

# **MANAGING FOR RESULTS:**



## **A Guide to Using Evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat**

**June 2005**

## NOTE TO READER

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This on-line manual is intended to provide programme managers and their staff with:

- an introduction to the **basic principles** underlying the practice of external and internal evaluation in the UN Secretariat;
- updated information on the **planning and implementation of external and internal evaluation**, particularly in the context of the two-year Strategic Framework and biennial budget preparation process; and
- **tools, technical guidance and practical suggestions** to help in the design and conduct of evaluations of programmes and subprogrammes.

The manual is:

- hyperlinked to a number of resources that are available on-line on the OIOS/MECD website, particularly the following:
  - ⇒ [Advisory Notes issued by OIOS/MECD](#): periodic bulletins prepared for the use of programme managers available through the “Programme Performance Reporting Portal” on the OIOS/MECD website;
  - ⇒ [Procedures for Programme Performance Monitoring and Reporting for the 2004-2005 biennium through the use of IMDIS](#) (25 July 2004) available through the “Programme Performance Reporting Portal”;
  - ⇒ [Results-based Management Tutorial](#): available on the OIOS homepage;
  - ⇒ [Glossary of Monitoring and Evaluation terms](#): available on the OIOS homepage;
  - ⇒ [Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System](#): issued on 29 April 2005 by the [UN Evaluation Group \(UNEG\)](#)
- also linked to material available on the website of the Office of Programme Planning and Budget and on other relevant websites.

# CONTENTS

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## MODULE I: EVALUATION IN THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT

- A. Introduction
- B. Evaluation Framework and Types of Evaluation
- C. External Evaluations
- D. Internal Evaluations
- E. Basic Evaluation Standards

## MODULE II: EVALUATION PLANNING

- A. Evaluation in the Programme Planning, Implementing and Reporting Cycle
- B. Preparing an Evaluation Plan
- C. Submitting the Evaluation Plan

## MODULE III: MANDATORY SELF-ASSESSMENTS

- A. Online Resources to Help Plan and Implement Mandatory Self-Assessments
- B. Scheduling Phases of the Mandatory Self-Assessment
- C. Organizing a Participatory Review
- D. Follow-up: Applying Lessons Learned to the Formulation of the Strategic Framework

## MODULE IV: DISCRETIONARY SELF-EVALUATIONS

- A. Designing and Conducting the Self-Evaluation

## MODULE V: COLLECTING AND ANALYZING DATA

- A. Collecting Data

Data Collection Methods:

1. Review of programme data
2. Review of official records and other documents
3. Surveys
4. Field visits and direct observation
5. Focus groups

- B. Analyzing Data
  1. What do I see?
  2. Why do I see it?
  3. Suggestions on Presenting Data

## MODULE I: EVALUATION IN THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT

### A. Introduction

1. Evaluation has been a mandated activity of the United Nations Secretariat's programme and budgeting system since the early 1980s. Guidance is set out in the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (PPBME) [ST/SGB/2000/8](#). As set down in Regulation 7.1:

The objective of evaluation is:

- To determine as systematically and objectively as possible, the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the Organization's activities in relation to their objectives;
- To enable the Secretariat and Member States to engage in systematic reflection, with a view to increasing the effectiveness of the main programmes of the Organization by altering their content and, if necessary, reviewing their objectives.

Evaluations:

- assess whether *results* have been obtained;
- provide a platform for learning and performance improvement; and
- focus on whether the Organization's activities provide value to the Member States and other stakeholders.

2. There are other forms of assessment conducted in the UN Secretariat which vary in purpose, techniques used and level of analysis. While there may be overlap, evaluations should be differentiated from the following activities\*.

- ***Audit***: an assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of internal control to ensure: the compliance with regulations, rules and established policies; the economical and efficient use of resources; the integrity and reliability of financial and operational information; the safeguarding of assets; the effectiveness of programme management for achieving stated objectives consistent with policies, plans and budgets; and the adequacy of organizational structures, systems and processes;
- ***Appraisal***: a critical assessment of the potential value of an undertaking before a decision is made to implement it;

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\* This list is drawn from the OIOS Glossary of Monitoring and Evaluation Terms, the Glossary of Evaluation Terms prepared by the Joint Inspection Unit (Document JIU/REP/78/5, November 1978), the OECD Glossary, 2000 and the [Norms and Standards for Evaluation](#) (developed by the UN Evaluation Group, 2005).

- ***Inspection***: a general examination which seeks to identify vulnerable areas and malfunctions and to propose remedial action;
- ***Internal management consulting***: consulting services to help managers to implement changes that address organizational and managerial challenges and improve internal work processes;
- ***Investigation***: a specific examination of a claim of wrongdoing and provision of evidence for eventual prosecution or disciplinary measures;
- ***Monitoring***: management's continuous examination of progress made during the implementation of an undertaking to track compliance with the plan and take necessary decisions to improve performance;
- ***Review***: the periodic or *ad hoc*, often rapid, assessment of the performance of an undertaking. Reviews tend to emphasize operational aspects. Often self-assessments are reviews because they do not apply the due process of evaluation.
- ***Research***: a systematic examination designed to develop or contribute to knowledge.

3. Evaluations have become increasingly central to the programme planning, budgeting and implementation cycle since the introduction of results-based approaches in 2000 and the reform measure launched for the Secretary-General's Agenda for Further Change in 2002 (A/57/387). The results approach uses evaluative tools and techniques such as logical frameworks (including indicators, baselines and targets). It also stresses data collection and analysis techniques that provide information that help managers think more systematically about the results of their work.

4. Evaluation is now an important management tool in the Organization. All managers are expected to be familiar with and use it to improve operations. Most evaluative techniques do not require extensive specialized training. Reflection on two simple questions is key:

Are we doing the right things?  
Are we doing things right?

These two questions address the four primary evaluation objectives of assessing efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and impact.

[\(back to top\)↑](#)

## B. Evaluation framework and types of evaluation

5. Evaluation is divided into two broad categories:

- Internal; and
- External.

This distinction is based on who **conducts** the evaluation.

6. Evaluation may be further differentiated by:

- who **requests** the evaluation; and
- who **uses** the evaluation.

7. Internal and External evaluation can be also categorized in terms of those exercises that are:

- **Mandatory** requirements - mandated by the General Assembly (GA), the Committee for Programme Coordination (CPC) or other Intergovernmental (IG) entity

and those which are:

- **Discretionary** choices - undertaken by programme managers and their staff as deemed necessary, to answer questions and issues that they would like to explore in greater depth.

8. The terms '**Mandatory**' and '**Discretionary**' are being introduced for the first time in this manual, in order to distinguish between those evaluations that are mandated by intergovernmental bodies or required by rules and regulations, and those that can be initiated at the discretion of senior managers, programme managers and their staff.

9. Furthermore, a new term – '**Mandatory Self-assessment**' – has been developed to cover the assessments undertaken by all programme and subprogramme managers when reporting the results attained with respect to the expected accomplishments presented in the logical frameworks of the biennial programme budget documents.

10. The following chart summarizes the four types/forms of evaluation, namely:

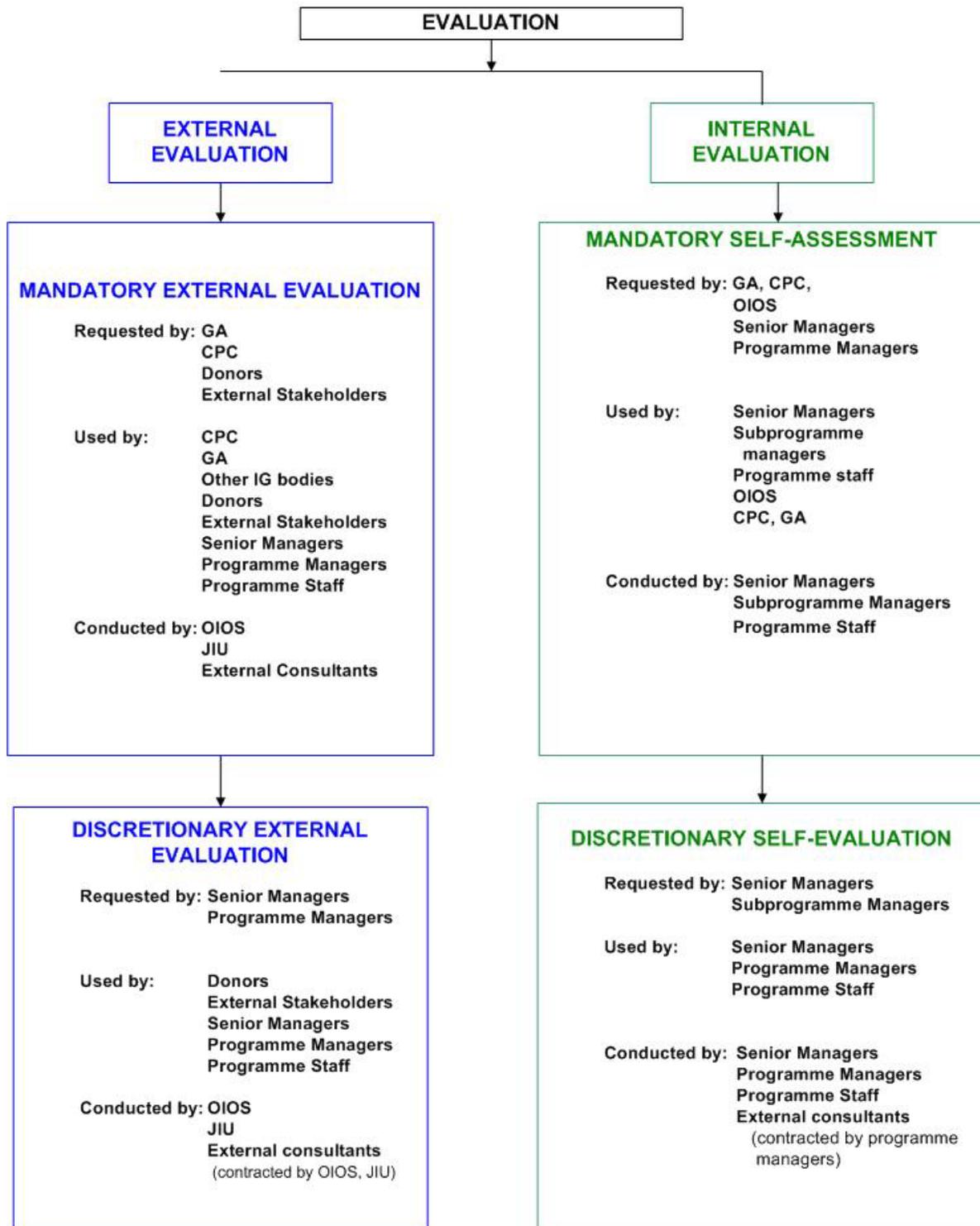
### EXTERNAL EVALUATION

1. Mandatory Evaluation
2. Discretionary Evaluation

### INTERNAL EVALUATION

1. Mandatory Self-assessment
2. Discretionary Self-evaluation

# TYPES OF EVALUATION



- Key:
- GA: General Assembly
  - CPC: Committee for Programme and Coordination
  - OIOS: Office of Internal Oversight Services
  - JIU: Joint Inspection Unit
  - IG: Intergovernmental

11.A note on 'In-depth' evaluation:

**In-depth evaluation**

In-depth now refers to the **scope**, *not* to the **type** of evaluation. Both types of evaluation – external and internal - can be 'in-depth' when they take a comprehensive and broad-ranging view. (Please see [Glossary of Monitoring & Evaluation Terms](#) for a complete listing).

Historically, the external evaluations conducted by OIOS and reported to the Committee for Programme and Coordination were termed "in-depth". The term can now be used with reference to internal evaluations as well.

