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Update on the status of the independent peer review of the UNICEF evaluation function

Summary

The present report is intended to provide the Executive Board with an update on the independent peer review of the UNICEF evaluation function that was launched in 2022 and is currently under way. The report provides an overview of the objective and purposes of the exercise, as well as its scope, approach and methods. It then provides a brief summary of the role of the peer review panel and of the profiles of its members.

The peer review aims to provide UNICEF and its key stakeholders with an independent, impartial and evidence-based assessment of the current state of the UNICEF evaluation function and the extent to which it is optimally positioned to serve its learning and accountability role within the organization. In keeping with the scope of all such reviews, it assesses the state of the function in accordance with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards (revised 2016) of independence, credibility and utility, and as well as three further institution-level factors that are determinants of the evaluation function's ability to achieve these standards, namely roles and responsibilities for evaluation at all levels of the organisation; the use of and follow-up on evaluations across the organization to ensure that independent and credible evaluations result in learning, accountability, and informed decision-making that brings material improvement in the work of the organization on behalf of children; and the overall enabling environment for the evaluation function. The peer review thus focuses simultaneously on the evaluation function itself and on the wider enabling environment in which it operates. Its ultimate purpose is to ensure that the UNICEF evaluation function is optimally positioned to contribute to positive outcomes for children. Its recommendations will therefore provide crucial inputs into the revision of the UNICEF evaluation policy (2018) slated for 2023, as well as other changes in evaluation practice or the evaluation culture in ways that extend beyond the policy realm.

* E/ICEF/2023/1.



This peer review is the third such exercise since the creation of the peer review modality. It is rooted in the UNEG Framework for Professional Peer Reviews and is being led by an external peer review panel supported by a team of consultants. The panel is composed of a diverse range of senior-level professional evaluators representing a range of institutional affiliations; balance in gender and geographical representation was also sought. In addition, careful attention was paid to minimizing any real or perceived conflict of interest among the Panel members.

Despite being commissioned by UNICEF in a timely manner in March 2022, the peer review was officially launched later than planned due to delays in finalizing the terms of reference (i.e., September 2022) and identifying panel members who were qualified and available and who were free of any conflict of interest (i.e., in July 2022). Further delays occurred in the recruitment and on-boarding of qualified and available consultants, with the consulting team only coming on board in early November 2022.

The report concludes with a section that situates the peer review alongside the various other exercises and considerations influencing the further evolution of the function. These include the recent discussions and decisions of the Executive Board, the advice of the UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee, and the recommendations in the “Evaluability assessment and formative evaluation of the UNICEF positioning to achieve the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025” (EAFE) completed in October 2022, a summary of which is being presented alongside the present report at this session of the Executive Board.

Finally, the report outlines next steps in the process to ensure that the exercise is effectively and efficiently harnessed in the service of its main purpose: the revision of the UNICEF evaluation policy in 2023, particularly in light of the nine-month delay between its commissioning and its commencement. Owing to this delay, the Panel and consultants, together with the staff of the evaluation function as well as the Office of the Executive Director and the Global Evaluation Committee will, in accordance with the organizational commitment to agility in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, need to work in an agile manner to not only ensure that the peer review is of high quality and credibility, but rather also that its findings and recommendations are rapidly management response and seamlessly brought to bear on the review and revision of the evaluation policy in a timely fashion.

A draft of the revised evaluation policy will be presented to the Executive Board for discussion and comment at its annual session in June 2023, revised to address this feedback, and presented for Executive Board decision at its second regular session in September 2023.

I. Overview

1. Since its establishment, the UNICEF evaluation function has grown and evolved along with developments in the practice of evaluation and with organizational changes in UNICEF and the context in which it operates.
2. The revised evaluation policy of UNICEF ([E/ICEF/2018/4](#)) defines and guides the evaluation function, ensuring that it meets the core purposes of organizational learning and accountability. The revised policy identifies these interrelated purposes in support of the organization's mandate: evaluation supports learning and decision-making, which in turn leads to better results for children through enhanced relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, coherence and sustainability. At the same time, evaluation helps to hold UNICEF accountable for its contributions to the achievement of results for children.
3. This core role of evaluation, shared across the entities of the United Nations system and in public and non-governmental organizations globally, remains constant. However, the context in which UNICEF works changes over time, sometimes considerably. The organization's budget has increased substantially in recent years, bringing with it a corresponding increase in the need for evaluation evidence to provide insights into organizational performance and account for the results (including impact-level results) achieved with these increased resources. This trend raises questions as to whether the evaluation function is fit to meet these needs and whether the function can meet this need.
4. The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has also brought about major changes in how the organization works, with ramifications for how the evaluation function itself works. In the face of the pandemic, the function has introduced new and innovative evaluation tools, methods and products; at the same time, this development raises questions about how to harness these tools to best support the organization. Even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, environmental, economic, political and humanitarian crises had stalled progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. With only seven years remaining before the Sustainable Development Goal target year of 2030, the effort to regain ground will demand that the evaluation function, in its dual learning and accountability role, be optimally positioned to help UNICEF and its partners advance the rights of every child.
5. These developments are just a few of the key currents prompting the ongoing evolution of the evaluation function. There are numerous other developments, however, and these have been described in previous reports to the Executive Board. These include broader technological advances, economic uncertainties, geopolitical shifts, the increasing impacts of climate change, forced migration, and the collective and cumulative effects of these forces on children.¹
6. The evaluation function, therefore, while retaining its core role, cannot remain static but must rather evolve and mature in tandem with the organization in which it resides. Accordingly, and in parallel to these developments, the governing bodies of the United Nations system have increased their scrutiny of United Nations agencies' positioning of their respective oversight functions, including evaluation, with a particular focus on ensuring that these functions possess a sufficient degree of independence to provide the most robust and credible accounting of organizational performance possible. In the case of evaluation, this notion of independence means that the function is optimally positioned to be able to ask the evaluative questions about the organization's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, coherence and

