

## UNICEF Evaluation Report Standards

The UNICEF Evaluation Report Standards have been created as a transparent tool for quality assessment of evaluation reports. This document outlines what the Standards are, the rationale for each standard and how they are applied. The Standards are used by UNICEF Evaluation Office to assess evaluations for inclusion in the organisation's Evaluation and Research Database to strengthen the Database as a learning tool. Application of Standards will also provide feedback to UNICEF Country Offices on how the evaluation is seen by someone outside of the evaluation process.

The Standards are also intended for use by UNICEF offices and partners commissioning evaluations to establish the criteria against which the final report will be assessed. The UNICEF Evaluation Report Standards draw from and are complementary to key references on standards in evaluation design and process increasingly adopted in the international evaluation community.

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UNICEF NYHQ  
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## I. Introduction and Procedures

The UNICEF Evaluation Report Standards have been created as a transparent tool for quality assessment of evaluation reports. This introduction provides an overview of why and how the Standards were developed and how they are used. The body of this document outlines, for each of the 22 Standards, what is being assessed, why this is important and how it is applied.

The Standards are intended to be useful to both UNICEF and partners in the management of programme evaluation. These Standards draw from and are complementary to a broad range of widely accepted references on evaluation design and process. They also set standards for how evaluation reports address key shared approaches in development and humanitarian practice – specifically results based management and a human rights based approach to programming, both of which figure explicitly as guiding principles for how UNICEF works.

### WHY the Standards were developed

In the past, all evaluations have been provided to UNICEF staff through EvalWin. An analysis of EvalWin and meta-evaluations of UNICEF's evaluations<sup>1</sup> have found that the uneven quality of evaluations has limited their use as a learning tool. Staff are more interested in having good reports rather than having all reports. The Standards will be used to determine which evaluations are posted on the Evaluation and Research Database on the Intranet and Internet.

The Standards also provide feedback on how the evaluation is seen by someone outside of the evaluation process. The office will have another perspective on where the report needs additional clarity or explanation allowing offices to gauge progress in evaluation report quality. This feedback can be seen by offices on the Evaluation Report Submission Website.

Additionally, the Standards are intended for use by UNICEF offices and partners commissioning evaluations to establish the criteria against which the final report will be assessed. For future meta-evaluations as well, Country Offices now know the standard by which the evaluation reports will be judged.

### HOW the Standards were developed

First overall programme evaluation quality standards<sup>2</sup> (usually referred to as *programme evaluation standards*) were consulted from:

- American Evaluation Association<sup>3</sup>
- African Evaluation Association Guidelines<sup>4</sup>
- Swiss Evaluation Society Standards<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Meta-Evaluation of the Quality of Evaluations Supported by UNICEF Country Offices, 2000 – 2001*, Rideau Strategy Consultants Ltd, June 2003; *Managing Knowledge: A Review of the UNICEF Evaluation Database*, Stein-Erik Kruse, August 2000; *A Systematic Review of UNICEF-Supported Evaluations and Studies 1992 – 1995*, Cesar G. Victora, June 1995

<sup>2</sup> Overall evaluation quality standards developed by reputable international evaluation associations relate to the entire evaluation process from planning to the final report. The evaluation report standards outlined in this document are complementary to overall evaluation quality standards. UNICEF offices are encouraged to know and use the overall evaluation quality standards developed by their area evaluation association. Given that there is a large degree of overlap of these guidelines, it is reasonable to expect that the UNICEF evaluation report standards will not pose any conflict to overall evaluation quality standards from various area evaluation associations. Areas of significant disagreement should be brought to the attention of the Evaluation Office (EO).

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.eval.org/EvaluationDocuments/progeval.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.afrea.org/content/index.cfm?navID=5&itemID=204>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.seval.ch/en/Standards/index.cfm>

- OECD/DAC Principles for Evaluation<sup>6</sup>

and standards for evaluation reports were compiled from:

- “Suggested Contents of Evaluation Report” given in *A UNICEF Guide for Monitoring and Evaluation: Making a Difference?* produced in 1991
- meta-evaluations mentioned above
- ALNAP Quality Proforma<sup>7</sup>
- UNICEF M&E Training Resource

Drawing on the above, draft evaluation report standards were created. The following factors were considered in formulating these Standards:

- trends across evaluation standards
- usability given current evaluation capacity and a manageable set of standards
- UNICEF specific issues such as Human Rights Based Approach to programming

Feedback was then gathered from M&E officers and focal points and other divisions.

### **WHAT the Standards are**

For each standard the following information is given:

WHAT is the standard

WHY is this standard included

HOW is this standard applied

LIMITATIONS to the use of this standard

TIPS for report preparation

Throughout the report, the word “evaluator” refers to those involved in conducting the evaluation and preparing the evaluation report. “User” refers to anyone who might read the evaluation report for any purpose. “Reader” refers to those UNICEF staff who will be applying these Standards to the evaluation report.

Words that are underlined in blue are linked to a glossary at the end of the document. Holding down the Cntrl key on the keyboard while clicking on the word with the mouse will bring the cursor to the definition in the glossary.

*It is planned to issue another version of these Standards after they have been in use for six months. The new version will include examples of many items based on the experience gained during that time period. Throughout the report, the EO will add “TIPS for report preparation” that will link to the UNICEF M&E Training Resource once the updated manual is finalized.*

### **Responsibilities**

As stated in the most current UNICEF Programme and Policy Procedures Manual and audit guidelines, it is the responsibility of the UNICEF commissioning office to include these Evaluation Report Standards in every TOR for an evaluation and explicitly mention these Standards in describing the outputs of the TOR. It is also thus assumed that the Standards will be referred to when reviewing the end product to ensure that it complies with the TOR. Beyond this, there is no required procedure, no formal consequence from UNICEF NYHQ’s point of view. A write-up on

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.oecd.org/findDocument/0,2350,en\\_2649\\_34435\\_1\\_119820\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/findDocument/0,2350,en_2649_34435_1_119820_1_1_1,00.html)

<sup>7</sup> ALNAP Annual Review, 2003; <http://www.alnap.org>

the application of these Standards is not required by NYHQ.<sup>8</sup> The UNICEF commissioning office or RO can introduce further uses as suitable to their situation.

#### *Disclosure Policy*

For the Evaluation and Research Database on the Intranet, all evaluations that meet these Standards will be posted. Evaluations that meet these Standards will also be posted on the parallel Evaluation and Research Database on the Internet unless they are identified as being sensitive in nature by the UNICEF office that commissioned the report. As established by the Evaluation Committee Rules and Procedures, June 2004, the EO will assume that all reports are suitable for public dissemination unless informed in writing by the commissioning office. Further information will be provided in a forthcoming Executive Directive. Partners who wish an evaluation report to remain internal are asked to contact the UNICEF office that participated in the evaluation with them and not to contact UNICEF NYHQ directly.

#### **Application of Standards**

The Evaluation and Research Database Editor, or a suitable consultant, will rate every evaluation report. The Evaluation Officer supervising the ERD will perform random checks on the ratings to ensure consistency and accuracy. If an office disagrees with the rating given, they are encouraged to contact the UNICEF Evaluation Office (EO). The EO welcomes all suggestions and will work with the office until a common understanding is reached. (As explained below in the Dissemination of Ratings section, only “satisfactory”, “very good” or “excellent” evaluations will be seen by everyone. “Poor” evaluations are only seen by the UNICEF CO that commissioned the evaluation, and by the ROs and HQ.)

Evaluations and their rating will be regularly checked with a staff member in the appropriate Division or technical cluster to confirm the quality of the report for those evaluations that the EO would like to either: profile on the Intranet (write up a short “Lessons from Evaluation” or similar article); or use as a methodological example for that sector.

There are a variety of options for an office to facilitate a good quality review and consistency with the Standards during the evaluation cycle. For example:

- Evaluation team consults the ERD; the person who will be authoring the evaluation report may want to read some reports that are rated “Excellent” in the ERD;
- Evaluation manager checks through the evaluation Standards in designing the TOR;
- Evaluation team reads through the evaluation Standards while organizing their data and formulating the report outline; and/or
- Evaluation manager and author together read through the Standards after the first draft has been finished but before the final draft.

There are some options for the office after the report has been released:

- If the consultant is still available, the office can work with the consultant and relevant stakeholders to adjust the report – adding description or clarifying sections – and issue a new version. Clearly, findings and conclusions cannot be changed to any significant extent without the original author and relevant stakeholders’ agreement.
- If the consultant is not available and the office finds the evaluation weak enough as to make the recommendations unreliable, an office may always write a formal response to an evaluation describing what recommendations they accept and their action plans based on

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<sup>8</sup> The one exception is evaluations in non-UN languages. In this case, COs are to apply the Standards and provide a write-up. A rate on each standard with full comments (in English) and an English Executive Summary should be sent to the Evaluation Office via email to Elizabeth Santucci.

those recommendations; and what recommendations they do not accept and why. As of 2004, Country Offices are required to establish their response to recommendations through the UNICEF Country Management Team or another suitable body as appropriate to which office(s) the recommendations are addressed.

