

unrwa evaluation policy

background

1. This UNRWA Evaluation Policy is based on Organization Directive (OD) 14, the Charter of the Department of Internal Oversight Services (DIOS). It was developed in conformity with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards¹, taking into account advice of the Advisory Committee on Internal Oversight (ACIO), inputs from discussion with senior management, the analysis and recommendation of the Professional Peer Review and the comments from the Subcommittee of the Advisory Commission.
2. The Evaluation Policy describes the framework for evaluation in UNRWA, including roles and responsibilities. It is supplemented by *Standards and Procedures for Quality Assurance* in evaluations describing some of the processes in more detail.

definition of evaluation

3. The definition for an evaluation for UNRWA is:

Evaluations aim to systematically and impartially determine the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of ongoing and completed activities, projects, programmes, and strategies, policies, topics, themes, operational areas and institutional performance by examining expected and achieved accomplishments, result chains, processes, contextual factors and causality. Evaluation findings, recommendations, and lessons learned should be incorporated into decision-making processes in order to strengthen learning and accountability in the Agency with the aim of improving operations and results.

mandate

4. In accordance with OD 14, DIOS's evaluation responsibility includes:
 - a. assuming functional leadership and oversight over UNRWA's evaluation system which consists of the central evaluation function in DIOS and decentralized evaluation functions in Headquarters' Departments and Field Offices;
 - b. designing, commissioning, managing and carrying out independent evaluations;
 - c. providing guidance, technical support and capacity development for the management of decentralized self-evaluations and promoting an evaluation culture in the Agency;
 - d. developing and regularly updating policy documents, guidelines, systems, procedures and tools related to evaluation in the Agency;
 - e. preparing an annual Evaluation Plan based on a process of consultation, a clear rationale for selection, and prioritization of the subjects for evaluation; presenting the plan for the review of the ACIO and approval by the Commissioner-General;
 - f. managing a follow-up system for evaluation recommendations; and
 - g. ensuring that internal and external stakeholders have access to evaluation findings and recommendations.

independence

5. OD 14 guarantees the independence of DIOS and the Evaluation Division in conduct of its work. Specifically it ensures:

¹ Selected norms and standards are attached in the Annex

- a. unrestricted access to all functions, records, property, premises and personnel to enable DIOS to fulfill its responsibilities free from interference in determining the scope of work, performing its work and communicating results; as well as
 - b. the necessary resources in terms of budget and staff in DIOS to adequately maintain its independence and objectivity.
6. Any issues affecting its ability to operate independently are reported to the ACIO and mentioned in the DIOS annual report submitted to the Advisory Commission.

identifying what needs to be evaluated

7. Needed evaluations will be identified using the following criteria:
- key strategic areas of the Medium Term Strategy (MTS);
 - agency priorities;
 - new policies and innovative programmes
 - discussion with donors to determine what evaluations are required and to ensure that funding is put into the project proposal and emergency appeals;
 - discussions during the UNRWA planning exercise (strategic as well as annual) identifying knowledge gaps; and
 - an assessment of risk in key strategic areas.
8. For activities such as projects and emergency appeals where it is likely that a donor will want an evaluation, DIOS should be given sight of the proposed documents to provide advice on what will be needed to facilitate an evaluation. This will assist in ensuring the likelihood of evaluation results that will meet internal and external stakeholder expectations.

evaluation plans

9. In addition to annual plans a longer term plan for strategic evaluations will be prepared to accompany the MTS. DIOS will therefore co-ordinate with fields and headquarters departments and produce the following plans to record identified evaluation work that needs to be undertaken:
- an annual plan; and
 - medium-term plan aligned with the MTS.

annual plan:

- the annual evaluation plan will indicate the resources required to conduct the evaluations, indicating those that can be done with Agency resources and those for which external funding may be required;
- the annual evaluation plan will take into account available resources and is reviewed by ACIO, as part of the DIOS Annual Work plan, before submission to the Commissioner General for approval;
- the annual Evaluation Plan will include decentralized evaluations that will be conducted in fields and headquarters departments as well as the evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Division of DIOS; and
- the annual evaluation plan will include evaluations financed from projects as well as evaluations conducted or commissioned using UNRWA general resources.

medium-term plan:

- the medium-term evaluation plan will be aligned with the MTS covering six years and will inform the annual evaluation plans.

methodology

10. The methodology for the conduct of an evaluation by the Evaluation Division is spelled out in the *Standards and Procedures for Quality Assurance* and consists of three phases: (1) evaluation preparation, (2) evaluation implementation and (3) evaluation follow-up.

evaluability

11. It is the responsibility of the planning functions at central programme and at field level to ensure that all projects and programmes are 'evaluable'.

evaluation follow-up

12. Adequate follow-up on the recommendations and action points of evaluations is vital for ensuring learning and feedback into the programming cycle as well as to ensure accountability for implementation.

