Revised Evaluation Policy (2018)

Evaluation is a core pillar supporting UNICEF’s mission to help realize the rights of every child, especially the most disadvantaged. The Evaluation Policy governs UNICEF’s evaluation function by providing a comprehensive framework for all evaluation activities undertaken by the organization. It details the purpose and rationale for the revision; outlines evaluation principles and procedures; sets out key accountabilities for the function and use of evaluations; describes contributions to system-wide evaluations and national evaluation capacity development; highlights the human and financial resource requirements and concludes with a note on the implementation, reporting and periodic review of the policy. UNICEF’s operating environment is constantly evolving. Evaluation allows the organization to respond to those changes – to learn, adapt, and improve. It supports better programme design, more timely and informed decision-making, and greater accountability.

The Evaluation Policy was revised in 2018 in accordance with Executive Board Decision 2018/2. It expresses UNICEF’s commitment to demonstrate results, transparency and accountability through an independent and credible evaluation system. It also supports the mission, mandate and strategic priorities of UNICEF. The Policy aligns with the Norms and Standards defined by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

Purpose and Use of Evaluations:
Evaluations that are not properly used represent wasted investment and missed opportunities for learning and improving performance. Therefore, evaluations at UNICEF aim to help the organization improve its performance and results by supporting organizational learning and accountability. The best way to make sure evaluations are used is to make sure they are useful – that is, that they are relevant, of high quality and timed to feed into key decision-making and planning processes. Even the most

Definition of Evaluation
"An assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using such appropriate criteria as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders."


For the revised evaluation policy, visit: https://undocs.org/E/ICEF/2018/14
relevant evaluation findings will not improve performance or contribute to global evidence for children unless they find their way to those in a position to use them, and recommendations are implemented in a timely manner. Key strategies for ensuring this include dissemination plans, management responses, and effective knowledge management.

WHY HAS THE POLICY BEEN REVISED:
The new policy responds to important changes in the international development landscape, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and major new frameworks around disaster risk reduction, climate change, and financing for development. The policy has also been revised in light of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021, which identifies evaluation as a key enabler essential to achieving better outcomes for children.

KEY SECTIONS:
NOMS and standards:
UNICEF evaluations should meet international norms and standards, including those of UNEG. UNEG has identified 10 key norms, all of which are inter-linked and mutually reinforcing. These include utility, credibility, independence, impartiality, ethics, transparency, human rights and gender equality, national evaluation capacities, and professionalism.

Planning and coverage:
UNICEF’s work for children takes place in 190 countries around the world. To develop a complete picture of UNICEF performance globally, evaluations need to cover a representative sample of the organization’s work. That means ensuring that each year’s crop of evaluations includes a diverse range of countries, representing every region and covering a variety of contexts, including humanitarian situations. It should also include a mix of multi-country evaluations, country-led evaluations, and joint evaluations with other UN agencies and government partners. The policy outlines specific coverage norms based on the office typology and situation (e.g. expectations for L1, L2 and L3 evaluations).

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:
Meeting the accountabilities for the evaluation function across UNICEF requires the cooperation of professional staff at various levels.

Accountabilities at HQ levels:
◊ The Executive Board exercises oversight of the evaluation function at UNICEF.
◊ The Executive Director safeguards the integrity of the evaluation function and its independence.
◊ The Global Evaluation Committee creates opportunities for the use of evaluation evidence and follows up on the implementation of management responses.
◊ The Evaluation Office and its Director provide global leadership of the evaluation function. They have accountabilities in the areas of governance and accountability, conducting evaluations, partnerships for evaluation, knowledge management for evaluation and development and professionalization of the evaluation function.
◊ The Division Directors are responsible for evaluations of the global policies and initiatives and for responding to relevant evaluation lessons and recommendations.

Accountabilities at the regional and country levels:
◊ To a large extent, UNICEF evaluation activities are undertaken at the regional and country levels. Meeting the accountabilities at these levels requires action from all professional staff.
◊ Regional offices provide regional leadership of the evaluation function in the following areas: governance and accountability, guidance and quality assurance, conducting evaluations, partnerships for evaluation, development and professionalization of UNICEF’s evaluation function and national evaluation capacity development (NECD).
◊ Country offices, where approximately 90% of UNICEF evaluations occur, are accountable for: governance and accountability, planning and resource allocation, conducting evaluations, partnerships for evaluation and NECD.

EVALUATION PARTNERSHIPS:
UNICEF maintains partnerships in support of the aims of the evaluation policy, including UN agencies, international financial institutions, Governments, evaluation associations, non-governmental organizations, foundations and academic institutions. UNICEF also supports the work of UNEG in enhancing partnerships for evaluation.

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RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS:
High-quality evaluations cannot be successfully undertaken or generate useful insights without adequate investment of human and financial resources.
◊ Credible, professional evaluations require skilled human resources. This is especially true at the country level, where most evaluations are carried out.
◊ Country and regional offices should ensure that annual and multi-year work plans include specific budget lines for evaluation.
◊ Globally, UNICEF has committed through the new policy to allocating at least 1% of its overall programme expenditure to evaluation.
◊ In addition, the Executive Director will establish a pooled fund to support evaluation capacity development, including for conducting and managing evaluations, especially at the decentralized level; professionalization throughout the organization; innovation in evaluation; and strategic evaluations.