¹ See [E/ICEF/2022/3](#), paras. 1–11, and [E/ICEF/2022/17](#), para. 5.

sustainability that need to be asked, and that it is able to answer these questions, without undue interference from management or other stakeholders. Governing bodies have, by extension, likewise scrutinized the extent to which the recommendations of the oversight functions, including evaluation, are being valued and meaningfully used as inputs into decisions and actions to improve organizational performance.

7. Since 2005, the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD-DAC) have conducted independent peer reviews of the evaluation functions of their respective member organizations. The Joint Inspection Unit, in a 2014 paper,² acknowledges the value of the independent peer review modality as a means of strengthening the evaluation function by improving quality assurance and enhancing its credibility. The Unit notes that external assessment (including through UNEG/OECD-DAC peer review) is significantly related to the maturation of the evaluation function. A more recent assessment³ further concludes that peer reviews have added to the credibility and utility of individual evaluation functions.

8. UNEG has developed a “Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Function of UN Organizations”, which was most recently updated in 2011. This Framework ensures that peer reviews follow a rigorous process focused on the extent of the reviewed function’s adoption and application of UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation, coupled with an assessment of the overall enabling environment for the function within which the function resides – including, and most centrally, the extent to which the function is accorded the requisite degree of independence to conduct its work. The Framework acknowledges that peer reviews are not fully fledged evaluations in their scope or their specific processes and timelines; however, it does stipulate that reviews should apply evaluation methods and follow evaluation standards as a means of ensuring a high level of rigour, relevance and utility in their analyses.

9. The present report is intended to provide the Executive Board with an update on the independent peer review of the UNICEF evaluation function that was launched in 2022 and is currently under way. The report provides an overview of the objective and purposes of the exercise, as well as its scope, approach and methods, and a summary of the role of the peer review panel and its members. The report concludes with a section that situates the peer review alongside the various other exercises and considerations influencing the further evolution of the function. It also outlines next steps in the process to ensure that the exercise is effectively and efficiently harnessed in the service of its main purpose: the revision of the UNICEF evaluation policy in 2023, a draft of which will be presented to the Executive Board for discussion and comment at its annual session in June 2023, following which it will be revised to address this feedback, and presented for decision at the second regular session in September 2023.

II. Introduction

10. The current peer review is the third such exercise since the creation of the peer review modality. The first review, conducted in 2006, paved the way for the 2008 revision of the UNICEF evaluation policy and codified the policy’s adherence to the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation. The second review in 2017 was a

² Joint Inspection Unit, *Analysis of the evaluation function in the United Nations system*, JIU/REP/2014/6, Geneva, 2014.

³ United Nations Evaluation Group, *Stocktaking study on the utility of peer review*, December 2021.

precursor to the UNICEF revised evaluation policy of 2018. The revised policy situated the evaluation function in the updated UNEG Norms and Standards and in the changes in the UNICEF operating environment, including the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and new foundational frameworks related to disaster risk reduction, climate change and financing for development.

11. As with the previous peer reviews, the conduct of this peer review is rooted in the UNEG Framework for Professional Peer Reviews. This Framework, developed in 2011 and incorporating lessons from earlier peer reviews of UNEG members, provides a level of rigour and consistency across peer reviews of United Nations organizations. The Framework ensures that, in their assessment of the evaluation functions themselves, peer reviews focus on core norms and standards expected of the function, in particular independence, credibility and utility, while also attending to their key line of inquiry related to the overall operating environment for the function. Within this overarching focus, the peer review is intended to fulfil number of objectives, namely:

(a) It provides an independent and professional assessment of the extent to which UNEG Norms and Standards have been adopted, and thus may identify any areas where policy and practice should be improved to meet the Norms and Standards.

(b) It builds greater understanding, confidence and use of evaluation systems within the organization. This can support better understanding of any needed improvements in the function, better integration of the function into broader organizational systems, and stronger evaluation planning and budgeting within the organization.

(c) It provides a process for assessing the evaluation function that avoids direct assessment on the part of the corresponding organization's management, thus avoiding any compromise to the independence of the evaluation function.

(d) It can share good practices, experience and mutual learning between and among the evaluation functions of United Nations agencies, as well as the evaluation functions and systems of Governments.

