. Security considerations

63. As an independent supplier of evaluation services to the United Nations, the contracted firm will be responsible for ensuring the security of the evaluation team and adequate arrangements for evacuation for medical or security reasons.
64. The evaluation team must observe applicable United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) rules including taking security training (BSAFE & SSAFE) and attending in-country security briefings in the case of travel for evaluation data collection.

5.6. Budget

65. The evaluation will be financed by extra-budgetary contributions to the UN Trust Fund in Support of System-Wide Evaluation (32ESW).
66. SWE0 will solicit the submission of technical and financial proposals from firms holding Long Term Agreements for the provision of evaluation services with SWE0 and UN-OCHA. Proposals will include a detailed budget. Following the technical and financial assessment SWE0 may request improved offers from preferred bidders to better respond to the requirements of the ToR. SWE0 may conduct reference checks and interviews with proposed team members.
67. To assist LTA firms in developing realistic and competitive proposals for the delivery of the evaluation, SWE0 has provided an indication of possible categories of team member (LTA function category) and indicative allocations of days for each evaluation element and module. These categories and numbers are indicative and bidders may wish to adjust them to provide a realistic and competitive offer in response to the ToR.
68. The different parts of the evaluation (modules and transversal elements) will be contracted across three Task/Purchase Orders (POs) within the scope of the existing Long Term Agreements. Accordingly, bidding LTA holders should prepare a comprehensive financial offer in three parts. Table 4 details the scope (modules and key deliverables) with indicative timelines.

Table 4 Modules and key deliverables by purchase order

	Purchase Order 1 (Q1-Q3 2026)	PO 2 (Q2-Q3 2026)	PO 3 (Q2-Q1 2027)
Estimated start date	~Feb 2026	~Apr 2026	~May 2026
Modules included	Evaluability/strategic assessment Joint SDG Fund evaluation (Annex 3)	Evidence Summary 1 Evidence Summary 2 Evidence Summary 3	Evaluation of key transition initiative 2 (TBC) Final overarching report

69. Table 5 provides an estimate of number of days for each LTA function category in each module and, as such, each purchase order.

Table 5 Estimated number of days by each LTA function for each module/purchase order

	Team Leader	Senior Evaluator/ Sub TL	Evaluator	Research/ Data analyst	Synthesis Specialist
Inception note	15	10		10	
Evaluability/Strategic Assessment	45	40	-	40	-
Joint SDG Fund evaluation (Annex 3)	5	70	70	55	-
Total PO 1	65	120	70	105	0
Evidence Summary 1	2	-	-	-	35
Evidence Summary 2	2	-	-	-	35
Evidence Summary 3	2	-	-	-	35
Total PO 2	6	0	0	0	105
Key transition initiative evaluation 2	5	48	48	48	-
Final report & dissemination	55	55	-	-	-
Total PO 3	60	103	48	48	0

70. LTA firms are reminded that while the Evaluation of the Food Systems Coordination Hub (Annex 1) and the Learning Exercise on Cooperation Framework Evaluations (Annex 2) are excluded from the scope work to be undertaken, the contracted firm will be expected to collaborate closely with SWE0 staff and consultants undertaking these ongoing modules – interactions will be facilitated by the Evaluation Manager. To provide visibility on the ongoing work Annex 1 and Annex 2 provide a ToR and overview.
71. The evaluation will include travel for data collection and stakeholder engagement. SWE0 estimates that within the scope of the two evaluation of key transitions initiatives (Joint SDG Fund & TBC) data collection travel to up to 6 programme country settings and to UN HQ locations (primarily New York) will be required. LTA firms should not, however, preparing travel cost estimates in their commercial offers in response to this ToR. Rather, at the issuance of a Purchase Order, up to 20% to the value will be added as a lump sum for travel. This will be used to reimburse approved actual travel costs (flights and DSA) upon presentation of proof expenditure with invoices for raised at completion of deliverables.

Annex 1: Evaluation of the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub – TOR

UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) Follow Up: Joint Evaluation of Food Systems Coordination Hub

Terms of Reference (November 2025)

Introduction

1. The United Nations Sustainable Development Group System-Wide Evaluation Office (UNSDG SWEO – hereafter SWEO) is responsible for the provision of independent evaluation evidence to strengthen learning, transparency, and accountability, to incentivize joint work and collective learning, and to conduct system-wide evaluations and advance evidence on the United Nations development system's contribution towards achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.
2. To ensure independence, impartiality, and credibility, SWEO is a standalone independent office within the United Nations Secretariat. It provides leadership and strategic guidance for the system-wide evaluation function in accordance with the [UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Policy](#). SWEO is led by the [Executive Director](#), reporting directly to the Secretary-General, but exercising operational independence in the performance of the evaluation function. SWEO reports to UN Member States through an Annual Report of the Executive Director, presented to the [Operational Activities Segment of the Economic and Social Council](#) since 2025 (in accordance with General Assembly resolution 79/226 on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review).
3. System-wide evaluation is the systematic and impartial assessment of the results and performance of the United Nations development system to provide integrated and comprehensive support to address the challenges of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the SDGs. Independent system-wide evaluations are focused on collective development results and performance of UNSDG entities that cannot be adequately addressed through existing accountability mechanisms. Independent system-wide evaluations are distinguished from other types of joint and inter-agency evaluations undertaken by two or more United Nations entities, because they encompass the entirety of the United Nations system. UNSDG system-wide evaluations are not expected to evaluate the performance of individual entities. As with all evaluations, the purpose of UNSDG system-wide evaluation is to promote accountability and learning. The evaluations should provide credible, useful, evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of their findings, recommendations and learning into the decision-making processes of the United Nations development system.
4. These Terms of Reference (ToR) are for the **Joint Evaluation of the Food Systems Coordination Hub**. They define the purpose, scope and objectives of the proposed evaluation of the Food Systems Coordination Hub. It also sets out the key evaluation questions, the methodology, implementation arrangements and governance mechanisms. They have been prepared by the Evaluation Management Group and based upon an initial document review and consultation with UN food systems stakeholders.

Context

5. At the mid-point between 2015 and 2030, a large majority of SDG targets were off track, with some showing no movement or regression against their 2015 baseline. In this context, there is convergence on the need to identify and pursue *transformative* or *accelerating* actions that can have catalytic and multiplier effects across the SDGs. Member States called for “bold, ambitious, accelerated, just and transformative actions, anchored in international solidarity and effective cooperation at all levels” in the 2023 SDG Summit Political Declaration ([A/RES/78/1](#)).

