



IEO | INDEPENDENT
Evaluation Office
United Nations Development Programme



Charter of the Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP

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Introduction

1 This charter sets out the mandate, authority and accountabilities of the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It defines how IEO operationalizes its independence, and sets out the principles and procedures for engagement with UNDP business units (evaluands) that are subject to independent evaluations.

Mandate

2 The revised UNDP Evaluation Policy was adopted by the Executive Board in the 2016 second annual session in New York (DP/2016/23). It sets out the purpose and basic principles of evaluation and defines the institutional architecture for UNDP and its associated funds and programmes. Within this context, IEO is defined as a functionally independent unit within UNDP that supports the oversight and accountability functions of the Executive Board and the management of UNDP, UNCDF and UNV. The structural independence of the Office underpins and guarantees its freedom to conduct evaluations and report evaluation results to the Executive Board.

3 The main role of IEO is to conduct independent evaluations according to the plans and costed programmes of work approved by the Executive Board. The work of the Office includes:

- Developing evaluation standards, procedures, criteria and methodological guidance for UNDP evaluations, and contributing to innovation in evaluation methodology and dissemination of good practices;
- Conducting thematic programmatic and other independent evaluations, ensuring strategic and representative coverage of UNDP programmes and results against national, regional and global scales;
- Providing UNDP and its development partners with timely knowledge and lessons drawn from evaluations that can feed into development programming at global, regional and country levels;
- Assessing the quality of decentralized evaluations of UNDP, UNCDF and UNV, and monitoring compliance with best international evaluation and data collection standards, including the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG);
- Maintaining a searchable, publicly accessible repository of all UNDP, UNCDF and UNV evaluations, and respective management responses and resulting actions;

WHAT IS EVALUATION?

An evaluation is an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders.

The purposes of evaluation are to promote accountability and learning. Evaluation aims to understand why — and to what extent — intended and unintended results were achieved and to analyze the implications of the results. Evaluation can inform planning, programming, budgeting, implementation and reporting and can contribute to evidence-based policymaking, development effectiveness and organizational effectiveness.

(UNEG Norms and Standards, 2016)

- Supporting the development of communities of practice, and partnering with professional evaluation networks to improve evaluation utility and credibility;
- Supporting the harmonization of the evaluation function in the United Nations system, including contributing to the annual work programme of UNEG, participating in system-wide evaluations, and prioritizing joint evaluations with United Nations organizations;
- Promoting national ownership and leadership in evaluation through country-led and joint evaluations.

Independence

4. The independence of the IEO is enshrined in the UNDP Evaluation Policy. The Office is led by a Director who is responsible for ensuring its independence, and upholding the impartiality and credibility of its work. The Director reports directly and is accountable to the UNDP Executive Board. The Director is appointed by the UNDP Administrator, in consultation with the Executive Board and Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee (AEAC).¹ The Director cannot be dismissed for public statements made in the conduct of his or her work, consistent with UNDP staff rules and regulations and the United Nations standards of conduct for the International Civil Service. Through the Board-approved Multi-Year Evaluation Plan (MYEP) and costed biennial programme of work, the Office is allocated resources to implement its agreed programme of work.

Authority

5. In the performance of its work, in determining its multi-year/annual work plans, and in deciding the scope of evaluations the IEO shall be free from managerial interference. In line with the UNDP Evaluation Policy, IEO shall consult the UNDP Administrator in the identification and selection of themes or country programmes to be evaluated, however, IEO shall have the final say on such selection subject to approval by the Executive Board.

6. IEO shall have the freedom to engage directly with internal and external stakeholders deemed necessary for the discharge of responsibilities under this Charter. This includes communicating directly with all levels of staff and external stakeholders at any stage of the evaluation process, to furnish information deemed necessary for the completion of any evaluation without necessarily giving prior notice to the evaluand.

7. IEO shall have full and unrestricted access to the organization's records across all offices and programmes, in the field and at headquarters, as necessary for the performance of its duties.

8. The Director has the final say on the content and release of evaluations carried out by the Office, in accordance with UNDP Executive Board decisions (evaluation reports will be issued under the imprimatur of the Office).

9. Any impairment or attempt to interfere in the independence and integrity of evaluations being conducted by the Office, including unwarranted delays to timely completion, will be taken up with UNDP senior management, and depending on severity may be elevated for consideration by the AEAC and the UNDP Executive Board.

10. If evidence or reports of wrongdoing are provided to the IEO in the course of its work, IEO shall refer the matter to competent bodies, such as the Office of Audit and Investigations and Office of Ethics, in keeping with UNDP policies and procedures relating to fraud, abuse and misconduct.