12. Within the Framework for Professional Peer Reviews, there is flexibility for the terms of reference of individual peer reviews to respond to the specifics of the evaluation function within the organization under review. The terms of reference for the current peer review of the UNICEF evaluation function, in recognition of the numerous, complex and interrelated factors described above, thus acknowledge a profoundly different operating environment in the ways described above than was the case during previous peer reviews – and what this means for the UNICEF evaluation function itself and for the wider organization in which it is intended to serve the learning and accountability for children.

13. Accordingly, while the terms of reference of the peer review are consistent with the UNEG Framework for Professional Peer Reviews, they provide greater and more granular contextualization in applying the assessment criteria to the organizational realities of UNICEF. These dimensions are noted in annex I. The terms of reference were finalized by the external peer review panel on 1 September 2022 and subsequently shared with the members of the UNICEF Global Evaluation Committee for discussion and comment on 7 September 2022.

III. The 2022 independent peer review of the UNICEF evaluation function

A. Objectives and purpose

14. At its core, the peer review provides UNICEF and its key stakeholders with an independent, impartial and evidence-based assessment of the current state of the UNICEF evaluation function and the extent to which the function is optimally positioned to serve its learning and accountability role within the organization. It seeks to answer a single overarching question, as follows:

Based on the experience implementing the 2018 revised evaluation policy of UNICEF over the past five years, what aspects of the policy have worked well in practice in optimizing the evaluation function in the organization in accordance with the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation and should therefore be retained and potentially built on, which aspects have not worked well and should be changed or abandoned, and what gaps evident in the 2018 policy need to be filled in the 2023 evaluation policy?

15. Implicit in this overarching question is a simultaneous focus on the evaluation function itself and on the wider enabling environment in which it operates, which corresponds to the dual levels of assessment in the peer review mechanisms. While most of the peer review recommendations will likely entail corresponding changes to the evaluation policy during its revision in 2023 (or, alternatively, for those areas the peer review finds to be functioning well under the current policy, the retention of the corresponding aspects of the policy), some recommendations might instead (or additionally) entail changes in evaluation practice or the evaluation culture in ways that extend beyond the realm of policy solutions. With these objectives in hand, the ultimate purpose of the exercise is to ensure that the UNICEF evaluation function, in line with the UNEG Norms and Standards – and both in its learning and accountability roles, and both in the policy and practice of the organization – is optimally positioned to contribute to positive outcomes for children.

B. Scope

16. The core assessment criteria being used in this exercise are the same as those applied in previous peer reviews, namely the UNEG standards of independence, credibility and utility of the function and of the work it produces. Independence is vital for ensuring the integrity of the function to focus on those areas of organizational performance that need to be evaluated, and to evaluate them without interference. Credibility is vital to ensure that the results of evaluations are considered worthy of organizational attention and action. Utility points to the ultimate aim of evaluation, namely to produce credible and independent analyses of organizational performance that stakeholders can learn from and act on.

17. In addition to these assessment criteria, the review assesses three further institutional-level factors that are key determinants of the evaluation function's ability to achieve optimal independence, credibility and utility. The first of these criteria is roles and responsibilities for evaluation at all levels of the decentralized organization (global, regional and national, as well as between the evaluation function and other complementary functions such as research, audit and data). The second criterion is the use of and follow-up on evaluations across the organization to ensure that independent and credible evaluations result in learning, accountability, and informed decision-making that brings material improvement in the work of the organization on behalf of children. The third criterion is the overall enabling environment for the evaluation function, including whether there is a robust organizational culture that

values evaluation as a basis for evidence-based decision-making, recognizes evaluation as a key corporate function for achieving results and accountability, and provides adequate and predictable resources to the function. The full set of criteria is provided in annex I, together with a more detailed description of each criterion and the specific dimension to be explored under each.

18. The peer review focuses particularly on the period 2018–2022, the time frame for implementation of the current evaluation policy. However, where useful, it considers the development of the evaluation function over a longer period, and its potential in the coming years.

C. Approach and methods

19. In accordance with its grounding in evaluative methods, the peer review panel is following an approach that is both objective, independent and evidence-based, on one hand, and participatory and consultative on the other hand. By the completion of the peer review, the panel will have engaged with stakeholders with evaluation function responsibilities (including the Executive Director, Deputy Executive Directors, Representatives, and Regional and Division Directors, as well as the organization’s evaluation practitioners themselves), in addition to the many other staff members who are end users of evaluations. Consultations will have also been held with the members of the UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee as well as counterparts in other United Nations agencies. Importantly, members of the Executive Board from all regions will have been invited to share their views, insights and guidance during data collection. The Executive Board will subsequently have an opportunity to comment on the draft revised evaluation policy at its annual session in June 2023, prior to discussing the final revised evaluation policy at the second regular session in September 2023.

20. Specific quantitative and qualitative methods are being employed to generate, analyse and triangulate data. These include the following modalities:

(a) **Self-assessment of the UNICEF evaluation function.** This self-assessment is an essential element of the UNEG Framework for Professional Peer Reviews and is anchored in the terms of reference of the peer review. The self-assessment involves two separate surveys, one administered to evaluation function staff at all three levels of the organization and the other administered to senior management across all levels of the organization who have responsibilities for the evaluation function, as well as those who utilize evaluations and evaluation evidence. Both surveys were deployed in October and November 2022.

