



Evaluation Technical Notes

No. 3

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Writing a good Executive Summary

Primarily for key decision-makers who do not have time to read the full evaluation report, an Executive Summary should provide an overview of the essential parts of a report: a summary of the project/programme evaluated, the purpose of the evaluation, the methods used, the major findings and the recommendations. It should be very short — ideally two to three pages — and should “stand alone” (without requiring reference to the rest of the report).

The UNICEF’s Evaluation Database now lists the full Executive Summary for each report. The Executive Summary should be clear, simple and comprehensible to those not familiar with your programme, allowing database users to quickly grasp the important findings and recommendations.

By commitment to the Executive Board, Country Offices are requested to submit all completed evaluation reports to the Regional Office and to Headquarters [Evaluation Office] and all surveys and studies they believe are of significance in quality or findings. Also, Country Offices should use the format detailed below for all evaluations submitted to the Evaluation Office. It provides the needed information for effective use in the Evaluation Database and serves as a good stand-alone Executive Summary for inclusion in the report itself.

Depending on the audience for the report, it may be necessary to draft more than one Executive Summary or even different short dissemination pieces. In deciding whether to write a different Executive Summary than the standard format, consider your key audiences and the messages you want to bring to each one. The goal of the Executive Summary for the database is to share important findings and lessons with those outside of your programme in a concise manner.

The Executive Summary format below has two parts. The first part is standard bibliographical information, name of report, name of author, etc., and UNICEF-specific items, such as PIDB number, needed for report identification. The second part is the Executive Summary itself: background, purpose, methodology, findings, and recommendations. Both parts should be submitted to HQ. You may choose to use the second part as the Executive Summary inside of the report itself, but please still send both parts with the report to HQ to prevent confusion.

Format for Executive Summary

(Section 1 - Bibliographical Information)

Title: Usually includes the type of report and name of the project

Example: Evaluation of Early Childhood Development Programme

Author(s): Names of all the authors of the report in the following format: Last Name, First Initial; Last Name, First Initial

Example: Macom, X.; Pickett, W.

Institutions: Name of the institution contracted to implement the study, survey or evaluation. If a consultant is hired independently of an institution, this may be left blank

Example: London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Date: Year of publication

Region: Abbreviated name of UNICEF region. CEE/CIS, EAPRO, ESARO, MENA, ROSA, TACRO or WCARO

Country: Country name

Type: Survey, study or evaluation

- ◆ *Survey:* An assessment of the conditions of specified population group/s (children, women, adolescents) or public goods (health services, school, water system) at a point in time, e.g. MICS, KAP surveys; survey of quality of health services; Hygiene Practices survey
- ◆ *Study:* An investigation designed to improve knowledge about something (a problem or phenomenon) and understand its direct and underlying causes as well as its consequences on people or environment, e.g. *A study of vulnerability of young people to illicit substance abuse*
- ◆ *Evaluation:* A process to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the value or significance of a programme, project, policy or strategy, e.g. *Evaluation of effectiveness and sustainability of UCI programme*

Judgement on the value or significance is based on criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. In rights-based programming, coverage (to what extent all social groups benefit) is another important evaluation criterion. Evaluations can use data from surveys and studies. Further, in evaluation of humanitarian assistance programmes, four additional criteria are recommended: coverage, coordination, coherence and protection.

Theme: Thematic area as defined in PIDB coding [add a button for a pull down list on website] The theme of an evaluation or study is the same as the theme of the related project or programme



Partners: Sponsoring organizations (funders and /or initiators)

UNICEF in collaboration with a donor, another international organization, a government ministry, a local research institution, etc.

PIDB: The actual PIDB code corresponding to the above theme is also necessary to establish a link between ProMS and the Evaluation Database in the future

Sequence Number: Number assigned to the evaluation as reported in Annex A of the Annual Report

Follow Up: One or two sentences about how the findings of the evaluation were used to improve programming

Languages: Languages that the report is available in

(Section 2 – Summary)

Background:

Brief information about the programme or project that the evaluation is related to, including the major stakeholders, partners and implementing organizations/agencies involved and their respective roles, as well as a brief description on how the evaluation came about.

Purpose/Objective:

A statement of *why* the assessment is needed, how it will benefit the program/project.

List your objectives, specifically, what you hoped to learn from the evaluation, questions to be answered by the evaluation.

Methodology:

A short description of the type of research methods used: sampling (describe the composition, location and number of people surveyed/interviewed/observed and how they were selected), data collection (survey, interviews, observation, desk review, etc.) Actual questions and surveys do not need to be included. Please include limitations if there are any significant drawbacks the audience should be aware of.

Key Findings and Conclusions:

Summary of significant findings and conclusions of the evaluation. All results do not need to be reported in full. Include important data and relevant, succinct conclusions drawn from findings. (If you have difficulty deciding what to include, a good rule of thumb is to look at those findings that led to your conclusions/recommendations; also key conclusions should be short answers to questions raised in the Objectives section.)

Lessons Learned:

(Optional, usually only given for thematic evaluations looking at a specific aspect beyond the level of one project or programme)

Recommendations that can be generalised beyond the specific case to apply to programs globally.

Recommendations:

Overall suggestions of how the project/program can be improved based on the findings.