6. The UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) has committed to an operational shift that embraces a systems approach with a focus on key transitions. The [key transitions set out](#) include: (i) food systems; (ii) energy access and affordability; (iii) digital connectivity; (iv) education; (v) jobs and social protection; and (vi) climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. The approach calls for UN delivery of “engine room actions” to support key transitions by addressing common bottlenecks, including: (i) shifts across policy and regulatory frameworks, (ii) pipelines of bankable/market ready national initiatives (involving public and private sector); (iii) convening to attract the required financing mix; and (iv) capacity building at scale to reinforce and sustain investments. The concept implies a shift in the UN country team offer to: embrace systems-thinking and integrated approaches; focus UN efforts on a wider ecosystem of actors to create the enabling environment for key transitions; and better leverage UN roles in convening; normative agendas; policy advice; capacity building; and financing, as opposed to sector-based interventions and project implementation. At the global level, the Joint SDG Fund has been positioned as the UN’s flagship financing mechanism to support this approach.
7. This operational shift is exemplified by UN follow up to the 2021 Food Systems Summit (UNFSS), which was convened by the Secretary-General to position food systems as a driving force for accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To foster continued political commitment and accountability, the Secretary-General committed to convening a global stocktaking every two years and established the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub to convene, stimulate, and support action for food systems transformations.
8. UNSDG Principals have requested that SWEO consider options for *‘an initial evaluation to assess how the UN development system’s approach to the transitions is set up to support SDG acceleration, with a view to informing any future system-wide evaluations focused on achievements and results for the SDGs’* in the run up to 2030. SWEO will conduct an overall evaluation on the “key transitions” using a **modular approach** beginning in 2025-2027 and including various elements of analysis, to be released as shorter, **standalone evidence products** during the evaluation period, culminating in a **final report** to be released in time to inform preparations for the 2027 SDG Summit (Q1 2027). This will include selected standalone evaluations of system-wide initiatives that support key transitions within a common analytical framework, such as the [Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions](#), specific [Joint SDG Fund windows](#), and [Integrated National Financing Frameworks \(INFFs\)](#) and the [Food Systems Coordination Hub](#) (“the Hub”).
9. In parallel, a Joint Evaluation of the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub was requested by the Oversight Steering Group as part of the Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) process to assess the effectiveness of the Hub, particularly focusing on its work, partnership and coordination mechanisms, and to provide actionable recommendations for improvement. The results of the evaluation are intended to inform the follow up to the UNFSS+4 which took place in Ethiopia in July 2025. While responding directly to the OSG request, the evaluation of the [Food Systems Coordination Hub](#) will also represent the first of the standalone modular evaluations envisaged under the broader system-wide evaluation.
10. However, it is important to emphasize that the evaluation of the Food Systems Coordination Hub remains a standalone exercise for the consideration of the Oversight Steering Group. In addition, to maximise the utility of the evaluation and for the efficient use of resources, the evaluation will also contribute system-wide learning in the context of the broader evaluation on the UN development system’s support to key transitions for SDG acceleration.

11. The evaluation will be based on these Terms of Reference and will commence in Q4 2025 to inform the follow up to the UNFSS+4 and to contribute to broader learning on the UN development system's approach to SDG acceleration.

Evaluation subject

12. The UN Food Systems Coordination Hub (the Hub), established at the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS), fulfills a commitment by the UN Secretary-General to accelerate food systems transformation. Its vision is to convene, stimulate, and support action for food systems transformations aimed at accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Its **mission** is to **serve countries through systemic, country-driven, customized support in translating their commitments into effective actions to reach sustainable food systems by 2030**, leveraging the wider UN system's capacities.
13. The Hub is hosted by FAO on behalf of the UN system with strategic oversight provided by an Oversight Steering Group comprising the principals of FAO, WFP, IFAD, DCO, WHO, and UNDP, alongside the UN Deputy Secretary-General. It functions as a coordination mechanism rather than an implementing entity, organizing its work into five clusters to ensure integrated support: Landing the Vision, Policy and Governance, Science and Knowledge, Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration, and Finance and Investment.

Figure 5 – Five Coordination Clusters of Work



Source: Biennial Work Plan 2024 – 2026

14. The Hub exemplifies a new approach to UN system support for food systems transition, one of support to key transitions that have potential to fast-track SDG achievement, based on coordination, convening and partnership building. This structure—comprising National Convenors, the Hub, coalitions, and targeted funding—positions the food systems transition as a model for global SDG acceleration efforts.
15. Coordination extends across UN Country Teams, Resident Coordinators, and a broad Ecosystem of Support that includes coalitions, scientific networks, international financial institutions, and private sector actors. Intended beneficiaries range from national governments, particularly in low- and

middle-income countries, to smallholder farmers, agri-food enterprises, women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples, who benefit from improved governance, financing solutions, and inclusive participation in food systems transformation.

16. Officially operational from May 2022, the Hub began with a team of six staff and an initial grant of \$250,000 from FAO. Over two years, it expanded to 26 personnel (including secondments from the participating entities) and contributed to the mobilization of nearly \$40 million, including \$20 million for the Joint SDG Fund's Food Systems Window. The Hub now operates with a \$10.86 million budget and supports food systems pathways in 66 countries through coordinated efforts with UN Resident Coordinators (UNRCs) and Rome-based agency (RBA) country offices.
17. The Hub has five fully funded projects backed by donors, including Germany, the Netherlands, and the EU, directly supporting 32 countries, with an additional 16 in its pipeline. It also assists 18 countries under the Joint SDG Fund projects. A cornerstone of the Hub is the National Food Systems Convenors Network, which integrates food systems pathways into national development frameworks to accelerate SDG progress.
18. The work of the Hub is guided by biennial work plans. A **first work plan** was developed by the Hub covering the timeframe between the its launch in April 2022 until the first stocktaking moment on Food Systems Transformation in 2023 (UNFSS+2). The workplan identified six functions that should contribute to support countries to step up their food systems transformation: i) facilitate implementation of national pathways; ii) strengthen strategic thought leadership; iii) engage an ecosystem of support; iv) leverage means of implementation; v) communicate and advocate a food systems approach; and vi) prepare for the 2023 Stocktaking Moment.
19. A **second work plan** covers the period April 2024 to March 2026. The document specifies that the new work plan is structured along an evolving version of the six key functions adopted by the 2022 workplan but recomposed into five coordination clusters with related outcomes. These are: i) sustain global momentum on food systems transformation (**landing the vision** which is the overarching cluster); ii) customized support for the effective operationalization and implementation of national pathways (**policy and governance** cluster); iii) scale evidence-based action for food systems transformation (**science and knowledge** cluster); iv) spearhead innovative partnership and collaborations as catalysts for bottom-up transformation (**strategic partnerships and collaboration** cluster); v) support countries move the needle on the level and quality of financing for food systems transformation by: i) leveraging domestic public spending, private investments, and concessional financing; (ii) enabling access to financing analytics and budgeting tools (**finance and investment** cluster).
20. As noted above, to foster continued political commitment and accountability, the UN Secretary-General committed to convening **global stocktaking moments** every two years from the Food Systems Summit (2021) onwards. The first stocktaking moment (UNFSS+2) was held in Rome in 2023. The second (UNFSS+4) was held in Addis Ababa in July 2025. These events are organized by the Hub with the objective of reflecting on progress, strengthening partnerships and tracking commitments, and unlocking new investments.
21. For clarity, the subject of the evaluation is the Food Systems Coordination Hub in its entirety as a new mechanism within the UN system and global food systems landscape. This includes the work of the Hub as guided by its workplans, its oversight/governance/advisory mechanisms, engagement by its participating entities, partnerships with other actors, situated within the complex and evolving context in which it functions.

Scope, Objectives and Key Evaluation Questions

22. **Purpose:** The evaluation has been commissioned at the request of the Food Systems Coordination Hub Principals (Oversight Steering Group). The evaluation report findings and recommendations are intended to inform the follow up to the UNFSS+4 and contribute to broader learning on the UN development system's approach to SDG acceleration.
23. **Objective:** To conduct an evaluation of the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub, evaluating its coherence, effectiveness and efficiency, and to provide actionable recommendations for improved UN food systems coordination, as well as broader lessons on the UN system's contributions to SDG acceleration.
24. **Scope:** The evaluation will assess the work of the Hub from its establishment in 2022 to 2026. Specifically, it will assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the first action plan 2022 – 2023, and the likelihood of delivering the second action plan (April 2024 – March 2026). The adequacy and sustainability of the Hub's resources (financial, human and technical) and its institutional arrangements (governance, management, and partnership structures) and coordination mechanisms in supporting the Hub's delivery of objectives and goals will be a key part of the evaluation. Considering that a new Hub workplan for 2026 onwards will be developed in parallel, the evaluation will adopt a forward-looking perspective to improve performance and to inform any necessary adjustments to operational models.³⁶
25. **Evaluation Questions:** a set of evaluation questions has been identified by the Evaluation Management Group during the preparatory phase and is reported in the table below. The table reflects the evaluation criteria covered by the questions. The questions will be further developed during the inception phase by the evaluation team through a consultative process, including the elaboration of more detailed sub-questions and indicators in an Evaluation Matrix.