(b) **Document review.** By the completion of the exercise, the panel will have conducted an extensive desk review of relevant documents. Key among these are: the 2018 revised evaluation policy of UNICEF and its implementation procedure; annual reports of the evaluation function from 2018 to 2021 and their corresponding management responses; previous peer review reports and their management responses; audit reports of the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations and the United Nations Board of Auditors; reports of the Multilateral Organisation Performance Accountability Network (MOPAN); the evaluation policies of comparator organizations; and others. The panel will also have reviewed a sample of UNICEF evaluation reports (as well as their corresponding Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS) ratings on the quality of these evaluation report) in exploring issues related to utility and use. It will also have reviewed a wide range of other documents that are particularly pertinent in addressing each of the review assessment criteria.

(c) **Secondary data analysis.** The panel’s analysis will have benefited from an examination of all of the most relevant UNICEF data sets, including those related

to the key performance indicators for the evaluation function. These include data on evaluation coverage, quality and use, among others, garnered from the GEROS quality assessment tool.

(d) **Key informant interviews and focus group discussions.** The panel will have conducted a series of interviews and focus groups with the key internal stakeholders of the UNICEF evaluation function (i.e., those with roles and responsibilities for the evaluation function, end users of evaluations and other evaluative exercises, and the staff of the other UNICEF oversight and evidence functions) as well as with evaluation staff themselves. The full membership of the Executive Board will have been invited for consultation as well, as will the UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee.

(e) **Direct observation.** Wherever relevant and feasible, the panel will have seized opportunities to undertake direct observations of key meetings and other events, either in person or virtually. For example, members of the Panel and one its consultants were able to attend the UNICEF Global Evaluation Meeting in New York from 7 to 11 November 2022, providing a first-hand opportunity to benefit from internal discussions within the function and interview key stakeholders, thus enabling them to gain a rich and rapid understanding of the most salient concerns and aspirations of staff across all three levels of the function.

(f) **Comparator analysis.** The peer review includes an analysis of the evaluation functions of comparable organizations, in order to benchmark practice and draw lessons that might be useful for revising the UNICEF evaluation policy and enhancing the function.

D. Panel role and member profiles

21. In line with the UNEG Framework, the Chair of the peer review panel was selected by the UNEG peer review working group, with additional members of the panel being identified by the Chair. This aspect of the process was important for ensuring the independence and impartiality of the panel members. The process was also undertaken in close communication with the UNICEF Director of Evaluation to ensure that the final slate of panel members did not represent a conflict of interest with or for the Director of Evaluation or the evaluation function more widely.

22. The panel consists of six senior-level professional evaluators representing a range of institutional affiliations, as detailed in annex I. The Chair of the panel and one other member are senior staff of United Nations agencies comparable to UNICEF in size and function (the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)). One member leads the evaluation function in the Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning of Nigeria. Two panel members hold senior evaluation positions in OECD-DAC country governments (the Netherlands and the United States of America), with one of them possessing expertise in the evaluation of programmes funded by official development assistance and evaluation capacity development. The sixth member of the panel leads the evaluation function in the International Committee of the Red Cross, whose humanitarian focus is closely relevant to that of UNICEF.

23. The panel is supported by a team of consultants that it has directly recruited. The lead consultant is, inter alia, the President of the European Evaluation Society and an adviser to the World Bank on the Global Evaluation Initiative. The lead consultant is supported by a second consultant and two research assistants. The team of consultants is responsible for all data collection and preliminary analysis to support the work of the panel.

E. Review status

24. Despite being commissioned by UNICEF in a timely manner (i.e., in March 2022), the peer review was officially launched later than planned due to delays in finalizing the terms of reference (i.e., September 2022) and in identifying panel members who were qualified and available and who were free of any conflict of interest (i.e., in July 2022). Further delays occurred in the recruitment and on-boarding of qualified and available consultants, with the consulting team only coming on board in early November 2022. Owing to this nine-month delay, the panel and consultants, together with the staff of the evaluation function as well as the Office of the Executive Director and the Global Evaluation Committee, will, in accordance with the organizational commitment to agility in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025,⁴ need to work in an agile manner to ensure that the peer review is not only of high quality and credibility, but rather also that its findings and recommendations are rapidly and seamlessly brought to bear on the review and revision of the evaluation policy in a timely fashion.

25. As indicated above, the terms of reference of the peer review were finalized by the peer review panel and shared with UNICEF senior management in September 2022. The self-assessment surveys were completed in October and November 2022. All remaining aspects of data collection have been slated for November and December 2022, with report drafting scheduled for January 2023.

26. The peer review panel aims to submit a draft report and finalize its report to UNICEF based on stakeholder feedback during the first quarter of 2023. Despite the delays to date and the time constraint this has placed on the peer review process, it will be necessary to ensure sufficient, and sufficiently timely, engagement with UNICEF – i.e., with the Global Evaluation Committee and other internal stakeholders as well as the Director of Evaluation and the staff of the evaluation function – before finalization of the peer review report. Accordingly, a timeline has been shared with all parties well in advance of the report review and finalization process, with a view to ensuring that the process proceeds in a thorough and thoughtful manner without compromising the tight time frame at hand.

