EVALUATION IN THE UN SYSTEM[1]

a. The Purpose of Evaluation

Evaluation is an instrument that predominates in the national and international public sectors as a means to ensure substantive (rather than financial) accountability of the investments made, and as a basis for learning to improve the relevance and quality of future actions.

Within the specific context of the UN, evaluation helps to ensure the accountability of the various UN bodies, their managers and staff, to the General Assembly (GA) and/or their respective Governing Bodies, as well as to national stakeholders (particularly national governments). At the same time, it supports reflection and learning by the Member States, Governing Bodies, management and staff, as well as national stakeholders, on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of UN activities, so as to be able to improve on them.

Evaluation serves this dual purpose through the provision of reliable and credible evaluative evidence, analyses and information to Member States, the Secretary-General, programme managers, staff, and national stakeholders, on the activities of the UN system and their impact. These evaluation outputs are provided in the form of evaluation reports, briefings, various information exchanges and other evaluation products; including the act of conducting or participating in the evaluation itself. In order to be of use, they have to be provided in a timely manner, in relation to the different organizations' programme planning, budgeting, implementation and reporting cycles.

Because evaluation has to simultaneously support both accountability and learning at different levels of governance, oversight, management, and operations, the conduct of evaluation has to be carried out at these different levels within each organization. Typically, in large, complex organizations with decentralized, global operations, evaluation is divided between centralized and decentralized functions. Due to the fragmented nature of governance in the UN, with various subsidiary organs and independent boards responsible for the various funds, programmes and specialized agencies, there is no single center for the production or consumption of evaluation.

b. How Evaluation Works in the UN

As can be seen in the Governance and Oversight overview[2], the United Nations system consists of various entities with diverse mandates and governing structures that aim to engender principles such as global governance, consensus building, peace and security, justice and international law, non-discrimination and gender equity, sustained socio-economic development, sustainable development, fair trade, humanitarian action and crime prevention.

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[1] This document is an extract from the paper produced by the UNEG Working Group on Evaluation and Oversight. The full paper was presented at the UNEG Annual General Meeting, 18-20 April 2007.
[2] http://www.uneval.org/index.cfm?module=Library&page=Document&DocumentID=5656

The heterogeneity of mandates of the UN System organizations, covering normative, analytical and operational activities, combined with the requirement for evaluation to be carried out at different levels within each organization, has resulted in a diverse set of arrangements for the management, coordination and/or conduct of evaluation in the UN. In some cases, there is a dedicated evaluation entity established, in other cases, the evaluation entity is established within the organization's oversight entity. Others have established the evaluation entity within a programme management, policy, strategic planning or budgeting entity, and yet others have established it within an entity dedicated to research, learning, communications or other operational functions. A few have yet to establish any kind of evaluation capacity, but their management or operational staff may nevertheless, be involved in the conduct self-evaluations.

The regulations that currently govern the evaluation of United Nations activities were promulgated on 19 April 2000 in the Secretary General's bulletin (PPBME). Similar regulations and policies have been issued in recent years in several UN system organizations. For the autonomous organizations that are part of the UN system, each is governed by their own regulations and policies. In 2005, the heads of evaluation of 43 UN entities, under the auspices of the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG), adopted a common set of norms and standards for evaluation in the UN system.

i. UN System-Wide Evaluation

In support of evaluation for the UN System as a whole, there is only one entity in the UN that has a system-wide evaluation mandate from the GA; the Joint Inspection Unit.

The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) was created on an experimental basis by the GA in 1966 and in 1976 was established as a standing subsidiary organ, responsible to the GA and the competent legislative organs of those specialized agencies and other international organizations within the United Nations system that have accepted its statute.

The JIU Inspectors have the broadest powers of investigation in all matters having a bearing on the efficiency of the services and the proper use of funds. Towards these ends, they may make on-the-spot inquiries and investigations. They are mandated to provide an independent review through inspection and evaluation aimed at improving management and methods and at achieving greater coordination between organizations. Its reports are addressed to the one or more organizations concerned or to all the organizations when the subject is of interest to the System as a whole, for consideration by the competent legislative organs of the organizations concerned. Notes and confidential letters are submitted to executive heads for their own discretionary use. The JIU produces about nine reports a year (ranging from 6 to 15), and these are a mix of system-wide, thematic and agency specific topics. Given its limited size, scope of work and ad hoc approach to topic selection, though a valuable source of independent analysis and information for the GA, its current programme does not constitute an adequate system-wide evaluation function.