[\(back to top\)↑](#)

## C. External evaluation

### 12. External evaluations:

- Ensure impartiality;
- Help establish the merit and worth of programmes and the extent to which they have discharged their mandates and objectives and have had an impact;
- Are designed and conducted by independent, external evaluators who have had no involvement with the programme's activity: the programme manager's role is as an 'evaluee';
- Produce reports that are intended for use by intergovernmental bodies as well as by programme managers; and
- Often help to identify 'best practices' and lessons learned.

### 13. There are two types of external evaluation, namely:

1. **Mandatory external evaluation**
2. **Discretionary external evaluation**

#### **1. Mandatory External Evaluations**

##### 14. This type of evaluation -

- Is generally mandated by the CPC, which reviews evaluation reports and makes recommendations to the Economic and Social Council and the GA for consideration and endorsement (see <http://www.un.org/ga/cpc/>).
- Can also be mandated by functional commissions, regional and sectoral intergovernmental bodies and other technical bodies who can request their respective secretariats to conduct evaluation. They may decide to undertake evaluation studies themselves or commission independent evaluators to do so.

##### 15. External evaluations are conducted:

- by OIOS, the JIU, external consultants or donors; and
- in consultation with programme managers.

For list of external evaluations and text of reports, please click [here](#).

#### **2. Discretionary External Evaluations**

##### 16. This type of evaluation is:

- proposed by programme managers who request the JIU or OIOS to undertake the exercise; and
- undertaken by JIU or OIOS, (if they have adequate resources).

17. In this type of evaluation, the programme manager requests the external entity, OIOS or JIU, to design and conduct the evaluation and the manager's role will be as an 'evaluatee'. An example of this is the OIOS evaluation of the [UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture](#) (2004).

18. Discretionary evaluations are particularly useful and considered a good practice for managers who wish to improve the performance of their programmes on the basis of objective assessments. Discretionary evaluations may take a wide scope and look at issues of impact and effectiveness and are often helpful in identifying [lessons learned](#) and [best practices](#). They may also cover benchmarking of a programme's performance in relation to other non-UN programmes that are engaged in similar activities.

### **3. Design and Conduct of External Evaluations**

19. The following steps are generally used to **design** both mandatory and discretionary external evaluation:

Step 1: Frame the Evaluation by determining topic, purpose and scope;

Step 2: Determine questions and issues that will be addressed;

Step 3: Decide on data and methodology to be used; and

Step 4: Decide on composition of evaluation team, schedule and workplan.

Steps 1 to 4 are typically captured in a [Terms of Reference](#). The Terms of Reference document is generally reviewed by the evaluation team and the staff of the programme being evaluated to ensure there is common understanding as to the scope and intent of the evaluation.

20. The following steps are generally used for the **conduct** of the external evaluation:

Step 5: Conduct the evaluation through the use of surveys, interviews or other forms of information-gathering decided upon during the design of the evaluation;

Step 6: Formulate findings and conclusions;

Step 7: Draft report;

Step 8: Discuss report with key stakeholders;

Step 9: Finalize report together with suggestions for evaluation follow-up plan; and

Step 10: Publish and disseminate final report.

[\(back to top\)](#)↑

## D. Internal evaluations

21. Internal evaluations are:

- Useful in determining the effectiveness and efficiency of programmes;
- Designed, conducted and managed by programme managers and their staff;
- Concerned with issues that are of primary interest and use to programme managers;
- Concerned with assessing programme performance and results; and
- Useful methods for identifying lessons learned and best practices.

22. There are two types of internal evaluation:

1. Mandatory Self-assessments; and
2. Discretionary Self-evaluations.

### 1. **Mandatory Self-assessments:**

- Are compulsory exercises required of all UN Secretariat programmes;
- Are framed by the logical frameworks in the approved biennial programme budget documents;
- Use the information generated by measuring the extent to which Expected Accomplishments were achieved through the collection of indicator data;
- May also use information generated from other types of evaluation and assessment, as appropriate;
- Use the IMDIS\* tool as the means to record progress and share information; and
- Are reported on through the Programme Performance Report produced by OIOS.

The process of mandatory self-assessment begins with an analysis of the logical framework and indicators of achievement (together with baselines and targets) and of the methods that will be used in the collection of data for their reporting. (This methodology to measure each indicator should have been captured in the Methodology Form in IMDIS, early in the biennium.) Progress in achieving the Expected Accomplishments is monitored by OIOS at the 6, 12, 18, 21 and 24 month points in the biennium through the vehicle of IMDIS. To facilitate this process, OIOS suggests that a draft Accomplishment Account should be formulated at the 12 month point in order to capture the progress achieved during the preceding year.

The next stage in the process of mandatory self-assessment takes place during the 18-to-21st months of the biennium. During this time, programme managers are expected to update their preliminary performance assessments and draft [Accomplishment Accounts](#) and “Statement of accomplishments/results achieved”. These Accounts and statements are then distilled into “[Highlights of Programme Results](#)” and “Challenges, obstacles and unmet goals”. These drafts can then be shared

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\* Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS)

with OIOS for comments and suggestions. The final versions are then used for programme performance reporting purposes in the [Programme Performance Report \(PPR\)](#), produced biennially. It is also expected that these accounts will be of value to managers when they are called upon to provide results reports for consideration by other oversight bodies and specialized intergovernmental bodies (e.g. the Committee on Information, the Trade and Development Board etc).

## **SUBPROGRAMME & PROGRAMME SUBMISSIONS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE BIENNIAL REPORT ON PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE (PPR)**

### **AT SUBPROGRAMME LEVEL:**

Each "Expected Accomplishment" in the subprogramme's logical framework has to be reported upon as follows:

#### **Accomplishment Accounts**

A summary (1-2 pages maximum) of a specific subprogramme accomplishment that is based on data collected for the indicators of achievement and other relevant information that serves as the source of reporting on whether the relevant Expected Accomplishment was achieved. Generally includes information on (1) the setting; (2) end-users; (3) intermediaries (4) challenge, problem or issue being addressed; (5) activities undertaken; (6) results/what was accomplished; (7) verifiable data and information that include comparison with original target, variations from that target; (8) lessons learned including recommendations on how to solve problems and issues. Draft Accomplishment Account should be included at the 12-month point and incorporated into the IMDIS database.

#### **Challenges, obstacles and unmet goals**

Information on challenges, obstacles and unmet goals should be compiled by subprogramme managers and included in the interim and final accomplishment accounts so that they can be extracted and summarized at the end of the biennium. (An additional box for this purpose will be provided in IMDIS at the programme level for the PPR for 2004-2005).

#### **Statement of accomplishment/results achieved**

A succinct synopsis of accomplishments achieved relative to the Expected Accomplishment which is based on and distilled from the Accomplishment Account. It captures the key facts of what was achieved in this regard during the biennium.

### **AT THE PROGRAMME, DEPARTMENT OR OFFICE LEVEL:**

#### **Highlights of programme results**

The most salient results achieved by a department/office during the biennium based on all the results/accomplishments of the various subprogrammes under it. These highlights of programme results should be very brief and concrete and are included in the Programme Performance Report for each Budget Section and reflect the most significant achievements towards realizing the programme's objectives.

## 2. Discretionary Self-evaluations are:

- Commissioned and conducted by programme managers for their own use;
- Not required to be reported upon at the intergovernmental level;
- Focused on issues of efficiency, effectiveness and relevance;
- Of particular value when results are insufficiently identified and documented and/or areas and means for improvement are not clear;
- Assessments that cover areas and issues over and above those that are covered by Mandatory Self-assessments;
- Used by programme managers to double-check the working hypotheses used to explain the *raison d'être* of their programmes;
- Assessment that cover cross-cutting issues that are of relevance to a number of subprogrammes (e.g. impact of flagship and other reports, quality of training efforts); and
- Useful when trying to formulate best practices and lessons-learned.

23. While managers may contract external consultants and specialists to help with the exercise, they will design and manage the evaluation and be ultimately responsible for the quality of the reports and for using the results to improve operations. Self-evaluations also generate information that is often of value as an input to external evaluations.

[\(back to top\)↑](#)

## E. Basic Evaluation Standards for Evidence and Data

24. To be credible and useful all evaluations should meet basic evaluation standards for evidence and data. (A fuller list of Evaluation **Norms and Standards** has also been compiled by the UN Evaluation Group). These are as follows:

### 1. Evidence presented must be sufficient, competent and relevant.

25. Evidence is the information collected and presented to support findings and recommendations. It can be categorized into four broad types, namely physical, documentary, analytical and testimonial evidence:

- **Physical evidence** is obtained through direct observation of people, property or events;
- **Documentary evidence** consists of written information – letters, reports, contracts, accounting records - and could exist in both electronic or hardcopy format;
- **Analytical evidence** includes computations, comparisons, and separation of information into components, categories and rational arguments;
- **Testimonial evidence** is obtained through interviews, questionnaires and inquiries.

26. Evidence is **sufficient** when it can support an evaluator's findings. In determining whether evidence is sufficient or not, it is helpful to consider whether there is enough evidence to reasonably confirm the validity of the findings. Statistical methods are also used to establish sufficiency.

27. Evidence is **competent** when it is valid and reliable. Competence is established by ensuring that the evidence was obtained by using a professionally accepted methodology or was obtained from a knowledgeable, experienced, reliable and independent source.

28. Evidence is **relevant** when it has a logical and sensible relationship to the issue it seeks to prove or disprove. It helps to make a recommendation compelling, convincing and useable. For example, if one is seeking to demonstrate the use of information contained in a flagship report and the readers were surveyed and provided examples of how they used the information contained in the report, this evidence would be relevant.

### 2. Data collected must be valid and reliable.

29. **Validity**: The data used in evaluations should be valid. This means that the data collection methods and indicators meaningfully measure what they are supposed to measure. While this would seem obvious, it does not always happen. For example, if the expected accomplishment is that government officials use guidance provided by a United

Nations programme, and the indicator is that documents containing the guidance were *circulated* to government officials, the indicator is not valid, since it does not measure *use* of the guidance.

30. **Reliability**: The data used should be reliable. Data acquired is reliable when repeated observations using similar instruments under similar conditions produce similar results. Reliability addresses the question: “*Will X remain X if collected by different methods?*” It is important to show that the results do not vary even when the methods used and people collecting the information are different. For example, if the indicator is that resolutions adopted by an intergovernmental body contain a specific content (such as gender or poverty-orientation), but two different persons classifying the content of the resolutions reach different conclusions, the method used is not reliable.