Evaluation Questions (EQ)	Evaluation Criteria			
	Relevance	Efficiency	Coherence	Effectiveness
1. To what extent is the model of the Food Systems Coordination Hub, including its financial, human, technical resources and institutional arrangements, appropriate considering its mission and vision?	X	X		
2. To what extent has the Food Systems Coordination Hub..				
a) leveraged UN system expertise and resources; and b) convened and engaged with external actors			X	X

1. ³⁶ The Hub plays a key role in the Joint SDG Fund's Food Systems Transformation Window. If the Joint SDG Fund is to fall into the scope of the wider evaluation on UN development system support to transitions, overlap/duplication with the present evaluation will need to be considered and managed.

...to support countries in translating their commitments into sustainable food systems transformation?				
3. To what extent has the Food Systems Coordination Hub contributed to sustainable food systems transformation at country level to date?				X

26. Across all evaluation questions, the evaluation will seek to identify internal and external factors that have enabled or constrained progress in the Hub's achievement of its objectives and contribution to outcomes. Connections between evaluation questions and sub questions and a reconstructed Theory of Change for the Hub's work will enable this analysis.

Methodology

27. **The evaluation will adopt a theory-based approach.** A Theory of Change will be developed at the beginning of the exercise which should contribute to clarifying the scope of the evaluation. It will be based on documents available on the Hub's vision and mission, workplans and other relevant documents. The Theory of Change will be validated in consultation with key stakeholders in the Hub (Evaluation Reference Group). The evaluation will base its assessment causal pathways between Hub activities and outcomes identified in the Theory of Change. A theory-based approach is considered useful as it will allow the evaluation to take into account the evolution of the Hub's outcomes. It will also enable the assessment of key internal and external factors that have enabled or hindered the work of the Hub. A set of internal and external assumptions will be developed as part of the Theory of Change, which will be reflected in the evaluation matrix.
28. **The evaluation will adopt a utilization focused approach.** With a strong focus on utilization, the approach of the evaluation will concentrate on engaging with the principal users of the evaluation process and report, focusing on utilization and use of the findings and recommendations by all key stakeholders.
29. **Primary users** are signatory entities at the global level while secondary users will be UN Resident Coordinators and National Food Systems Convenors Network at country level, representatives at sub-regional and national level and, as far as possible, key stakeholders including implementing partners and civil society. A further key stakeholder and user is the Joint SDG Fund. The evaluation will also provide learning on SDG acceleration to the broader UN development system.
30. **The evaluation will adopt a mixed methods approach.** The main data collection methods foreseen will be the following:
- Document review** related to the UNFSS, UNFSS+2 and UNFSS+4 (including reports, national pathways, project documents and other relevant documents) to better understand the context and the work of the Hub with specific focus on the two Hub's workplans, existing documents on the process followed to identify priorities, and on results achieved so far.
 - Stakeholder consultations.** The data collection will be based on in-depth key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Given the limited time available and the need to ensure process efficiency, particular attention will be placed on identifying key stakeholders to be interviewed (based on a sampling strategy/rationale to be developed in the Inception Phase). Individual interviews and focus group discussions will include both internal and external stakeholders and will gather views at both global and country level. Specific

interview guides tailored to different stakeholders will be developed to ensure coverage of the evaluation questions and sub-questions identified in the evaluation matrix.

- iii) A **comparative assessment** of the Food Systems Coordination Hub with other UN system coordination approaches or mechanisms (for example, the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions) may also be conducted to identify good practice and contribute to learning (but not for the purpose of performance benchmarking)
- iv) An **e-survey** targeting a broader group of stakeholders

31. **Analysis of the data collected** will be conducted throughout the whole evaluation process. The evaluation team will ensure robust triangulation of information across different sources and methods. Information collected will be mapped against the evaluation questions and sub-questions. The team will proceed with the analysis and synthesis to formulate key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

32. **User engagement:** The evaluation process and recommendations are intended to trigger ownership mainly at headquarters level. The evaluation management group will establish how the evaluation will engage with the key users.

Evaluation Process

33. The evaluation will be organized around five main phases:

- **Phase 1 - Planning and preparation.** The preparatory phase will be led by the management group and will consist in defining the scope, objectives and expected outcomes for the exercise including the key evaluation questions. It will include the preparation of TORs for the exercise, the identification and recruitment of the evaluation team, the development of the timeline and deliverables for each phase of the evaluation. The preparatory phase will also be instrumental for collecting background documents necessary to the work of the evaluation team.
- **Phase 2 – Inception.** The evaluation team in consultation with the Hub and based on desk review will refine the scope of the evaluation. The team will develop a brief inception note clarifying the scope and approach of the evaluation. The note will include a brief description of the subject, the theory of change and related assumptions, the evaluation matrix with detailed questions and sub-questions specifying sources of information, methods of collection and sampling strategies. This phase will also comprise the identification/analysis of key stakeholders, including UN staff, governments, NGOs and private sector to be involved during the data collection at global and country level through interviews, surveys, and consultations.
- **Phase 3 - Data collection, analysis and reporting.** At the end of the data collection, the team will proceed with the analysis and synthesis of information and evidence collected. Information will be triangulated using different sources. Preliminary findings will be presented (with a PowerPoint presentation) and discussed with the reference group at the end of the data collection. The evaluation will prepare a draft report detailing the findings, conclusions, and recommendations which will be submitted to the management group for quality assurance. The draft report will be shared with the evaluation reference group for comments.
- **Phase 4 – Finalization and dissemination.** The evaluation team will address comments received and proceed with the finalization of the report, which will be cleared by the management group. Following the finalization, the management group will be responsible for disseminating the final report to relevant stakeholders and publishing it on appropriate platforms.

- **Phase 5 – Management response and follow up.** A management response will be prepared, and a follow-up plan will be defined to monitor the implementation of recommendations and ensure continuous improvement of the UNFSS process and the work of the Hub.

Quality assurance and assessment

34. Quality assurance will take place throughout the evaluation process at all levels. The key features of quality assurance are:
- Adherence to UNEG Norms and Standards
 - Establishment of evaluation management and evaluation reference groups to review the evaluation products
 - Recruitment of evaluators, based on proof of qualifications, skills, and experience
35. The evaluation team, under the leadership of the Team Leader will have primary responsibility for quality assurance subject to the guidance of the Evaluation Management Group.
36. The quality assurance process does not interfere with the views or independence of the evaluation team but ensures that the report provides credible evidence and analysis in a clear and convincing way and draws its conclusions on that basis.

Roles and Responsibilities

37. **Management Group:** The evaluation will be jointly managed and coordinated by the four main participating entity evaluation offices: FAO, IFAD, WFP and WHO together with the UNSDG System Wide Evaluation Office. The management group will meet regularly during the evaluation process, share decision making and provide sign-off on evaluation deliverables. To facilitate the Management Group, the UNSDG System Wide Evaluation Office will act as chair of the group, however, decisions will be taken by consensus. Specific terms of reference will guide the management group (see annex 1-A). Key responsibilities will include:
- Hiring consultants to support the evaluation
 - Reviewing the inception note
 - Convening reference group meetings
 - Compiling background information
 - Facilitating key informant interviews in the respective organizations
 - Reviewing the draft evaluation report and general quality assurance throughout the exercise
 - Supporting communication, dissemination and use of the evaluation
38. **Reference Group:** To enhance utilization and dissemination of the evaluation, a Reference Group will be formed with key representatives from the FSH entities and the Hub and others as relevant. The Reference Group will allow for engagement of key stakeholders in the evaluation process and support dissemination of the evaluation results. Specific terms of reference will guide the reference group (see annex 1-B). The Reference Group will be responsible for:
- Engaging in discussions to help finalize the evaluation scope.
 - Reviewing and providing comments on key documents, including the draft ToR, inception note and the evaluation draft.
 - Communicating and disseminating the evaluation results.

