Revised evaluation policy of UNICEF

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Director of Evaluation

Informal briefing in advance of the Second Regular Session of the Executive Board 2023
22 August 2023 | 11:00am-1:00pm EDT
Item 7: Revised evaluation policy of UNICEF
Reference document: E/ICEF/2023/27
### Overview and update

#### Independent Peer Review

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2 | UNICEF Executive Board – Item 7: Revised evaluation policy of UNICEF
Recap of policy review and revision process

Focused and methodical, extensive and inclusive process leading

Draft revised policy that was incremental yet still embodied significant areas of strengthening
Recap of policy review and revision process

Continuity

- Overall structure of the function
- Almost all management and governance arrangements
- Establishing more detailed policy positions
- Grounding in established international norms and standards for evaluation
- Central importance of independence and of arrangement to support this

GOVERNANCE

- Necessity of adequate human and financial resources
- Centrality of costed evaluation plans and IMEPS; close links with RBM/Planning

RESOURCING

- Criticality of close collaboration and partnership, both internally and externally
- Reliance upon external expertise, especially for implementation and quality control
- Stakeholder rights of inclusion; intent to build counterpart and civil capacities
- Importance of partnership based on comparative advantages and common interests

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

- Designating certain activities as mandatory
- Focus on utilization, not on just producing evaluation products
- Diverse evaluation products/activities to benefit varied contexts & stakeholders

UTILITY & USE

- Importance of developing the evaluation culture as well as technical capacities
- Attention to risks and risk mitigation

CULTURE
## Recap of policy review and revision process

### Main areas of change to 2018 policy rooted in clearly articulated problem statements

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<th>Problem statements</th>
<th>Associated policy solutions in draft document</th>
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<td>1. The evaluation function is not well understood throughout the organization due to the dry and overly technical language used in the current policy. It reads like standard operating procedures instead of being rooted in core principles that are important to the organization and its stakeholders. This misses an opportunity to raise awareness of the function and strengthen the evaluation culture.</td>
<td>1. Greater precision surrounding the purposes of evaluation 2. Explicit explanation of the key principles underlying the evaluation function and the specific provisions contained in the policy</td>
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<td>2. The standard definition of evaluation is not suitable for UNICEF's context, which now includes a broader range of evaluative exercises. Current coverage targets are inflexible and do not allow these exercises to contribute to the organization's evaluation commitment.</td>
<td>1. Contextualization of the core UNEG definition within UNICEF 2. Refinement of coverage targets to reflect new realities</td>
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<td>3. Since 2018, more focus has been put on meeting quantitative key performance indicators, but it is unclear if evaluations are effectively contributing to organizational results.</td>
<td>1. Improved guidance on evaluation planning methods 2. Clearer, more expanded role of evaluation managers 3. Measures to enhance evaluation use</td>
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<td>4. The current policy lacks specific guidance on how the evaluation function can maintain independence for credibility while staying connected to management for relevance and utility, especially within the organization's decentralized structure.</td>
<td>1. Adjustment of senior management roles to the evolving context 2. Adaptation of evaluation function roles to the evolving context</td>
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<td>5. UNICEF’s evidence functions are not fully leveraging their common interests and comparative strengths.</td>
<td>1. Demarcation between evaluation and other evidence functions and a commitment to coordination and collaboration</td>
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<td>6. External partnerships, particularly in relation to national evaluation capacity development, have been underemphasized in the policy.</td>
<td>1. More explicit commitment to partnering with governments, academia and private sector in addition to traditional partners 2. Stronger commitment to national evaluation capacity development</td>
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<td>7. Human resource investments in evaluation are vaguely defined in the policy, and financial investments are inconsistently applied across the organization over time.</td>
<td>1. Clearer expectation-setting around human resources targets 2. Clearer expectation-setting around financial resources</td>
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## Changes resulting from the Independent Peer Review