[\(back to top\)↑](#)

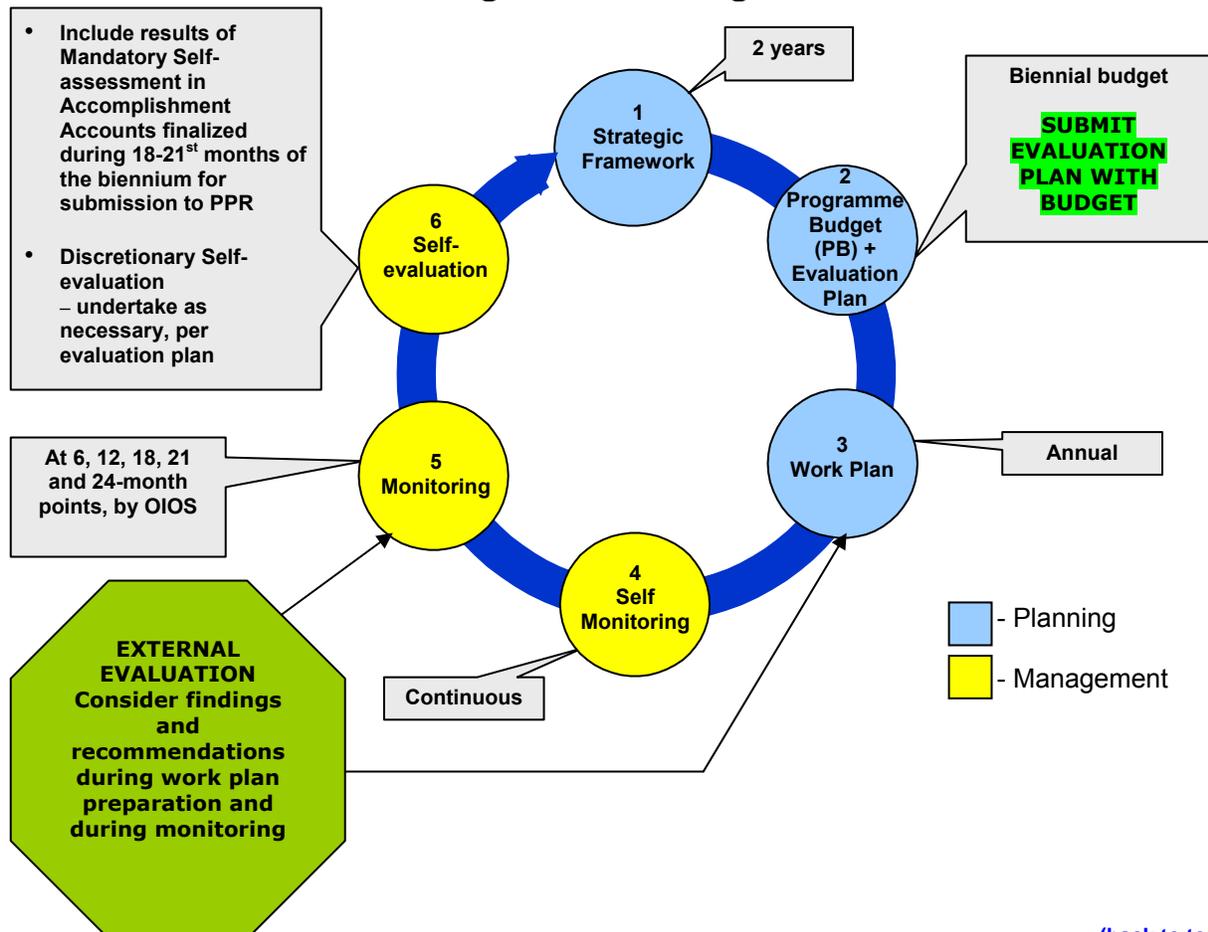
## MODULE II: EVALUATION PLANNING

### A. Evaluation in the programme planning, implementing and reporting cycle

31. During the course of the PPBME cycle, a manager can expect to be involved in some form of external or internal evaluation during a biennium and beyond. There are specific points during the cycle where either a self-assessment must be undertaken, or where involvement in an external evaluation or conducting a discretionary self-evaluation would yield information that would help improve performance.

32. The PPBME cycle shown below provides a view of where evaluation planning covering internal and external evaluation plays a role in the planning and implementation of activities and in performance reporting.

### Evaluation Planning in the PPBME cycle: The Programme Manager's view



[\(back to top\)↑](#)

## B. Preparing an evaluation plan

33. To strengthen the practice of monitoring and evaluation, specific instructions to guide managers in the preparation of Evaluation plans were announced as part of the programme budget instructions issued in September 2004. Annex 7 of the Budget Instructions provides instructions on how to [complete an evaluation plan](#) at the subprogramme level. To supplement these instructions, OIOS compiled [Advisory Note No. 5](#) which also contains a template in Excel which should be used to capture the evaluation plans together with resources required for internal evaluation.

34. These instructions on Evaluation Planning are notable because they:

- provide clarification on the definitions of external and internal evaluation;
- introduce new terminology in terms of mandatory and discretionary evaluation;
- suggest a “rule of thumb” approach of earmarking 2 to 5 per cent of a project/programme’s total cost to cover monitoring and evaluation activities.

[\(back to top\)↑](#)

## C. Submitting the evaluation plan

35. Evaluation plans are to be submitted along with the draft programme budget documents to OPPBA, with a copy to OIOS.

36. Please note that listing the topics in the evaluation plan does not constitute a formal commitment to undertake them since the plan can be modified as conditions and priorities change. However, preparing these plans will help in ensuring that adequate time and resources are set aside for monitoring and evaluation and is a useful tool in the practice of results-based management by programme managers.

[\(back to top\)↑](#)

## **MODULE III: MANDATORY SELF-ASSESSMENTS**

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37. As noted in Module I, mandatory self-assessments:

- Are an obligatory exercise for all programmes of the Secretariat;
- Are framed by the logical frameworks in the approved biennial programme budget documents;
- Use the information generated by measuring the extent to which Expected Accomplishments were achieved through the collection of indicator data;
- May also use information generated from other types of evaluation and assessment, as appropriate;
- Use IMDIS as the means to record progress and share information; and
- Are reported on in the Programme Performance Report produced by OIOS.

38. Objectives, Expected Accomplishments, Indicators, Baselines and Targets and the Methodology field are entered into IMDIS and are monitored at the 6,12,18, 21 and 24th month points of the biennium by OIOS. This is the formal process within the UN for measuring results and is codified in the guidelines and protocols on IMDIS.

[\(back to top\)↑](#)

## A. Online resources to help plan and implement mandatory self-assessments

39. There are four resources currently available on the OIOS website which provide detailed guidance on how to prepare for and undertake mandatory self-assessments. These are:

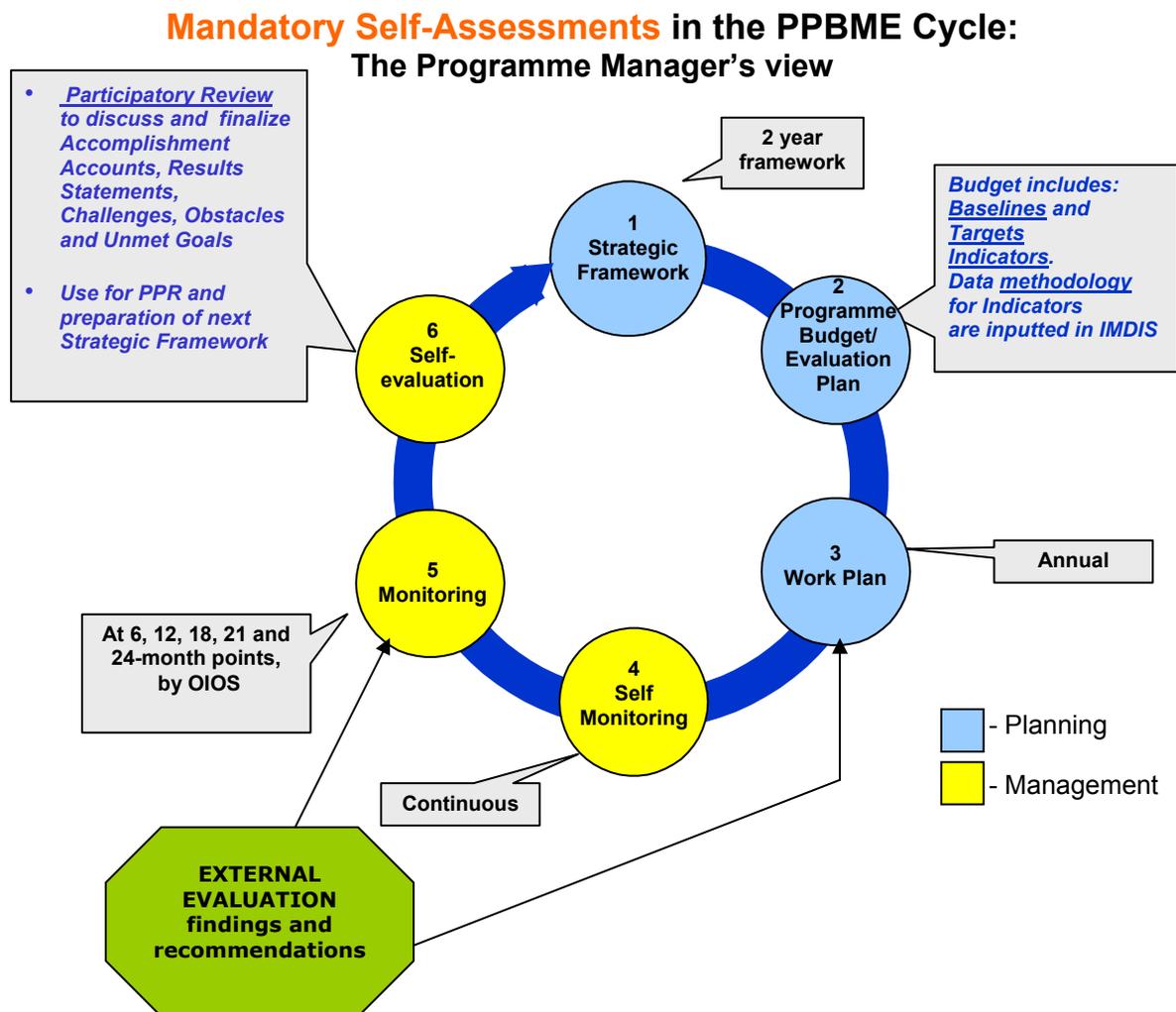
1. **[Procedures for Programme Performance Monitoring and Reporting for the 2004-2005 biennium through the use of IMDIS](#)** - these provide background on performance assessment and monitoring together with detailed guidance on how to access and use the IMDIS data base.
2. **RBM tutorial entitled “[Programme Performance Assessment in Results-based management](#)”** which introduces the reader to results-based management and provides help to plan the performance assessment by way of mandatory self-assessment. It includes interactive tests and quizzes that clarify central concepts. It also includes a brief description of the steps needed for self-assessments.
3. **Advisory Notes** – the following Advisory Notes present detailed guidance on specific topics:
  - a) [Advisory Note No. 1](#): Actions on recommendations of the 44th session of the CPC
  - b) [Advisory Note No. 2](#): Executive Direction and Management
  - c) [Advisory Note No. 3](#): Preliminary Programme Performance Assessment
  - d) [Advisory Note No. 4](#): Lessons Learned from monitoring and reporting in 2002-2003
  - e) [Advisory Note No. 6](#): Actions following the 59th General Assembly and Online sources of information.
4. **IMDIS User’s Guide** – provides a step by step guide on how to navigate the screens to IMDIS.

**[\(back to top\)](#)**↑

## B. Scheduling phases of mandatory self-assessment

40. Mandatory self-assessments should be scheduled to match the Organization's programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation process. This means that results should be available at key points in the cycle so that they will be able to affect programming and monitoring. The mandatory self-assessment undertaken during the latter part of the biennium should in particular yield useful information that is helpful in identifying issues that may be addressed during the design and formulation of the Strategic Framework for the future planning period.

41. The graphic below contains a visual summary of the actions during the biennial cycle.



42. The following checklist provides a summary of key actions that should be undertaken to prepare for and implement mandatory self-assessments.