39. **Expert Advisory Group:** An advisory group will be formed and engaged at various stages of the evaluation process to provide thought leadership and external viewpoints (e.g. on evaluation design, as external key informants during data collection). It will be composed of individuals with extensive research or professional experience in relevant food systems and UN development system coordination and reform issues, who are (currently) fully independent from the UN system. Specific terms of reference will guide the expert advisory group (see annex 1-C).
40. **Evaluation Team:** The independent evaluation team will comprise a senior evaluation expert (designated Team Leader), evaluator, a thematic specialist and an evaluation analyst. The skill mix should include technical expertise in sustainable food systems, development finance /economics, institutional development/ governance/ organizational strategy and a good understanding of the United Nations system, the UN reform agenda and working knowledge of the Food system entities.
41. The evaluation team will lead the preparation of the inception note, the data collection including desk review, online key informant interviews and focus group discussions, and the possible conduct of an e-survey. The team will analyze data collected, prepare and deliver the presentation of preliminary results, and draft the evaluation report incorporating inputs from the management group. The evaluation team will be responsible for finalizing the draft report by addressing comments provided by the reference group.
42. The Team Leader is responsible for the overall conduct of the evaluation in accordance with the ToR, including: refining the evaluation approach and methodology, as described above and in consultation with the Management Group; technical management of the Evaluation Team, ensuring efficient division of tasks between team members and taking responsibility for the quality of their work; representing the Evaluation Team in meetings; ensuring the quality of all outputs; and submitting all deliverables in a timely manner. The Team Leader will have no fewer than 15 years of professional experience in the international development sector (UN, bilateral agencies/donors, IFIs, INGOs), and previous experience as Team Leader for evaluations of UN entities at both country and global level.

Timeline

43. The indicative timeline of the evaluation is presented in the table below.

Phase	Dates	Activity	Deliverables
Phase I – Planning and preparation	August – October 2025	Clarification on evaluation scope, objectives and expected outcomes Identification and recruitment of the evaluation team Document gathering	Overall TORs for the evaluation Team in place
Phase 2 - Inception	November – December 2025	Scoping Development of the ToC, evaluation framework Stakeholder mapping	Inception note

Phase 3 – Data collection, analysis and reporting	December 2025 – March 2026	Interviews with Key Informants Online Focus Group Discussions E-survey Presentation of preliminary results Draft report shared for comments	PPT on preliminary findings Draft report
Phase 4 – Finalization and dissemination	April-May 2026	Finalization of the evaluation report and dissemination	Final report
Phase 5 – Management response and follow up	May 2026 onwards	Preparation of the management response 12 month follow up	Management response Follow up report

Communication

44. Transparent and open communication is essential for the credibility of the evaluation. The Evaluation Management Group will disseminate information related to the evaluation and organize stakeholder briefings/consultations at critical points of the evaluation, for example, during the inception phase and debriefings to discuss draft evaluation findings and emerging conclusions and recommendations.

Budget

45. The evaluation will be financed through contributions from the Food Systems Coordination Hub.

Annex 2: Cooperation Framework evaluation learning exercise

1. The reform of the UN development system (A/RES/72/279 and subsequent resolutions on the QCPR) positioned the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (replacing the UN Development Assistance Framework – UNDAF) as the most important planning and implementation instrument for the UN system at the country level. Accordingly, evaluation of the Cooperation Framework in the penultimate year of its implementation is an integral part of the Cooperation Framework cycle. The evaluations are conducted in accordance with the guidelines for Cooperation Framework evaluations developed by the United Nations Evaluation Group and the Development Coordination Office in 2021. Their purpose is to assess the contribution of United Nations country teams to national development results and progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, and to inform the design of subsequent Cooperation Framework cycles.
2. Cooperation Framework evaluations are system-wide, but decentralised. They are commissioned and managed at the country level under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, in collaboration with the United Nations country team. The Development Coordination Office, at headquarters in New York, provides quality assurance to facilitate and support the conduct of independent, timely and useful Cooperation Framework evaluations. In line with the UNSDG System-wide Evaluation Policy, SWEO advises DCO on models and guidance for the system-wide evaluation function at the country and regional levels, including on the design and operationalization of evaluation quality assurance systems, in order to support credible Cooperation Framework evaluations.
3. By 2025, some 35+ Cooperation Framework evaluations had been undertaken. But the quality and use of Cooperation Framework evaluations is generally understood as being sub-optimal due to limited financial resources and their broad scope and complexity, among other factors. There is limited evidence that the evaluations have informed the design of subsequent Cooperation Frameworks, mainly due to issues with their timeliness and quality, and the level of ownership of the evaluation process and recommendations by the Resident Coordinator and United Nations country team. Although management responses are usually produced, they are not always publicly available, and accountability for acting on recommendations is weak.
4. As the UNSDG begins a review and reconceptualization of the whole of the Cooperation Framework guidance (all phases), in response to the recommendations of the System-wide evaluation on progress towards and new generation of UNCTs and in the context of the UN80 Initiative, the time is optimal for a review of Cooperation Framework evaluations completed to date.
5. Therefore, SWEO is undertaking a learning exercise on Cooperation Framework evaluations between Q4 2025 and Q1 2026. The exercise has two objectives and components:
 - i. **Assess the quality of Cooperation Framework evaluations, to inform recommendations for improved evaluation practice**
 - ii. **Extract and synthesise key lessons and insights from UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Evaluations completed to date (2023-2025)**
6. The first objective, a **meta-evaluation**, aims to answer three key questions:
 - To what extent do CF evaluations meet UNEG norms and standards for evaluation and specific standards for CF evaluations (set out in the CF guidance)?
 - What are the factors that support high quality CF evaluations? Conversely, what factors explain shortfalls in quality?
 - What changes could be made to improve the future quality and use of Cooperation Framework evaluations?

7. The second objective, a **synthesis of evaluation evidence**, aims to extract key findings, lessons, conclusions and recommendations from the growing body of completed Cooperation Framework evaluations. In doing so, the exercise may extract relevant learning on the adoption of system-thinking and transition-supporting approaches at country level, in the six entry point areas and others, and across the four engine room actions. In this regard, the exercise may be complementary to the wider evaluation described in this ToR, both in substance in in methodology.
8. The team undertaking the exercise includes a SWE0 Evaluation Officer and Evaluation Analyst. The selected LTA firm will be expected to collaborate with this team on the analytical frameworks for synthesis, and with a view to learning from and replicating AI-assisted evidence extraction and synthesis techniques in the wider evaluation.
9. UN country teams that have completed a Cooperation Framework evaluation since 2023 are as k

Argentina
Armenia
Azerbaijan
Bahrain
Belarus
Bosnia and Herzegovina
China
Congo
Cote d'Ivoire
Cuba
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Djibouti
Ethiopia
Georgia
Guatemala
Indonesia
Iraq
Kazakhstan
Kosovo team (SC resolution 1244)
Malaysia
Mali
Mexico
North Macedonia
Panama
Paraguay
Rwanda
Serbia
Sierra Leone
Somalia
Timor-Leste
Tunisia
Türkiye
Turkmenistan
Uganda
Uruguay
Uzbekistan