In addition to the JIU, the UN has other ad hoc, as well as standing, arrangements for reviews, which might constitute a form of evaluation, of specific thematic or cross-agency issues system-wide. By way of example, these include –

- Ad hoc GA mandated or SG initiated reviews that are carried out by the SG or specific UN departments; for example, the High Level Panels established to evaluate - Governance and Oversight in the UN, UN System-wide coherence, UN Reform, Peace Operations, Threats, Challenges and Change, and so on. These reviews are assigned to the appropriate lead UN agency; e.g. DM, CEB, EOSG, DPKO, DPA, etc.

- The Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review, which evaluates the effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations development system's assistance to national efforts of developing countries, specifically in their efforts to pursue their priorities and meet their needs in the context of the Millennium Declaration and other global conferences and summits. This review is assigned to the Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and is submitted to the GA / ECOSOC for consideration.

ii. Evaluation in the UN Secretariat

With regard to evaluation of UN Secretariat programmes, the rules and regulations of the PPBME apply for all of them. Given the heterogeneity and size of Secretariat programme activities, in order to ensure that all programme activities are evaluated, evaluation is decentralized to the programme level, and each Secretariat programme is required to conduct regular, periodic evaluation of all activities. Moreover, in some cases, individual programmes are mandated by intergovernmental bodies that directly oversee the substantive and operational aspects of the respective programmes to conduct specific evaluations and report to them, so as to ensure effective and substantive intergovernmental oversight at the programme level. Individual programmes also receive requests from donor agencies to conduct evaluations of activities supported by voluntary funding provided by those donor agencies.

To respond to the above needs, currently, 15 of the 28 Secretariat programmes have a dedicated office, team or unit supporting evaluations; these are – UNCTAD, UNEP, UNHABITAT, UNODC, ECA, ECE, ESCAP, ECLAC, ESCWA, UNCHR, UNHCR, OCHA, DPI, OIOS and UNON. Some of these have, in addition to the PPBME, established programme specific evaluation policies (OCHA, UNEP, UNODC, ESCAP and UNHCR). The remaining Secretariat programmes do not have any dedicated evaluation office, team or unit, though self-assessment activities are conducted by management or programme staff for the purpose of mandatory reporting. In a few cases, there has been little or no evaluation at all, of programme activities.

The central evaluation function of the Secretariat is assigned to OIOS, where evaluation complements its other oversight functions of investigation, audit and inspections, by focusing on broad issues of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of Secretariat programmes and activities. The Evaluation Section of OIOS is mandated by the GA to conduct in-depth and thematic evaluations on the work of the Secretariat programmes, as well as to establish guidelines for the conduct of self-evaluation by the programmes, and to provide methodological support. OIOS evaluations are considered by the CPC, and as appropriate, by the Main Committees of the GA. Once endorsed by the GA, OIOS recommendations are mandatory and subject to triennial reviews for compliance.

iii. Evaluation in the UN Funds and Programmes

The UN Funds and Programmes that are not part of the Secretariat; i.e. UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP, have well established evaluation offices and evaluation policy. Again, given the size of these programmes and their global reach, with their complex activities and stratified management arrangements, it has also been necessary to establish decentralized and centralized evaluation functions within each of them. Typically, the central evaluation offices conduct programme, thematic and country-level evaluations, while providing methodological guidance to decentralized evaluation functions at the country and project levels, which are carried out by programme managers, country directors, and project managers. The central evaluation offices of these UN funds and programmes report to their respective Governing Bodies (or Executive Boards) through (or simultaneously to) their respective Chief Executives.

iv. Evaluation in the UN Specialized Agencies and Funds

Similarly, most of the autonomous specialized agencies have well established evaluation offices, each with their own evaluation policy. Some of these – IFAD, IBRD, IMF, IFC and GEF, have established central evaluation offices that have a high degree of independence; i.e. the evaluation offices report directly to the Executive Boards, have heads of evaluation appointed by the Board, and have budgets approved independently by the Board. Several – ILO, FAO, UNESCO, WIPO, WHO, WMO and UNIDO, have established central evaluation offices or units with operational independence and clear evaluation policy in line with UNEG norms and standards, and reporting to the Heads of the Organization, if not directly to the Governing Bodies. There are a few without central evaluation capacity (ICAO, UPU, and IAEA) but that have evaluation capacity decentralized, or embedded, within management or operational structures. Finally there are a few that do not seem to have any established evaluation capacity – ITU, IMO, OPCW, UNFIP and UNWTO (Tourism) and WTO (Trade).

v. Evaluation in UN Research and Training Institutes

The following are UN research and training institutes - UNDIR, UNICRI, UNRISD, INSTRAW, UNITAR, UNSSC and UNU. No information available with regard to evaluation in these institutions.