## CHECKLIST OF KEY MILESTONES FOR MANDATORY SELF-ASSESSMENTS

TIMING	MAJOR ACTIONS
Month 5 (May) of the Biennium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review performance measures (baseline and target figures)</li> <li>• Input modifications and adjustments in IMDIS</li> <li>• Assign responsibilities among staff for output monitoring and reporting, the developing of methodologies for data collection and the gathering of such data for periodic reporting and reflect in workplan</li> <li>• <a href="#">Adopt/establish indicator methodologies for data collection</a> (see example from ECLAC)</li> </ul>
Month 6 (June) of the biennium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin data collection</li> <li>• Update the implementation of the work programme</li> </ul>
Months 12 & 13 (December-January) of the biennium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review all outputs that are not started or in progress, report on their implementation and submit to OIOS</li> <li>• Submit all newly implemented, reformulated and terminated outputs to OIOS for verification</li> <li>• Update interim performance measurements</li> <li>• Input information from data collected on each indicator of achievement</li> <li>• Submit interim progress reports on each indicator under “Description of Results” in IMDIS</li> <li>• Formulate first drafts of “Accomplishment Accounts” and statement of accomplishments/results achieved</li> </ul>
Months 18-23 (June-November) of the biennium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit all newly implemented, reformulated and terminated outputs to OIOS for verification</li> <li>• Analyze and synthesize data on each indicator of achievement and update progress reports on each under “Description of results”</li> <li>• Update “Accomplishment Accounts” with the most recent progress achieved in attaining the desired results</li> <li>• Prepare a draft of the “Statement of accomplishments/Results Achieved,” “Highlights of Programme Results” and a summary of “Challenges, Obstacles and Unmet Goals”</li> <li>• Attach any external or internal evaluations that may have been undertaken</li> </ul> <p><b>PARTICIPATORY REVIEW:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize participatory review among all concerned staff to               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- review final draft of the “Accomplishment Accounts,” “Statement of accomplishments/results achieved,” “Highlights of programme results” and “Challenges, Obstacles and Unmet Goals”</li> <li>- take stock of any lessons learned that should be considered when formulating next Strategic Framework</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Submit drafts of these assessments to OIOS for comments and feedback</li> </ul>
Month 24 (December) of the biennium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare final “Accomplishment accounts” and “Statement of accomplishments/results achieved” for each expected accomplishment</li> <li>• Prepare a final “Highlights of programme results,” “Challenges, obstacles and unmet goals,” and summary of intergovernmental, external and internal reviews</li> <li>• Mark incomplete outputs as postponed or terminated</li> <li>• Submit all outputs to OIOS for verification</li> <li>• Provide summaries and attach documents of any internal and/or external evaluation reports or assessments that may have been undertaken during the biennium and indicate whether they are internal documents or for sharing with Member States</li> </ul>

### C. Organizing a participatory review

43. It is recommended that the process of reaching the conclusions to be included in the “Accomplishment Accounts,” “Results Statements,” “Highlights of Programme Results” and “Challenges, Obstacles and Unmet Goals” be a participatory one – i.e., involving all relevant members of the subprogramme team. This has proven to be a valuable approach and was practiced in programmes such as [ECLAC during the preparation of Accomplishment Accounts for 2002-2003](#). The hyperlink provides an example of the Results Statement distilled from an Accomplishment Account.

44. One approach would be for the programme manager to commission a team to put together (1) the draft “Accomplishment Accounts” and summarize these as (2) the draft “Statements of Results”. These drafts can then be the subject of an assessment session involving subprogramme personnel and other internal stakeholders (such as the IMDIS and RBB focal points or members of the Evaluation Units in those departments that have personnel dedicated to evaluation).

45. The Assessment Session could cover:

- Analysis of the indicators of achievement associated with the relevant expected accomplishments to be reported on;
- Consideration of the draft “Accomplishment Accounts”;
- Review of the “Statements of Accomplishment”;
- Identification of relevant “Highlights of Programme results”;
- Identification of relevant “Challenges, Obstacles and Unmet Goals”;
- Identification of lessons learned and best practices; and
- Identification of issues that should be taken into account during the formulation of the next Strategic Framework.

46. The following questions may be of use to frame the participatory session and used as a quality control checklist:

- Do the “Accomplishment Accounts” contain a clear, credible and balanced statement of whether expected accomplishments have been achieved?
- Are the conclusions or results reported supported by facts and figures derived from the indicators?
- Is there any information, data, findings or conclusions from discretionary self-evaluation efforts that can be used in the “Accomplishment Accounts”?
- Do the Accounts include comparisons to the original targets, with numbers and percentages showing achievements and variations from the target?
- Have all generalities been eliminated? (e.g. expressions like “the considerable increase,” “significant enhancement of capacity,” “massive media coverage,” “important progress”)
- Have “lessons learned” and “areas in need of improvement” been identified for each Expected Accomplishment so that these may be incorporated in IMDIS?

- Have these been incorporated into the summary of the programme’s “challenges, obstacles and unmet goals”?
- Can the contents of the “Accomplishment Accounts” be used for reporting to any other oversight or intergovernmental body or for other reports which describe the achievements of the subprogramme or programme?
- Are there findings or conclusions that should be kept in mind and acted upon when formulating the next Strategic Framework, programme budget and work plan?

47. The overall objective of the participatory process is to help clarify results, identify areas that need improvement, identify lessons learned and best practices and, most importantly, to come up with suggestions for follow-up and improvement.

[\(back to top\)↑](#)

## D. Follow-up: Applying lessons learned to the formulation of the strategic framework

48. The final step, after preparing the material that is to be used by Member States and reflected in the Statement of Accomplishment/Results Achieved, is to decide what actions are required to improve performance in the future. The following questions may help in this process:

- How can the expected accomplishments be expressed in more realistic and measurable terms while clearly contributing to the objectives defined by IG bodies?
- Is the link between the expected accomplishment and the objective clear?
- Can the output of the programme reasonably be expected to lead to the expected accomplishment?
- Does the indicator of achievement clearly measure whether the expected accomplishment has happened?
- Can the indicator be measured effectively?
- Are we clear on the assumptions we are making in terms of the achievements, changes and improvements we are trying to realize. In other words, does the logical framework make sense in terms of the objectives we are trying to achieve?

[\(back to top\)↑](#)

## MODULE IV: DISCRETIONARY SELF-EVALUATIONS

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49. Self-evaluation is a discretionary activity meant to provide programme managers with the option of looking at issues that are of importance to them. In many instances these may be issues that do not readily fall within the subprogramme's mandatory self-assessment of the logical framework. The programme manager makes his/her own choice when selecting the topics and processes by which to conduct a self-evaluation. The process is similar to that followed in a self-assessment, but there is considerable flexibility in design. Unlike a self-assessment, where the focus is exclusively on whether promised results have been obtained, self-evaluation is an opportunity for programme managers to take stock, explore issues or answer questions that are of primary concern to them.

50. As noted in Module I, discretionary self-evaluations are:

- Commissioned and conducted by programme managers for their own use;
- Noted reported upon at the intergovernmental level;
- Focus on issues of efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and usefulness;
- Of particular value when results are insufficiently identified and documented and/or areas and means for improvement are not clear;
- Assessments that cover areas and issues over and above those that are covered by Mandatory self-assessment; and
- Assessments that also cover cross-cutting issues that are of relevance to a number of subprogrammes (e.g. impact of flagship and other reports, quality of training efforts etc).

51. While managers may contract external consultants and specialists to help with the exercise, they will design and manage the evaluation and be ultimately responsible for the quality of the reports and for using the results to improve operations. Self-evaluations also generate information that is often used as input to external evaluations.

[\(back to top\)↑](#)

## A. Designing and conducting the self-evaluation

### 1. Determining the purpose of the self-evaluation

52. Discretionary self-evaluation provides an opportunity for programme managers to focus on the effectiveness, relevance and usefulness of all or some subprogramme products and services, and on the efficiency with which they are produced, as well as on management and support functions. The following guidelines are offered for identifying topics for self-evaluation. A self-evaluation may be appropriate when:

- a) Results are insufficiently identified and documented;
- b) Areas and means for improvement are unclear;
- c) A new policy or procedure has been instituted; and/or,
- d) A specific issue or topic needs to be addressed such as implementing recommendations contained in external evaluations and audits.

Managers may also use self-evaluation to:

- e) Review cross-cutting issues;
- f) Review internal work processes deemed critical to programs;
- g) Answer specific questions; and
- h) Test the assumptions/hypotheses underlying a project, programme or subprogramme.

53. Self-evaluation is meant to be a tool for managers to think creatively about gathering value-added information and feedback on how the programme is being implemented and ways to improve performance. An example of self-evaluations undertaken within the UN follows.

#### **III: International justice and law**

##### **III. 8.B.2: General legal services to UN organs and programmes**

One recommendation of an external evaluation undertaken of the Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) was that *legal assistance should be sought early when complex or innovative commercial contracts were being negotiated* (ref. E/AC.51/2002/5). It was suggested that the Procurement Division and OLA should form teams so that major legal issues could be tackled early and that criteria should be developed to identify high risk procurement situations

In responding to this recommendation, the General Legal Department (GLD) undertook a series of consultative sessions with the Procurement Division on ways and means to improve support to higher risk procurement. The conclusion was that an amendment to the Procurement Manual would be a better option to dealing with the issue highlighted by the external evaluation. Action was taken to amend the Manual and the revision included specific criteria defining high risk

procurement.

Another recommendation of the external evaluation was that OLA should *compile a reference collection of contracts* to be used as precedents. The reference material was to be updated regularly with instructive practices sought from end-users. OLA has responded by posting 9 model contracts on their web site. In addition, GLD undertook a self-evaluation process that led to a *comprehensive revision of the General Conditions of Contract*. This self-evaluation process involved a working group composed of key stakeholders from the Procurement Division and was launched in July 2004. The process is to be concluded in mid 2005. GLD will also be conducting a series of seminars for the Procurement Division on software license agreements, performance bonds and liquidated damages.

## 2. Terms of Reference as a framework for a Self-evaluation

54. Managers are encouraged to complete a Terms of Reference (TOR) for Self-Evaluation to assist in determining the issues, scope, and process for a self-evaluation. There are three main steps associated with a self-evaluation:

### 1. Designing the self-evaluation

- Determining the purpose and topic(s) of the self-evaluation;
- Determining the scope of the self-evaluation;
- Determining the issues that self-evaluation will address;
- Deciding on the methodology to be used; and
- Assigning resources and developing a schedule.

### 2. Conducting the self-evaluation

- Conducting the self-evaluation.

### 3. Using the results of the self-evaluation

- Reporting on the self-evaluation; and
- Setting up an implementation plan for following up on recommendations.

55. The following template may be useful in designing a self-evaluation:

### TERMS OF REFERENCE TEMPLATE

#### Title of Self-Evaluation

#### I. Purpose

*What is the primary purpose of the evaluation? What topic(s) will the evaluation address?*

#### II. Scope

*What are the parameters of the evaluation? What will be included and excluded in the review?*

### **III. Background**

*Include relevant background information, such as a brief synopsis of the programme or activity to be evaluated, summary of pertinent resolutions and findings from recent reports.*

### **IV. Issues**

*What are the primary questions the evaluation will seek to answer?*

### **V. Methodology**

*What method(s) (such as **Review of programme data and official records, surveys & interviews, Field visits, Focus Groups – see MODULE V**) will be used for the evaluation?*

*What data is available from mandatory self-assessment exercises and other sources?*

### **VI. Evaluation Schedule**

Develop a timetable for the following phases of the self-evaluation:

- A. Preliminary research
- B. Data Collection
- C. Data Analysis
- D. Draft Report (include timing for peer review)
- E. Final Report

### **VII. Resources**

*What staff will be involved in undertaking the evaluation? Are there any other resources required?*

### **VIII. Intended Use/Next Steps**

*How are the findings of the self-evaluation expected to be used? What procedures/arrangements will be established to consider the results of the self-evaluation and to formulate an action plan?*

56. The following four steps provide greater detail on the design and implementation of a self-evaluation.

#### **a) Step One: Determining the purpose and topic(s) of the self-evaluation**

57. Defining the purpose involves first deciding what problem or issues needs to be examined, based on the needs of the programme.

58. Sometimes the incentive to consider a self-evaluation comes from a perception by the managers that something in the work could be improved. It can also come from an external source such as an audit finding, an external evaluation report or an observation/recommendation made by an intergovernmental body. A summary of these recommendations is compiled by each programme on a biennial basis to respond to [Form 6 of the budget instructions](#) (page 53) and could be used as a possible source of self-evaluation and evaluation topics. Here are two examples of how this step was accomplished.

### **Flagship reports in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs**

Considerable resources are expended in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to produce what are termed “flagship reports,” major publications of policy research and analysis in the fields covered by the Department. These include such publications as The Economic and Social Survey, the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development and the Report on the World Social Situation. The new Under-Secretary-General wished to know whether these reports were meeting the needs of their intended audience, whether their content was being used and whether the quality of the research was considered by peers as acceptable. A self-evaluation, with the help of an experienced, external consultant, was organized to answer these questions.

