



Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Function in United Nations Organizations A Joint Undertaking of the DAC Evaluation Network and the UN Evaluation Group (January 2012)

The DAC Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet) and the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) have established a Joint Task Force to support professional peer reviews of the evaluation function of UN organizations. The framework applied in the reviews was developed by conducting two pilot reviews of UNDP and UNICEF (see below) and consists of internationally recognized standards. The reviews are conducted by an independent Peer Panel consisting of professional evaluators with the support of expert advisors. Lessons from earlier peer reviews are incorporated in the approach and the framework has been revised in 2010 to become a fully owned UNEG framework for peer reviews.

Peer reviews conducted so far

The peer review approach was piloted in assessing the evaluation function of UNDP in 2005 and of UNICEF in 2006. In 2007, a general framework for peer reviews was established on the basis of the experiences with the reviews of UNDP and UNICEF. This framework can be adapted according to the context of the specific organization whose evaluation function will be reviewed. Subsequently, peer reviews were undertaken of the evaluation function of WFP (reported in 2007), OIOS (reported in 2009), GEF (reported in 2009) and UNIDO (reported in 2010). On the basis of lessons emerging from these peer reviews, the framework was revised and presented to the Annual General Meeting of UNEG in May 2010. All reports have been distributed widely and are available on UNEG's web site at www.unevaluation.org (in the Evaluation Function section).

Reviews conducted in 2011 and 2012

During 2011, the co-chairs of the Task Force engaged with FAO, UNEP and UN-Habitat in order to plan and initiate reviews of the evaluation function in these organizations. The current situation is as follows:

- The reviews of the evaluation function of UNEP and that of UN-Habitat started in the second half of 2011. Due to their location in Nairobi and the relatively small size of the evaluation function of both organizations, the reviews were conducted by one Peer Panel which will produce separate reports for each organization. The work was finalised at the end of the year and the reports are expected in the first quarter of 2012. The Peer Panel consisted of Margareta De Goys, Director, Evaluation Group, UNIDO (chair of the Panel), Dominique de Crombrugghe, Special Evaluator for Development Cooperation, Belgian Federal Public Service of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, and Oscar Garcia, Senior Evaluator, UNDP Office of Evaluation. The Panel was assisted by Roland Rodts, independent evaluation expert (advisor).
- An external peer review of FAO's evaluation function is mandatory and forms part of the quality assurance mechanisms stipulated in FAO's Charter for its Office of Evaluation. Following preparatory work which commenced in mid-2011, the review of

FAO's Office of Evaluation will take place in the first quarter of 2012 with a final report planned for June 2012, followed by a Management Response in July 2012. In October 2012, the Peer Review Panel's report and the Management Response will be presented to the FAO Programme Committee. The Peer Panel consists of Rob van den Berg, Director of the Evaluation Office of the Global Environment Facility (chair of the Panel), Henri Jorritsma, Deputy Director of the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Vice-Chair to the DAC Evaluation Network, Doha Abdelhamid, economist and evaluation expert from Egypt, Segbedzi Norgbey, Chief of Evaluation in UNEP. The Panel is assisted by Paul Balogun, independent evaluation expert (advisor).

Reviews planned in the medium term

Taking into account the experiences following each peer review, the approach and methodology of the reviews were updated in 2010 as noted above. The peer review instrument has now firmly been embedded into UNEG which, at its Annual General Meeting of 2010, confirmed the utility of the reviews and adopted the modified approach. This implies *inter alia* that UN organizations wishing to undergo a review will seek funds for the exercise, whilst assuring the independence of the peer panel conducting the review. It was also confirmed that future panels would continue to consist of professional evaluators from UNEG and DAC EvalNet supplemented by other evaluation experts. UNEG's Task Force on Strengthening the Evaluation Function continues to take up further work on peer reviews.

In 2012, a number of UN organizations which expressed interest in undergoing a peer review, will be contacted to plan such reviews during the period 2012-2013.

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