If an office decides to apply the Standards to an evaluation report themselves and finds that it is below “satisfactory” and is not adjusting the evaluation, the evaluation still must be sent to the EO for institutional memory purposes.

#### *Relation to Institutional Memory Databases*

The Evaluation Office (EO) has the responsibility to maintain the organizational memory of evaluation in UNICEF. All evaluations – conducted or commissioned by the COs, the ROs, and headquarters – are stored in an archival database. Country Offices should send all evaluations (and recommended studies and surveys) to the EO using the Evaluation Report Submission Website accessible on the UNICEF intranet. These reports are registered in the system and the electronic copies of the reports are transferred to a secure electronic archival system called Ramp-Trim.

UNICEF staff still have access to all evaluations upon request. The EO can conduct searches of the Archive for staff members and provide evaluations that are not in the ERD on the Intranet. Additionally, the EO can provide a list of evaluations conducted by the COs that the EO has not yet received for the staff member to contact the CO directly him/herself.

Maintaining this institutional memory is a critical component of the EO and the office’s accountability. Evaluation is an important part of programme learning and improvement that should be available to all.

#### **Rating**

For each standard in the section “HOW is this standard applied,” an explicit description specific to that standard of what constitutes “poor”, “satisfactory”, “very good” and “excellent” is given. There are also basic quality factors that the reader will consider in determining a rank. For each standard, the applicable section of the report will also be assessed for:

- Length – not too long
- Coverage – comprehensiveness
- Linkage – relevant to overall purpose of report and consistent with other elements of report
- Clarity – clear and simple language, understandable to outside reader

If any of these qualities is felt to be lacking, the report will not receive “excellent” for that standard.

The average score needed to merit inclusion in ERD is “satisfactory”, “very good” or “excellent.” In general, “excellent” represents a model for all evaluations in this area and will be infrequently used. The standards will be weighted – the mark on each standard will count differently towards the average based on the weight given the standard.

In addition to having an average score of “satisfactory” or better, the report must also receive “satisfactory” or better on each of the four key standards below. If the report receives an average score of “satisfactory” or better but receives less than that on any of the key standards, it will not be included in the ERD. The proposed key standards are:

10. Transparent description of methodology

11. Evaluation methods were appropriate and adequate providing a complete and fair assessment. Consideration was given to the limitations of the methodology.

*Reports completed prior to implementation of these Standards that fail either #10 or #11 -* will be considered acceptable for inclusion in the ERD if the evaluation receives an average score of "satisfactory" or greater.

*Reports completed during the implementation period from September 2004 to April 2005 that fail either #10 or #11 -*

if the report receives a passing average score but does not pass either of these standards, an email will be sent to the office that commissioned the report pointing out the importance of clear and sound methodology that includes an awareness of the limitations. The report will be considered acceptable and included in the ERD.

*Reports completed after April 2005 that fail either #10 or #11 -*

the report will not be included in the ERD regardless of the overall rating.

14. The evaluation design was ethical and included ethical safeguards where appropriate, including protection of the confidentiality, dignity, rights and welfare of human subjects, particularly children, and respect for the values of the beneficiary community.

*Reports completed prior to implementation that fail #14 -*

will be considered acceptable for inclusion in the ERD if the evaluation appears to the reader to be ethically designed and conducted and if the evaluation receives an average score of "satisfactory" or greater.

*Reports completed during the implementation period from September 2004 to April 2005 that fail #14 -*

if the report receives a passing average score but does not pass this standard, an email will be sent to the office that commissioned the report pointing out the importance of this issue and the need to include a description of the ethical safeguards used during the evaluation in the evaluation report. The report will be considered acceptable and included in the ERD.

*Reports completed after April 2005 -*

if no statement concerning ethical safeguards is provided, the report will not be included in the ERD regardless of the overall rating.

15. Conclusions were substantiated by findings consistent with data and methods and represent insights into identification and/or solutions of important problems or issues.

This key standard will be implemented directly. Any evaluation – even for those evaluations already completed and received by NYHQ – that does not pass this standard will not be included in the ERD.

#### **LIMITATIONS to the use of the Standards**

These Standards are applicable to the evaluation report. The quality of any evaluation is truly measured by its planning and implementation – the actual report can only hold a mirror to this. Although the Standards indicate what a good evaluation is, the Standards are no replacement for the M&E Training Resource and other manuals which should be consulted and used.



## II. Evaluation Report Standards

### 1. Completeness of Title Page and Opening Pages

#### **WHAT is the standard**

The following information should be easily accessible in the first few pages of the report:

- Name of [programme](#) or [project](#) being evaluated
- Date
- Country/ies of programme/project
- Name and organizations of the evaluators
- Name and address of organization(s) the report has been commissioned by
- Name of UNICEF staff contact point for the evaluation (someone involved in the evaluation not someone responsible for the evaluation files)
- Table of contents
  - with the contents of the Annexes listed

#### **WHY is this standard included**

This basic information is needed to keep track of the report if it were to be separated from a cover letter or surrounding materials. There have been cases where the name of the country does not appear anywhere in the report and it must be deduced from the city names of the sample!

#### **HOW is this standard applied**

A simple check list is used to mark off that each of these items is there.

### 2. Assessment of Executive Summary

#### **WHAT is the standard**

An Executive Summary should provide an overview of the essential parts of a report. It should be very short – ideally two to three pages – and should “stand alone” (without requiring reference to the rest of the report.) The Executive Summary should include:

- Brief description of programme/project
- Context of programme/project – years of implementation, situation vis-à-vis UNICEF Country Programme outcomes and other programming it contributes to (i.e. UNDAF outcomes, complementary national or partner programmes)
- Basic description of context and purpose of evaluation – why this evaluation now
- Objectives of evaluation
- Short description of methodology; key features include:
  - Rationale for choice of methodology
  - Data sources used
  - Data collection and analysis methods used
  - Major limitations
- Most important findings and conclusions
- General areas of recommendation
  - With highest priority recommendations given in more detail

#### **WHY is this standard included**

Primarily for key decision-makers who do not have time to read the full evaluation report, a good Executive Summary increases the [utility](#) of the evaluation. Additionally, the UNICEF Evaluation and Research Database (ERD) now uses the full Executive Summary for each report.

### **HOW is this standard applied**

A four point scale is used:

- Missing – the report lacks an Executive Summary
- Poor – the Executive Summary does not provide the whole picture, leaving out essential information, either the name of programme, findings or recommendations
- Satisfactory – the Executive Summary provides a clear picture but does not encompass all of the elements above (perhaps missing a critical finding or recommendation or an aspect of the methodology) or cannot stand-alone from the report
- Very good - the report has an Executive Summary that includes all of the elements above and can effectively stand-alone from the report
- Excellent – a model for this kind; clear, concise and could be used to inform decision making

### **LIMITATIONS to the use of this standard**

It may be necessary to draft different versions of Executive Summary for different audiences. Not all versions will include all of the elements recommended in this standard. The content described above is, however, necessary for outside users and must be included in the version provided for the Evaluation and Research Database.

### **TIPS for report preparation**

Standards for an executive summary are detailed in Technical Note #3, “Writing a good Executive Summary” available on the [Intranet](#)<sup>9</sup>. An Executive Summary should be included in all evaluations and the Terms of Reference should oblige the evaluator to provide one. The ERD can also be used as a source for examples of good executive summaries. (For reports posted on the ERD, the EO will alter the Executive Summary to meet the standard above if necessary.)

### **3. The programme/project to be evaluated was clearly described, including the logic of the programme design and/or expected [results chain](#).**

#### **WHAT is the standard**

The user not only needs to know what the programme/projects does, but how the designers of the programme/project thought the programme/project would address the problem they had identified. The overall goal that the programme/project is expected to contribute to and how it was expected to contribute should be described. The overall goal may be related to national development plans or MDGs which may in turn be supported by UNICEF's MTSP, MDG or WFFC goals. Critical elements of the national or sub-national context which have shaped the programme design needs to be explained.

Additionally, how the programme was intended to be implemented needs to be explained if the evaluation finds/documents a change in programme implementation (intentional or unintentional change).

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<http://www.intranet.unicef.org/epp/evalsite.nsf/1565f9b3780158a285256b95005a5231/81db8238743b9ed985256c31004ef905?OpenDocument>

Other important elements are the size of the programme/project – including the relative size of the programme/project to the Country Programme. At the very least, description should include the number of participants/people reached by the programme/project. Budget figures are important though there are occasions where this information is hard to obtain.

### **WHY is this standard included**

A good description of the project is essential to increase the utility of the evaluation to other users in addition to providing general clarity. Users not familiar with UNICEF's work (or UNICEF staff involved in other sectors/geographic areas) should clearly understand what the project does. This allows them to draw parallels to their own programme/project and see how they can apply findings and recommendations to their own situation.