### ***b) Step Two: Determining the scope of the self-evaluation***

59. Determining the scope consists of defining the parameters of the evaluation. For example:

- Will it be a system-wide assessment or focus on a specific activity?
- What time frame will it cover?
- Within what context does the programme being evaluated function?
- Which parts of the programme or subprogramme are of concern to the evaluation?
- What will be included and excluded from the evaluation?

Unlike a mandatory self-assessment for which the time-frame is set by legislative and budgetary requirements, the time-frame of a self-evaluation is determined by the programme managers. The choice is a pragmatic one:

- When will we need the results?
- How are the findings of the self-evaluation to be used?

### ***c) Step Three: Determining the issues that the self-evaluation will address***

60. Based on the topic and scope of the evaluation, this section details the primary questions that the evaluation will seek to answer. It focuses on transforming issues into

analytic questions that the self-evaluation will strive to answer. This is probably the most difficult and most important part of designing a self-evaluation and therefore deserves care, attention and consultation among the members of the evaluation team. It may help to start with a brainstorming session which covers the following seven analytic questions which can form the basis for identifying the issues relevant to the self-evaluation in question.

## **SEVEN ANALYTIC QUESTIONS TO HELP FRAME A SELF-EVALUATION**

### **1. What is the CURRENT situation?**

- What is the issue or problem?
- Does it affect/Is it part of the 'big' picture?
- Does it affect all parts of the programme, subprogramme, unit etc?
- Is it a question of effectiveness, efficiency or impact of the current operations?
- Is it a combination of all three? Is it something else?

### **2. How does this current situation COMPARE to**

- Situations in the past?
- Similar situations elsewhere?
- Established requirements (set out in mandates)?
- Established standards (targets, goals, minimum acceptable, top-notch ideal)?
- Expectations/predictions of project team and key stakeholders?

### **3. What is CAUSING the current situation?**

- What forces and factors seem to be plausibly associated with the current situation?
- What reasons can be ruled out as most likely unrelated or not plausibly associated with the current situation?

### **4. What are the CONSEQUENCES of the current situation?**

- What seem to be the effects, ramifications, results of the problem?

### **5. What will the FUTURE situation be if there is no active intervention?**

### **6. How can the current situation be IMPROVED?**

- Are there any steps already being taken to improve the situation?
- Are there other interventions that the self-evaluation might recommend to improve the situation?
- Is it possible to express the end-state of what the improved situation would look like?

### **7. How can the findings of the self-evaluation be USED?**

- Who should they be addressed to?
- Who will be interested in the findings of the self-evaluation?

61. The results of the conclusions reached during the brainstorming session could then be synthesized and incorporated in the Terms of Reference as the key evaluation questions.

#### **d) Step Four: Deciding on the self-evaluation methodology**

62. This section outlines the methods that can be used to collect the data and information for the self-evaluation. The selection of questions and indicators will determine the type of data collection methodology to be used. In practice, this often involves selecting from the repertoire of five main types of methods, namely:

- (1) Review of programme data
- (2) Review of official records and other documents
- (3) Surveys (self-administered by respondent and interviewer-administered by evaluators)
- (4) Field visits and direct observation
- (5) Focus Groups

Each of these methods is described in detail in [Module 5](#).

63. The following questions help in detailing the methodology to be used for the evaluation:

- What information is needed to answer the evaluation questions?
- Where is the information for the evaluation likely to be found?
- How many resources can be dedicated to the evaluation and how much time is available to complete it? By when do the results have to be known?

64. For both self-assessment and self-evaluation, the credibility of the information gathered and analysis conducted is important. In order to enhance the validity and reliability of the information, it is suggested that a multi-method approach be used, incorporating more than a single source of data. While self-evaluation within the UN Secretariat implies a more creative, less formalistic exercise, it is no less rigorous in its attempt to add value to the programme.

#### **e) Step Five: Assigning resources and scheduling the self-evaluation**

65. The timetable developed as part of the Terms of Reference could be developed as a workplan for the conduct of the implementation. In addition, the following template may be useful for planning the collection and analysis of data.

Task or Issue	Data source	Time required for data collection	How and when results will be analyzed	Responsible Staff member

**f) Step Six: Conducting the self-evaluation**

66. The self-evaluation should be conducted as outlined in the schedule. This workplan should include specific points at which progress of the self-evaluation is assessed – especially when the returns from data gathering and analysis are expected – so that appropriate adjustments can be made to the design and conduct of the self-evaluation.

**g) Step Seven: Reporting of the self-evaluation**

67. A written report should be drafted for each self-evaluation. This will permit the findings to be used by others and also provides a discipline in looking at findings and conclusions. The process of drafting may open up new lines of exploration. Reporting can therefore be seen as part of the analysis process since it involves putting the pieces together into one coherent document. An effective report will do two things:

- It will tell the story of how well the programme or project did, and
- It will provide clear guidance for follow-up.

**(1) Clarification of terms to be used in a report:**

68. The report will be based on the conclusions drawn from the analysis. The box shows some of the terms used in self-evaluation reports.

<p><b>Key terms used in drawing conclusions and making recommendations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a <i>finding</i> is a factual statement – such as “the repayment rate on loans was 95%.” Findings should be based on evidence obtained through data collection.</li> <li>• a <i>conclusion</i> is a synthesis of findings corresponding to a specific circumstance – e.g., “project x did not achieve its objective.”</li> <li>• a <i>recommendation</i> prescribes what should be done in a specific circumstance – e.g., “incentives should be introduced in order to increase the repayment rate in this micro-credit project.”</li> <li>• a <i>lesson learned</i> is a generalization that does not refer to a specific circumstance</li> </ul>
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but to a “type” of situation – e.g., to credit projects for the rural poor in the highlands. The lessons learned drawn from an evaluation should highlight the strengths and weaknesses in project preparation, design and implementation that affected performance and impact.

## **(2) Suggested format for a self-evaluation report**

### **Executive Summary:**

- 1 to 2 pages highlighting major findings and recommendations

### **I. Context**

- A. Purpose and Scope of the Self-evaluation
- B. Key issues/evaluation questions selected for Self-evaluation
- C. Summary of the evaluation methodology

### **II. Findings**

### **III. Conclusions and recommendations**

### **IV. Lessons Learned**

### **Appendices:**

- Terms of Reference,
- Other documentation and data which amplify the findings of the self-evaluation

## **(3) Review of draft report**

69. Once the report is ready in draft, it is suggested that key stakeholders are debriefed on the salient findings and recommendations. It is also advisable to have a peer review (including some key stakeholders as deemed necessary) of the actual text. Such a review will help to:

- (a) Identify factual errors or points needing clarification;
- (b) Help the evaluators improve their recommendations; and
- (c) Create an understanding of the evaluation results so they are more likely to be agreed to and the recommendations accepted.

## **(4) Preparing the report in final form and circulating it**

70. One person should be in charge of consolidating the draft report into final form so it is written in “one voice” and is consistent throughout. In terms of circulation, self-evaluations

are intended for internal use, so there is no obligation to distribute them outside the programme concerned. Consideration should also be given to including the Executive Summary of the self-evaluation report (or a shorter synopsis) in IMDIS.

**(5) Developing a follow-up Action Plan**

71. The primary purpose of a self-evaluation is to improve performance results. The final phase of the self-evaluation process is to take the results and use them to plan and implement improvements. Some agencies use a standard procedure for developing 'Follow-up Action Plans' as the final stage in the evaluation process and this may be used if it is considered useful. The following format may be of value for this purpose.

**Title of Evaluation** (Completion Date)

Date: Prepared \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ Date Status Review: \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

<b>REPORT RECOMMENDATION (What should be done)</b>	<b>FOLLOW-UP (How) (If accepted, action to be taken; if not, reason why not)</b>	<b>ACTION BY (Unit/person responsible &amp; start &amp; completion date)</b>	<b>STATUS</b>
<u>No. 1:</u>			
<u>No. 2:</u>			
<u>No. 3:</u>			

[\(back to top\)↑](#)

## MODULE V: COLLECTING AND ANALYZING DATA

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72. One of the key advantages of undertaking mandatory self-assessment or discretionary self-evaluation is that it yields information based on the analysis of data which provides a **factual basis** for the conclusions being presented. For both activities, the design phase will have determined the sources of data and the methods of collecting them.

73. For mandatory self-assessment, decisions with regard to source and method of data collection occur when the Indicator Methodology is defined in Month 5 of the biennium and then recorded in the IMDIS database.

74. For discretionary self-evaluation, sources and methods for data collection and workplans and schedules associated with data analysis are outlined in the Terms of Reference.

75. This module is presented in two sections. The first covers collecting data and contains a description of the main methods of data collection. The second provides a number of examples of how data has been analyzed. It is expected that this section will be revised, updated and expanded as and when we receive examples of instructive practices.

[\(back to top\)↑](#)

## A. Collecting data

76. Data collection depends on the source and method to be used. Each of the methods involves a specific research technique. There are five main methods that are used in evaluations:

1. [Review of programme data](#)
2. [Review of official records and other documents](#)
3. [Surveys](#)
4. [Field visits and direct observation](#)
5. [Focus groups](#)

In addition there may be some instances in which it is valuable to seek the opinions of renowned outside experts in the field and use the information they provide as a source of information for the evaluation.

77. This module provides a brief summary of each method. In addition, the reader may wish to look at the information that is available through the [RBB portal](#) (Office of Programme Planning, Budgeting and Accounts website). It is particularly useful for those programme managers involved in mandatory self-assessments.

[\(back to top\)↑](#)

## Data Collection Method 1: REVIEW OF PROGRAMME DATA

78. Programme data consists of information that is routinely collected as part of programme operations and that can be used to indicate results and describe processes. The records can often provide information about management processes and results. Some of the types of programme data available include:

- Conference service utilization statistics
- Sales figures for United Nations sales publications
- Programme/subprogramme expenditure data
- Web-hit/page down-load counters
- Human resource databases
- Budget data
- Output, accomplishments and other data captured in IMDIS

79. Some data series are electronic and automatic retrieval in the form of data reports can be built into the systems. Others will require manual retrieval.

80. When assessing the data available, it is important to recognize and accommodate the limitations of the data. For example, the data may not include the most updated information or it may not be adequately representative (say in terms of sample size, gender, geographical/regional grouping and other such criteria). It is also important to consider issues of data validity and reliability.

### AN EXAMPLE OF THE USE OF PROGRAMME DATA DERIVED FROM USE OF THE WEB

#### **Tracking hits on the United Nations Treaty Collection (UNTC) on the Internet of OLA**

**Context:** Facilitating easy access by the global community to treaties is one of the key reasons d'etre of the Treaty Section. The publication of treaties traces back to the time of the League of Nations when it was felt that if nations made their treaties public, there would be less likelihood of the type of secret diplomacy which had contributed to the outbreak of World War I. The mandate of the UN Treaty Section derives from Articles 98 and 102 of the UN Charter. The UNTC now contains over 50,000 treaties and a similar number of subsequent treaty actions. It also offers the full text and status information on over 500 Multilateral Treaties deposited with the Secretary-General. In the mid 1990s, the Treaty Section was required to place the United Nations Treaty Collection on the Internet and provide ready online access to users. In this context, the need to develop a method of measuring the public interest in treaties published by the UN Secretariat or deposited with the Secretary-General was highlighted.

**Data Sources and Information:** Based on the data collected from its website, the Treaty Section was interested to obtain and analyze the information on the

categories of users of its online databases by country, region or continent and find out whether individuals or institutions were showing more interest. In order to track this data, information was retrieved on a monthly basis and analyzed. Accurate real-time website statistics with detailed visitor tracking and analysis has helped the Treaty Section to better evaluate the needs of its client base over the past five years. In particular, it found that there are a number of critical data variables to be considered. For example, (1) Site Activity reports (Number of Hits and Page Views, Most Common Downloads, Time spent per Visit, etc), (2) Repeat Visitors, (3) Page reports, (5) Referrals reports, and (4) Geographic reports, all offered clues on how to enhance the overall effectiveness of the website and its information delivery capabilities.