IV. Other processes influencing the development of the evaluation function

27. Alongside the peer review, there are other processes in which the evaluation function is engaged and which have the potential to influence the development of the function broadly and the evaluation policy more specifically. These include the various exercises that will be included in the desk review component of data collection. They also include a further report being presented in parallel to the present report at the first regular session of the Executive Board in February 2023, namely, a summary of the report associated with the “Evaluability assessment and formative evaluation of the UNICEF positioning to achieve the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022–2025”. With the collective role of data, research, evaluation and knowledge management representing one of the nine change strategies noted in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, the evaluability assessment and formative evaluation included an assessment of the extent to which these functions are adequately positioned to enable results for children both individually and in coordination with each other. The report issued recommendations in this area that will likely serve as further inputs into the revised policy and to the day-to-day practice of evaluation, as well as these distinct but complementary functions.

⁴ See E/ICEF/2021/25, pp. 1, 6–10.

28. Recent discussions and decisions of the Executive Board, in tandem with the advice of the UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee, form a further source of guidance in the revision of the evaluation policy. The present report provides one vehicle for ensuring connectivity between Executive Board deliberations and the revision of the evaluation policy. The engagement of the Executive Board and the UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee during and after the peer review constitutes one further and important means of ensuring this linkage.

V. Next steps

29. The peer review panel will present its final report to UNICEF during the first quarter of 2023, and UNICEF will prepare a management response to the peer review report. Owing to the aforementioned delays, this process will not be completed in time for submission of the final report and management response to the Executive Board in advance of its annual session in June 2023. However, both the peer review report and the corresponding management response will be made publicly available on the UNICEF website and on the UNEG website so that members of the Executive Board may access the report ahead of the session if they so wish. Therefore, while the annual session will focus on a discussion of the draft revised evaluation policy that will have been informed by the peer review, the peer review report and the management response will be fully accessible by then should the Executive Board wish to reference these documents during the annual session.

30. The Evaluation Office will utilize the findings and recommendations of the peer review report and the UNICEF management response, alongside other sources of guidance, such as those outlined above, to draft a revised evaluation policy for discussion and comment at the annual session in June 2023. During the policy revision process, the Evaluation Office will consult closely with the Executive Director, the Global Evaluation Committee and other UNICEF divisions and offices, as well as the Executive Board and the UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee. Based on the comments received during these processes, the Director of Evaluation will present a final revised evaluation policy of UNICEF for discussion and decision at the second regular session in September 2023.

Annex I

Description of the six peer review assessment criteria and specific dimensions of each that will be explored *

Assessment criterion	Description	Dimensions to be explored
Independence	<p>In keeping with the UNEG norms and standards, independence will be assessed in both its structural and behavioural dimensions – that is, the extent to which the function and its staff are positioned to fulfil their role in undertaking their work to evaluate what needs to be evaluated without interference or undue influence. In light of the decentralized nature of UNICEF’s organisational structure, which extends to the evaluation function itself, this assessment criterion must be explored not only as an overall issue but rather also how it has been experienced at all three levels of the function. Owing to the attention paid in the 2018 Revised evaluation policy for UNICEF to defining specific stakeholder roles in ensuring independence within UNICEF’s decentralized organisational structure, there is a close intersect between this assessment criterion and the criterion of Roles and responsibilities for evaluation described below.</p>	<p>In addition to providing a diagnostic of key stakeholders’ overall perceptions of evaluation independence in UNICEF, as well as a summary of the institutional arrangements currently in place to optimize independence, this line of inquiry will cover the following dimensions</p> <p>Structural independence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which reporting lines of evaluation staff (e.g., Director of Evaluation, Regional Evaluation Advisers, and [Multi-]Country Evaluation Specialists) are maximally enabling of the function’s ability to identify and pursue those topics for: evaluation that are most in need of evaluation, manage evaluations to completion, deliver their results, and elevate evaluation relevant issues of importance, to all key decision-makers without undue influence or interference; • Extent to which evaluation staff are in practice provided direct, unimpeded and confidential access to decision-makers and other key stakeholders, including but not limited to those in their direct report lines, such that the function is able to conduct its work most effectively and without undue influence or interference; • Conduciveness of procedures for identifying, recruiting and appointing senior evaluation staff (Director and REAs) with the requisite technical qualifications and independence; and • Conduciveness of current resourcing arrangements to the independence of the function (see Overall enabling environment). <p>Behavioural independence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which evaluation teams (staff and consultants) have a clear shared understanding of what independence means in practice and comport themselves in a manner that adheres to this standard in both its structural and behavioural dimensions; • Extent to which evaluation teams are given access to all key stakeholders, data, documents and other materials they deem necessary to the conduct of their work; and • Ability of evaluation teams to undertake all aspects of their work without interference or undue influence (including harassment and intimidation) from other corners of the organization
Credibility	<p>Evaluations must be credible – that is, in the evaluation products produced, in the processes followed, and in the people who manage and conduct them, the evaluation must be (and must be seen to be) undertaken in such a manner that its analysis, conclusions and recommendations can be trusted and believed.</p> <p>Thus, for example, the evaluative product itself must be grounded in sound methods and analysis that are also</p>	<p>In addition to providing a diagnostic of key stakeholders’ overall perceptions of evaluation credibility in UNICEF, this line of inquiry will cover the following dimensions:</p> <p>Product aspects of credibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of clarity and comprehensiveness of evaluation reports, and in particular evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations;