Users and evaluators alike must have an understanding of the programme logic to accurately situate the programme results and the effects of the wider context.

Even if a report has an Executive Summary, these background materials are still necessary. An Executive Summary does not take the place of an Introduction – they serve different purposes with different components.

### **HOW is this standard applied**

- Missing
- Poor – a vague programme/project description is given that does not paint a complete picture for the user
- Satisfactory – the programme/project is described but gaps in logic or relevant context are unexplained
- Very good - the programme/project is well described including its logic model and relevant context
- Excellent – a model for this standard providing a concise overview that illuminates the findings and analysis of outcomes

### **LIMITATIONS to the use of this standard**

The programme logic and expected results chain may not be well described in the programme documentation. This is not a problem in the evaluation but in programme design. A good evaluation, however, will note this and may have developed a programme logic retroactively with key programme staff. If this is done, care should be taken that the programme logic built retroactively should focus on the intended implementation and outcomes and document any adjustments to the implementation. The observed implementation and outcomes – or findings – should not be assumed to be the same as what was planned.

### **TIPS for report preparation**

This standard should not encourage a lengthy description of the programme/project. If additional details of the history or logic model are pertinent to the findings and conclusions, a full description and logic model can be provided in an annex. The evaluator should ensure that the pertinent information is given without being excessively long.

## **4. The role and contributions of UNICEF and other stakeholders to the programme/project were clearly described.**

### **WHAT is the standard**

Describe who is involved, in what role and what they have contributed to the programme/project including: financial resources, in-kind contributions (material items such as drugs, books, desks,

etc.), technical assistance, participation, staff time, training, leadership, advocacy and lobbying. This should include any contributions from primary stakeholders, which includes children and adolescents. The reader needs to have a sense of who is doing what that facilitates an understanding of what partners assisted in which outcome.

### **WHY is this standard included**

A statement as to who was involved in the programme and in what role is important background information. Users will want to compare this with who was involved in the evaluation to assess how different points of view were included. Users will also need to refer back to this in understanding evaluation findings and outcomes.

### **HOW is this standard applied**

- Missing
- Poor – only a single party's contributions are identified OR the information is scattered throughout the report without any brief summary in the introduction
- Satisfactory – all stakeholders contributions are identified but not a complete picture such as only in a single dimension, i.e. just financial inputs are described with no attention to staff resources, community members' time and labour, etc.
- Very good – all stakeholders' contributions are comprehensively described in an easily understandable manner that aids understanding of the outcomes
- Excellent - a model for this standard, would include what primary stakeholders may have contributed to the programme/project and what type of support UNICEF provided

### **TIPS for report preparation**

The reader should not have to search all over the report for this information. The programme description should be a complete overview in one section. If the reader sees primary stakeholder involvement through school construction in the findings, for example, but did not read about such involvement in the programme description, then that description was lacking and could not be considered "Excellent" for this standard.

## **5. Purpose and context is described providing a specific justification for undertaking this evaluation at this time.**

### **WHAT is the standard**

Purpose discusses why the evaluation is being done and how it will be used. It should not be confused with the evaluation objectives - which state what the evaluation seeks to accomplish. The purpose also relates to the timing of the evaluation in the project cycle - at the beginning of the project, mid-way through the project, after the project is completed. Sometimes it may be relevant to relate the project to the Country Programme cycle, especially if the evaluation is to contribute to a Mid-Term Review.

The reader is basically looking for why, why now, and how will the evaluation be used. Explaining why the evaluation is being done - what triggered the evaluation - does not always answer how it will be used by the stakeholders – who will use it, what decisions will be taken after the evaluation is complete. For example, a report may state that an evaluation is being done at the end of a five-year programme. The reader is left wondering if the evaluation is to assist the programme for its next cycle or to determine how to hand the programme over to the government or another NGO or for general lessons learned for similar programmes now that this particular programme has finished. Evaluations are most used when they are planned to coincide or are driven by a decision that needs to be taken. Ideally, an evaluation report is also intended to have use value to partners and other stakeholders.

### **WHY is this standard included**

This adds to the clarity of the evaluation and should provide the broad orientation which is then further elaborated in the objectives and scope of the evaluation – why something is evaluated sets up more clearly what the evaluation should do. Purpose and timing should help to define what questions the evaluation should answer.

### **HOW is this standard applied**

- Missing
- Poor – Purpose is unclear or does not correlate with objectives and scope.
- Satisfactory – Purpose is clear but context of evaluation is either missing or unclear
- Very good – Purpose and context are clearly described and relates appropriately to objectives and scope
- Excellent - a model for this standard

### **TIPS for report preparation**

For some evaluations, the purpose may seem self evident or the evaluation may have to conform to a model format for a particular client – such as an evaluation at the end of the programme/project cycle for a donor report. However, to those removed from the context, the purpose is not apparent. The evaluation report should always explicitly state the purpose, context and objectives in the report.

### **6. The evaluation used standard OECD/DAC evaluation criteria as per UNICEF PPM and/or provided an explanation for criteria that was considered not applicable and not used.**

### **WHAT is the standard**

UNICEF manuals refer to the following established OECD/DAC evaluation criteria:

[Relevance](#)  
[Efficiency](#)  
[Effectiveness](#)  
[Impact](#)  
[Sustainability](#)

And for evaluations of humanitarian response should also include:

[Coverage](#)  
Co-ordination  
[Coherence](#)  
[Protection](#)

Not all criteria are applicable to every evaluation. Which criteria to use is determined by the evaluation's objectives and scope. The rationale for not using a particular criterion should be explained in the report.

Performance standards or benchmarks should be identified. For example, statements that qualify the programme outputs such as “acceptable range” should have some clear reference standard. Where appropriate, international standards should be referred to in defining benchmark terms.

Any foreseen limitations in applying the evaluation criteria should also be noted. This may be presented in a broader discussion of evaluation questions and scope; both of which are also covered under standard #9.

### **WHY is this standard included**

It is imperative to make the basis of the value judgments transparent if the report is to be understood, considered convincing, and accepted by stakeholders. Additionally, the established OECD/DAC criteria was developed through common consensus of experienced evaluation offices and organizations. By considering each criteria, it ensures that basic evaluation questions are covered and decisions to limit evaluation scope through dropping one or more of these criteria are conscious and considered.

### **HOW is this standard applied**

- Missing - do not use OECD/DAC criteria or objectives could only be considered OECD/DAC with broad interpretation by the reader
- Poor - objectives easily translate to OECD/DAC criteria, but no explanation as to why all OECD/DAC criteria was not used OR criteria selected is not appropriate to the purpose of the evaluation
- Satisfactory - some OECD/DAC criteria used and applicable but no explanation as to why all OECD/DAC criteria was not used
- Very good - OECD/DAC criteria used, applicable with a description of why all OECD/DAC criteria was not used OR different criteria are well described, applicable and a sound explanation given as to why OECD/DAC criteria was not used
- Excellent – a model for this standard that explains how the criteria will be used to provide a comprehensive assessment of the programme, linking the evaluation purpose and context to the evaluation objectives and scope

### **LIMITATIONS to the use of this standard**

An evaluation can have clear objectives, be methodologically sound, and be relevant but miss key questions – for example, an evaluation that looks only at effectiveness and ignores relevance and sustainability. The report in this case would score low on this standard while still having high marks for objectives and methodology. It represents a lost opportunity to find out more about how to improve programming.

On the other hand, there are evaluation reports that list only one or a few criteria in the methodology section yet provide analysis using additional or alternate criteria in the findings. The report in this case could not be considered Very Satisfactory or Excellent.

Evaluation criteria is usually given in the TOR for the evaluation. The TOR may be drafted and criteria selected without involving the person(s) commissioned to conduct the evaluation. In this situation, the evaluator should work with the evaluation manager to adjust the criteria for analysis appropriately.

### **TIPS for report preparation**

There are resources available that further define and explain these terms. Please see the UNICEF intranet and/or the PPPM.

**7. Evaluation objectives were realistic and achievable in light of the information that can be collected in the context of the programme/project. The scope of the evaluation was defined clearly.**

### **WHAT is the standard**

The objectives of the evaluation should follow from the purpose for the evaluation outlined above. They should be clear to all individuals and groups involved in the evaluation. Ideally, they should be SMART - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

Scope determines the boundaries of the evaluation, tailoring the objectives and evaluation criteria to the given situation. It should also make the coverage of the evaluation explicit (time period, phase in implementation, geographic area, and the dimensions of the network of actors being examined, i.e. a single organisation or all stakeholders.) The limits of the evaluation should also be acknowledged within the scope.

Evaluations may also be oriented by evaluation questions. These add more detail to the objectives and contribute to defining the scope.

### **WHY is this standard included**

This is the critical reference against which the findings/conclusions and recommendations are compared. The objectives and scope of the evaluation are also the critical reference to judge whether the methodology selected and resources allocated were adequate.