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<th>Sub-recommendations</th>
<th>Policy measures</th>
<th>Measures beyond policy</th>
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<td><strong>1</strong> UNICEF management should ensure the sufficient and predictable funding of the evaluation function. The 1% target should be clarified including and how it is calculated and what is included.</td>
<td>1. Utilize 1% as a mechanism for timely and predictable evaluation funding, excluding fundraising responsibility for evaluation function. 2. Establish clearer sustainable funding levels for evaluation, presenting to EB for informed investment decision. 3. Align funding methods with program cycles for improved evaluation fund efficiency, enhancing resource allocation and monitoring.</td>
<td>Calculation of 1% agreed with OED/DFAM and addressed in para 78 and related footnote</td>
<td>Briefing Note with resourcing requests over OMP period submitted by EO in August 2023</td>
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<td><strong>2</strong> The evaluation function should build on its added value by identifying, together with other knowledge functions in the organization, specific and focused ways to work more together.</td>
<td>1. Create synergies with other knowledge functions 2. Involve children and young people in evaluation 3. Invest in digital technologies</td>
<td>Explicit commitment to cooperation with the other UNICEF evidence functions included within para 42</td>
<td>Additional $9m mobilized for joined-up evidence production in the social policy area. Several potential initiatives proposed by EO</td>
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<td><strong>3</strong> UNICEF should maintain and further strengthen the improvements that have been achieved in its evaluation Human Resources and leadership capacities.</td>
<td>1. Maintain direct reporting of Evaluation Director to UNICEF Executive Director, with access to Executive Board. 2. Sustain experienced Evaluation Director and Deputy Director appointments. 3. Expand regional evaluation presence, assess and improve reporting structures. 4. Foster career growth for country office evaluation practitioners. 5. Persist in staff development, refine external evaluation processes, consider expansion.</td>
<td>Accountabilities for evaluation HR strengthened at all levels (paras 45-62). Decentralized evaluation roles, staffing requirements and competencies strengthened (paras 72-77)</td>
<td>Regular meetings now held between Evaluation Director and OED. Evaluation skills mapping underway with DHR. Continuing professional development opportunities arranged through two-way stretches, trainings etc.</td>
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<td><strong>4</strong> UNICEF should use its unique mandate and visibility to work with and influence the external evaluation environment of UN agencies, academics, voluntary evaluation organizations and foundations to promote national evaluation capacities and mobilize evaluative action in support of UNICEF’s mission.</td>
<td>1. Share insights via academic journals and conferences. 2. Partner with evaluation societies to amplify UNICEF’s impact. 3. Collaborate with corporate and government partners for evaluation support.</td>
<td>Commitments to NECD have been strengthened in the Policy incl strengthening capacities for country-led evaluations and VNR’s in support of SDG delivery and UN coherence (paras 66-70)</td>
<td>NECD investments substantially enhanced incl. dedicated trainings with govs.. UNICEF is now co-lead of the Global SDG Synthesis Coalition and a member of the Global Evaluation Initiative</td>
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Changes since Annual Session of the Executive Board

Feedback received from Executive Board and Audit Advisory Committee in May-June 2023

- Acknowledgement of the extensive process and intensive consultations that fed into the policy revision process
- Provision for an independent midterm evaluation of independence-enhancing measures in the policy
- More explicit emphasis on several existing areas of importance to the Executive Board (e.g., joint, inter-agency, country-led and system-wide evaluations; national evaluation capacity development; outcome- and impact-level measurement; gender, disability and climate)
- Clearer identification of the range of exercises not covered by the policy (i.e., monitoring, research, data analysis)
- Clarification of where independence resides (i.e., with the UNICEF evaluation function, not external consultants)
- Reduction in the section on cooperation with other evidence functions, while retaining evaluation function's own commitment to such cooperation
- More explicit identification of evaluation function's central role in determining what type of exercise should be done in specific contexts, and at what level of effort and with what resources, based on its independent perspective on all attendant factors
- Greater emphasis on the relational aspect of the matrix management model (i.e., between and among the Regional Director, Director of Evaluation, and Regional Evaluation Adviser) as a key element in ensuring its success, rather than on the mechanics of reporting lines
- Identification of the Global Management Team as a key forum for discussing evaluation issues
- Inclusion of the formula for calculating progress toward the 1% target
- Small number of non-substantive copyediting and format changes in order to enhance the document's logical flow in a few areas
- Deletion of select non-substantive words and sentences to bring word count back within range of the 8500-word limit
Looking ahead

**Independent Peer Review**

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Looking ahead

Implications for future Annual Reports on the UNICEF Evaluation Function (AREFs):

- **More analytical** in exploring the underlying factors affecting organizational performance in relation to KPIs
- **More holistic** in reporting on the actual maturity of the function and its enabling environment (including assumptions, risks and drivers) as well as on KPI performance
Thank you.