13. The client of the evaluation, as well as the Executive Office, are responsible for a timely management response and the implementation of all accepted evaluation recommendations and action points; committing to appropriate and ongoing follow-up on the status of implementation. The client of the evaluation can suggest that some of the recommendations not be accepted. The Executive Office will provide a formal and justified acknowledgement that these recommendations will not be implemented to the Director of DIOS.

14. DIOS tracks the status of evaluation recommendations and action points, through the Results Based Monitoring (RBM) system.

15. DIOS reports progress in implementation to the ACIO and as part of the DIOS Annual report. This includes highlighting recommendations where progress is considered slow or not satisfactory. The Executive Office will also be consulted during follow-up for recommendations where progress is slow or unsatisfactory.

communication and use

16. Evaluation need to be communicated to all relevant stakeholders and need to be used in the development of UNRWA strategies, projects and operations. To ensure their use, evaluation reports will be disseminated internally and externally, governed by the UNRWA dissemination policy of oversight reports.

17. Fields and headquarters' departments are required to take relevant evidence from evaluation into account when developing strategic response plans and annual work plans.

evaluation quality

18. DIOS is responsible for establishing and maintaining a quality assurance programme with the aim to:

- provide reasonable assurance to the stakeholders that evaluations have been performed in accordance with *Standards and Procedures for Quality Assurance* and add value to the Agency;
- assess and ensure that the Evaluation Division and, Field and Headquarter units engaged in evaluation are operating in an efficient and effective manner; and
- ensure that the decentralized evaluation function is adequately trained and equipped to commission evaluations.

19. The Evaluation function will be reviewed every five years as proposed by UNEG norms and standards.

20. Quality assurance includes:

- ensuring that evaluations are properly supervised and are carried out in conformance with *Standards and Procedures for Quality Assurance* for planning, conducting and reporting of evaluation assignments;
 - ensuring that findings and recommendations are adequately supported by relevant and sufficient evidence;
 - ensuring reports are accurate, objective, clear, concise and timely;
 - monitoring adherence to annual work plan and ensuring that work is achieved within resource budgets, or approved variations;
 - reviewing stakeholders comments on assignments to assess stakeholder satisfaction;
 - conducting lessons learned exercises at each end of assignment;
 - reviewing periodically Field and Headquarters arrangements for evaluation, including training and skills of staff managing or conducting evaluations;
 - periodically reviewing planning arrangements;
 - reviewing arrangements for hired consultants, and performance assessments of work performed by consultants; and
 - periodically reviewing of arrangements for recommendation follow-up.
21. DIOS has the responsibility to keep the *Standards and Procedures for Quality Assurance in evaluation* updated in line with UNEG norms and standards.
22. The quality of evaluations will be assessed independently on a biennial basis and reported in the DIOS annual report.

roles and responsibilities

the commissioner-general:

- ensures the independence of the evaluations in UNRWA by ensuring compliance with OD 14 and the UNRWA Evaluation Policy;
- fosters a corporate culture of accountability and learning as an enabling environment for independent evaluation and embeds evaluation principles into management and decision making in UNRWA;
- ensures the independence of evaluation in terms of access to data and information and the establishment of a financing mechanism that provides adequate resources for evaluation allocating three percent of projects over a million to the evaluation function²; and
- ensures that substantive management responses to evaluation recommendations are prepared.

fields and headquarter departments:

- contribute to the annual and medium term work planning for evaluations in UNRWA;
- ensure that evaluations they conduct (decentralized evaluations) with their own resources are conducted in accordance with *Standards and Procedures for Quality Assurance* promulgated by DIOS;
- ensure that details of all decentralized evaluations are forwarded to the Evaluation Division, DIOS;
- liaise and work with the Evaluation Division, DIOS to ensure timely implementation of all agreed recommendations arising from Evaluation reports;
- provide adequate resources to commission and supervise decentralized evaluations;

²² To bring UNRWA within the range of policies of similar organization.