Assessment criterion	Description	Dimensions to be explored
	<p>fit-for purpose for the decisions at hand. They must also be of high quality in their substantive grounding, their methods, and the written and oral means by which they are delivered.</p> <p>With respect to process, credibility rests in part on the independence and impartiality with which the exercise has been undertaken. (See <i>Independence</i> above.) It also rests on the extent to which key stakeholders, including duty bearers (e.g. those in charge of program/project implementation) and rights holders (e.g. children and parents) were involved in the evaluation at appropriate junctures, how the analysis and its key messages are rolled out, how recommendations are developed and finalized, and more.</p> <p>Finally, with respect to the people managing and/or conducting the evaluations, these individuals must be (and be seen to be) credible, both in terms of their technical and/or subject-matter expertise and in their “soft” skills such as stakeholder engagement skills, openness to debate and dialogue, written and oral communication skills, and so on.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robustness of the quality assurance system in place and its adequacy for different types of evaluation products (e.g., evaluability assessment, real time evaluations, impact evaluations) with particular focus on methodological soundness of the design and implementation; • mechanisms to enhance the credibility and utility of reports; • Involvement of external quality reviewers, advisory panels, etc.; • Extent to which evaluation reports and quality assessments are made publicly available in timely and comprehensive manner. <p>Process aspects of credibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which evaluation processes are conducted in transparent, independent, and inclusive ways with the involvement of relevant stakeholders; • Extent to which evaluations are carried out by using appropriate, up-to-date, rigorous, objective and reliable methods while utilizing advanced evaluative approaches and innovative solutions; • Extent to which ethical guidelines for evaluation (such as the <i>UNICEF Procedure on Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis</i>) as well as Human Rights and Gender Equality and Empowerment principles are in place, applied, and reported on in quality assurance mechanisms; • Extent of stakeholders’ engagement and conduct at all stages of the evaluation process. <p>People aspects of credibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which evaluations are managed and carried out by professional and well-equipped individuals and teams (both UNICEF staff and internal/external consultants); • Extent to which mechanisms and systems are in place to ensure continuous skill enhancement of evaluation staff, including trainings and learning opportunities; • Conduct of evaluation staff and consultants, including knowledge of and adherence to principles of professionalism, integrity, ethics and independence as well as fairness and responsiveness in evidence generation and avenues to address pertaining issues; timeliness and appropriateness of staff’s deliverables and products; • Contributions and engagement of UNICEF evaluation staff in evaluation networks and learning events.

Assessment criterion	Description	Dimensions to be explored
<p>Utility</p>	<p>The intention of every evaluation is that it ultimately be used for learning purposes, accountability purposes, or both. According to UNEG norms and standards, in commissioning and conducting an evaluation, already at the outset of an evaluation there should be a clear intention to use the resulting analysis, conclusions or recommendations to inform decisions and actions. Ideally, intended uses should be spelled out as explicitly and specifically as possible at the earliest stages of the evaluation process.</p> <p>The utility of evaluation is closely correlated with its credibility. (See Credibility above.) Utility is also manifested through its use in making relevant and timely contributions to organisational learning, informed decision-making processes and accountability for results. Evaluations could also be used to contribute beyond the organization by generating knowledge and empowering stakeholders.</p> <p>To maximize their utility, findings of UNICEF's evaluative products also need to be disseminated and communicated in effective and accessible ways and through diverse and appropriate channels.</p>	<p>In addition to providing a diagnostic of key stakeholders' overall perceptions of evaluation utility in UNICEF, this line of inquiry will cover the following dimensions:</p> <p>Structural utility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeliness, credibility, and appropriateness of evaluations; quality of evaluation reports and recommendations; • Extend to which the final evaluation products are in line with the intended outcomes as included in their ToRs and inception reports; <p>Ability of the function to respond timely and adequately to arising issues and emergencies. Organisational utility</p> <p>Extent to which evaluative products are informing UNICEF decision-making, are referred to in UNICEF programmes, policies and strategies, and contribute to organisational learning and accountability;</p> <p>Quality, adequacy, and timeliness of management responses to evaluation recommendations, follow-up mechanisms in place for tracking actions;</p> <p>Channels and methods for clearly and effectively communicating and disseminating evaluative products within and outside UNICEF;</p> <p>Evaluation database in place and utilized for referencing, monitoring, and learning.</p> <p>Wider utility</p> <p>Extent to which UNICEF evaluation products contribute to learning and decision-making within the broader UN system;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which lessons and results from UNICEF evaluations are shared with the wider evaluation and UN community.
<p>Roles and responsibilities for evaluation</p>	<p>Roles and responsibilities for the evaluation function are articulated in the 2018 UNICEF Evaluation Policy. These include the respective roles and responsibilities within the function itself – e.g., the roles of the Evaluation Office at global level and the REAs and (M)CES at decentralized level. They also include the roles and responsibilities of other actors outside the evaluation function. The peer review will assess the overall sufficiency and conduciveness of these roles and responsibilities, as currently configured, to the ability of the evaluation function to fulfil its accountability and learning roles to maximum positive impact for children.</p>	<p>In addition to providing an overall descriptive summary of the roles and responsibilities for evaluation as currently configured, this line of inquiry will cover the following dimensions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall clarity and specificity of the roles and responsibilities currently defined in the policy, both within the evaluation function itself and between the function and other key stakeholders (e.g., including the Executive Board, Audit Advisory Committee, Executive Director and Deputy Executive Directors, Global Evaluation Committee, Regional Directors, Country Representatives, reference groups, and others); • Extent to which these roles and responsibilities have been fulfilled according to policy to date; • Degree to which and responsibilities have been executed in line with UNEG norms and standards and in the most conducive way to the function's ability to be maximally beneficial to the organization's work for children – e.g., to ensuring the independence, credibility and utility of the function; to

