Orientation on oversight functions and independent offices: Key features of the UNICEF Evaluation Function

Robert McCouch | Director of Evaluation

12 January 2023
Background and overview of the evaluation function

- Historically **one of oldest and best-established evaluation functions** in the United Nations system
- **Evolution of the function** from heavy accountability focus to more integrated accountability-learning focus
- **Fundamental role** is to provide UNICEF and its key stakeholders (including, importantly, the Executive Board) an independent, impartial assessment of the organization’s performance so as to enhance both learning and accountability – *and ultimately to help us all achieve better results for children*
- Fulfils this role by **providing independent evaluative assessments**
  - ... across *wide range of areas*
  - ... in *all phases of the programme cycle*
  - ... at *all levels of the organization*
  - ... increasingly *with evaluation partners*, including governments
- Provides a range of **other public goods**: national evaluation capacity development, methodological guidance, “big-picture” evaluation syntheses
- **Intended impact of the function – better and more results for children** – is achieved through relevant, timely, high-quality, credible and useful evaluations whose recommendations lead to evidence-based decisions/actions by UNICEF and its key stakeholders (including the Executive Board)
Structure of the function: Highly decentralized

### Global Level: Evaluation Office (New York)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Portfolios</th>
<th>Cross-cutting Portfolios</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thematic (based on UNICEF Goal Areas)</td>
<td>Capacity Development (including National Evaluation Capacity Development)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humanitarian (L3s, global humanitarian themes)</td>
<td>Methods, Innovation, Impact, Learning in support of the global evaluation practice and the wider evaluation community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional Effectiveness (overall organizational performance, internal operations, global policy evaluations)</td>
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#### Main responsibilities at global level
- Policy setting
- Management and conduct of global evaluations
- Management and conduct of joint/inter-agency/system-wide evaluations
- Management and conduct of L3 evaluations
- Overall planning, budgeting and reporting
- Fiduciary responsibility for Evaluation Pooled Fund
- Support to specific decentralized evaluations
- Methodological and strategic guidance
- Management of external quality assurance system
- Liaison with global-level partners
- Lead on national evaluation capacity development

### Regional Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional Evaluation Advisers (1 per region)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EAPRO (Bangkok)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECAR (Geneva)</td>
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<td>ESARO (Nairobi)</td>
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<td>LACRO (Panama)</td>
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<td>MENA (Amman)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAR (Katmandu)</td>
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<td>WCARO (Dakar)</td>
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#### Main responsibilities at regional level
- Management and conduct of thematic multi-country evaluations
- Management and conduct of L2 evaluations
- Management and conduct of Country Programme Evaluations
- Management and conduct of joint/inter-agency/system-wide evaluations at regional level
- Support to specific global and decentralized evaluations
- Liaison with regional-level partners
- Contribution to strategic initiatives led by Evaluation Office

### Country Level

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Country Evaluation Specialists and Multi-Country Evaluation Specialists</th>
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<td>(large variations in capacity, size and programmatic focus)</td>
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#### Main responsibilities at country level
- Management and conduct of thematic evaluations, impact evaluations, and other evaluative exercises
- Management and conduct of L1 evaluations
- Management and conduct of joint/inter-agency/system-wide evaluations at country level
- Liaison with country-level partners (government, CSOs, NGOs, UNCT members)
- Contribution to strategic initiatives led by Evaluation Office
- Conduct of non-evaluation analytical exercises (e.g., reviews, studies, research)
Normative foundations of the evaluation function

Applies internationally established principles to the unique context of the UN system, which we follow (and by which we are held to account): Independence, Credibility, Utility

Defines the specific evaluation criteria that are to be applied in our evaluations: Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, Coherence, Sustainability, etc.*

Describes the broader accountability system of UNICEF within which evaluation plays its accountability role, namely by promoting organizational accountability (for results, to children, before its partners — including the Executive Board)

Sets the overall direction for how the function will fulfill its accountability and learning role in the most impactful way, and in line with the UNEG norms and standards, over a five-year period

Sets the overall strategic direction for the wider organization, pointing us to the areas we will cover in our evaluations in a given quadrennium — the programmatic priorities, the overall strategic direction, and the specific strategies envisioned
Independent Peer Review of the UNICEF evaluation function

**Objective:** Determine extent to which the UNICEF evaluation function is optimally positioned to fulfil its learning and accountability role, and to do so in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards

