Independent Evaluation Office
Presentation to the Executive Board of UNDP
31st May 2017
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INTRODUCTION

1. It gives me great pleasure to present the 2016 Annual Report on Evaluation to the UNDP Executive Board and His Excellency Ambassador Ib Petersen. This is the first report along lines of the Evaluation Policy 2016. The report reflects on some of the fundamental changes made since 2012 when the office was professionalized, summarizes 2016 outputs and activities, and tables a programme of work for 2017. It also outlines the strengthened oversight structure of the IEO as it moves to independence under the policy, and outlines the organizational changes undertaken within the office for this policy goal. The report outlines how IEO supported capacity development globally and details the new approach to supporting decentralized evaluation, as both assessor of the function and supporter where deemed necessary through collaborative work.

INDEPENDENCE AND OVERSIGHT OF IEO

2. The new evaluation policy ensures and embeds evaluation and independence as a learning and accountability approach within UNDP. IEO is also given a strong set of governance arrangements to oversee and support the work of the office. 2016 was a milestone with the IEO also presenting its work to the newly expanded Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee (AEAC), which has integrated the oversight function and provides a coherent approach to oversight for UNDP. Specifically, the AEAC advises the Director on IEO and the Administrator on responsibilities under the policy, and the support has been appreciated by IEO.

3. The role of the International Evaluation Advisory Panel is further underlined in the policy and the IEAP and its 12 members were active throughout 2016 in advising and supporting the work of the office both in its structural reorganization and strengthening as well as in the completion of thematic and country level evaluations as well as other work. The panel is now fully representative of all geographic regions and brings in formidable experience and expertise to inform UNDP evaluations.

4. During 2016 IEO also began drafting a Charter for engaging with HQ, Regional and country offices; outlining expectations and responsibilities for all parties to the preparation, implementation, completion and reporting of evaluations.

5. To ensure the independence and scope of evaluations is not constrained or limited, evaluation budgets need to be assured. The new evaluation policy recognizes this and embeds a combined budget for independent and decentralized evaluation of 1% of UNDP’s core and non-core financing for evaluation function, of which a minimum of 0.2% for IEO. This reflects that evaluations are a unique service to the entire organization, with funds expected and earmarked from the entire UNDP budget. The matter becomes more important as non-core funding now is more than core, and the voice and expectations of this constituency needs to be acknowledged. More critically it is a directive by UNDP donors and member states who require assurance that the funds they allocate are
we'll-spent and deliver proposed results. UNDP as evaluand needs to comply with the policy and Board decisions on this fundamental aspect of accountability to the Board, which IEO serves and is entrenched in its direct reporting and accountability line. The Board thus not only approves the costed program of work but also the budget, and UNDP needs to implement this as evaluand.

6. However, 2016 saw expenditures on evaluations fall far short of this benchmark, only reaching 0.44%, with a delivery of US$19,854,524 for combined evaluation activities of IEO, regions and country office. The 0.2% benchmark for IEO component fell short by $600,000. The shortfalls need to be addressed to ensure that UNDP meets its accountability obligations to the Board and program countries who fund operations across the globe and any ambiguity in terms of where decisions on the matter reside needs to be addressed by this board. In considering UNDP's responsiveness to the Board decision on resource allocation to evaluation I would like to strongly caution against making miscellaneous 'monitoring' expenditures permissible; not because they are not important - but because they are something else than evaluation.

INDEPENDENT EVALUATIONS IN 2016

7. Thematic evaluations undertaken in 2016 included firstly, an evaluation of UNDPs contribution to anti-corruption and addressing the drivers of corruption and the organizations support for disability inclusive development, both of which were presented to the board in January 2017.

8. Also in 2016 UNDP and OAI undertook its first joint evaluation looking at UNDPs Institutional Effectiveness, which is being presented to the board today. IEO also took the June Board meeting as opportunity to informally deliver its first set of findings from the comprehensive evaluations of UNDP’s 2014-17 Strategic Plan, global and regional programmes. This will be formally presented in September 2017.

9. The IEO has significantly refined its methodologies for thematic evaluations to include more engagement with UNDP business units and stakeholders, increased sample sizes and dedicated attention to making reports more accessible. Illustrated summaries and videos that accompany the main reports have proven successful in communicating major findings and recommendations to a range of audiences, strengthening adoption and overall impact.