11. The Director and staff of IEO shall protect the rights of institutions and individuals to provide information in anonymity and ensure that sensitive data cannot be traced to its source.

Accountability

12. The Director of IEO reports directly and is accountable to the UNDP Executive Board.²

13. The AEAC, as an advisory panel monitors the work of the IEO.

14. The quality of the work of IEO is further strengthened by the International Evaluation Advisory Panel.³

15. The Director of IEO shall report annually to the Executive Board on the status of the evaluation function through the Annual Report on Evaluation.

16. The Director and staff of IEO shall abide by the UNEG Norms and Standards and shall at all times maintain and safeguard their independence, impartiality and integrity.

Ethics

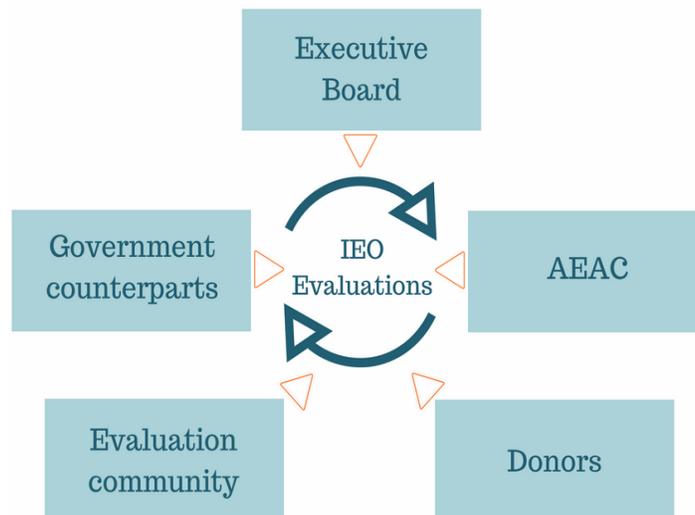
17. IEO shall adhere to ethical principles in accordance with the UNEG Norms and Standards (“Standard 3.2 *Ethics*”). In particular, IEO:

- Gives consideration to the utility and necessity of an evaluation at the outset (*Intentionality*);
- Exercises its commitment to avoid conflicts of interest in all aspects of its work, thereby upholding the principles of independence, impartiality, credibility, honesty, integrity and accountability (*Conflict of interest*);
- Engages appropriately and respectfully with participants in evaluation processes, upholding the principles of confidentiality and anonymity and their limitations; dignity and diversity; human rights; gender equality; and avoidance of harm (*Interactions with participants*);
- Ensures accuracy, completeness and reliability; inclusion and non-discrimination; transparency; and fair and balanced reporting that acknowledges different perspectives (*Evaluation process and products*);
- Reports the discovery of any apparent misconduct to a competent body (*Discovery of wrongdoing*).

Independent Evaluation Office (IEO)

- ⇒ Functionally independent
- ⇒ Guided by the UNDP Evaluation Policy
- ⇒ Reports directly & is accountable to the Executive Board

IEO work is overseen at many levels



Planning and Execution of the IEO Work Plan

18. IEO shall prepare its Multi Year Evaluation Plan (MYEP) once every four years in consultation with the UNDP Executive Board, UNDP Administrator and the AEAC. Each MYEP shall be submitted to the Executive Board for approval.
19. Based on the MYEP, IEO shall prepare and present to the UNDP Executive Board an annual costed programme of work in consultation with the AEAC.
20. The MYEP reflects the needs of UNDP as well as the demands from its governing body. IEO seeks to ensure greater accountability and learning through the independent evaluations it conducts, namely the corporate/thematic and independent country programme evaluations (ICPEs).
21. Appendix 'I' details procedures governing the conduct of corporate / thematic evaluations.
22. Appendix 'II' details procedures governing the conduct of ICPEs.

Management Responses to Independent Evaluations

23. The UNDP Evaluation policy states that “management should respond to all evaluation recommendations”. The management response is intended to promote evaluation use and follow-up by facilitating engagement on evaluation findings and involving key stakeholders.
24. UNDP Management has the responsibility to provide a written management response to all independent evaluations.
25. The preparation of the management response is expected to take no more than 10 working days for ICPEs and 20 for Executive Board reports.
26. The management response shall be prepared in the requested template in Appendix III.
27. Management shall respond to each evaluation recommendation by stating whether they (a) accept; (b) accept with reservations; or (c) do not accept the evaluation recommendation. Reasons for acceptance with reservations or non-acceptance shall be stated.
28. In the case that Management fully accepts a recommendation(s), it means that the recommendation will be implemented, and the management response shall specify the actions, timeframe and the party(ies) responsible for implementation. The status of management response actions should be updated on a quarterly basis until all recommendations have been closed. The IEO tracks the status of implementation of management response actions for a five-year period.
29. Management responses shall be made part of the public record. If submitted on a timely basis they will be published in evaluation reports.
30. IEO may report to the Executive Board on the implementation status of independent evaluation recommendations.