### **HOW is this standard applied**

- Missing
- Poor – objectives are vague, not related to the purpose or impractical given the context
- Satisfactory – objectives are clear but: either the scope is not clear OR it is not entirely clear how the objectives will be measured and achieved leaving the evaluator to feel their way
- Very good – objectives and scope are clear, measurable, achievable and relevant
- Excellent – a model for this standard, objectives were clear, measurable, achievable, relevant and related to the evaluation purpose and OECD/DAC criteria as in Standard #6  
Excellent

### **LIMITATIONS to the use of this standard**

A thread of logic should pass from the description of the programme/project and the programme/project objectives, to the purpose of the evaluation, to the objectives and scope of the evaluation. Each may be clear and solid on its own but they may not be clearly related to one another. The score and comments on the Standards together should reflect this thread and not fall in the trap of treating each piece in isolation.

An evaluation may have unrealistic or vague objectives yet collected good information with a sound methodology and supported findings. If this occurs, the score on this standard would be quite low while the report can still receive high scores on methodology and findings.

The TOR may be drafted without involving the person(s) commissioned to conduct the evaluation and have poor objectives. In this case, the evaluation manager and evaluator should work together with other relevant stakeholders to reframe the objectives. An excellent evaluation report would describe why the original objectives were un-workable and what changes were made to the evaluation design.

## **8. The evaluation design considered programme/projects' incorporation of the UN and UNICEF's commitment to human rights-based approach to programming.**

## WHAT is the standard

Children, as rights-holders, have claims against those with obligations to ensure the fulfilment of those rights. Children whose rights remain unmet have claims against those with an obligation to act. Parents, communities, civil society organizations, governments, and others have resulting duties. At the same time, parents and other duty bearers also may have unfulfilled rights, for example due to poverty. Vulnerability and exclusion are manifestations and causes of the lack of capacities within families, communities, government, and others to fulfil children's rights.<sup>10</sup>

A Statement of Common Understanding was developed in the Interagency Workshop on a Human Rights based Approach in the context of UN reform 3-5 May, 2003 that identifies the necessary elements for a HRBAP:

. . . the application of "good programming practices" does not by itself constitute a human rights-based approach, and requires additional elements.

The following elements are necessary, specific, and unique to a human rights-based approach:

- a) Assessment and analysis identify the human rights claims of rights-holders and the corresponding human rights obligations of duty-bearers as well as the immediate, underlying, and structural causes of the non-realization of rights.
- b) Programmes assess the capacity of rights-holders to claim their rights, and of duty-bearers to fulfil their obligations. They then develop strategies to build these capacities.
- c) Programmes monitor and evaluate both outcomes and processes guided by human rights standards and principles.
- d) Programming is informed by the recommendations of international human rights bodies and mechanisms.

These four elements rather neatly encapsulate much of the material developed at UNICEF regarding HRBAP. In programming, UNICEF must be mindful of the articles of the [CRC](#) and [CEDAW](#) and of the guiding principles of these and other human rights treaties.

Within this analysis, a gender perspective is critical, particularly in regard to understanding the often more disadvantaged status of women and girls. "Children experience discrimination in various other dimensions in addition to gender, such as ethnicity, language, disability and rural-urban residence. Unfortunately, when a child is female, this usually places her at a double disadvantage."<sup>11</sup> For UNICEF, gender issues have been implemented as a cross-cutting theme in programming and the organization has given promoting gender equality and gender-sensitive development programmes high priority.<sup>12</sup> As such, a description of the consideration of gender issues is a minimum requirement for all evaluation reports.

At this point in time, UNICEF does not have a uniform methodology to assess the implementation of the Human Rights Based Approach to Programming. It is necessary to develop an appropriate assessment framework depending on the programme/project and context. In all cases a gender sensitive perspective should be incorporated.

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<sup>10</sup> PPPM, 2004, Chapter 2,  
<http://www.intranet.unicef.org/Policies/DHR.nsf/cc58cfbb4d01337f85256720005e2cd7/7a963b4ce562e37985256bd7006ccec9?OpenDocument>

<sup>11</sup> MTSP, para 40, p. 17

<sup>12</sup> UNICEF Executive Board Decision 1994/A/4, 6 May 1994, see  
<http://www.intranet.unicef.org/PD/PDC.nsf/3850ce420892b27485256c870076544b/d4617386c8564be58525674d00697541?OpenDocument>



The evaluation report should describe how the programme/project:

- was informed by the CRC and CEDAW;
- identified the human rights claims and obligations relevant to the programme;
- Identified gaps in the capacity of rights-holders to claim their rights, and of duty-bearers to fulfil their obligations, including (but not solely) an analysis of gender and marginalized and vulnerable groups;
- how the design and implementation of the programme addresses these gaps; and
- how the programme monitored results and viewed results within this rights framework.

### **WHY is this standard included**

UNICEF, as part of the United Nations system and guided by the United Nations Charter, has a responsibility and mission to help State parties to human rights treaty bodies to meet their obligations towards the realisation of the *human rights of those who live within their jurisdiction*. As the UNICEF [Mission Statement](#) makes clear, the Convention on the Rights of the Child is the organisation's guiding frame of reference, and provides a legal foundation for the ethical and moral principles that guide the work of UNICEF for children. The other keystone of the organisation's mandate and mission is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Both the CRC and the CEDAW comprehensively address the social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights of children and women. The scope of UNICEF involvement therefore includes areas of concern with any or all of these categories of rights.<sup>13</sup>

A consideration of HRBAP is essential to ensuring the organization's commitment to these principles. As such, it is part of the standard criteria above concerning relevance – specifically policy relevance. It is highlighted separately here because of the overall importance of this guiding principle for UNICEF.

Additionally, attention to programme effects on marginalised, vulnerable and hard to reach groups is necessary to gain a complete and accurate assessment. This standard also reinforces credible methodology. HRBAP is emerging as a standard of good programming; as such an analysis based on human-rights considerations is increasingly considered a prerequisite for a credible evaluation.

### **HOW is this standard applied**

- Missing – no description of the programme's HRBAP or of any gender analysis
- Poor – minimal consideration given to this strategy, i.e. a token paragraph considering programmes link to the CRC or CEDAW but not with a specific analysis of the rights claims and duties for this programme area
- Satisfactory – report considers human rights with a systematic description of the programme/projects consideration of rights claims and duties (including an analysis of gender) but not in a methodological way; i.e. the description is limited to a one time statement concerning programme design and is not used in analysis of all phases of programming - missing in programmes monitoring and results
- Very good – an analysis of HRBAP is incorporated into the evaluation framework in an appropriate and context specific manner, including a gender sensitive perspective, with analysis applied to all phases of programming
- Excellent – a model for this standard that UNICEF can use to develop standard methodology on this topic

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<sup>13</sup> PPM, 2004, Chapter 2,  
<http://www.intranet.unicef.org/Policies/DHR.nsf/cc58cfbb4d01337f85256720005e2cd7/7a963b4ce562e37985256bd7006ccec9?OpenDocument>

## **LIMITATIONS to the use of this standard**

Given the lack of Standards for evaluation in this area, evaluators will be feeling their way. It is understandable that it may be somewhat imprecise. A variety of sources are available to UNICEF staff on the Intranet to assist them in framing the evaluation and to provide guidance to the evaluators in this area. As our work in this area progresses, further guidance will be given and more detail provided in subsequent versions of these Standards.

This standard – especially when considered together with the next standard - provides a comprehensive view of the overall programme design. A reminder – this is not the standard by which to judge the programme itself but rather the evaluation's analysis of the programme. An evaluation report can receive an "Excellent" score even if the programme was poorly designed.

## **9. The evaluation design considered programme/projects' incorporation of results based management.**

### **WHAT is the standard**

[Results Based Management](#) is a management approach "focusing on performance and the achievement of outcomes and impacts."<sup>14</sup> In examining relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, outcomes/impact and sustainability of a programme, an evaluation should explore some underlying questions as to how a programme is managed and what information stakeholders at different levels have had access to and used to take key decisions in design and implementation – such as what indicators the programme/project had planned to use to monitor programme/project performance, what indicators were used, how they were used, and how they influenced adjustments to the programme/project. These indicators may not be explicit – an excellent evaluation documents the reasons for programme adjustment working with programme staff to understand why they decided adjustments needed to be made and comments on whether this process was driven by a focus on results for children and women.

"The standard of programme excellence sought in the MTSP combines result-based management (RBM) with a human rights-based approach to programming (HRBAP)."<sup>15</sup> Results in a human rights perspective must refer to both the achievement of desirable outcomes and the establishment of morally acceptable processes to achieve these outcomes. Results-based management therefore becomes a tool or a means to realize human rights.

### **WHY is this standard included**

RBM is widely believed to be central to a programme achieving its desired outcomes and impact. It is highlighted here because of the overall importance of RBM in UNICEF corporate strategy.