- follow up on recommendations generated by decentralized evaluations; and
- assist in steering committees on individual evaluations.

dios, through its evaluation division:

- prepares UNRWA evaluation plans;
- conducts and commissions centralized evaluations;
- provides other evaluation products in support of accountability and learning;
- provides the quality framework for evaluations;
- builds capacity of decentralized evaluation functions;
- contributes to the evaluability of the MTS, strategic response plans, project, programme and emergency interventions;
- leads the recommendation follow up and assesses the progress of recommendation implementation; and
- ensures access of internal and external stakeholders to evaluation findings.

the external relations and communications department:

- Assists DIOS with ensuring that all donor agreements include a clause for evaluation.

the department of planning:

- ensures that results from evaluations are used during the planning process (annual and strategic);
- ensures that MTS, strategic response plans, project, programme, and emergency interventions are evaluable;
- ensures that evaluation is adequately covered in the planning guidelines; and
- maintains the recommendations in the Results Based Monitoring system.

effect and review

23. This Technical Instruction will enter into force on 6 September 2016 and be reviewed at the mid and end points of the MTS.

annex 1: selected uneg norms and standards relevant to the technical instruction unrwa evaluation policy

UNEG Norm 6.1 "The evaluation function has to be located independently from the other management functions so that it is free from undue influence and that unbiased and transparent reporting is ensured."

UNEG Norm 2.2 "The governance structures of evaluation vary. In some cases, it rests with the Governing Bodies, in others with the Head of the organization. Responsibility for evaluation should be specified in an evaluation policy".

UNEG Standard 1.1.2 "The Head of evaluation should report directly to the Governing Body of the organization or the Head of the organization".

UNEG Standard 1.5.7 "[The Head of Evaluation should ensure that] The evaluations are conducted according to defined quality standards".

UNEG Norm 2.6 "They [The Governing Bodies and / or the Heads of organizations and of the evaluation function] should ensure a system is in place for explicit planning for evaluation".

UNEG Norm 4.1 "Planning for evaluation must be an explicit part of planning and budgeting of the evaluation function and / or the organization as a whole".

UNEG Standard 1.3 "UN Organizations should ensure that evaluation plans of evaluation activities are submitted to their Governing Bodies and / or Heads of organization for review and / or approval".

UNEG Norm 7.1 "During the planning stage of an undertaking, evaluation functions can contribute to the process by improving the ability to evaluate the undertaking and by building an evaluation approach into the plan. To safeguard independence, this should be performed in an advisory capacity only.

UNEG Standard 1.6: The Head of evaluation is responsible for ensuring the preparation of evaluation guidelines.

UNEG Norm 12.1 "Evaluation requires an explicit response by the governing authorities and management addressed by its recommendations. This may take the form of a management response, action plan and/or agreement clearly stating responsibilities and accountabilities".

UNEG Norm 12.2 "There should be a systematic follow-up on the implementation of the evaluation recommendations that have been accepted by management and / or the Governing Bodies".

UNEG Norm 12.3 "There should be a periodic report on the status of the implementation of the evaluation recommendations. This report should be presented to the Governing Bodies and / or the Head of the organization".

UNEG Norm 2.3 "The Governing Bodies and / or the Heads of organizations are also responsible for ensuring that adequate resources are allocated to enable the evaluation function to operate effectively and with due independence".

UNEG Norm 2.5 "The Governing Bodies and / or the Heads of organizations are responsible for appointing a professionally competent Head of the evaluation, who in turn is responsible for ensuring that the function is staffed by professionals competent in the conduct of evaluation".

UNEG Norm 2.7 "The Governing Bodies and / or the Heads of organizations and of the evaluation function are responsible for ensuring that there is a repository of evaluations... They should also make evaluation findings available to stakeholders and other organizations of the UN system as well as to the public".

UNEG Norm 4.1 "Annual or multi-year evaluation work programmes should be made public".

UNEG Norm 10.2 "Evaluation Terms of Reference and reports should be available to major stakeholders and be public documents".