Annex 3: Evaluation of the Joint SDG Fund (2022-2026)– Concept Note

Context

1. At the SDG Summit in September 2023, Member States called for “bold, ambitious, accelerated, just and transformative actions, anchored in international solidarity and effective cooperation at all levels” and pledged “to fully support the UN development system, including the RC system and the Joint SDG Fund, to deliver better in support of programme countries and their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs” ([A/RES/78/1](#)).
2. In response to this call, the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) has committed to an operational shift that embraces a systems approach with a focus on key transitions that can have catalytic and multiplier effects across the SDGs. The [key transitions set out](#) in 2023 included: (i) food systems; (ii) energy access and affordability; (iii) digital connectivity; (iv) education; (v) jobs and social protection (including health); and (vi) climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. The approach calls for UN delivery of “engine room actions” to support key transitions by addressing common bottlenecks, including: (i) shifts across policy and regulatory frameworks, (ii) pipelines of bankable/market ready national initiatives (involving public and private sector); (iii) convening to attract the required financing mix; and (iv) capacity building at scale to reinforce and sustain investments.
3. The concept implies a shift in the UN country team offer to: embrace systems-thinking and integrated approaches; focus UN efforts on a wider ecosystem of actors to create the enabling environment for key transitions; and better leverage UN roles in convening; normative agendas; policy advice; capacity building; and financing, as opposed to sector-based interventions and project implementation. In this regard, the key transitions are not a programme, policy or clearly articulated system-wide strategy, rather they are an ‘organizing frame that spotlights critical pathways and investments to accelerate SDG progress’. They are situated within the pre-existing Agenda 2030 and cutting across the SDGs within a crowded landscape of ongoing mandates, commitments and activities.

System-wide evaluation on the UN development system’s support to key transitions for SDG acceleration

4. In 2024, the UNSDG asked SWE0 consider options for ‘*an initial evaluation to assess how the UN development system’s approach to the transitions is set up to support SDG acceleration, with a view to informing any future system-wide evaluations focused on achievements and results for the SDGs*’ in the run up to 2030.
5. In response, SWE0 is undertaking an initial formative, learning-focused evaluation between 2025 and 2027. The evaluation will include various elements of analysis, to be released as standalone evidence products during the evaluation period, culminating in a final report to be released in time to inform preparations for the 2027 SDG Summit (Q1 2027). See Annex 1 for visualization of this modular approach.
6. A core element of this overarching modular design is standalone evaluation of key aspects of the UN development system identified as most explicitly pursuing a “SDG transitions-supporting” approach.

Rationale for a Joint SDG Fund evaluation

7. At the global level, the Joint SDG Fund has been positioned as the UN development system’s flagship joint financing mechanism to support the UNSDG’s operational shift. The Fund’s [Transitional Strategy \(2023-2026\)](#), adopted in late 2023, has a focus on supporting “key transitions”

for SDG acceleration through “engine room actions”. In 2024, the Fund allocated funds across five strategic rounds, including digital transformation, food systems transformation, jobs and social protection, and just energy transition. Previous funding rounds, predating the current strategy, also focused on social protection and supported nationally owned SDG financing through Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs).

8. In line with the [UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Policy \(2024\)](#) evaluations of “pooled funds and joint initiatives, in which United Nations entities are working towards a common objective” are a global system-wide evaluation priority and should be undertaken by SWEO. Periodic independent evaluations that assess the overall performance and progress of the Joint SDG Fund are also foreseen by its [Terms of Reference](#) (updated 2024). The implementation period of the Fund’s current transitional strategy ends in December 2026. As such, 2026 is an optimal time for an independent evaluation that can inform the formulation of the Fund’s next strategy for the period 2027 onwards.
9. A standalone evaluation of the Joint SDG Fund will be complementary to SWEO’s wider evaluative work on the UN development system’s support to key transitions for SDG acceleration. While retaining all the key elements of a standalone evaluation (e.g. management, governance arrangements, standalone report with specific recommendations for the Fund etc.) it will also be considered a key module of the wider evaluation. This positioning will enable wider UN system-wide learning on key mechanisms that support the UN development system’s operationalization of the transitions approach. It may also generate relevant learning related to pooled fund mechanisms in the context of the UN80 Initiative, for example work packages aiming to ensure that pooled funding mechanisms are “simpler, cheaper and more impactful for contributors than fragmented financing” as proposed by SG report on [Workstream 3](#) (September 2025) and [Action Plan](#) (November 2025)
10. A standalone evaluation of the UN Food Systems Coordination Hub will also be conducted, and one further standalone evaluation will be undertaken (TBC) in the context of the wider evaluation on support for key transitions for SDG acceleration.

Purpose, objectives and key users

11. The evaluation of the Joint SDG Fund will have a dual purpose of accountability and learning, with an emphasis on the latter. More specifically, in line with the above rationale, it will have two high level objectives:
 - To provide an independent assessment of the relevance, coherence, efficiency and effectiveness of the Joint SDG Fund, in particular its support for key transitions for SDG acceleration, with learning and recommendations that inform the new strategy of the Fund from 2027 onwards.
 - To contribute to UN system-wide learning on SDG acceleration approaches and the contribution of pooled funding mechanisms to the realization of UN system-wide reforms
12. Specific evaluation questions relating to these objectives will be developed based on preliminary analysis of the evaluation subject, and consultations with evaluation stakeholders and users. These will be detailed in a full Terms of Reference and finalized in an Inception Report.
13. The key stakeholders and primary users of the evaluation will be the Joint SDG Fund Secretariat, Operational Steering Committee, MPTFO, UNSDG entities, Development Coordination Office, Resident Coordinator System and Member States.

Evaluation subject

14. The evaluation subject is the Joint SDG Fund in its entirety, including its governance, strategies and policies, operations, and investments in UN joint programmes. In this regard, all UN system participants in the Joint SDG Fund, including its leadership, secretariat, participating UN organizations (PUNOs) and the UN resident coordinator system are part of the evaluand.
15. Given aforementioned rationale and purpose of the evaluation, a key focus and core reference point for the evaluation will be the 2023-2026 Transitional Strategy of the Fund and its implementation to date. The strategy was informed by experience and lessons learned by the Fund in its first four years as well [as a previous system wide evaluation](#) completed in mid-2022. See Box 1.

Box 1: System-wide evaluation of the Joint SDG Fund (2019-2022)

The 2022 evaluation confirmed that the Fund is a valuable mechanism for advancing the repositioning of the UN development system and promoting joint action, innovation and integrated policy solutions for SDG acceleration, noting that programmes most closely aligned with UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks achieved stronger national ownership and UN system coherence. At the same time, its conclusions and recommendations emphasized a need to:

1. Improve programming by shifting away from an emphasis on “calls for proposals” towards an approach whereby RCs and UNCTs have sufficient time, space and preparatory funding to identify and design more strategic joint programmes in the response to context and national development priorities
2. Clarify and strengthen the Fund’s value proposition to position it as a key mechanism for leveraging UN development system reform and catalyzing SDG acceleration
3. Update the Fund’s governance mechanisms to be more inclusive, agile and to address conflicts of interests in resource allocation
4. Enhance coherence and synergies with other pooled fund secretariats at global and country levels through harmonized guidance and coordinated calls for proposals
5. Strengthen resource mobilization through higher-level UN leadership, improved visibility, active donor engagement, and leveraging of country-level funding to support joint programmes
6. Clarify the role of the Resident Coordinator in steering and coordinating joint programmes in their implementation phase
7. Continue to strengthen Fund monitoring, evaluation, and learning, including by actively monitoring “jointness”, providing quality assurance for decentralized evaluations, and making efforts to measure longer term results as joint programmes mature
8. Consider Fund Secretariat capacity in a more structure way, ensuring capacities are in place to support new approaches and arrangements in the Fund’ next phase.