### **HOW is this standard applied**

- Missing – report does not comment on implementation or programme monitoring
- Poor – minimal consideration given to this strategy, i.e. a token paragraph speaking of results based management OR minor aspects – disparate tools - of RBM are commented on not as an overall management system, e.g. analysis of monitoring forms without a broader analysis of how managers managed results and adjusted the programme for results

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<sup>14</sup> OECD/DAC (2001) "Glossary of Evaluation and Results Based Management Terms"

<sup>15</sup> PPPM, 2004, Chapter 2,

<http://www.intranet.unicef.org/Policies/DHR.nsf/cc58cfbb4d01337f85256720005e2cd7/7a963b4ce562e37985256bd7006ccec9?OpenDocument>

- Satisfactory – report considers the programme/project’s use of key elements of RBM such as results based planning or monitoring systems but not in a methodological way through out the report, e.g. considers only the planning of results based indicators but not programme adjustment for results based upon these indicators
- Very good – an analysis of programme/project’s use of RBM is incorporated into the evaluation framework in an appropriate and context specific manner that is carried throughout the evaluation report
- Excellent – a model for this standard which would involve RBM fully integrated into the evaluation report in analysis, conclusions and recommendations

#### **LIMITATIONS to the use of this standard**

Explicit RBM has been increasingly introduced in UNICEF programming guidance over recent years. The recent DPP/EO guidance (September 2003) “Understanding Results Based Programme Planning and Management: Tools to reinforce good programming practice” sets out very clearly how long standing programming tools can be used to strengthen RBM. COs and partners may use alternative tools that have a strong RBM approach. Regardless of the tools used, excellent evaluations will ask simple clear questions exploring how programme management was results-focused in its design and implementation.

This standard – especially when considered together with the last standard - provides a comprehensive view of the overall programme design. A reminder – this is not the standard by which to judge the programme itself but rather the evaluation’s analysis of the programme. An evaluation report can receive an “Excellent” score even if the programme was poorly designed.

### **10. Transparent description of methodology**

#### **WHAT is the standard**

This standard is to ensure that the critical aspects of the methodology are described fully in the report. The appropriateness and merit of the methodology is discussed in another standard below.

A description of the methodology should include:

- Data sources
- Description of data collection methods and analysis (including level of precision required for quantitative methods, value scales or coding used for qualitative analysis)
- Description of sampling – area and population to be represented, rationale for selection, mechanics of selection, numbers selected out of potential subjects, limitations to sample
- Reference indicators and benchmarks, where relevant (previous indicators, national statistics, etc.)
- Key limitations

The appendices should include the following in addition to more detail on any of the above:

- Data collection instruments (surveys, checklists, etc.)
- System for ensuring data quality through monitoring of data collection and oversight
- A more detailed discussion of limitations as needed

#### **WHY is this standard included**

A full description of the methodology allows the user to come to their own conclusions about the quality of the data. Utility is increased by this assurance of quality. A clear description of

methodology contributes to the overall value of the report. [Propriety](#) is also ensured through transparency.

### **HOW is this standard applied**

- Missing
- Poor – incomplete description is given lacking any of the following:
  - data sources
  - description of data collection methods
  - general description of data analysis
  - general description of sampling – population to be represented, rational for selection of sample, and methods of sample selection
  - key limitations
- Satisfactory – full description is given (see list under WHAT) but lacks a wider comparison - to international Standards, to past evaluations/indicators concerning this programme/project, or to secondary source materials
- Very good – full description of the methodology is given including a wider comparison
- Excellent – a model for this standard, comprehensive but not excessive

### **LIMITATIONS to the use of this standard**

Full description of the methodology is sometimes presented in the Annexes to increase the readability of the report itself. Before determining a score on this standard, check the Annexes and supplemental materials.

### **11. Evaluation methods were appropriate and adequate providing a complete and fair assessment. Consideration was given to limitations of the methodology.**

WHAT is the standard

The standard covers three elements:

- *Logical link to evaluation objectives –*

The methodology should be suitable to the subject matter and the information collected should be sufficient to meet the evaluation objectives.
- *Methodology illustrates good practice -*

Evaluation methods depend on the information sought and the type of data being analyzed. A complete description cannot be provided here.

The data should come from a variety of sources to ensure its accuracy and also to ensure that all affected people/stakeholders are considered. Methodology should explicitly address issues of gender and under-represented groups.

Commonly accepted practice for the given situation by evaluation professionals may also be considered and referenced.
- *Efforts to control bias and acknowledgement of limitations –*

Limitations can come from a variety of sources both internal and external. Bias can be from three levels:

- Sources of data - the respondents themselves have a bias in their opinion on the topic
- Methods of data collection - the structure of the data gathering could be skewed to favour one factor, preconceived idea or viewpoint
- Analysis of data - the evaluators have a bias towards a certain viewpoint that colours their interpretation of the findings

Satisfactory methodology seeks to limit bias in design and to explicitly identify areas where bias may occur. Bias can be addressed through having a representative sample that seeks many different points of views to balance. The standard here should ensure that the choice of methodology and actions to limit bias provided a complete and fair assessment.

#### **WHY is this standard included**

This standard addresses basic issues of propriety and accuracy.

#### **HOW is this standard applied**

- Missing
- Poor – methodology is not suited to the subject matter or objectives
- Satisfactory - methodology is appropriate and complete but lacking an identification of limitations OR methodology is well designed but implemented poorly
- Very good – methodology is well suited, well implemented and a full discussion given of its limitations
- Excellent – a model for this standard that could be used for sample methodology for the evaluations sectoral/topical area

### **12. A complete description for stakeholder participation in the evaluation was given.**

#### **WHAT is the standard**

The degree of participation of stakeholders in the evaluation process can vary along a continuum from low to high based on what key steps or activities stakeholders are involved in – some steps are more pivotal than others in shaping results – and what role stakeholders can have in each. Roles might include liaison, technical advisory roles, observer roles, or more active decision-making roles. The degree of participation of stakeholders should be described including why that particular degree was selected.

While not all evaluations can be participatory to the same degree, it is important that consideration is given to participation of stakeholders and that the evaluation report is transparent about the rationale and level of participation of different stakeholders.

#### **WHY is this standard included**

The participation of a broader range of stakeholders in an evaluation is increasingly recognised as a critical factor in the use of conclusions, recommendations and lessons. A human rights-based approach to programming adds emphasis to the participation of *primary* stakeholders. For UNICEF this clearly points to the involvement of children and adolescents. Finally, including certain groups of stakeholders may be necessary for a complete and fair assessment.

#### **HOW is this standard applied**

- Missing – no description of stakeholder participation is given (although stakeholders may be involved in the evaluation as data sources)
- Poor – vague description of stakeholder participation is given; OR a very limited definition of “participation” or “stakeholder” is used, e.g. no attention to primary stakeholders or participation is interpreted as involving stakeholders only as a source for data
- Satisfactory – clear description of stakeholder participation but no rationale provided for the degree of participation decided upon
- Very good– clear description and justification of stakeholder participation given, including reference to primary stakeholders
- Excellent – a model for this standard that exemplifies “participatory evaluation” with stakeholders included in evaluation design as well as data collection and recommendations workshop

### **LIMITATIONS to the use of this standard**

The breadth and degree of stakeholder participation feasible in evaluation activities will depend in part on the kind of participation achieved in the programme/project. Nonetheless, evaluation activities can be used to open greater participation. Ideally there will be a few strategically important evaluation activities where a broader range of stakeholders can be brought together to explore common research/evaluation questions.

Given how dependent such participation is to the particulars of each programme/project, the reader applying this standard should generally look for soundness of the description and rationale given for the degree of stakeholder participation in the evaluation as opposed to rating the degree of participation itself. The Notes section of the rating sheet can be used to identify cases where a higher degree of participation may have been feasible and preferable – however this should not influence the rank on this standard.

### **\*\*\*13. Where information was gathered from those who benefited from the programme/project, information was also gathered from eligible persons not reached.\*\*\***

\*\*\*If the methodology was designed such that direct beneficiaries were not contacted, this standard should be skipped. The previous standard covers the case that direct beneficiaries could have been included but were not.\*\*\*

### **WHAT is the standard**

To provide a complete assessment, people who were eligible to participate in or benefit from the programme/project but did not should be included in the evaluation. This includes children or adolescents who were eligible to benefit from the programme/project.

The decision to gather this information should be made with consideration of the ethical issues involved as outlined in the next standard. Although it may be technically feasible to collect information, it may not be ethically prudent.

### **WHY is this standard included**

This standard is to assess how and why the programme/project did not attain its full potential. It is not to be confused with a “control group” – evaluation methodology that compares the programme/project area to an area explicitly not involved in the programme/project by design.