In addition, by using a professional web statistical tool (the Treaty Section uses DeepMatrix Live Stats. xsp version 7), the Section was able to determine further modifications to the design of their website based on visitors' preferences and interests. In response to the trends indentified, the current website is undergoing a major overhaul. These enhancements will ensure that commonly searched and viewed content is easily accessible, all data is fully text searchable (possibly in languages other than English) and that the top performing keywords continue to engage the most popular referring search engines (Google.com remains the top referring site.)

The use of statistical tools also allows the Treaty Section to address security issues by tracking the IPs and host names of visitors and identifying suspicious activity when attempts are made to gain unauthorized access to the web server. The web statistical tool is also useful in forecasting the need for hardware/software server upgrades.

In addition, the Section has introduced an on-line user survey on the following issues: (1) do users use the internet in conjunction with published versions of the same information; (2) the degree of relevance of the posted material; (3) the timeliness of the availability of the material compared to five years ago; (4) the user friendliness of the format; (5) the accuracy and reliability of the content; and (6) ease of access. A field is also included on a user profile covering title, occupation and field of work. In addition, Multilateral Treaties Deposited with the Secretary-General are available on CD-ROM and the Section has asked users for feedback. This information will be taken into consideration when steps are taken to place other publications on the CD/DVD-ROM, including the UN Treaty Series (UNTS).

A training module on accessing and using the UN Treaty Collection on the Internet (UNTC) is included in the annual UNITAR Training Seminars held at headquarters and on a regional basis. These sessions have yielded particularly useful user feedback.

## Data Collection Method 2: REVIEW OF OFFICIAL RECORDS & OTHER DOCUMENTS

81. The United Nations is a documents-based organization and official reports, publications, resolutions are major sources of results information. Content analysis is one method developed as a research tool to analyze documents. The key to content analysis is defining the categories that will be used to classify text in terms of the interest of the evaluators. (If interested in [the history and uses of content analysis](#), follow the links to the material available from *Writing Center* at Colorado State University) The electronic availability of documents (and search functions on word-processing and pdf software) has made content analysis much less tedious than in the past.

82. There are four steps involved in content analysis. Since this material is lengthy, it is not reproduced here but included as a hyperlink to the section from [How to Design and Carry Out Data Collection Strategies for the Results-based budgeting - A step-by-step Guide](#). Described below is a content analysis exercise undertaken by the Department of Public Information (DPI) to analyze the media coverage of the Global Compact Leaders Summit held in July 2004. Additional examples on coding data are included in the [detailed procedures](#) hyperlink.

### **Content Analysis of Media coverage of the Global Compact Leaders Summit**

**Context:** In June 2004, over 500 chief executive officers, government officials and labour and civil society leaders gathered at the United Nations Headquarters to discuss the topic of global corporate citizenship. DPI and staff of the Global Compact Office prepared a Communications Strategy for this event which also involved the concurrent release of a report by McKinsey & Company, the international management consultancy on "Assessing the Global Compact's Impact." As part of this Strategy, DPI undertook a content analysis of the media coverage of this event.

#### **Data Source, Questions and Methods adopted to answer these questions:**

Ninety-two press clips from print media were evaluated. (Each appearance of a wire service story in a separate newspaper was treated as a separate article.) Transcripts of television and radio coverage were not available for this evaluation.

Short-term staff were deployed as data analysts and assigned the following tasks:

- (1) grade each article on its overall tone - positive, neutral or negative.
- (2) judge which of the following five key messages, as defined in the Strategy by DPI and the Global Compact's external relations staff, were reflected in each clip:
  1. *The Global Compact is bringing together business, civil society and governments to improve living conditions worldwide and address globalization issues (trade, investment, cultural tensions, environmental protection, etc).*
  2. *The McKinsey Company evaluation of the Global Compact shows that*

*overall, it is doing a good job and making an impact on corporate behaviour.*

3. *The Global Compact is adding anti-corruption to its core principles.*
4. *The Global Compact is adding new initiatives in the finance sector, i.e. with stock exchange,; and with investment houses and credit rating agencies.*
5. *The Global Compact's work is impaired because it is a voluntary initiative and has no effective enforcement or compliance measures.*

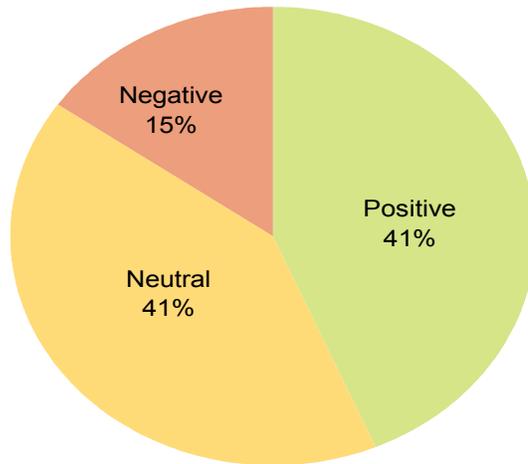
The outcome was captured in an access database and then aggregated for analysis.

### **Conclusions drawn from the content analysis:**

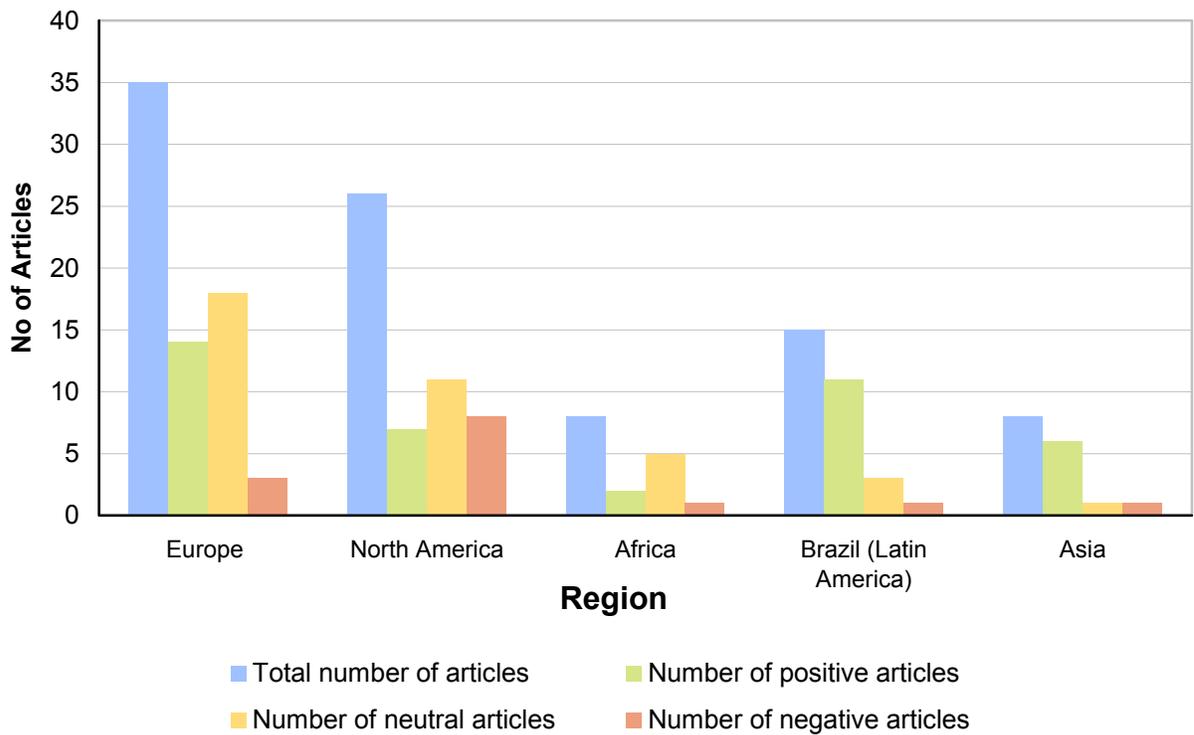
- (1) The results showed overall strong positive treatment by the press. However, these results were not weighted for the importance or impact of individual publications.
- (2) A strong influence of regional or national politics on message pick-up was evident. Latin American correspondents – virtually all from Brazil – were the most positive, which was not surprising given the presence of President Lula (who delivered the keynote address at the event) and the strong contribution to the Compact made by Bovespa, the Brazilian stock exchange. Bovespa’s role probably also accounted for strong Brazilian pick-up of the message relating to finance initiatives.
- (3) Europe was strongly represented in the Compact and has a tradition of business participation in social alliances. It was therefore natural that most articles about the Summit and overall positive tone reflected in reporting this event came from press coverage originating in this region. This same tradition, however, may have contributed to impatience with the lack of “teeth” in Compact rules for corporate membership. This issue emerged as a problem at a higher rate in European coverage than in US-based articles.
- (4) U.S. coverage was neutral, with a total of 8 negative versus 7 positive articles. This virtual standoff may in fact represent a public relations victory, given American anxieties about international regulation and an all-time low point in overall regard for the UN at the time (as indicated by separate public opinion polls showing the impact of Iraq and corruption allegations).
- (5) The appearance of UN-tailored messages was fairly strong. For example, the anti-corruption initiative was mentioned in virtually half of the European stories. The US press focused more often on the Compact’s initiative with stock markets and finance houses. While it was encouraging that nearly two-thirds of the articles reflected the UN message about the overall purpose and accomplishments of the Compact, it was also perhaps a cause for concern that more than one third did not.

The two figures that follow provide a graphic representation of the content analysis of the press clippings

**Figure 1: Tone of articles**



**Figure 2: Differences in the tone of articles among regions**



[\(back to top\)↑](#)

### Data Collection Method 3: SURVEYS

83. Surveys can be administered in two ways:

- by an interviewer (by phone or in person), or
- self-administered by the respondent (by mail, email or the web).

84. There are a series of steps that have to be followed in designing surveys:

- a) Deciding who your survey population is;
- b) Deciding on the method of getting the survey instrument to the persons in the sample; and
- c) Deciding what to ask and how to ask it. (This will be covered in the section on [questionnaire design](#))

Each of the steps is discussed below.

#### (1) Deciding on your survey population

85. Deciding the survey population that will be asked for information about results or process is often simple. It should consist of those who would have the necessary information and this is usually determined by the information itself. For example, when DPI wanted to find out whether their radio feeds were being used, they surveyed the managers of radio stations to know whether they used UN radio feeds.

86. Sometimes, however, the target is not as clear cut. For example, to evaluate whether the information imparted in training courses has been used, would it be better to survey the trainees? Or would it be better to survey their supervisors or colleagues? The answer would depend on who would provide more reliable information. The choice would also be affected by the relative difficulty in defining the universe of respondents: it would probably be easier to identify the trainees than it would be to identify their supervisors.

87. The next step is to determine if you want to survey the entire group of people involved in the subject of study or perhaps a smaller sample of the entire group. If the population is small, the survey should probably include all of the members. For example, if the population to be surveyed was the members of the bureaux of the Economic and Social Council for the last five years (which would normally include some twenty-five persons), it would be worthwhile to survey all of them. (See also RBB Guide '[To Sample or Not to Sample](#)') The advantage of surveying the entire universe of a group is that your findings are more precise. If you do not want to survey the entire universe, you may decide to survey a sample of the universe.

**Sample design:** If the population is large, time and resource constraints would suggest drawing a sample. Sampling is a technique of selecting a smaller number of cases from a larger group in such a way that they will represent the larger group within a known range of error. The [World Bank has an excellent discussion of the](#)

[elements of sampling](#) in its International Programme for Development Evaluation Training.

For most self-assessments and self-evaluations, the preferred sampling method is a **simple random sample**. Random samples are preferred because the extent to which they are likely to be representative of the whole population is known in advance.