Notes

¹The Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee is an external panel with an independent advisory role. The committee assists the Administrator in fulfilling his/her responsibilities regarding oversight, financial management and reporting, internal audit and investigation, risk management, the evaluation and ethics functions, and systems of internal control and accountability.

²Refer to the UNDP Evaluation Policy (DP/2016/23) for more information on the IEO accountability.

³The International Evaluation Advisory Panel is an independent advisory panel constituted by the IEO to advise IEO in keeping with its objective to produce high quality evaluations that help to enhance UNDP performance and contribution to development result.

Appendix I. Corporate / Thematic Evaluations

Corporate / thematic evaluations assess UNDP performance in areas that are critical to ensuring sustained contributions to development results in the context of emerging development issues and changing priorities at global and regional levels. To this end, these evaluations may cover, for example, UNDP policies, focus areas, partnerships, programmatic approaches, cooperation modalities, business models and operational issues. All corporate / thematic evaluations carried out by the IEO are formally considered by the UNDP Executive Board.

Planning and launch

- 1 The corporate / thematic evaluations to be conducted by the IEO are set out in the IEO programme of work, as approved by the Executive Board every four years. The IEO may take up additional topics when requested by the Executive Board and UNDP management, and may augment the plan to account for changes in the UNDP mandate, strategy and programming.
- 2 The IEO launches each corporate/thematic evaluation through formal communication to UNDP Management. The communication includes an evaluation concept note which Management are invited to comment on. The IEO requests Management to nominate a focal person for the evaluation at the appropriate level: headquarters, regional and/or country office, as necessary to liaise with the IEO and provide requested information.
- 3 Following the launch of each evaluation, the IEO will share the evaluation ToR at least 10 working days prior to finalization. The IEO may convene a meeting to discuss the draft ToR and will consider comments received within this timeframe. The IEO then finalizes the ToR, incorporating the comments of the evaluand as appropriate.
- 4 The IEO constitutes the evaluation team, augmented by external consultants after the ToR has been finalized.
- 5 As part of its quality assurance procedures, the IEO has established an independent external advisory panel, comprised of senior development practitioners and evaluators, to provide advice on evaluation processes and critique evaluation outputs. Depending on the topic under consideration, the IEO may also establish a technical reference group, comprised of relevant headquarters bureaux, regional hub and country office staff.

Data collection

- 6 According to the Evaluation Policy it is the responsibility of UNDP Management to provide IEO with the necessary information to conduct evaluations. Each evaluation ToR articulates the criteria and methods to be used to gather data and information on the topic under review. This includes missions that the team intends to carry out – at regional, country and local levels.
- 7 Headquarters, regional hub and country office management are expected to help facilitate full access to data and stakeholders. The IEO shall indicate the categories of stakeholders to be consulted during data collection.
- 8 UNDP management at regional hub and country office levels shall assign person(s) to facilitate and coordinate the itinerary and related logistics of the evaluation team during in-country missions. Support to evaluations conducted by IEO is an organizational responsibility and accordingly staff time used to support evaluations is not eligible for reimbursement.

9. The IEO shall provide a Chart of Accounts (CoA) to the regional hub/country office for evaluation-related expenses that are reimbursable, for instance to cover in-country local travel by the team; or to host and cover related costs of stakeholder-attended focus groups. All charges must be cleared by the IEO prior to being incurred and charged to the CoA. (See Appendix V for guidelines on the use of the CoA).

Draft evaluation report

10. IEO shall provide draft evaluation reports to UNDP Management for review according to the timeline set in each ToR. A period of 15 working days is allocated for review. The IEO will make the draft report available in PDF format and reviewers are expected to provide comments using the audit trail template (see Appendix IV).

11. The IEO revises each evaluation report taking into account all comments received and shares with UNDP Management, a revised report, no later than 15 working days after receiving the consolidated comments to prepare the management response. IEO also updates and shares the audit trail to reflect how comments have been addressed.

Executive Board paper

12. The revised evaluation report, after Management comment, is summarized in an Executive Board paper, following the template and size limits set out by the Executive Board Secretariat. The Board paper is submitted to the Executive Board Secretariat eight weeks in advance of the applicable Board session in which the final report is to be presented

Management response

13. UNDP Management also submits its management response to the Executive Board Secretariat eight weeks in advance of the applicable Board session in which the final report will be presented.