### **HOW is this standard applied**

- Missing – information was gathered from primary stakeholders, but no effort was made to contact eligible persons not reached by the programme/project
- Poor – limited information was gathered from potential beneficiaries that does not allow for a full analysis of the programme/project and no explanation was given as to why it was so limited
- Satisfactory – adequate and appropriate data was collected from potential beneficiaries with some analysis given of the differences OR an adequate rationale given for why the information could not be gathered
- Very good – complete assessment of how and perhaps even why the programme/project did not reach the entire target population OR an adequate rationale given for why the information could not be gathered and suggestions for how to address this issue in the next programme/project cycle
- Excellent – a model for this standard that will assist future programme/projects to reach the entire target population

#### **LIMITATIONS to the use of this standard**

The context of the evaluation may limit the evaluator's ability to acquire this information. If a sound rationale is given for why this analysis was not included, the report should not be marked down on this standard. This is not to deny the importance of this information but rather acknowledge the realities of some difficult situations such as unstable areas.

#### **14. The evaluation design was ethical and included ethical safeguards where appropriate, including protection of the confidentiality, dignity, rights and welfare of human subjects, particularly children, and respect for the values of the beneficiary communities.**

##### **WHAT is the standard**

Poorly designed efforts to expand the participation of primary stakeholders can do more harm than good. Working to expand the participation of any group of people engenders responsibilities to protect them from coercion to participate, from the negative repercussions of their participation, such as retribution by other stakeholders, and from other forms of abuse and exploitation. When the topic of the evaluation itself is contentious, there is a heightened need to protect those involved in the evaluation.

An evaluation report should contain a description of the measures and mechanisms put in place to: ensure that the evaluation process was ethical, that stakeholders were protected and address any ethical dilemmas or issues that emerged. This is especially important when children and adolescents are involved. Technical Note #1 "Children Participating in Research, Monitoring And Evaluation," available on the UNICEF [Intranet](#)<sup>16</sup> discusses how to include children in an evaluation while respecting their rights and dignity.

Measures and mechanisms would include some process of ethical review of the design initially. Further the design should contemplate:

- the balance of cost and benefits to participants including potential negative impact,
- the ethics of who is included and excluded in the evaluation and how this is done,
- handling of privacy and confidentiality,
- practices of obtaining informed consent,
- feedback to participants and

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<sup>16</sup>

<http://www.intranet.unicef.org/epp/evalsite.nsf/1565f9b3780158a285256b95005a5231/acf4c8b740fa19c085256bad007a9bd9?OpenDocument>

- mechanisms for shaping and monitoring the behaviour and practice of evaluators and data collectors.

#### **WHY is this standard included**

Individuals have personal rights that are secured by law, by ethical practices, and by common sense and decency. Evaluators and evaluation managers have the responsibility to ensure that the rights and well-being of individuals not be affected negatively in planning and carrying out an evaluation. Lack of attention to protecting peoples' rights and dignity is not only unethical but most often leads to unfair, inaccurate and/or incomplete evaluation results.

#### **HOW is this standard applied**

- Missing
- Poor – scant attention and only token paragraph on ethical considerations
- Satisfactory – good description of ethical considerations
- Very good – good description of ethical considerations including the rationale behind the design and the mechanisms to protect participants where appropriate
- Excellent – a model for this standard that could be referenced in guidance on this issue

#### **15. In presenting the findings, inputs, outputs, and, where possible, outcomes/impacts were measured (or an appropriate rationale given why not).**

##### **WHAT is the standard**

Findings regarding inputs for the completion of [activities](#) or process achievements should be distinguished clearly from [results](#), and findings on results should clearly distinguish [outputs](#), [outcomes](#) and where possible impact.

Outputs, outcomes and impacts should include any unintended effects – whether beneficial or harmful. Additionally, any multiplier or downstream effects of the programme/project should be included.

To the extent possible, each of these should be measured – either quantitatively or qualitatively. In using such measurements, benchmarks should be referred to as described in methodology.

##### **WHY is this standard included**

Using a framework distinguishing inputs, outputs and outcomes clarifies the various findings for the reader. Such clear classification is an essential element of results based management. For conclusions regarding attribution of results - which are most often tentative and require clear detailing of what is known and what can plausibly be assumed - it makes the logic from findings to conclusions more transparent and increases their credibility.

##### **HOW is this standard applied**

- Missing - blurring of activities, inputs, outputs, outcomes; no distinction made between them and no sense of the magnitude of the results
- Poor – some effort at measurement but a confusion between implementation and results, i.e. considers an activity an outcome
- Satisfactory - some logical distinction made in the findings showing the progression from implementation to results (though perhaps not labelled in the exact terms) but: with weak measurement OR with inadequate analysis of links in the results chain OR no rationale given as to why no results analysis was given



- Very good - logical distinction made in the findings showing the progression from implementation to results (though perhaps not labelled in the exact terms) with appropriate measurement and analysis of the results chain or a rationale given as to why an analysis of results was not provided
- Excellent – a model for this standard that shows a clear picture from the inputs/activities provided by various stakeholders to the outputs and, where possible, outcomes and results

### **LIMITATIONS to the use of this standard**

Different terminology other than “input”, “output”, “outcomes”, or “impact” may be used. This is acceptable as long as a clear distinction is made between the different types of results and that activities are not viewed as a results. The language and classification used should illustrate a results based approach to analysis.

### **TIPS for report preparation**

Data does not need to be presented in full; only data that supports a finding needs to be given, full data can be put in an Annex. Poor reports list data in one section and then presented findings in another section leaving the reader to juggle back and forth between the two sections to see if the findings are supported by the data. Additionally, reports should not segregate findings by data source. Excellent reports present a conclusion, then give findings and data to support that conclusion from all sources.

Findings should also cover all of the evaluation objectives. A report could have solid evaluation objectives and methodology but then the findings do not address all of the objectives using the data collected. This would mean the report is weak in Coverage for this section and could not be considered Excellent.

### **16. To the extent feasible, the report includes cost analysis.**

#### **WHAT is the standard**

Using a range of cost analysis approaches – from the elaborate [cost-effectiveness](#) and [cost-benefit](#) analysis, to [cost-efficiency](#) analysis to the less orthodox ‘quick-and-dirty’ cost comparisons -- an evaluation can pursue the following broad questions:

- How do actual costs compare to other similar programmes or standard benchmarks?
- What is the cheapest or most efficient way to get the expected programme results?
- What will be the cost implications of scaling up or down?
- What will be the costs of replicating the programme in a different environment?
- Is this programme worth doing? Do economic benefits outweigh the costs?
- How do costs affect the sustainability of the programme?

Cost analysis in evaluation builds on financial information, but may also involve calculating “economic costs” such as human resources, labour-in-kind, opportunity costs, etc.

The scope of cost analysis, i.e. whether cost comparison is made concerning impacts, outcomes or outputs, will depend on the purpose of the evaluation and the evaluation questions posed. Cost analysis must be explicit in terms of the different perspectives from which cost are analysed (donors, a single organisation, primary stakeholders) and the limitations – the complexity of the programme (multiple programme objectives, partners, financial systems), the availability of data and the time and resources invested.

Cost analysis is not always feasible. It requires some specialized skills and the availability of appropriate data. Where no cost analysis is included in an evaluation, some rationale for this exclusion should be included in the objectives or methodology section.

It is also expected – though should not be confused with a full cost analysis – that evaluators point out areas of obvious inefficient use of resources.

#### **WHY is this standard included**

Addressing the evaluation criteria of efficiency requires some cost analysis. Additionally, satisfactory cost analysis strengthens results-based management and thus increases the utility of the evaluation. No cost analysis leaves significant questions unanswered.

#### **HOW is this standard applied**

- Missing – there is no cost analysis and no justification of the omission
- Poor – data is insufficient to provide analysis but conclusions are drawn from data and presented as the results of cost-analysis; OR data appears to be sufficient but there is no cost analysis and the justification for not addressing this issue is weak
- Satisfactory – cost analysis is provided that is well grounded in the findings; OR report provides reasonable and seemingly accurate justification for the exclusion with reference to availability of data and/or accepted limitations in the scope of the evaluation
- Very good – cost analysis is provided that is well grounded in the findings including an analysis of its limitations and recommendations for data collection to improve the situation for the next evaluation; OR report provides reasonable and seemingly accurate justification for the exclusion with reference to availability of data and/or accepted limitations in the scope of the evaluation and recommendations for data collection to improve the situation for the next evaluation are given
- Excellent – a model for this standard that could be used as sample methodology for other evaluations

#### **LIMITATIONS to the use of this standard**

There are numerous constraints to cost analysis. There may be a good rationale that is simply not given in the report. This again is a standard that all evaluations should strive to achieve and it is hoped that the organization will build capacity and data collection tools in the future.

### **17. Analysis includes appropriate discussion of the relative contributions of stakeholders to results.**

#### **WHAT is the standard**

For results attributed to the programme/project, the result should be related back to the contributions of different stakeholders accurately. There should be a sense of proportionality between the relative contributions of each and the results observed.

#### **WHY is this standard included**

This is an integral element of results-based management and accountability to partners, donors and primary stakeholders.

