

Professional Peer Review of the UNICEF Evaluation Function

**United Nations Evaluation Group / OECD-
DAC Network on Development Evaluation
(EvalNet)**

Focus of the presentation

- **Overview of the Peer review**
- **Findings, conclusions and recommendations**
- **Discussion**

The criteria for the Peer Review

- **Independence**
- **Credibility**
- **Usefulness (Utility)**
 - **OECD/Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance (1991)**
 - **United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards for evaluation (2005, 2015)**

Peer Review Process & Timeline

- **2015: UNICEF Executive Board requested peer review,**
- **September 2016: UNEG / OECD-DAC Panel assembled, ToRs prepared with UNICEF inputs**
- **February-March 2017: Desk-review, Peer Review Panel visits UNICEF, engages with EO, Senior Managers, Member States, Project Managers, Evaluation Consultants**
- **April 2017: Draft report preparation**
- **May 2017: Report circulated for comment**
- **June 2017 onwards: Final report and Management response**

Panel Members

- **Mr. Michael Spilsbury, Director, Evaluation Office, UN Environment, Nairobi, Kenya (Chair)**
- **Mr. Per Øyvind Bastøe, Evaluation Director, NORAD, Oslo**
- **Ms. Anne-Claire Luzot, Chief Evaluation Officer at World Health Organization, Geneva**
- **Ms. Nancy MacPherson, Evaluation Director, Rockefeller Foundation, New York**
- **Mr A.K. Shiva Kumar, International Development Economist, New Delhi, India**
- **Ms. Tullia Aiazzi, International Evaluation Consultant, Rome, Italy**

Framework of analysis

Seven main areas of analysis, namely:

- **UNICEF Evaluation policy**
- **Governance of the Evaluation Function**
- **Management of Office of Evaluation**
- **Evaluation planning**
- **Evaluation quality**
- **Evaluation follow-up and use**
- **External Influence, Partnerships and Positioning**



2013 Revised Evaluation Policy

- Largely in line with UNEG Norms and Standards and with other UNICEF policies
- Weak alignment with UNEG N&S on safeguards for independence and impartiality
- Lacks Theory of Change for the function
- No strategy nor action-plan was developed for its implementation

Governance evaluation function

- **Executive Board interested and active**
- **Executive Director oversight role**
- **EO advisory, advocacy, monitoring and reporting role**
- **Regional Directors and Country Representatives full responsibility for evaluation planning, management, and approval**

Management of the EO

- **Staff assessed as professional and rigorous within UNICEF**
- **Internal organization in teams could be more conducive to cross-fertilization of experience**
- **Funding modality for staff positions can generate conflict of interest**
- **Room for improving planning and timeliness of delivery**

Evaluation planning

- **Planning tools useful and appreciated, work in progress in implementing Costed Evaluation Plans**
- **Decentralization of function results in low coordination and loss of potential synergies across evaluation levels**
- **More consultation required on corporate-level evaluation planning**
- **Missing analysis of reasonable coverage of UNICEF's work**

Evaluation quality

- **GEROS assessment highly appreciated, triggered improvements over-time in the quality of evaluation reports**
- **Real-time Quality Assurance mechanism highly effective**
- **Work on-going on participatory and child-focused evaluation framework**
- **Room for diversifying methods and approaches and for improving integration of human right and gender equality perspectives.**

Evaluation follow-up and use

- **UNICEF highly committed to use of evaluations, confirmed by anecdotal evidence**
- **Good level of implementation of the Management Response mechanism**
- **Decentralized function is a challenge for learning across countries and regions from evaluations**

External Influence, Partnerships and Positioning

- **EO Director and staff active in UNEG, ALNAP, Eval-Partners and its sub-networks**
- **UNICEF spearheaded equity-focused approaches in evaluation**
- **UNICEF decentralized structure may be useful in country-level evaluations in the context of the SDGs**
- **National Evaluation Capacity Development requires a framework of action**

Independence

- **Assessment: short of satisfactory, both for the EO and for the Decentralized Evaluation Function**
- **Behavioural independence at risk for staff dealing with evaluations at all levels**
- **Organizational independence not sufficiently safeguarded**

Credibility

- **Assessment: short of satisfactory, both for the EO and for the Decentralized Evaluation Function**
- **Quality of the evaluation process can be improved, with a direct effect on credibility**
- **Any action aimed at enhancing the independence of the function will positively affect its credibility**

Utility

- **Assessment: close to satisfactory**
- **Areas for improvements**
- **scope, timeliness and quality of the corporate evaluations**
- **better definition of the most important role of evaluation within UNICEF, needs and gaps it must respond to**

Recommendation 1, a new evaluation policy

A new evaluation policy for the UNICEF evaluation function should :

- **Establish a dual reporting line for Regional Evaluation Advisers:**
 - Direct administrative reporting line to the Regional Director
 - Technical reporting line to the Director of Evaluation in headquarters
- **Develop adequate impartiality provisions and safeguards for the behavioural independence of staff with responsibility in planning, commissioning and managing evaluations;**
- **Make publicly available on UNICEF's external web site, all Management Responses to evaluations;**
- **Revamp the Global Evaluation Committee as a platform for substantive discussion between the EO and UNICEF Management:**
- **Development of a Theory of Change for the UNICEF evaluation function;**
- **Development of a Policy implementation strategy, in the form of an Executive Directive to guide operationalization of a revised policy**

Recommendation 2, internal governance

UNICEF should assign to the EO, full responsibility for the internal governance of the evaluation function, and adequate resources for fulfilling this role.