**Non-random samples** may be used to gather information as well; however, one cannot generalize the information as being representative of the entire group. For non-random samples, selection criteria are needed to help you choose your sample. For example, if you are looking to construct a non-random sample of NGOs, you can look for variability in size, region and structure. (Further information and examples of how samples can be drawn are shown in the hyperlinked [supplement to this manual](#).)

## (2) Survey Mode: Deciding on the method of getting the survey instrument to the persons in the sample

88. The main choice is between a survey that is administered by interviewers or one that is self-administered by the respondents. The choice of type is mostly determined by time and resources. Each mode of administration has its advantages and disadvantages and some modes are more appropriate than others for certain types of questions. These issues are discussed below.

### 2(a) Self-administered surveys

89. A self-administered survey requires less staff time. The difficulty with self-administered surveys is that the response rate is usually lower than that obtained by interviewer-administered surveys. Surveys with a low response rate are less likely to be representative, since the characteristics of those who do not respond are often not known. Surveys sent by mail usually take longer to administer, while those that are transmitted by e-mail may be constrained by the access that respondents have to the Internet. However, the advantage of the self-administered survey is that it is a more appropriate vehicle for asking sensitive questions that a respondent may not want to answer in person, or where confidentiality is a concern. Such surveys are also useful when lack of resources do not allow in-person or phone administration, especially in cases when the population is located overseas.

## Web-based surveys

A more recent method that seeks to marry the convenience of a self-administered survey with the speed of the Internet is the web-based survey. Given that this survey method is still in its infancy, there is considerable debate about its effectiveness. Much of the concern focuses on the differentiation among potential respondents' computer literacy, screen configurations, connections speeds and how this impacts willingness or ability to answer web-survey questions accurately.\*\*

There are numerous software products on the market that support web-based surveys. However, at present UN programmes like DPI do not use an off-the-shelf software product for its online surveys. Instead, it uses in-house resources supported by the computer classes offered at the UN. DPI surveys are generally designed for use with Access, Dreamweaver and SQL.

It is also advisable to contact ITSD to get an update on whether there are any standardized approaches being adopted. (See [also iMCS power point presentation on web surveys](#)).

## 2(b) Interviewer-administered surveys

90. Depending on who is to be interviewed and where, interviews can be in-person, over the phone or on the Internet. The likelihood of the respondent completing a questionnaire through an oral interview is greater than if it is sent out in hardcopy. The RBB Manual has an [excellent comparison](#) of the advantages and disadvantages of different methods in the box entitled "How should my programme administer a survey?"

In all cases, the interview should:

- Be conducted as close to a normal conversation as possible; and
- Ensure that the questions should flow logically.

Interviewer bias can be minimized by:

- Developing a standard protocol for asking question;
- Using neutral probes if the answers are unclear; and
- Ensuring that all interviewers ask the same questions in the same way.

The [IAEA has developed helpful hints for undertaking interviews](#) that can be used in the United Nations as well.

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\*\* Don A. Dillman – Professor of Sociology at Washington State University – et al. have written an paper entitled [Principles for Constructing Web Surveys](#) that provide insights to successful web-survey techniques based on their recent research experience. Ronald D. Fricker and Matthias Schonlau from RAND offer a more sobering assessment of web-survey techniques in [Advantages and Disadvantages of Internet Research Surveys: Evidence from the Literature](#)

91. **Questionnaire design:** Interviews need a questionnaire that is systematically employed. The questions asked should be clear, unambiguous and relevant to the information needed. In practice, questions that ask about behaviour (what did you do?) are more reliable than those that ask about cognition (what did you think?) or affect (what did you feel?) The [RBB manual](#) contains a set of general guidelines for asking questions, but you may also wish to consult the [supplemental information of this manual](#).

92. There are two ways of asking questions for an interview:

- open-ended questions, and
- closed-ended questions.

Questionnaires can use a combination of open-ended and close-ended questions. There are advantages and disadvantages to both. Ideally a questionnaire will include a combination of both types. The choice between open-ended and closed-ended should be pragmatic. If a question deals with a fact for which there are known intervals (e.g. how often do you read the UN publication: several times a month, once a month, every two months, never), use a close-ended question. If the question seeks to obtain information where detail is valuable (e.g. How do you use the training provided by the UN), use an open-ended question.

#### **(i) Open-ended questions**

93. An open-ended question does not contain a previously fixed set of response categories. Open-ended questions provide more qualitative data, because respondents (the persons answering the question) often elaborate on their answers and are less constrained. However, if the questionnaire is to be responded to in writing, respondents may have to take more time to answer and this may reduce response rates. Also, if the interview is oral, the interviewer has to write down more information, which may take more time. Other examples of questionnaire design are found in the [supplement](#) to this manual.

#### **(ii) Closed-ended questions**

94. In closed-ended questions, the response categories are specified in the questionnaire. There are a number of types of closed-ended questions that are described in the [RBB Manual](#). The main advantage of closed-ended questions is ease of response since the respondent is only required to check the most appropriate answer. Furthermore, consistency of responses facilitates tabulation since this can be done mechanically. It is useful to follow these rules of thumb when designing close-ended questions:

- Make sure you employ a balanced scale (same amount of negative and positive choices);
- Do not exceed 7 response categories; and
- Make sure that the categories used are mutually exclusive.

95. The main disadvantage of closed-ended questions is that the response categories are fixed and may not adequately answer the questions posed in the evaluation. When the

closed-ended questions deal with perceptions (such as satisfaction), the response patterns may also be affected by cultural factors. In some cultures, it difficult to criticize and as a result the ratings on a scale may tend to the higher side. In other cultures, there is less of a constraint on criticism.

**96. Pre-testing:** The importance of the value of pre-testing cannot be overstated. It is an essential quality-control measure to ensure that the questionnaire is clear and usable. Without careful pre-testing of the questions, interpretation of closed-ended questions is difficult. It is advisable to pre-test the protocols developed by asking one or two people to fill in the questionnaire and provide you with detailed feedback on the questions, structure and instructions.

[\(back to top\)↑](#)

## Data Collection Method 4: FIELD VISITS AND DIRECT OBSERVATION

97. Information needed for a self-evaluation or self-assessment can be obtained by direct observation. Much of the activity of the United Nations takes place in meetings, which involve complex interactions between governments, the Secretariat and non-governmental organizations. These can be observed directly. Similarly, operational activities can be observed through field visits. For example, management of refugee camps or peacekeeping operations can be observed during inspection or fact-finding visits. The quality of many administrative procedures can be assessed by observing how they are applied.

98. The methodological issue is how to systematize the observation and recording of data. This involves two aspects, designing protocols or forms for recording observations, and using the kinds of techniques that allow observation to take place without influencing the behaviour being observed.

### **(i) Protocol design**

To collect field observation data consistently, a protocol observation and/or discussion guide should be developed. The protocol sets out the minimum set of criteria that should be looked for when a field visit observation is made. The discussion guide develops a set of questions using the same approaches one would choose when putting together a questionnaire. The [discussion guide](#) used for the OIOS evaluation of the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture may be helpful as an example.

### **(ii) Field observation techniques**

Once a protocol has been developed, the observations themselves can begin. Field observations require care. Techniques that have been adopted by practitioners of [participatory evaluation](#) may be helpful in this regard. ( See also [Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Paper](#), IDS, the [World Bank Site](#) and [IFAD Manual](#)).

[\(back to top\)↑](#)

## Data Collection Method 5: FOCUS GROUPS

99. Focus groups are a form of group interview where, in addition to the responses to specific questions, the dynamics of the interview are also important. It is a particularly good technique for assessing how well processes work. It consists of bringing together a group of people who are either beneficiaries of a programme, or are the managers and implementers of the programme and discussing results and the processes that led to achieving the results. The interaction among different participants provides a multi-dimensional view of the programme and how it works.

100. There is a clear distinction between a focus group and individual interviews. Focus groups are more likely to be appropriate when there is a specific problem where there is no easy solution or when you are trying to determine the general success of a programme or activity or want to capture a broader range of divergent views. Interviews, on the other hand, capture information in a more systematic fashion.

101. Focus groups are not easy to run and usually require a facilitator. The role of the facilitator is to ensure that the discussions follow a logical path and produce the necessary information without, however, intruding too much on the flow of discussion. Very often facilitators are brought from the outside, although this is not always necessary if someone on the programme staff possesses facilitation skills.

102. As a technique, focus groups have implications in terms of costs and time required to complete them as compared to large-scale surveys. A thorough manual on the [use of focus groups in research on disease](#) has been published by the United Nations University and is available on-line.

### **(i) Planning a focus group**

There are several sequential steps to follow in planning a focus group. There is a need to be clear on the type of information being sought in deciding whether focus groups are the best means of obtaining it. If you decide a focus group is the appropriate way to obtain the needed information then follow the steps below.

**(1) Identify the issues and participants to be included in the discussion.** Focus groups usually discuss a small number of issues or questions. If you have too many issues, the discussion may flounder. The issues also need to be relevant to the participants, ones in which they have an interest and an informed opinion.

Consult and convince the people that will be included in the focus group. Offices or groups may be reluctant for their staff to participate in focus group discussions, especially if they fear the sessions may concentrate on general staff dissatisfaction - something that will exist in every organization. It is important to discuss with the intended group at a very early stage the intention to use focus groups, explaining how the information will be collected and interpreted, the results used and presented in the report.

**(2) Select a facilitator.** Encouraging participants to speak freely and to achieve good group interaction requires specialist skills. Select a person trained in and experienced with facilitation techniques. Where participants are likely to be reticent, it may be appropriate to recruit a professional facilitator who can draw out the less engaged participants.

**(3) Identify appropriate focus group participants.** These need to be chosen carefully so that they are reasonably representative of the organization or group of people whose views are being sought. While neither the individuals nor their views will ever be statistically representative, the participants should be a good cross-section of the various types of people within the programme or group you are interested in.

**(4) Invite participants to attend.** If the focus group is to be successful the participants need to feel comfortable and be prepared to express their views freely. They are likely to be concerned about the confidentiality of the information they may provide and that nothing will be individually attributed to them. How the focus group will be organized and how the results of the discussion will be used should be clearly explained to all participants and their concerns addressed.

**(5) Choose a venue.** Where the focus group is held can influence its success. Neutral ground is usually best - away from the offices. The environment should be conducive to good discussion by encouraging participants to feel comfortable and at ease.

#### **(ii) Conducting the focus group**

The focus group is a group interview, conducted by the facilitator. While the questions to be discussed should be worked out in advance, the group members should determine the flow of the discussion. Often the interaction among group members will provide new leads. An important facilitation technique is to draw out all group members to participate.

103. A major issue with focus groups is how to record the information. Most studies suggest that careful written notes be kept, picking up key ideas that have been expressed. Often focus groups are recorded (by audio cassette or video), although this may inhibit participants and increases the cost of analysis, since the recordings either need to be transcribed or listened to. It is also important to alert participants to the fact that the proceedings of the focus group will be taped and get their explicit concurrence to the taping.

[\(back to top\)↑](#)

## B. Analyzing data

104. Analyzing the data is typically a two step process: first determining what the results are and then, secondly, determining what accounts for these results. The type of analysis to use and the conclusions to draw will depend on the specifics of the programme or project being evaluated, but some general rules of thumb about analysis are that:

- Analysis should answer the evaluation questions;
- Analysis should show changes over time, if relevant and appropriate;
- Conclusions should be based on unambiguous findings; and
- Analysis should be appropriate to the quality of the data being used.

105. The purpose of data analysis is to be able to draw defensible conclusions. It is the answer to two questions:

1. What do I see? What is the data telling me?
2. [Why do I see it?](#) Tackling causality.

### **1. What do I see? What is the data telling me?**

106. The first step is to see whether the expected accomplishments (measured by the indicators of achievement in the case of a self-assessment) or the hypothesized results happened, or what the data are. If the indicators have been well-defined, this stage of analysis should be straight-forward. Either what was expected was observed or not. The following provides examples of basic analysis from existing evaluations.