The evaluation made 8 recommendations to this effect. All these recommendations were accepted by the Joint SDG Fund Secretariat and reported as “implemented” its [2023 Annual Report](#).

16. The 2023-2026 strategy of the Fund explicitly adopts the “key transitions” approach as an organizing frame. It outlines that national level existing investment strategies and diagnostics must be the starting point for the identification of transition pathways through consultation and analysis rather than competitive projectized approaches (section 2). It describes the role of the Fund as “support UNCTs in delivering key engine room actions that are critical in undertaking complex transitions” (section 3). The six key transition areas articulated in 2023 are set out as the Fund’s thematic priorities at the global level, noting that they are themselves interconnected (section 4). The strategy also commits to continued and strengthened mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues in its support to transitions, notably localization, gender equality and youth (section 5). Finally, the strategy details approaches to partnerships, innovation/adaptive management, use of data/evidence (section 6) and the Fund’s resource mobilization strategy (section 7).

17. In the first full calendar year of implementation of the strategy (2024), the Fund invested a total of 90 million USD in 129 joint programmes across 90 countries, typically as 12-month seed grants or larger joint programmes with a 3-year duration. A total of 50 million USD of investment is anticipated for the calendar year of 2025. These 2024 and 2025 investments are allocated within “key transition” windows, summarized in Table 6.

Table 6 Summary of Joint SDG Fund aims and investments to date by key transition area (under the 2023-2026 Transitional Strategy)

Key transition³⁷	Intention of 2023-2026 strategy and investments to date
Food systems	The 2023-26 strategy aims to build on the Food Systems Summit momentum and support networks of National Conveners, national food systems transformation pathways and the “global ecosystem of support”. The Food Systems Transformation window launched its first funding round in February 2024, allocating USD 16.7 million plus USD 7.6 million in co-funding across 24 joint programmes. Key donors to the window include Spain, Germany, Ireland and Italy.
Just energy transition	The strategy aims to “promote integrated policy and financing solutions for just and green energy transitions, focusing on renewable energy production, transmission, storage deployment and access, especially for many energy-poor people, which have been left behind”. The Fund’s Just Energy Transition portfolio allocated USD 6.3 million across 25 joint programmes in 2024 in 12-month grants of 250,000 USD to support the UN system wide push for NDCs 3.0 that strengthen collective efforts to enhance countries’ climate commitments while ensuring sustainable energy transitions. The Fund also seeks to connect to and build on national strategies and plans, such as “Just Energy Transition Partnerships” (JETPs).
Digital transformation	The strategy aims to “support promotion of systems change and leverage broader funding for key areas such as government services, digital connectivity, digital financing, e-trade, and digital standards to protect the planet” as well as cross-cutting initiatives to advance digital public goods, digital human rights and digital capacity building. The resulting Digital Transformation Window approved 22 joint programmes in its first funding round (to end of 2024) with a total investment of USD 40.3 million by the Fund in high impact joint programmes (up to USD 3m) and seed funding grants (up to USD 250k).
Jobs and social protection	The strategy aims to support the implementation of the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions launched in 2021, by catalyzing integrated policies for employment and social protection while promoting financing solutions to mobilize domestic and international resources. Its Window on Decent Jobs and Universal Social Protection has provided funding for the Global Accelerator Technical Support Facility and for joint programmes at the country level (with a particular focus on job creation in the green, care and digital economies). ³⁸ By May 2025, the window had designed and approved 23 joint programmes with a total budget of USD 27.7 million (including fund investments and co-funding by partners).

³⁷ The strategy also envisages investments in Transforming Education and Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss and Pollution, however these areas have not been sufficiently capitalised to enable investments to date

³⁸ [Joint SDG Fund Strategy.pdf](#); [Investment Strategy of the Global Accelerator Window .pdf](#)

	The Multistakeholder Engagement to implement the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions and the World Bank Social Protection Compass (M-GA) is a joint mechanism created by the Joint SDG Fund and the World Bank Rapid Social Response Adaptive and Dynamic Social Protection Program (RSR-ADSP) Trust Fund. With support from donor countries, it funds joint UN-World Bank projects that support the implementation of the Accelerator in pathfinder countries. Its first funding round has allocated USD 500,000 grants to 9 pathfinder countries for two year projects beginning in late 2024.
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Scope

18. *Temporal*: the 2023-2026 Transitional Strategy of the Fund and its implementation to date will cover a large portion of the temporal scope of the evaluation. However, noting that the previous system-wide evaluation of the Fund covered the period 2019 to May 2022. The proposed temporal scope for this evaluation is 2022 to 2026.
19. *Thematic/Substantive*: While the evaluation will the 2023-2026 strategy and investments made from 2024 onwards this should not preclude coverage of investments made before the strategy's adoption. Previous investments of the Fund predating the current strategy also aligned closely with a transitions approach, notably with a focus on social protection and SDG financing³⁹.
20. *Geographic*: The geographic scope of the evaluation will be global. Certain data collection methods will require a sampling approach and focus on particular countries, UNCTs and programmes. Country sampling will take account of potential data collection synergies with other modules of the overarching system-wide evaluation on the UN development system's approach to key transitions for SDG acceleration.⁴⁰

Implementation timeframe

21. The evaluation will be conducted over a 6-8 month period during 2026. It must conclude or reach an advanced stage of reporting in sufficient time to inform the formulation of the Joint SDG Fund Strategy from 2027 onwards (Q4 2026), and to provide data and analysis to the overarching system wide evaluation on support to key transitions for SDG acceleration (Q1 2027).

Human and financial resources

22. The evaluation will be led and managed by SWE0. A SWE0 Evaluation Officer will perform the role of evaluation manager/team member under the supervision of the Executive Director. External consultants with the necessary combination of skills and experience covering key transition areas, SDG financing, and strategic evaluation in the United Nations system will be engaged as Team Leader, Team Member(s) and Analyst(s).
23. UNSDG entity evaluation functions will be invited to nominate participants in an Evaluation Management Group to provide methodological support and quality assurance. The existing Operational Steering Committee and its working level group would represent the key users of the evaluation and as such would serve as the Evaluation Reference Group. SWE0 may establish an

³⁹ A previous Joint SDG Fund "Integrated Social Protection portfolio" invested USD 69 million in 35 joint programmes. The Fund also previously supported the development of INFFs in 80 countries under its "SDG Financing Enabling Portfolio" with a total value of USD 70 million. A further USD 70 million "SDG Financing Catalytic Investment Portfolio" provided design grants and de-risking capital to unblock SDG finance in 10 countries. An evaluation of the enabling portfolio was commissioned in 2024.

⁴⁰ For example, engagement by other transition-supporting initiatives outside of the Fund, or particular adoption of a systems-based approach in Common Country Analysis/Cooperation Framework

informal Expert Advisory Group to provide external expertise and viewpoints to complement the process.

24. The evaluation will be financed by the Joint SDG Fund.

Contact

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Annex 4: Indicative criteria for country sampling

Purposive sampling of countries for primary data collection could be informed by country level participation in key SDG acceleration or transition supporting initiatives, such as those highlighted in section 3.