Final evaluation report

14. Final evaluation reports undergo a production process which includes editing, design and printing. The final report shall be shared with UNDP Management and made public three weeks before the Board session. IEO reports are disseminated using its website, social media platforms, newsletter tools and UNDP Evaluation Resource Center portal.

15. Printed copies will be available to UNDP country offices, regional hubs and headquarters management upon request.

Appendix II. Independent Country Programme Evaluations

The independent country programme evaluations (ICPEs, formerly called “Assessment of Development Results”) are independent evaluations of UNDP country programmes which are conducted typically in the penultimate year of the country programme cycle to feed into the elaboration of new country programmes.

ICPEs are geared towards key audiences in the country of assessment, notably the UNDP country office, national government, and other partners at the country level. Their scope includes, but is not confined to, the assessment of the country programme’s effectiveness in responding to country challenges and priorities; the appropriateness of the country programme design and approaches; sustainability, replicability and scale-up of the results to which UNDP contributed to. In addition to providing a key reference for the Executive Board and national governments for accountability purposes, as well as an input into UNDP’s country programme strategies, these evaluations equally provide a resource for IEO to aggregate UNDP performance at large.

Planning and launch

1. IEO shall identify country programmes eligible for evaluation based on predetermined criteria that include: the Country Programme Document cycle, previous independent evaluations, portfolio size and security considerations in the country. From 2018, all country programmes shall be subject to an ICPE in the penultimate year of the programme cycle.
2. ICPEs shall be launched through official communication from the Director of IEO to the UNDP country office management, regional bureau, and the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS).
3. The IEO and the country office shall come to an early agreement on date of the in-country mission(s) to be undertaken by the evaluation team.
4. IEO shall conduct a preliminary desk review on the country programme and context. IEO shall send to the country office a list of required documents to support the desk review. The country office shall provide the requested information within 10 working days.
5. Following the desk review, the draft ToR shall be finalized by IEO and shared with the country office for review, in consultation with government. A period of 10 working days shall be allocated for such review, after which time the ToR shall be finalized and approved by IEO. The final ToR shall be in the public domain and shared with stakeholders.
6. The IEO shall constitute the evaluation team, augmented by external consultants after the ToR has been finalized.

Data collection

7. The data collection mission constitutes the one in-country mission of the ICPE. The evaluation team undertakes primary data collection in accordance with the approved ToR.
8. The country office shall help facilitate full access to data and stakeholders. The IEO shall indicate the categories of stakeholders to be consulted during data collection.

16. According to the Evaluation Policy it is the responsibility of the evaluand to provide IEO with the necessary information to conduct evaluations. Support to evaluations conducted by IEO is an organizational responsibility and accordingly staff time used to support evaluations is not eligible for reimbursement. The evaluand shall assign a person to facilitate and coordinate the itinerary and related logistics of the evaluation team during the in-country mission.

9. IEO shall provide a Chart of Accounts (CoA) to the country office for charging evaluation-related expenses. All charges should be cleared by IEO prior to being incurred and charged to the CoA. See Appendix V for guidelines on the use of the CoA.

10. At the end of the data collection mission, the evaluation team shall de-brief the country office management.

Draft evaluation report

11. All ICPE reports shall undergo internal and external review by the IEO International Evaluation Advisory Panel.

12. IEO shall provide the draft evaluation report (draft one) to the country office and regional bureau for review according to the timeline set in the ToR. A period of 15 working days shall be allocated to the country office and regional bureau to review and provide comments to IEO. The draft report will be shared in PDF format. Consolidated comments shall be provided in the audit trail template (see Appendix IV).

13. IEO shall submit a revised draft report (draft two) reflecting its consideration of the comments from the evaluand no later than 15 working days after receiving the consolidated comments. An updated audit trail reflecting how the comments of the evaluand have been addressed shall also be shared by IEO at this stage. The country office should then forward the draft report to national stakeholders, including the government, inviting them to comment on the report. The country office should forward any comments received from national stakeholders to IEO for its consideration.

14. After receiving the comments from the country office, IEO and the country office shall organize the stakeholders' debriefing. The stakeholder debriefing shall be held within 15 working days of IEO's submission of the revised draft to the country office. The purpose of the stakeholders' debriefing is to present the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations to stakeholders and to discuss UNDP's future programming and ways forward in the country with national stakeholders. It is also intended to promote national ownership and uptake of the evaluation findings. The debriefing shall normally be conducted via video teleconference; in rare cases it may involve a physical workshop. The senior management of IEO and the country office shall co-chair the meeting along with government representatives. Other stakeholders, including regional bureau and BPPS will be invited to the meetings.