- Led by external panel and supported by consulting team
- Will have recommendations on two levels: for the evaluation function itself, and for the organization more broadly
- Will be followed by management response from UNICEF
- Report and management response will be made publicly available for members of the Executive Board
- Update on Independent Peer Review to be provided to the Executive Board at its February 2023 session

Review and revision of the UNICEF evaluation policy

**Objective:** Critically assess the extent to which the current evaluation policy has helped ensure that the function can fulfil its role in the best way possible, and the extent to which it remains fit-for-purpose for the next five years, with a view to making any necessary revisions

- Led by UNICEF evaluation function itself, in consultation with key stakeholders
- Draft revised evaluation policy to be presented to the Executive Board at its June 2023 session

- Both exercises are mandated in the Executive Board-approved Revised UNICEF Evaluation Policy (2018)
- Both exercises are running concurrently (slated for completion in coming few weeks)
- Exercises are distinct but complementary:
  - Independent Peer Review will likely have some recommendations relevant to the policy revision, but not only policy-related recommendations
  - Policy review and revision process will be closely informed by the Independent Peer Review, but also by many other sources
  - Executive Board members form an essential stakeholder group in both processes
  - Recent Executive Board decisions have underlined the need to strengthen the function on the UNEG norm of Independence, especially at decentralized level of the function
Example: The evaluation lens applied to child malnutrition

Theory of Change for UNICEF’s contribution to ending child malnutrition (SDG 2.1.1, 2.2.2)

INPUT into

- Food production, cash income
- Caregiver control of resources and autonomy, knowledge, literacy and beliefs
- Safe water supply, adequate sanitation and hygiene

INTERMEDIARY OUTCOMES

- Household food security and diet
- Feeding practices and feeding styles
- Care for mothers and children
- Access and health seeking behaviour
- Health environment and services

CAUSAL PATHWAY

- Child’s dietary intake
- Child’s health status

OUTCOMES

SDG 2.1.1 and 2.2.2 Malnutrition (stunting and wasting)

IMPACT

- To what extent are we doing the right things to address the issue based on, e.g., established international standards, the state of the knowledge of what works, the specific population context?
- How well have we worked on the issue in a well-integrated manner, e.g., in addressing the health- and nutrition-aspects of the problem, between the physiological and behavioural science spheres, in a well-coordinated way with government and our other partners?
- How well have we managed our financial, human and physical assets, as well as partnerships, in pursuit of results?
- To what extent are the positive effects/impacts achieved likely to last, based on current and anticipated conditions?
- To what extent have our contributions actually helped increase children’s dietary intake and improve their health status in the short to medium term?
- To what extent have our contributions to improved health and nutrition actually helped reduce malnutrition in the longer term?
- How well have we managed our financial, human and physical assets, as well as partnerships, in pursuit of results?
- To what extent are the positive effects/impacts achieved likely to last, based on current and anticipated conditions?
- How systematically and meaningfully have we integrated the lenses of gender, disability, and other sources of inequity into our work in this area?
- What unintended results have resulted from our work (whether positive or negative)?
- The Why Question – i.e., What factors (internal and external) were most influential on outcomes?

UNEG Evaluation Criterion

- Relevance
- Coherence
- Effectiveness
- Impact
- Efficiency
- Sustainability
- Other: equity, coordination, etc.

Overarching Evaluation Questions (Example Questions)

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Key evaluation stakeholders

- **Internal evaluation users**
  - Office of the Executive Director
  - Evaluands
  - Evaluands’ internal stakeholders
  - Other knowledge functions

- **Evaluation governance**
  - Audit Advisory Committee
  - Executive Board

- **External evaluation partners**
  - UN agency counterparts
  - National governments
  - Civil society organizations
  - Non-governmental Organizations
  - Affected populations – including, and especially, children

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- The Director of Evaluation presents to the Executive Board: (a) the results of specific evaluations, (b) the Annual Report on the Evaluation Function, and (c) other documents and updates on request (e.g., the quadrennial Plan for Global Evaluations every 4 years and the Revised Evaluation Policy every 5 years) for its discussion and decision.
- The Director of Evaluation consults the Executive Board on various matters (e.g., policy revision) and Executive Board members can seek ad hoc discussions with the Director of Evaluation on any matters.
- The Executive Board is consulted on the appointment of a new Director of Evaluation.
Thank you.