#### **HOW is this standard applied**

- Missing – no discussion of stakeholders' contributions in the findings/results section

- Poor – over-simplification of the relative contribution of stakeholders to the results OR report describes what each partner did (i.e. partners inputs/activities) but does not relate this to any output or outcome
- Satisfactory – a reasonable effort to distinguish the effect of the various contributions of stakeholders, though still fairly general and focusing on a few major stakeholders
- Very good – a fair and realistic effort to distinguish the correlation between the results and the relative contributions of stakeholders
- Excellent – a model for this standard that provides a comprehensive analysis

#### **LIMITATIONS to the use of this standard**

Although difficult and perhaps impossible given the methodological constraints of certain evaluations, this is a standard that all evaluations should strive to achieve. A rationale for why such analysis was not done should be provided in the report if it cannot be completed. If an evaluation is done early in the programme/project cycle, it is understandable that results or any link to a stakeholders contribution may not be found.

#### **18. Reasons for accomplishments and difficulties of the programme/project, especially continuing constraints, were identified as much as possible.**

##### **WHAT is the standard**

Evaluation go beyond a description of programme/project implementation and outcomes to “why”. An analysis of the underlying causes, constraints and opportunities should be given. External factors contributing to the accomplishments and difficulties should be identified and analyzed to the extent possible. Beyond simply describing the geographic and demographic characteristics, the social, political, or environmental situation that has affected the outcome of the programme/project should be assessed. Informed judgments about what results may reasonably be attributed to the intervention, and what results may be due to other factors should be provided.

##### **WHY is this standard included**

Without an analysis of the reasons, an evaluation may wrongly attribute success/failure to something which is not related to the programme/project leading to inaccurate findings and recommendations. An explanation of context contributes to the utility and accuracy of the evaluation. Additionally, an understanding of which external factors contributed to the success or failure of a programme/project allows the programme/projects to be replicated elsewhere.

##### **HOW is this standard applied**

- Missing – findings are presented without any reasons
- Poor – reasons are identified but seem unrelated to the findings
- Satisfactory – reasons are identified and seem to logically flow from the findings
- Very good – reasons are identified that are based on the findings and analysis of how such factors will affect the future of the programme/project (or generally for other programmes/projects) are given
- Excellent – a model for this standard providing concise, usable information, easily accessible in the report that can improve programming in the next phase

#### **LIMITATIONS to the use of this standard**

Since the reader is removed from the context him/herself, the reader cannot access the accuracy of the evaluator's description and instead should focus on the completeness and logical consistency of the description provided.

Sometimes the data that can be gathered does not provide this information. However it is extremely helpful in designing better projects/programs in the future. A certain amount of reasonable speculation on the part of the evaluator is welcome if clearly identified as conjecture and well grounded in the findings presented.

This standard refers to findings – investigating why. The standard below is somewhat related – it refers to the conclusions drawn from these findings and that they should be insightful.

**19. Conclusions were substantiated by findings consistent with data and methods and represent insights into identification and/or solutions of important problems or issues.**

**WHAT is the standard**

Conclusions should add value to the findings. Users of evaluations must clearly see the logic of [conclusions](#) and how this flows from the actual findings. With this, they are then able to accept or reject additional analysis and reflections of the evaluators.

Conclusions must also focus on issues of significance to a programme/project. This choice of significant issues must relate back to the evaluation objective and key questions the evaluation is trying to answer. Simple conclusions that are already well known and obvious are not useful and should be avoided.

**WHY is this standard included**

Users must be able to discern the logic of the conclusions, be convinced of the conclusions before they will accept them.

**HOW is this standard applied**

- Missing – raw data presented with findings simply restating the data totals, lacking conclusions
- Poor – explanation of results not related to actual data; OR conclusions given that do not follow from the findings presented
- Satisfactory – explanation of results consistent with data and conclusions well based on findings
- Very good – explanation of results consistent with data, conclusions well based on findings, conclusions represent actual insights into identification and /or solutions of important problems or issues
- Excellent – a model for this standard providing concise, usable information, easily assessable in the report that can improve programming in the next phase

**LIMITATIONS to the use of this standard**

When conclusions do not correlate to the findings, the reader does not know what exactly the conclusion was based on - a case of insufficient description by the writer or perhaps a point of view that has found its way into the evaluation as a fact. The conclusions section may get a poor score because of a poor description, despite the quality of the analysis.

**20. Recommendations were firmly based on evidence and analysis; they were directly relevant and realistic with priorities for action made clear.**

### **WHAT is the standard**

Recommendations are the logical implications of the findings and conclusions. They should be relevant to the programme/project, not broad or vague, and realistic.

At the same time, recommendations that are overly specific or represent a long list of items are also of little value. Changes to the programme/project should be part of a participatory process that involves UNICEF staff considering the recommendations through a planning process – not the sole determination of someone outside the organization.

The preparation of recommendations needs to suit the evaluation process. Participation by stakeholders in the development of recommendations is strongly encouraged to increase ownership and utility. The planners and managers of the evaluation may decide to: include stakeholders in the creation of recommendations presented in the report; or may leave the consultation process for a separate stage after the report is completed - meaning that recommendations included in the evaluation report will necessarily be less specific, perhaps called “implications” rather than “recommendations”. The description of the evaluation methodology and discussion of participation would alert the reader to this situation. In such cases, the implications can still be assessed as to how logically they flow from findings and conclusions.

### **WHY is this standard included**

For accuracy and credibility, recommendations should be related to the findings and conclusions.

### **HOW is this standard applied**

- Missing
- Poor – recommendations or implications are given that do not flow logically from the findings; OR the consultant has given implications from the findings that are well-grounded but no follow-up process is described
- Satisfactory – recommendations are well-grounded in the findings, but are either: not specific and relevant, not few in number (e.g. 10 – 15) or not explicitly prioritised; OR the consultant has given implications from the findings that are well-grounded and explains the follow-up process planned with UNICEF staff
- Very good – recommendations are well-grounded in the findings and are either few in number (e.g. 10 – 15) or explicitly prioritised OR the consultant has given implications from the findings that are well-grounded and UNICEF staff have considered the implications and provided some type of follow-up documentation
- Excellent – a model for this standard, the evaluation or follow-up documentation provide clear, relevant, credible, prioritized, insightful information

### **TIPS for report preparation**

Sometimes evaluators present recommendations within their conclusions. As long as the recommendations are clearly identified as recommendations and some how distinguished, e.g. in italics or a box, this is acceptable. Mixing recommendations with conclusions leads to confusion – it is hard to know if the evaluator is truly recommending action or simply a poor choice of wording; also recommendations are not prioritized and the reader has an unclear picture of what the organization’s next steps should be. This would result in a “Poor” rating.

**\*\*\*21. Lessons learned, when presented, were generalized beyond the immediate intervention being evaluated to indicate what wider relevance there might be.\*\*\***

\*\*\*Not all evaluations have lessons learned. If a report does not identify any lessons learned, this standard should be skipped. For a reader removed from the evaluation process, conclusions that could be lessons learned that are not identified as such cannot be identified with any methodological rigor. (If a reader can determine a lesson learned, it is most likely a commonly accepted lesson that would not contribute any new knowledge.)\*\*\*

### **WHAT is the standard**

[Lessons learned](#) are contributions to general knowledge. They should be well supported by the findings and conclusions presented. They may refine or add to commonly accepted lessons learned but should not be merely a repetition of common knowledge. [Recommendations](#) are different from lessons learned in that they are specific and relevant to the particular programme/project in its specific context.

### **WHY is this standard included**

This increases the usability of the report contributing to learning outside the programme/project, at the country level, regionally or globally, within the organisations involved or beyond.

### **HOW is this standard applied**

- Poor – findings or conclusions are inaccurately identified as lessons learned OR lessons learned are identified that are simply repetitions of basic knowledge about good programming
- Satisfactory – lessons learned are correctly identified and stem logically from the findings
- Very good – lessons learned are correctly identified, stem logically from the findings, and an analysis of how they can be applied to different context and/or different sectors is given
- Excellent – a model for this standard; well written and described such that the lessons could be simply lifted from the report and put into a newsletter/update

Note: a description of MISSING is not provided since this standard is not to be applied if there are no lessons learned identified. See the note at the beginning of this standard.

### **LIMITATIONS to the use of this standard**

Some reports identify lessons learned that are truly just findings that can related to more than one programme/project within that context – but not necessarily to a different context or a different sector. In this case, the rating would be Poor.

## **22. Completeness of Annexes**

### **WHAT is the standard**

Additional supplemental information to the evaluation that should be included in the Annexes includes:

- List of persons interviewed and sites visited. (Maps, especially DevInfo maps are helpful but not required.)
- Data collection instruments (copies of questionnaires, surveys, etc.)
- Terms of reference.

These Standards do not analyze the quality of the TOR. Additional information on TORs can be found in Technical Note 2 "What goes into a Terms of Reference"<sup>17</sup> on the [Intranet](#).