An initial mapping of country participation/country footprint of the following initiatives has been conducted in the scoping phase of this evaluation:

Food systems	Food Systems Transformation Window (Joint SDG Fund)
	Food Systems Convergence Initiative
Energy access and affordability	Energy Transition window (Joint SDG Fund)
	Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETPs)
Digital connectivity	Digital Public Infrastructure initiative (UNDP/ITU/ODET)
	Digital Transformation window (Joint SDG Fund)
	Giga
Education	Gateways to Public Digital Learning
Jobs & social protection	(M-GA) Multistakeholder Engagement to implement the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions and the World Bank Social Protection Compass
	Global Accelerator (Pathfinder countries)
	Social Protection and Jobs window (Joint SDG Fund)
Climate, change, biodiversity loss and pollution	Early Warnings for All Initiative
	NDC Partnership
	Partnership for Action on the Green Economy
Engine rooms	Financing Portfolio (Joint SDG Fund)
	INFF Facility
	Local2030 (Joint SDG Fund Localization window)
	Power of Data
	Technology Bank for the LDCs

This mapping, while non-exhaustive, showed density of global SDG acceleration initiatives in certain countries, as follows:

Country / UNCT	Number of active listed SDG acceleration initiatives
Indonesia	12
Cambodia	12
Kenya	10
Cabo Verde	10
Rwanda	10
El Salvador	10
Ghana	10
Bangladesh	9
Jordan	9
Malawi	9

The mapping further gives an indication of key donor participants in the initiatives above, which may also inform sampling of key informants:

Country / organisation	Number of listed initiatives to which a donor
Germany	11
Spain	9
Ireland	8



Italy	7
Sweden	7
European Union	7
Belgium	6
Switzerland	6
Republic of Korea	6
Norway	6
Netherlands	6



Annex 5: Mapping of UNSDG Regional Issued Based Coalitions (IBCs)

Region	IBC (or group)	UN co-chairs	No. UNSDG entities	Alignment: 6 transitions / 4 engine rooms									
				Food systems	Energy	Digital	Transforming education	Social protection/jobs	Climate/bio./pollution	Policy/regulatory shifts	Financing	Investment pipelines	Capacity building
Africa	OIBC1 - Strengthened Integrated Data and Statistical Systems for Sustainable Development and Africa We Want	UNECA; UNFPA	14										x
	OIBC2 - Ensuring effective and efficient macroeconomic management and accelerated inclusive, economic transformation and diversification	UNCTAD; UNDP; ECA	7							x	x		x
	OIBC3 - Education, innovation, digitalization, and youth	UNESCO; UNFPA; ILO	13			x	x						
	OIBC4 - Fostering Climate Action and Resilience	UNEP; FAO; UNDP; UNECA	8	x					x				
	OIBC5 - Towards Peace, Security, the Respect of Human Rights, and Forced displacement	UNODC; UNOAU; UNDP; OHCHR; IOM	7										
	OIBC6- Sub-Regional Initiatives and Strategies	SRSBs/Envoys; UNOAU	9										
Arab States	IBC on Food Systems	WFP; FAO	All RCP members (27)	x									
	IBC on Energy Access and Affordability	ESCWA; UNIDO			x								
	IBC on Digital Connectivity	ESCWA; ITU				x							
	IBC on Education	UNESCO; UNICEF					x						
	IBC on Jobs and Social Protection	ILO; UNICEF						x					
	IBC on Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss, and Pollution	UNEP; UNDP							x				
	IBC on Macroeconomic Growth	ESCWA; UNDP									x		
	IBC on Gender Equity	UN Women; ILO											
	IBC on Humanitarian, Peace, and Development Nexus – Recovery and Reconstruction	UNDP; UN Habitat											
	IBC on Data and AI Tools	ESCWA											x
Asia-Pacific	IBC1 Raising Ambitions on Climate Action	ESCAP; UNEP	No data		x				x				
	IBC2 Building Resilience	UNDP; UNDRR							x				
	IBC3 Inclusive Economic Growth and Recovery	UNICEF; UNDP						x			x		
	IBC 4 Promoting Human Rights, Gender Equality and Women Empowerment	OHCHR; UNFPA; UN Women											
	IBC 5 Digital Transformation	ESCAP; ITU; UNESCO				x							
	Regional working group on Food Systems	FAO		x									



Region	IBC (or group)	UN co-chairs	No. UNSDG entities	Alignment: 6 transitions / 4 engine rooms									
				Food systems	Energy	Digital	Transforming education	Social protection/jobs	Climate/bio./pollution	Policy/regulatory shifts	Financing	Investment pipelines	Capacity building
Europe/Central Asia	IBC on Environment and Climate Change	UNEP; UNESCO; UNECE	15						x				
	IBC on Gender Equality	UN Women; UNFPA	11										
	IBC on Health and Well-Being	WHO	14										
	IBC on Large Movements of People, Displacement, and Resilience	IOM; UNDP; UNHCR	12										
	IBC on Social Protection	ILO; UNICEF; UNDP; WHO	9					x					
	IBC on Sustainable Food Systems	FAO; UNICEF; WHO	9	x									
	IBC on Adolescents and Youth	UNFPA; UNICEF	10										
	Regional coordination group on Data and Statistics	UNECE; UNEP	No data										x
	UN Digital Transformation Group for Europe and Central Asia	ITU; UNECE	17			x							
Latin America/Caribbean	IBC on Climate Change & Resilience	UNDRR; UNEP	21						x				
	IBC on Equitable Growth and Financing for Development	UNDP; ECLAC; ILO	15					x			x		
	IBC on Governance for Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	UNOPs; UNDP; UNODC	13										
	IBC on Human Mobility	UNDP; IOM; UNHCR	20										
	Working Group on GEWE	PAHO; UN Women	21										
	Working Group on Populations Left Behind	UNFPA; UNESCO; UN Habitat	11										
	Working Group on Youth	ILO; UNFPA; UNICEF	17										

Annex 6: Management and governance arrangements for system-wide evaluations

This Annex details the typical roles, responsibilities and composition of Evaluation Management Groups, Reference Groups and Expert Advisory Groups for system-wide evaluations. It provides generic Terms of Reference for each group, which may be updated for this system-wide evaluation and/or its modules.

Evaluation Management Group (EMG)

Background

To manage and coordinate the planning and execution of the evaluation, a **Management Group** will be established which includes UNSDG evaluation office representatives. The Management Group will meet regularly during the evaluation process, share decision making and provide sign off on evaluation deliverables. To facilitate the Management Group, the UNSDG System Wide Evaluation Office Executive Director will act as the chair of the group with final authority to approve deliverables. However, decisions will be taken, as far as possible by consensus among the group.

These **Terms of Reference** describe the responsibilities, governance and other details for the Management Group.

Responsibilities

The Management Group provides leadership and coordination of the overall evaluation process across all phases of the evaluation to ensure that evaluation components are completed, within the agreed timeline and of the expected quality. The Management Group will also be responsible for providing expertise and guidance to ensure quality and utility of evaluation deliverables. The management group will work through virtual meetings, electronic exchanges, and reviews.

Planning and strategy

- Identifying commitments to the evaluation process (e.g., staff time, management capacity, and/or financial support).
- Providing feedback on the UNFSS evaluation Terms of Reference.
- Developing consultant TORs and hiring consultants to support the evaluation
- Approving the evaluation budget and workplan.

Management, quality assurance and technical input

- Supporting the compilation of background documentation and providing input into the evaluation process
- Facilitate interviews with key stakeholders in the respective organisations.
- Participating in regular Management Team meetings, workshops and other meetings as required.
- Convening Reference Group meetings.
- Providing guidance to the evaluation team undertaking the day-to-day evaluation work.
- Providing input and quality assurance on key deliverables such as the inception note, PowerPoint presentations, and draft report

Reporting

- Approval of the final evaluation report and presentation materials.
- Leading on communication, dissemination and supporting use of the evaluation.

Membership

The Management Group will be made up of focal points appointed by the independent evaluation offices of United Nations entities. Membership includes:

Decision making and coordination

- The UN System Wide Evaluation Office will act as the chair to facilitate smooth operation of the evaluation. The chair will ensure the efficient functioning of the group: issuing meeting invites, preparing meeting agendas and minutes and facilitating.
- Key decisions on the design and implementation of the evaluation are taken by consensus by the group. In exceptional circumstances, decisions may be referred to the heads of the respective entities' evaluation offices to inform a final decision by the chair.
- Feedback on documents should be provided within 5 days. If more time is required, this should be communicated in advance.
- Management Group members may delegate reviews, decisions and participation in meetings as required due to absences with advance notice and agreement.