Assessment criterion	Description	Dimensions to be explored
		<p>ensuring adequate resources for the evaluation function; to fostering a culture of evaluation; to maximizing meaningful uptake of evaluations; and to securing a place for the evaluation function in key management processes;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued appropriateness of the decentralized operating model of the evaluation function, not only for optimizing independence and utility but also for ensuring the overall coherence, efficiency, cost-efficiency, and effectiveness of evaluation at all stages, from planning and budgeting through to conduct and rollout of evaluations (see <i>Overall enabling environment</i> dimension below); <p>Continued appropriateness of the current evaluation management model, in which evaluations are largely managed by UNICEF evaluation staff but conducted by external consultants, toward the same ends described under the previous dimension);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued appropriateness of the current division of evaluation management roles and responsibilities within UNICEF, in which evaluations are largely (and with few exceptions) managed within the independent evaluation function; • Clarity and coherence of roles and responsibilities for other evaluative products beyond evaluations (e.g., reviews, evaluability assessments, syntheses) and the extent to which these are clearly demarcated in the evaluation policy and adequately and appropriately quality assured in the Global Evaluation Report Oversight System (GEROS).

Assessment criterion	Description	Dimensions to be explored
<p>Evaluation follow-up and use</p>	<p>Under the premise that all evaluation is conducted to serve a concrete end purpose – namely, that its recommendations lead to management responses and concrete decisions and actions that in turn result in improved organisational performance – the peer review will explore the extent to which adequate systems are in place to ensure that UNICEF evaluations are not merely of high relevance, quality, credibility and utility, or even that they are conducted with optimal independence, but rather also that they are used in concrete, meaningful ways in pursuit of this end goal. Because stakeholders’ use of an evaluation hinges in part on the perceived independence, credibility, utility of the evaluation at hand, this criterion will examine the extent to which the degree of evaluation use stems from these and other “supply side” issues associated with the work of the evaluation function. It will also examine “consumer-side” issues – that is, the extent to which the degree of evaluation use stems from actions on the part of end users, such as compliance with the management response requirement currently enshrined in the evaluation policy, the extent to which management responses are accompanied by meaningful action plans that are used, monitored and enforced. Finally, the review will examine the extent to which the systems and mechanisms in place for ensuring evaluation use, coupled with roles and responsibilities for follow-through, are appropriate, sufficient, and sufficiently clear as a means of maximizing use.</p>	<p>In addition to exploring the overarching diagnostic dimension related to the current state of evaluation use and providing a descriptive summary of the systems currently in place to maximize meaningful evaluation use, this line of inquiry will cover the following dimensions:</p> <p>“Supply-side” issues relating to evaluation use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which evaluation use has been driven by the perceived independence, credibility and/or utility of evaluations (See <i>Independence, Credibility, and Utility</i> dimensions above); and • Extent to which evaluation use has been driven by the relevance and/or quality of evaluation recommendations, the relevance and/or quality of guidance and related communications provided by the evaluation function (e.g., on management’s responsibilities for follow-through, on the development of high-quality management responses and actions plans), dissemination and knowledge management practices, or other aspects of the recommendation development and finalization process. <p>“Consumer-side” issues relating to evaluation use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which evaluation use has been driven by stakeholder awareness, understanding and/or appreciation of the evaluation function and its role and/or other aspects of the evaluation culture in UNICEF (See the <i>Overall enabling environment for evaluation</i> dimension below); and • Extent to which evaluation use has been driven by stakeholder capacity and/or capability to develop high-quality, meaningful management responses and their corresponding action plans, and to monitor and enforce their implementation and demonstrate use. <p>Systems and mechanisms in place to maximize evaluation use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity of roles and responsibilities related to evaluation use – e.g., for evaluation management responses and corresponding action plans, for follow-through on these tools, for monitoring their implementation, and for reporting on use (See <i>Overall enabling environment for evaluation</i> dimension below); • Presence and adequacy of quality assurance/control mechanisms for ensuring that management responses and action plans are clear, comprehensive and fit-for-purpose in actioning their corresponding recommendations, such that they are likely to lead to desired improvements in organisational performance; and • Presence and adequacy of systems in place for measuring outcome- and impact-level improvements in organisational performance resulting from evaluations.