#### **Example. Visits to the Treaty Database**

The indicator for increased access to the United Nations Treaty Database was changes in the number of downloads over time. Compared to the baseline, the number of downloads increased. Therefore, the expected accomplishment was achieved.

#### **Example. Use of the 2003 long-range population projections**

To determine whether the 2003 long-range population projections were used, the Population Division counted the number of newspapers citing the projections. The findings from the Population Division's new long-range population projections (announced on 9 December 2003) appeared in over 60 newspapers internationally. This was interpreted to mean that Population Division research reaches a very wide audience, through its publications, internet, public presentations and press interactions. The data, however, were not compared with a baseline or benchmark.

107. Converting information into “descriptive statistics” – proportions, percentages and ratios is easy, but has to be done with care. The basic steps in analyzing quantitative data typically involves determining the following:

- the range - the distance between the highest and lowest data points in a set;
- the mean - the total of all observed values divided by the number of observations;
- the median - the middle value, when half the observations are below it and the other half are above it; and
- the mode - the most commonly occurring observed value.

108. The following sections contain some examples of types of data analysis and it is hoped that these will be further supplemented as best practices are reported and shared by managers involved in evaluating their programmes. (See also [Analyzing Performance Measurement Data](#)).

[\(back to top\)↑](#)

## Data Analysis Example 1: CITATION OF RESEARCH STUDIES IN REPORTS

109. In this example, the analysis was to answer the question: “Are the programme’s research studies cited in reports prepared by relevant ministries or in research journals?” In the data collection phase, documents were reviewed to see whether they mention the studies. The percentage of documents mentioning the studies was chosen as a means of analysis in this case. As the project has done its work over time it was decided to show what had happened at different points in time and also take into account whether external events could explain any changes in patterns. Thus, to show whether there are changes over time, the percentage in each year being evaluated might be tabulated, with 2002 as the baseline year.

Mentions of studies	2002	2003	2004	2005
Percent of documents mentioning	20	15	39	20
Total number of documents	40	40	40	40

110. Two points can be made about this table:

First, it is important whenever percentages are used, to include in the table the number of cases on which the proportions are based. This will allow a reader of the analysis to reconstruct the table, if necessary. It also allows noting where the percentage is based on a small number of cases.

Second, percentage of mentions gives equal weight to reports where there is one mention and where there are many. If the intensity of influence by the project is considered important it might be better to use the average number of mentions of project studies in reports (with a number that could range from zero – there were no mentions – to the highest number of mentions in a single document.)

[\(back to top\)↑](#)

## Data Analysis Example 2: ANALYSIS OF SURVEY DATA

111. Surveys are a common method used in conducting both self-assessments and self-evaluations. Analysis of survey data requires several basic steps. These are:

1. *Develop a survey tracking system*
  - Create a tracking system (typically using a database or spreadsheet) for logging in returned surveys and keeping track of queries and follow-up contacts with non-responders.
2. *Review and edit returned questionnaires*
  - Decide on a common protocol for editing the questionnaires. For example, the evaluation team must decide how to handle cases in which instructions are not properly followed. However, answers to questions should not be changed except for unique circumstances and only when agreed to by the respondent.
3. *Code responses*
  - For close-ended questions, assign a mutually exclusive numerical ('1', '2' etc.) or alpha ('A', 'B' etc.) code for each response category.
  - For open-ended questions, review a good sample of questionnaires to identify common themes and/or issues. Assign a numerical or alpha code for each one. These codes need not be mutually exclusive. Depending on how specific you want your analysis to be, you may want to use just a few codes to capture broad-level responses, or many codes to capture detailed-level responses.
  - Use consistent codes throughout the questionnaire for "Not applicable" and "No response."
  - Always provide a code for "Other" for responses that do not fit into pre-assigned codes.
4. *Enter responses*
  - For a very small survey, you may prefer to tabulate responses by hand.
  - For larger surveys, you can enter survey responses into a database or spreadsheet.
  - If data is stored in a database, you should "clean" the data of any data entry errors (such as out-of-range codes or blank fields) before analyzing it.
  - Some software packages for web-based surveys also store the data for you in a database.
5. *Calculate frequency of responses*
  - For each question, calculate the number of respondents for each response category. The percentage should be calculated out of the total number of respondents answering the question, not the total number of respondents in the survey.
  - It is best to report the raw number if there are few respondents (e.g., "10 of 15 respondents report ...").

- It is best to report the percentage if there are many respondents (e.g., “75 % of respondents report ...”).
- For numerical responses, common analyses would include calculation of the range, mean, median and mode. Alternatively, you may want to group numerical responses into mutually exclusive categories (for example: less than 3 years, 4 to 6 years, more than 6 years).

112. In addition to these steps, you may want to do further analysis of the survey data by creating new variables for themes or issues repeated throughout the questionnaire (in more than one question) or by conducting cross-tabulations between different variables. For example, if you have surveyed users of a flagship report and want to know if there is any difference in satisfaction among types of users, you could cross-tabulate satisfaction level by user group.

113. If the sample is large and the response rate is low, you should also consider the possibility of non-response bias in the survey results. For example, if you have conducted a survey of NGOs, and most of the respondents are from one region only, you may consider what effect, if any, this has on the findings of the survey.

114. Below is a sample of tabulated survey questions taken from a questionnaire used for an evaluation of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture. This questionnaire was sent to NGOs that had received a grant from the Fund to provide psychological and other services to torture victims.

*Sample survey questions:*

**2. How many years has the project supported by the Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture been operating?**

**8. Overall, how would you describe the application process for Fund grants?**

Very easy  
 Easy  
 Difficult  
 Very difficult

**10. What do you do when you have questions about your application?**

115. The example above illustrates three different types of survey questions: numerical (question # 2), close-ended (question # 8) and open-ended (question # 10). Each of the three required a different kind of analysis. In question #2, the years cited by respondents were too varied to make collapsing them into discrete time periods practical. Therefore, the range, mean, mode and median were calculated to get a sense of the time frames during which projects had been receiving support from the Fund.

116. Since question # 8 was close-ended with pre-determined response categories, each category was assigned a mutually exclusive code and the responses for each code were calculated. A code for “no response” was also added for the one respondent who did not answer the question.

117. Question # 10 required the most time to analyze, since it was open-ended and the text responses needed to be collapsed into meaningful categories. Upon reviewing a good sample of questionnaires, three codes were developed to capture the main responses. A code for “other” was also used for responses that did not fit into these three codes (either they were infrequent or not relevant to the question), as was a code for “no response” for the four respondents who did not answer the question.

The following table presents summary information on how each of these three questions were coded and how the data was analyzed:*Sample survey questions – TABULATED:*

2. *How many years has the project supported by the Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture been operating?*

**(n = 133)\***

**Range : 1 to 42 years**

**Mean : 13.4**

**Mode : 3**

**Median : 5**

8. *Overall, how would you describe the application process for Fund grants?*

**[Close-ended]\*\***

**(n = 133)\***

A	Very easy	9 / 7%
B	Easy	92 / 69%
C	Difficult	31 / 23%
D	Very difficult	1 / > 1%
Y	No response	1

10. *What do you do when you have questions about your application? [Open-ended]\*\*\**

**(n = 130)\***

A	Have not / do not have questions	6 / 5%
B	Contact the Fund	110 / 85%
C	Contact colleagues at other projects	25 / 19%
D	Other	10 / 8%
Y	No response	4

\* 'n' refers to the number of respondents answering the question and is used as the denominator in calculating percentages

\*\* Respondents may only choose 1 response and therefore percentages add up to 100%

\*\*\* Respondents may choose more than 1 response and therefore percentages may exceed 100%

### Data Analysis Example 3: MORE EXAMPLES OF PRESENTING QUANTITATIVE DATA

118. Another way to present quantitative data is with frequency distributions, averages and medians.

For example, suppose that for each annual meeting of a regional commission, data had been collected on the number of times one subprogramme's reports had been cited in the meeting's discussions. It would be possible to show the distribution of citations for each of these reports over subsequent years. This could be accomplished using the following table:

<b>Report</b>	<b>Number of citations: 2002</b>	<b>Number of citations: 2003</b>	<b>Number of citations: 2004</b>
Report A	3	2	4
Report B	0	2	1
Report C	9	11	10

This table would show how many citations each report received in each year.

It would also be possible to convert the table into averages and/or medians. In this example, the average (or mean) of citations for Report A would be calculated by dividing the sum of all citations by the number of years the report was discussed, as illustrated below:

Total number of all citations (9) / Number of years report was discussed (3)  
Average number of citations for Report A over time = 3

A useful next step in the analysis would be to then compare the average number of citations of each report to see which one is being cited the most.

<b>Report</b>	<b>Average number of citations during the period 2002-2004</b>
Report A	3
Report B	1
Report C	10

Further analysis may be required if one were interested in determining why report C received more citations than the others during the period in question.

Averages have to be used with care because they can be strongly affected by extreme values. In this example, if Report A had been cited 25 times in one year (when 2 or 3 citations were more typical), this would distort the average number of citations for the report.

## 2. Why do I see it? Tackling causality

118. After answering “What do I see?” the next question that must be answered is “Why do I see it?” This involves establishing causality between a current condition and the various factors that account for that condition. At the simplest level causality involves trying to establish a connection between two variables or characteristics of a phenomenon being evaluated.<sup>††</sup>

119. There are three main ways one can use to show causation between two variables:

- (1) **Timing** – A change in the dependent variable occurs an appropriate amount of time after a change in the predictor variable. (For example, the number of times a cricket chirps is said to be associated with a rise in temperature. Cricket chirps are the ‘dependent variable’ that appear to have a relationship with the predictor variable ‘rising temperature.’);
- (2) **Presence or absence** – The dependent variable acts one way in the presence of the predictor variable and another way in the absence of the predictor variable. (For example – An electric light always burns when its switch is in the “Up” position and it never burns when its switch is not in the “Up” position; and
- (3) **Intensity** – The value of the dependent variable is directly related to the value of the predictor variable. (For example – plants receiving more fertilizer grow faster and bigger than plants receiving less fertilizer.)

These factors all help in establishing the main purpose of analysis, which is to see whether an explanation can be found for the results observed. In most instances, when we are tackling the issue of causality we are trying to establish a meaningful association of cause and effect.

120. The supplemental information provides a brief case study on whether attendance at meetings influenced reading of United Nations publications. Essentially this kind of analysis centres on listing all of the possible causes for a result and eliminating those that are not supported by data or logic. The objective is to separate out the factors that are related to the subprogramme or project being evaluated from external factors.

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<sup>††</sup> A variable is a characteristic of an observation that can be classified into at least two categories.

### 3. *Suggestions on presenting data*

121. The following checklist may be useful when transforming data-based conclusions into findings and recommendations in an evaluation report:

#### **What is the best way to present data and findings?**

Consider whether presentation of information would be better in terms of text or would a pie chart, a graph, table or flow chart do a better job. One cardinal rule when presenting data in terms of graphics is the need to ensure that all readers will react to and interpret that presentation in the same way. Clarity in conveying the information is paramount and therefore it is best to pre-test the graphic on a cross-section of those who have knowledge of the evaluation and those who do not, to ensure that the messages being conveyed in the graphic is clear.

#### **Are the evaluation findings presented in a fair, open and unambiguous manner?**

Lucid and clear presentation of evaluation findings is critical to producing a convincing and useable evaluation. Findings should not be presented in a manner that could lead to several interpretations. They should be easy for a reader to grasp, even one who is unfamiliar with the topic or subject matter being evaluated. In addition, the findings should not be subjective, but rather fairly presented on the basis of the evidence.

#### **Are the evaluation recommendations practical and usable?**

When formulating the recommendations of an evaluation, it is advisable to consider who will use the findings and recommendations and for what purpose. This exercise will often help ensure that results are useable by those in a position to act on the recommendations.

[\(back to top\)↑](#)