The EO should take the lead, with inputs from the Regional Evaluation Advisers and in consultation with other relevant stakeholders in the organization, on the following actions among others:

- **Revision of KPIs on evaluation coverage at country level and on the budget allocated to the evaluation function to simultaneously achieve;**
 - adequate coverage of UNICEF’s work;
 - more accountability for the function itself;
 - and more flexibility to adjust to the very diverse contexts and circumstances of UNICEF country and regional offices;
- **Ensuring that the Global Evaluation Plan includes strategic corporate-level evaluations, as well as evaluation syntheses or meta-evaluations, that draw on country and/or regional level evaluations identified in consultation with the Regional Evaluation Advisers;**

Recommendation 2, internal governance (cont)

The EO should take the lead, with inputs from the Regional Evaluation Advisers and in consultation with other relevant stakeholders in the organization, on the following actions among others:

- **Country level Costed Evaluation Plans should be discussed with both Regional Evaluation Advisers and the EO; these CEPs should include to the extent possible evaluations that will feed into regional, multi-country and global evaluations;**
- **Regional Costed Evaluation Plans discussed with the EO include evaluations that feed into corporate-level evaluations.**
- **Development of a corporate strategy for National Evaluation Capacity Development.**

Recommendation 3, financial resources

UNICEF should establish new modalities for the funding of the evaluation function at all levels:

- The allocation of 1% of the organization spent should be a target at the regional level
- All EO and Regional evaluation staff positions should be funded through Regular Resources, or Programme Resources transferred to the EO and to the Regional Directors, managed under their respective direct responsibility;
- A sustainable pool funding mechanism should be developed, to fund evaluation specialist positions that cannot be funded through Regular Resources, and for conducting evaluations at the regional and/or multi-country level;
- The multi-country evaluation specialist model tested in Cambodia, Malaysia and Myanmar should be replicated

Recommendation 4, Human Resources

UNICEF should develop a Strategic Human Resource plan for the evaluation function:

- Establish an EO deputy director post at D-1 level
- Establishment of the position of Regional Evaluation Adviser at the P-5 level in each and all UNICEF Regional Offices
- Through gradual reallocation of resources over time, establishment of teams of full-time evaluation advisers and specialists in each region, at regional, multi-country and national level, where justified, by consolidating the resources currently used for M&E specialists at country level
- Development of provisions for the rotation of evaluation staff in UNICEF, that allows a career in evaluation whilst maintaining behavioural independence

Recommendation 4, Human Resources (cont.)

The Strategic Human Resource plan should include provisions for the selection and appointment of the Director of the UNICEF Evaluation Function:

- The title of the position should become 'UNICEF Evaluation Director'
- The Director of the Evaluation Function should be selected and appointed in agreement between the Executive Director and the Executive Board
- External evaluation expertise should be part of the selection panel for the Director, e.g. at the level of UNEG heads;
- The Evaluation Director should report directly to the UNICEF Executive Director, on all matters
- The ToR for the Director of UNICEF Evaluation should include the systematic presentation of all global evaluation reports to the Executive Board, in addition to the Global Evaluation Plan and the Annual reports on the evaluation function (as already the case)

Recommendation 5, Evaluation Quality

All evaluations should aim at achieving the same standards of independence, credibility and utility, and align with the guidance and procedures established by the EO. The EO should be given the responsibility to strengthen the quality of the evaluation process in UNICEF, with an active oversight role on the Decentralised Evaluation Function in this respect. Measures include:

- Establishment of an external evaluation advisory committee, similar to UNDP;
- Development of standard guidance for quality assurance of the evaluation process;
- Establishment of a real-time Quality Assurance mechanism in support of evaluations at country level in all regional offices, under the responsibility and management of the Regional Evaluation Adviser and the oversight of the EO;

Recommendation 5, Evaluation Quality (cont.)

- **Develop and/or adapt evaluation guidelines / manuals to fit the UNICEF evaluation process, from inception to completion**
 - And to improve the integration of human rights and gender equality perspectives in evaluations;
- **Revise criteria that differentiate evaluations from other types of assessments and reviews**
 - consider a more consistent application of the taxonomy in the titles of evaluation reports
- **Revise, in consultation with Senior Management and the Regional Evaluation Advisers the quality standards for evaluation recommendations**
 - make more useful to UNICEF managers while maintaining the possibility for strategic, corporate and cross-cutting issues to be captured
- **Revise timeframes for the implementation and closure of recommendations on strategic and corporate-wide issues.**

Recommendation 6, Management of the Evaluation Office

The Director of UNICEF Evaluation should revise the internal management processes of the EO.

- Improving the efficiency of the corporate-level evaluation processes and the timely delivery of all evaluation products by the EO
- Rotation of the EO evaluation advisers and specialists for the management and conduct of evaluations, enabling a diversity of perspectives and experience in evaluations of the same thematic areas and programmes
- Inclusion of highly reputed specialists in the subject matter of the evaluation, into the evaluation teams responsible for carrying out evaluations commissioned by the EO and the DEF
- Ensuring that all criteria and Key Performance Indicators identified in the Evaluation Policy are adequately monitored and reported upon

Thank You



UNEG
United Nations Evaluation Group