Assessment criterion	Description	Dimensions to be explored
<p>Overall enabling environment for evaluation</p>	<p>Numerous aspects of this criterion are covered under the foregoing criteria – e.g., with respect to the independence accorded the evaluation function, in the fulfilment of roles and responsibilities in support of the function, and other elements of the analysis. These aspects of the review will therefore contribute to the assessment of UNICEF’s overall operating environment for evaluation. In addition, this criterion will focus on other aspects related to the enabling environment for evaluation that go beyond the issues already covered under the other assessment criteria. These fall into two overarching areas: (1) institutional arrangements for ensuring that the evaluation is ideally positioned not merely for optimal <i>independence</i> but also for optimal <i>coverage</i> of the breadth of the organization’s learning and accountability needs and optimal <i>impact</i> on the work of the organization; and (2) evaluation culture, which entails the extent to which awareness, attitudes and behaviours in the wider organisational culture are amenable to the type of critical self reflection that evaluation lends. In doing so, the respective roles of the evaluation function itself and of other actors in creating and sustaining the institutional arrangements and evaluation culture will be examined; as such, this criterion dovetails off of specific aspects of the <i>Roles and responsibilities for evaluation</i> criterion.</p>	<p>In addition to providing an overall diagnostic of the overall state of the enabling environment for evaluation and a summary of measures take to sustain it, this line of inquiry will cover the following dimensions:</p> <p>Institutional arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which the current operating model of the evaluation function – i.e., a dual global and decentralized model – is not merely most conducive for optimizing independence (see <i>Independence</i> above), but rather also is the most fit-for-purpose model for ensuring maximum streamlining of evaluation plans, maximum coverage, maximum efficiency in the conduct of evaluations, maximum cost-efficiency in the use of resources (both on the evaluation side and on the evaluand side) and overall cost-effectiveness of evaluations; and other areas required for the function to be as impactful as possible in fulfilling its learning and accountability role; • Adequacy and predictability of resources in the evaluation function commensurate with the nature and size of the organization, which will entail the following sub-dimensions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ overall adequacy of human and financial resources being commensurate with the necessary level of evaluative effort to cover the whole of UNICEF operations, as well as for cross-cutting areas such as guidance and other supports, capacity-building efforts, methodological innovation, knowledge management, and other areas; ◦ appropriateness of the current model for resourcing the function (i.e., the Executive Board-mandated 1% set-aside for evaluation across the organization, 1% set-aside of Global Thematic Funds for corporate evaluations and a savings-based Evaluation Pooled Fund to help separate budgeting of the Evaluation Office and the decentralized level) in ensuring adequate and predictable human and financial resources for the function at all levels; and ◦ extent to which the formula(s) for calculating evaluation expenditure is/are compliant with International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) standards and are consistent with practice elsewhere in the UN system. • Extent to which relevant evaluation staff are included in key decision-making processes (e.g., strategic planning, Global Management Team meetings and Regional Management Team meetings) and evaluation is given a place in these and other fora that can strengthen the practice and culture of evaluation (e.g., staff induction sessions); and • Extent to which the evaluation function has developed sufficient guidance and advocacy to reinforce the institutional arrangements conducive to its work. <p>Evaluation culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall level of awareness, understanding and appreciation of evaluation and its role in relation to organisational learning and accountability in UNICEF, and of the 2018 UNICEF Evaluation Policy and the roles and responsibilities it assigns to various stakeholders;

Assessment criterion	Description	Dimensions to be explored
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific commitment from organisational leadership – both in its advocacy for the function and in its concrete practice – to resource, implement, use, publicize and follow-up on evaluations; • Overall clarity of understanding of the measures typically taken to help strengthen the evaluation culture in UNICEF, and the extent to which these measures have been taken; • Adequacy of measures taken to date by those responsible for strengthening the evaluation culture; • Extent to which key measures taken to date (e.g., the 1% evaluation expenditure requirement, the transparent feedback of GEROS evaluation feedback to offices, and so on) have served to incentivize greater evaluation coverage, and, through the generation of more evaluations of high credibility and utility, build the evaluation culture in UNICEF; <p>Extent to which UNICEF’s evaluation culture (as well as its corresponding practices and institutional arrangements) enable those issues and thematic areas that are most in need of evaluative attention to be selected for evaluation, rather than evaluation coverage being determined solely by demand or by other considerations.</p>

* Contents of annex are presented in the same format and using the same conventions as the original document from which they have been excerpted, i.e., the terms of reference for the independent peer review of the UNICEF evaluation function.

Annex II

List of peer review panel members

Ms. Lisa Sutton, Director, Office of Independent Evaluation and Internal Audit Services, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) (Panel Chair)

Mr. Zakariyau Lawal, Director, National Monitoring and Evaluation Department, Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Government of Nigeria

Mr. Winston J. Allen, Agency Evaluation Officer, United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Mr. Peter van der Knaap, Director, Policy and Operations Evaluation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the Netherlands

Ms. Jo Kaybryn, Head of Evaluation Office, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

Mr. Alan M. Fox, Deputy Director, Independent Evaluation Office, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