10. In 2016 IEO successfully completed Independent Country Programme Evaluations (ICPE) for six countries, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico and Pakistan. The findings, conclusions and recommendations of the 2016 ICPEs have all received detailed management responses from country offices with detailed sets of key actions to ensure improvement and lessons are learnt. The ICPE’s also supported the country offices in their CPD submissions to the Board in 2017 and 2018.

11. As IEO moves to full coverage of countries presenting CPDs in each year the office is finalizing new approaches to ensure this growth in demand for ICPEs is met with the same rigour and level of quality expected of IEO’s ICPEs. The restructuring in the office as well as recruitment of new staff will go some way to addressing these needs, but challenges will still be seen especially when the number of CPDs presented to the board in one year is high.
CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

12. IEO/UNDP continued to fund the Secretariat of UNEG and IEO was very active in the revision of the Norms and Standards and other materials produced by the group. The IEO Director continued to act as the UNEG Vice-chair responsible for defining UNEG role in the follow up and implementation of SDGs.

13. The office all continued to work to further its engagement, capacity development and push for the professionalization of evaluations through its work with numerous global and regional organizations to support and continue the work of NEC 2015 on evaluation and agenda 2030 and the SDGs.

14. Following successful global conferences on national evaluation capacity in Morocco (2009), South Africa (2011), Brazil (2013) and Thailand (2015) I would like to hereby officially announce that the next in this series will be held, in collaboration with the Turkish Government, in Istanbul during week of 16-20 October.

SUPPORT TO DECENTRALISED EVALUATIONS

15. 2016 saw considerable engagement by IEO with UNDP, regional and country offices, to support the strengthening of the evaluation function at the decentralized level. Most engagements outlined to the board in previous years have now been started and will continue through 2017 and into 2018, many in partnership with DIG/BPPS where appropriate.

16. IEO reviewed all decentralized evaluations undertaken in 2016, finding 27 per cent to be of a satisfactory level, with a further 45 per cent being moderately satisfactory.

17. IEO has also partnered with DIG/BPPS to undertake several regional workshops with UNDP's M&E focal points to review evaluation plans, budgets as well as implementation issues to identify their needs. A major issue that is often raised is the lack of clear guidance for evaluations plans as well as a need for clarity in budgeting for evaluations. These lessons will strongly inform the revision of the evaluation guidelines that is about to start in partnership with DIG/BPPS.

IEO is concerned that there has been a considerable decrease in the number of and budgets for decentralized evaluations between 2013 and 2016, with a decrease of some 34 per cent in the number of evaluations and 19 per cent in budgets assigned. Along with this decline there is also an increasing shift in the structure of evaluation plans, with increasingly mandatory evaluations, such as GEF TE, Outcome and UNDAF evaluations making up the majority (and in some cases, only) evaluations.

18. However, 2017 sees a considerable increase in the number of evaluations being planned and budgets assigned, from 256 evaluations in 2016 to 505 in 2017, and $7.7 million in 2016 to almost $16 million. IEO will monitor this with interest and will liaise with regional focal points to ensure the plans are implemented and the quality of evaluations is maintained.

SCHEDULE OF WORK GOING FORWARD
19. As we shortly conclude our evaluation of the 2014-2017 UNDP Strategic Plan, the IEO will consult with the new UNDP Administrator and the Executive Board to identify priority thematic evaluations for the 2018-2021 cycle. We also further commit to a regular series of corporate reports to the board starting with a review of the quality assessment process of decentralized evaluations, a review of implementation of IEO recommendations for both thematic and country level evaluations, a synthesis of independent country level evaluations and their finds.

20. As the work of the office expands to include a full cohort of ICPEs as well as expanded reporting to the Executive Board, through corporate and thematic reports a restructuring has been undertaken within the office and 7 new TA positions secured, taking the office to 30 professional staff and support staff, to ensure the planned growth and expansion of evaluations continues to meet the quality expected by IEO, UNDP and the Executive Board.

21. IEO has asked for a budget of US$10.2 million to meet the goals laid out under the plan for 2017 and in order to meet its commitments under the evaluation policy.

22. At this point I would like to end and thank the Board for its continued support to evaluation across UNDP and within IEO.