- List of Abbreviations.
- Cost of evaluation is given, preferable presented as a percentage of the overall programme/project cost. Costs should include an accounting of the use of staff time and other UNICEF CO resources.

Although not an audit or meant for audit purposes, this information is provided to promote transparency and ensure propriety. This can also assist the CO in tracking evaluation costs and in planning the next evaluation.

### **WHY is this standard included**

The annexes increase the usability of the report – other COs often look at others' survey questions and data collection instruments when designing their evaluations.

### **HOW is this standard applied**

A simple checklist is used to see if the information was included or not.

### **LIMITATIONS to the use of this standard**

When these Standards are used at the headquarters level, the full annexes may not have been sent with the report because of space limitations on the size of electronic attachments. The reader is asked to check the Table of Contents to see if the Annexes are described there. If the Table of Contents lists the contents of the annexes, the reader will mark the various contents of the annexes listed as included.

### **TIPS for report preparation**

Completing a checklist before final payment is given to the consultant will ensure that all the necessary material is present.

Administrative note for the COs - If the Annexes are too long to include with the report, COs are asked to send the Annex to Lourdes SanAgustin via email. Please tell her the name of the report and its sequence number. Our goal is to have the TOR for every evaluation that is included in the ERD on the Intranet for staff to use as a reference.

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<sup>17</sup>

<http://www.intranet.unicef.org/epp/evalsite.nsf/1565f9b3780158a285256b95005a5231/e17ce448d105c58485256b88006e824c?OpenDocument>

### III. Glossary of Terms

**Activity(ies)**

Actions taken or work performed through which inputs - such as funds, technical assistance and other types of resources – are mobilized to produce specific outputs. (OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management, 2002)

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**Coherence**

Refers to the policy coherence and the need to assess security, developmental, trade and military policies to ensure that there is consistency and, in particular, that all policies take into account humanitarian and human rights considerations. (ALNAP Annual Review Glossary, 2003)

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**Conclusions**

Conclusions point out the factors of success and failure of the evaluated intervention, with special attention paid to the intended and unintended results and impacts, and more generally to any other strength or weakness. A conclusion draws on data collection and analyses undertaken through a transparent chain of arguments. (OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management, 2002)

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**Context (of an evaluation)**

The combination of factors accompanying the study that may have influenced its results, including geographic location, timing, political and social climate, economic conditions, and other relevant professional activities in progress at the same time. (Programme Policy and Procedures Manual, UNICEF, May 2003)

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**Cost Benefit Analysis**

Cost-benefit looks to outcomes and impact, but compares different interventions with different effects. It compares the benefits-to-costs ratio, which is the total monetary value of benefits compared to total monetary value of costs.

Because cost benefit analysis involves translating all inputs and all outcomes into a common unit of comparison (e.g. dollars), it is then possible to compare programmes with different objectives. For example, two programmes with the goal of poverty alleviation, but different objectives — e.g. expanded access to credit for investment in cash crops vs. access to vocational training to meet needs in local processing industries — can be compared. (M&E Training Resources, UNICEF, 2004)

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**Cost Effectiveness Analysis**

Cost-effectiveness analysis entails comparing costs across different strategies for achieving a given outcome, with a view to determining the lowest cost approach. For example, cost-effectiveness analysis might explore three different approaches to getting girls working in the informal sector back into school. As compared to cost-efficiency analysis, it is wider in scope, looking beyond outputs to outcomes. (M&E Training Resources, UNICEF, 2004)

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**Cost Efficiency Analysis**

Cost-efficiency analysis compares costs of how project inputs are supplied and used to achieve specific outputs with a view to finding lowest cost options. For example, cost-efficiency analysis might explore whether outreach vaccination services were provided at the lowest possible cost. It entails comparing total and unit costs (total cost/number of units of outputs) as well as comparing



cost breakdowns among different sites or facilities, or over time at the same site. It entails exploring what makes costs higher and why, and takes into consideration quality of service.

Cost-efficiency analysis tends to have a smaller scope of analysis, comparing cost at the level of outputs. It does not relate costs to broader issues of outcomes as does cost-effectiveness analysis. Efficiency is a necessary and not a sufficient condition for effectiveness. (M&E Training Resources, UNICEF, 2004)

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### **Coverage**

The need to reach major population groups facing life-threatening suffering wherever they are, providing them with assistance and protection proportionate to their need and devoid of extraneous political agenda. (ALNAP Annual Review Glossary, 2003)

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### **Effectiveness**

A measure of the extent to which an aid programme attains its objectives or produces its desired results. (Programme Policy and Procedures Manual, UNICEF, May 2003)

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### **Efficiency**

An economic term referring to the measure of the relative cost of resources used in a programme to achieve its objectives. (Programme Policy and Procedures Manual, UNICEF, May 2003)

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### **Impact**

Positive and negative long-term effects on identifiable population groups produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. These effects can be economic, socio-cultural, institutional, environmental, technological or of other types.

(OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management Proposed Harmonized Terminology, 2002)

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### **Input**

The financial, human, material, technological and information resources used for the development intervention. (OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management Proposed Harmonized Terminology, 2002)

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### **Lesson learned**

Conclusions that can be generalized beyond the specific case. This could include lessons that are of relevance more broadly within the country situation or globally, to an organization or the broader international community. (Programme Policy and Procedures Manual, UNICEF, May 2003)

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### **Outcome**

The intended or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs, usually requiring the collective effort of partners. Outcomes represent changes in development conditions which occur between the completion of outputs and the achievement of impact.

(OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management Proposed Harmonized Terminology, 2002)

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### **Output**

The products and services which result from the completion of activities within a development intervention. (OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management Proposed Harmonized Terminology, 2002)

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### **Programme**

In UNICEF, "programme" is used in two ways: 1. "country support programme" defined as the whole field in which UNICEF is co-operating in the country, e.g. the subject of a programme recommendation to the Board; and 2. co-operation in a sector or a geographical area, e.g. a "health programme" or an "area-based programme." Programmes are designed to have a specified outcome(s) or impact, and are detailed in a Plan of Operations, Master Plan of Operations (MPO) or Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP), if it consists of a number of programmes.

Frequently a programme consists of a set of projects, which in turn are made up of *activities*. A project is usually related to one main implementing agency, therefore to one sector (e.g. health) or part of a sector (e.g. immunization) or one field (e.g. women's activities). It can be defined as "a planned undertaking composed of a group of interrelated activities whereby specified inputs are designed with the purpose of achieving specified outputs (or changes) within a specified time-frame." (Programme Policy and Procedures Manual, UNICEF, May 2003)

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### **Project**

A time-bound intervention that consists of a set of planned, interrelated activities aimed at achieving defined objectives. (Programme Policy and Procedures Manual, UNICEF, May 2003)

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### **Propriety**

The evaluation will be conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of those involved in the evaluation, as well as those affected by its results. (Program Evaluation Standards, American National Standards Institute, 1989)

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### **Protection**

Activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. human rights, humanitarian and refugee law) which are conducted impartially and not on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, language or gender. (ALNAP Annual Review Glossary, 2003)

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### **Recommendation**

Prescription of what should be done, in the future and in a specific situation with regard to a programme, project, strategy or policy under study. (Programme Policy and Procedures Manual, UNICEF, May 2003)

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### **Relevance**

The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with duty bearers and rights holders requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donors' policies.

Retrospectively, the question of relevance often becomes a question as to whether the objectives of an intervention or its design are still appropriate given changed circumstances. (OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management, 2002)

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**Result**

Results are changes in a state or condition which derive from a cause-and-effect relationship. There are three types of such changes (intended or unintended, positive and/or negative) which can be set in motion by a development intervention – its output, outcome and impact. (OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management Proposed Harmonized Terminology, 2002)

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**Results Based Management (RBM)**

A management strategy by which an organization ensures that its processes, products and services contribute to the achievement of desired results (outputs, outcomes and impacts). RBM rests on clearly defined accountability for results, and requires monitoring and self-assessment of progress towards results, and reporting on performance. (OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management Proposed Harmonized Terminology, 2002)

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**Results chain**

The causal sequence for a development intervention that stipulates the necessary sequence to achieve desired objectives beginning with inputs, moving through activities and outputs, and culminating in outcomes, impacts and feedback. It is based on a theory of change, including underlying assumptions. (OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management Proposed Harmonized Terminology, 2002)

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**Stakeholder**

Individuals, groups, or organizations that can affect or be affected by an intervention or issue.

**Primary stakeholders** are those directly benefiting from an intervention. (Programme Policy and Procedures Manual, UNICEF, May 2003)

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**Sustainability**

The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed.

The probability of long-term benefits. The resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time. (OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management, 2002)

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**Utility**

The extent to which an evaluation produces and disseminates reports that inform relevant audiences and have beneficial impact on their work. One of the key Standards against which an evaluation is measured. (Programme Policy and Procedures Manual, UNICEF, May 2003)

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