vi. Placement of Evaluation Functions in United Nations and related organizations (56)

Placement	Organizations
Entities with Independent Stand-Alone Evaluation Units (9) (16.7%); i.e. the Head of Evaluation reports directly to either the Head of Organization or the Governing Body, and the Evaluation Unit is located separate from policy, management and operational units.	1. GEF - Evaluation Office 2. IFAD - Office of Evaluation 3. IMF - Independent Evaluation Office 4. WFP - Office of Evaluation 5. World Bank (IBRD & IFC) - Independent Evaluation Group 6. UNDP - Evaluation Office 7. UNCDF (associated fund of UNDP) - Evaluation Unit 8. UNV (associated prog. of UNDP) - Evaluation Unit 9. UNAIDS - Evaluation Department
Entities with Evaluation co-located with Oversight Units (9) (16.7%)	1. OIOS - Evaluation Section/MECD 2. UNEP - Evaluation and Oversight Unit 3. UNFPA - Division for Oversight Services (DOS) 4. UNESCO - Evaluation Section of the Internal Oversight Service (IOS) 5. WIPO - Evaluation functions within the Internal Audit and Oversight Division (IAOD) 6. ICAO - Office for Programmes Evaluation, Audit and Management Review 7. IMO – Member State Audit and Internal Oversight Unit (Includes Evaluation?) 8. WHO - Evaluation and Performance Audit Office of Internal Oversight Services 9. WMO – Evaluation and Performance Audit Service, Internal Oversight Office
Entities with Evaluation co-located with Programme Policy, Management, Planning and/or	1. UNCTAD – Programme Planning and Assessment Unit (PPAU) and ITC Evaluation Unit 2. UNODC - Independent Evaluation Unit in the Division for

Monitoring Units (17) (30.4%)		Policy Analysis and Public Affairs
	3.	ECA - Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Section (PMES)
	4.	ESCAP - Programme Planning, Budget and Evaluation Section
	5.	ECE - Programme and Evaluation?
	6.	ECLAC - Programme Planning and Evaluation Unit
	7.	ESCWA - Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Division
	8.	UNHCR - Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit
	9.	UN-HABITAT - Monitoring and Evaluation Unit?
	10.	OCHA - Evaluation and Studies Unit in the Policy Development and Studies Branch
	11.	UNCHR – Project Management and Technical Cooperation Unit
	12.	UNICEF - Evaluation Office, Programme and Strategic Planning
	13.	FAO - Evaluation Service in the Office of Programme, Budget and Evaluation
	14.	ILO - Evaluation Unit in Mgt and Admin Sector
	15.	UNIDO - Evaluation Group under the Bureau for Organizational Strategy and Learning
	16.	IAEA - Office of Programme Support and Evaluation
	17.	CTBTO - Evaluation Section, Office of Executive Secretary
Entities with Evaluation co-located with Research and/or Learning Units (3) (5.4%)	1.	DPI - Evaluation and Communications Research Unit
	2.	UNIFEM (associated fund of UNDP) - Learning Unit
	3.	DPKO – Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit
Entities with no dedicated evaluation units (18) (32.1%)	1.	EOSG (UNOG, UNOV, UNLOAA, and UNON – UNON has a Compact Team that has evaluation?)
	2.	DGACM – Proposed Monitoring and Evaluation Unit
	3.	DPA
	4.	DDA
	5.	OOSA
	6.	OLA
	7.	DESA
	8.	OHRLLS
	9.	OSAA (NEPAD)
	10.	UNRWA – Proposed Evaluation Unit under Director of Operations
	11.	DM
	12.	DSS
	13.	ITU
	14.	UPU
	15.	UNWTO (Tourism)
	16.	OPCW
	17.	UNFIP
	18.	WTO

c. How Evaluation is Coordinated in the UN System

Currently, there is no centralized coordination and/or planning of evaluation for the UN system as a whole. However, to some extent, "sub" system planning and coordination is being done by – OIOS for the Secretariat programmes, UNDP for the development related funds and programmes, and OCHA for humanitarian-related activities. There does exist an inter-agency working group (called the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). Established in January 1984 (originally under the name of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Evaluation), UNEG's objective is to provide a forum for the discussion of evaluation issues within the UN System and to promote simplification and harmonization of evaluation reporting practices among UNDP and the executing agencies. To date, UNEG has 43 member organizations. UNDP chairs UNEG and provides the Secretariat facilities. In 2005, UNEG adopted a common, UN system-wide set of norms and standards for evaluation. These norms and standards are currently being adapted and used by UN system organizations as appropriate for their particular evaluation needs.