EVALUATION NORMS AND STANDARDS:
The policy makes clear provisions for all the general norms of UNEG as follows:

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<th>NORMS AND STANDARDS</th>
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<td>1. <strong>Interationally agreed principles, goals and targets</strong>: Plans for evaluations should directly contribute to evidence for the realization of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Sustainable Development Goals and other relevant internationally agreed goals.</td>
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<td>2. <strong>Utility</strong>: Evaluations should specify the intended use of the evaluation and the intended users of evaluation results.</td>
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<td>3. <strong>Credibility</strong>: Quality assurance mechanisms are established at various levels or UNICEF.</td>
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<td>4. <strong>Independence</strong>: Evaluations that are conducted at the various levels are independent.</td>
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<td>5. <strong>Impartiality</strong>: Evaluation managers at all levels of the organization manage evaluations in line with the norms and standards.</td>
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<td>6. <strong>Ethics</strong>: All evaluation managers and evaluators conform to the ethical standards, code of conduct and norms and standards for evaluation of UNEG.</td>
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<td>7. <strong>Transparency</strong>: All completed evaluations are made publicly available in a timely manner, as are associated management responses when finalized.</td>
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<td>8. <strong>Human rights and gender equality</strong>: Evaluation planning, design, methodology and analysis explicitly addresses human rights, gender equality and sustainability aspects of the programme or policy to be addressed.</td>
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<td>9. <strong>National evaluation capacities</strong>: Evaluations are planned and conducted in partnership with national authorities, addressing issues relevant to the national agenda.</td>
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<td>10. <strong>Professionalism</strong>: Evaluators should be recruited or contracted on the basis of their professional knowledge, skills and experience.</td>
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EVALUATION COVERAGE NORMS:
The policy establishes coverage norms and responsibilities for quality assurance and learning for types of evaluations and reviews, as follows:

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<td>1. <strong>Country programme evaluations</strong>: At least once every two programme cycles, sequenced to feed into subsequent CPD and UNDAF.</td>
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<td>2. <strong>Country office-level thematic evaluations</strong>: At least one country thematic evaluation, country programme component evaluation or project evaluation per year for each country programme.</td>
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<td>3. <strong>Evaluation of humanitarian action</strong>: Various norms of L1, L2 and L3 emergencies.</td>
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<td>4. <strong>Corporate evaluations</strong>: Themes under each Strategic Plan Goal Area, cross-cutting priorities.</td>
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<td>5. <strong>Evaluability assessments, evaluation syntheses, meta-evaluations</strong>: Determined by commissioning office.</td>
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<td>6. <strong>Reviews in support of policies, plans and strategies</strong>: Determined by commissioning office.</td>
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<td>7. <strong>Regional level multi-country evaluations</strong>: Determined by the regional office.</td>
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<td>8. <strong>Joint United Nations and system-wide evaluations including UNDAFs and joint programmes, and the Strategic Plan common chapter</strong>: Determined by interagency mechanism.</td>
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<td>9. <strong>Country-led evaluations</strong>: Determined by partner Governments.</td>
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Theory of Change for the Evaluation Function

**Approaches**
- Improving independence, impartiality and credibility of all evaluations
- Improving quality-assurance mechanisms and processes
- Using gender and human rights-responsive methods in all evaluations to understand impacts on all, including the most disadvantaged
- Adopting innovative approaches to deliver evaluations that are timely and respond to organizational needs
- Enabling the use of evaluation results
- Professionalizing the evaluation role within UNICEF

**Outputs**
- Independent, credible and useful evaluations at the corporate, regional and country levels (humanitarian, development and institutional) delivered in line with coverage norms
- Effective knowledge management of evaluation evidence
- Demand generated for evaluation evidence and its use within UNICEF, the Executive Board, and amongst its partners

**Drivers/inputs**
- Evaluation policy
- Evaluation planning (corporate, global, regional, country levels)
- Evaluation resources (human, financial)
- Guidance and tools on effective evaluation
- Evaluation quality-assurance systems and processes
- Systems for monitoring evaluation activities, including key performance indicators at all levels
- Partnerships for evaluation, including for country-led and joint evaluations
- Evaluation capacity development within UNICEF and its partners

**Impact**
UNICEF and its partners deliver effectively on attaining the Sustainable Development Goals and the Strategic Plan targets towards the realization of the rights of every child, especially the most disadvantaged.

**Outcome**
Evaluation evidence is systematically used for learning and accountability, guiding the effective design and implementation of programmes in UNICEF, and supporting decision-making by partners for improving child well-being.

**Assumptions and risks**
- Organizational leadership and support
- Sustainable and predictable funding for evaluation
- Availability of skilled human resources
- Evaluable policies and programmes
- The building of an evidence culture in UNICEF
- Timely presentation of management responses to the Executive Board and timely follow-up action
- Adoption of monitoring and research norms and standards for the organization
- Continuous application of the audit charter.