For the Food Systems Coordination Hub Evaluation, the composition of the Management Group is as follows:

Entity	Representative(s)
UNSDG System Wide Evaluation Office (SWEO)	Andrea Cook
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	Genny Bonomi
World Food Programme (WFP)	Catrina Perch
Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)	Serdar Bayryyev
World Health Organisation (WHO)	Riccardo Polastro
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Participation TBC

Evaluation reference group (ERG)

The main purpose of the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) is to ensure the relevance and utility of the evaluation's findings and recommendations, by engaging throughout the evaluation process. The ERG will be engaged at key points in the evaluation process to comment on the Terms of Reference and inception note; to validate findings; and participate in the development of recommendations, ensuring that the evaluation is relevant and useful to its intended users. The ERG participates in the process in an advisory capacity, with final decisions taken by the Evaluation Management Group to safeguard the independence of the evaluation.

Responsibilities

- Review documents and participate in (virtual) meetings:
- Review the Terms of Reference and inception note and provide inputs to the evaluation questions to make these as utilization oriented as possible, considering what key decisions, actions and processes might be meaningfully informed by the evaluation
- Review the draft and final reports and provide feedback to ensure the soundness of the findings and adequacy of the recommendations. This includes considering the operational implications of the recommendations and that they are actionable and consistent with ongoing and planned developments.
- Act as a source of knowledge for the evaluation
- Facilitate access to information and documentation
- Identify and suggest key internal and external stakeholders for consultation
- Contribute to the dissemination of evaluation findings and the preparation of the Management Response.

Membership

The Reference Group will be made up of designated technical or managerial focal points nominated by United Nations entities.

For the Food Systems Coordination Hub Evaluation, the composition of the Reference Group is as follows:

Entity	Representative(s)
Development Coordination Office (DCO)	Helena Fraser, Chief of Branch, Programme, RCS supported by Gonzalo Pizarro, Chief of Policy
Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG)	Lara Blanco, Deputy Director, Sustainable Development Unit
Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)	Guenter Hemrich, Senior Adviser, Office of the Chief Economist
Food Systems Coordination Hub ("the Hub")	Stefanos Fotiou, Director, Food Systems Coordination Hub supported by Lena Savelli, Deputy Director
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	Ronald Hartman, Director, Global Engagement, Partnerships and Resource Mobilisation
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Andrew Bovarnick, Food and Agricultural Commodity Systems (FACS) Global Head
World Food Programme (WFP)	Giacomo Re, Deputy Head of WFP Food Systems Coordination
World Health Organisation (WHO)	Luz Maria De Regil, Director, Department of Nutrition and Food Safety

Expert advisory group (EAG)

The purpose of the EAG is to provide thought leadership, external perspectives, and a source of independent advice to the evaluation team throughout the process. The group will be convened by SWEO and participate a voluntary capacity. Responsibilities of EAG members include:

- Interviews/discussions with the Evaluation Team at several points through the evaluation process to provide external review of evaluation design, emerging findings, and advise on the development of recommendations
- Review and commenting on draft evaluation products
- Facilitating access to external research/analysis, experts, and key informants for consultation
- Contribution to the dissemination of evaluation findings

The EAG will be composed of a small number of individuals with extensive research or professional experience in relevant thematic areas and UN development system coordination and reform issues, who are (at the time of the evaluation) fully independent of the UN system. EAG members may include retired senior officials and/or staff of academic institutions/think tank



Annex 7: Pledge of ethical conduct for evaluation in the UN system



ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATION

PLEDGE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT IN EVALUATION



UNEG
United Nations Evaluation Group

By signing this pledge, I hereby commit to discussing and applying the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation and to adopting the associated ethical behaviours.



INTEGRITY

I will actively adhere to the moral values and professional standards of evaluation practice as outlined in the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation and following the values of the United Nations. Specifically, I will be:

- **Honest and truthful** in my communication and actions.
- **Professional**, engaging in credible and trustworthy behaviour, alongside competence, commitment and ongoing reflective practice.
- **Independent, impartial and incorruptible**.



ACCOUNTABILITY

I will be answerable for all decisions made and actions taken and responsible for honouring commitments, without qualification or exception; I will report potential or actual harms observed. Specifically, I will be:

- **Transparent regarding evaluation** purpose and actions taken, establishing trust and increasing accountability for performance to the public, particularly those populations affected by the evaluation.
- **Responsive** as questions or events arise, adapting plans as required and referring to appropriate channels where corruption, fraud, sexual exploitation or abuse or other misconduct or waste of resources is identified.
- **Responsible** for meeting the evaluation purpose and for actions taken and for ensuring redress and recognition as needed.



RESPECT

I will engage with all stakeholders of an evaluation in a way that honours their dignity, well-being, personal agency and characteristics. Specifically, I will ensure:

- **Access** to the evaluation process and products by all relevant stakeholders – whether powerless or powerful – with due attention to factors that could impede access such as sex, gender, race, language, country of origin, LGBTQ status, age, background, religion, ethnicity and ability.
- **Meaningful participation and equitable treatment** of all relevant stakeholders in the evaluation processes, from design to dissemination. This includes engaging various stakeholders, particularly affected people, so they can actively inform the evaluation approach and products rather than being solely a subject of data collection.
- **Fair representation** of different voices and perspectives in evaluation products (reports, webinars, etc.).



BENEFICENCE

I will strive to do good for people and planet while minimizing harm arising from evaluation as an intervention. Specifically, I will ensure:

- **Explicit and ongoing consideration of risks and benefits** from evaluation processes.
- **Maximum benefits** at systemic (including environmental), organizational and programmatic levels.
- **No harm**. I will not proceed where harm cannot be mitigated.
- **Evaluation makes an overall positive contribution** to human and natural systems and the mission of the United Nations.

I commit to playing my part in ensuring that evaluations are conducted according to the Charter of the United Nations and the ethical requirements laid down above and contained within the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation. When this is not possible, I will report the situation to my supervisor, designated focal points or channels and will actively seek an appropriate response.

Evaluation

Date

Signature

Name



Annex 8: Bibliography

This bibliography collates all documents and sources referenced in the main body of this ToR.

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Evaluation synthesis sources

This section provides a preliminary list of database sources for identification of relevant evaluations for evidence synthesis/summary.

- *Sample of UN evaluations (2021-mid 2024) mapped against QCPR themes, SDGs and countries/territories*
 - SWEU. [United Nations Evaluation Evidence Map \(2021-2024\)](#)
 - SWEU. [Mapping of UN evaluation evidence against General Assembly priorities \(Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review\)](#)
 - SWEU. [Mapping of UN evaluation evidence against the Sustainable Development Goals](#)
 - SWEU. [Mapping of in-depth UN evaluation evidence against General Assembly priorities \(Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review\)](#)
- *UNEG repository (upgrading in process)* - <https://www.unevaluation.org/repository/member-publications?tab=2>
- *UNDP Artificial Intelligence for Development Analytics (AIDA)* - <https://aida.undp.org/>
- *Global SDG Synthesis Coalition* - <https://www.sdgsynthesiscoalition.org/>
- *OECD DAC Evaluation Resource Centre (DEReC)*-
<https://www.oecd.org/en/about/programmes/dac-evaluation-resource-centre--derec.html>
- *Evaluation Cooperation Group database (IFIs / MDBs)* -
https://www.ecgnet.org/documents?f%5B0%5D=field_global_document_type%3A10



United Nations
Sustainable Development Group
System-Wide Evaluation Office