15. If IEO does not receive comments on the draft evaluation report within the established timeframe, IEO shall proceed with finalizing the report.

Management response

16. The country office shall be responsible for preparing the management response within 10 days of receiving draft two, under the oversight and guidance of the relevant regional bureau according to the template provided in Appendix III.

17. The country office shall present its draft management response to the evaluation recommendations during the stakeholders' debriefing.

18. The country office shall be responsible for uploading the management response on the Evaluation Resource Center portal and for updating the status of its implementation on a quarterly basis until all recommendations have been closed.

19. Regional bureaux, with BPPS support shall be responsible for monitoring the implementation of management response actions.

Final evaluation report

20. IEO shall finalize the ICPE reports following debriefing to stakeholders.

21. The final report shall undergo a production process which includes editing, design, translation and printing.

22. ICPE reports shall be written in English and may be translated to other UNDP working languages (e.g. French and Spanish) by IEO as necessary.

23. Should there be interest from national governments to translate the ICPE report into languages other than UNDP working languages, the country office shall take responsibility.

24. IEO shall share electronic copy of the published report with the country office, regional bureau and Executive Board Secretariat ahead of the submission of the new country programme document. In addition, ICPE reports shall be in the public domain and shall be disseminated globally using its website, social media platforms and newsletter tools.

25. IEO shall arrange to print a limited number of the report for dissemination to the country office, regional bureau, UNDP Management and UN Missions. The country office may request extra hard copies, in which case IEO shall request the country office to cover the printing cost.

Appendix III. Management Response Template

| Evaluation recommendation # 1: | | | | |
|---|------------|---------------------|-----------|----------|
| Management Response (Indicate whether you: a) Accept; b) Accept with Reservations; or c) Do Not Accept. Provide reasons if you select b) or c): | | | | |
| Key Action(s) | Time Frame | Responsible Unit(s) | Tracking* | |
| | | | Status | Comments |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| Evaluation Recommendation # 2: | | | | |
| Management Response (Indicate whether you: a) Accept; b) Accept with Reservations; or c) Do Not Accept. Provide reasons if you select b) or c): | | | | |
| Key Action(s) | Time Frame | Responsible Unit(s) | Tracking* | |
| | | | Status | Comments |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| Evaluation Recommendation # 3: | | | | |
| Management Response (Indicate whether you: a) Accept; b) Accept with Reservations; or c) Do Not Accept. Provide reasons if you select b) or c) : | | | | |
| Key Action(s) | Time Frame | Responsible Unit(s) | Tracking* | |
| | | | Status | Comments |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

* The implementation status is tracked in the UNDP Evaluation Resource Center (ERC).

Appendix V. Guidelines for the use of the IEO-issued Chart of Accounts and other Operational Issues

Chart of Accounts

1. The following types of expenses shall be chargeable to the IEO-issued Chart of Accounts (CoA):
 - Domestic travel expenses of the evaluation team, e.g. flights and/or vehicle hire to and from field project sites as well as transportation to and from meetings
 - Translation services
 - Communication expenses, e.g. issuance of local SIM cards
 - Individual consultancy in case a local ICPE facilitator is recruited
 - Stakeholder workshop expenses
 - Other official miscellaneous expenses incurred for the evaluation, as necessary and approved by the Evaluation Manager
 - Any related cost recovery for the Country Office, as outlined in the latest Universal Price List/Local Price List, as deemed necessary and approved by the IEO Operations Manager
2. All expenses should be cleared by the IEO lead evaluator prior to being incurred and charged to the CoA.
3. Once the expense has been cleared, the country office/regional hub shall prepare an e-requisition and/or purchase order if necessary and send it to IEO for approval.
4. Once the requisition or purchase order has been approved by IEO, the country office/regional hub shall prepare the payment voucher in Atlas and send it to the IEO Operations Manager for approval.

Other charges

5. According to the Evaluation Policy it is the responsibility of the evaluand to provide IEO with the necessary information to conduct evaluations. Support to evaluations conducted by IEO is an organizational responsibility and accordingly not eligible to be reimbursed. The evaluand shall assign a person to facilitate and coordinate access to requested information and stakeholders.
6. If IEO requests the evaluand to undertake recruitment or to advertise a vacancy on its behalf, IEO shall reimburse the evaluand according to the Implementing Supporting Service (ISS) policy.