INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS EVALUATION GROUP

2004- 2012

A SUMMATIVE ANALYSIS AND THE WAY FORWARD

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AGM	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
ALNAP	ACTIVE LEARNING NETWORK FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION
ASC	ASSESSMENT STEERING COMMITTEE
CC	UNEG COORDINATION COMMITTEE
CEB	UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM CHIEF EXECUTIVES' BOARD FOR COORDINATION
DESA	UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
DFID	DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT-UK
DOCO	UN-DEVELOPMENT OPERATIONS CO-ORDINATION OFFICE
DPKO	DEPARTMENT OF PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS
ECG	EVALUATION COOPERATION GROUP
ECOSOC	UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
EPE	EVALUATION PRACTICE EXCHANGE SEMINARS
GA	GENERAL ASSEMBLY
GMS	GENERAL MANAGEMENT SUPPORT
IASC	INTER AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE
IOCE	INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR COOPERATION IN EVALUATION
JIU	JOINT INSPECTION UNIT
MERG	UNAIDS MONITORING AND EVALUATION REFERENCE GROUP
MOPAN	MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATION PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT NETWORK
NONIE	NETWORKS OF NETWORKS ON IMPACT EVALUATION
OC	ORGANISING COMMITTEE
OECD DAC	ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT, DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE
OECD-DAC EvalNet	ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT, DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE EVALUATION NETWORK
OIOS	OFFICE OF INTERNAL OVERSIGHT SERVICES
PoWT	PRINCIPLES OF WORKING TOGETHER
QCPR	QUADRENNIAL COMPREHENSIVE POLICY REVIEW
RIAS	UNITED NATIONS REPRESENTATIVES OF INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICES
SWE	SYSTEM WIDE EVALUATION
SWOT	STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS
TCPR	TRIENNIAL COMPREHENSIVE POLICY REVIEW
TF	TASK FORCE
UNDG	UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT GROUP
UNEDAP	UN EVALUATION DEVELOPMENT GROUP FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
UNEG	UNITED NATIONS EVALUATION GROUP

Executive summary

Purpose of the assessment

This report assesses the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) contribution to its mission during the period from 2004 to 2012. UNEG defines itself as a professional, voluntary network that brings together the units responsible for evaluation in the United Nations (UN) system, including the specialized agencies, funds, programmes and affiliated organisations. UNEG currently has 43 such members and 3 observers. It ensures common standards, the quality and the rigour of the evaluation function within the UN.

The purpose of this assessment is to provide a summative analysis about what has worked in UNEG, what has not worked and why, and a formative view to enhance learning about actions that could be taken to further improve the work of the group. The team employed a mix of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, including a survey for UNEG members, interviews with a broad range of members, the UN non evaluation communty and evaluation users. The team was guided by a Steering Group of UNEG and non UNEG members.

UNEG has its origins in the Inter Agency Working Group (IAWG) which was created in 1986 with UNDP as its driving force. Its objective was to promote the simplification and harmonisation of evaluation practices among its members. Over the years UNEG has developed key principles and guidance for its members, including Norms and Standards (2005), Principles of Working Together (2007), and various guidance documents. The Principles of Working Together (PoWT) identified UNEG's mission statement which is to promote the independence, credibility and utility of the evaluation function and evaluation across the UN system and to promote the visibility and advocate the importance of evaluation for learning, decision-making and accountability. The same principles established the criteria for membership, defined the governance arrangements and UNEG's working modalities. UNEG's central decision-making body is the Annual General Meeting (AGM) where UNEG heads responsible for individual evaluation units of UN agencies agree on priorities, adopt annual work plans, create Task Forces (TF), approve applications for membership and elect a Chair and Vice-Chair. A Secretariat hosted and financed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provides support to the Chair and Vice-Chair.

UNEG enjoys a diverse membership since its members conduct evaluations in different themes such as the development or humanitarian spheres or in specific normative areas. The membership is also diverse in terms of the size of the evaluation unit, the capacity and reporting lines to boards or heads of the organisation, oversight or other management units.

UNEG's contribution to its mission

UNEG's contribution to its mission has been significant and in particular the development of its normative work which has had an important impact: the Norms and Standards and the development of codes of conduct and job descriptions for evaluation staff that improved their professional and technical competence. It has strengthened the evaluation function through the development of guidance documents such as Human Rights and Gender and also provided guidance on specific evaluation types and methods.

Learning and exchange of information have been a central element throughout UNEG's existence and the introduction of Evaluation Practice Exchange (EPE) seminars enabled UNEG members to discuss and learn in an informal way. Its joint work with the OECD DAC EvalNet introducing peer

reviews among members was instrumental in improving the evaluation function and in stimulating learning. All of the above (but particularly the work on Norms and Standards) has contributed to UNEG's major role and achievement in the first phase of its development which has been in strengthening UN evaluation functions in some and possibly most agencies, particularly in terms of the independence of the functions and clarity of standards and the evaluation policy environment. More recently, the focus of UNEG's work has also been on the quality, credibility and utility of the evaluations for themselves, particularly for accountability, on evaluation of normative work, and on helping some of the smaller agencies to catch up and respond to pressures from Boards. UNEG members are experiencing pressure from Boards, Member States – both programme countries and donors – to demonstrate results in an environment where resources are declining. This is reflected in demands on the evaluation side and there is a need in a few agencies to pay attention to helping the evaluation functions to develop in the field as well as at headquarters.

UNEG has promoted innovation and joint initiatives and UNEG, for example, developed guidance for UNDAF evaluations. It has contributed to the evaluation of the One UN pilots, particularly by managing the evaluability assessments in the seven pilot countries, and took part in discussions on a System-Wide Evaluation (SWE) mechanism. This has provided UNEG with a more prominent position as a professional network within the UN and recently the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) encouraged the use of UNEG's Norms and Standards and invited UNEG to be part of a coordination mechanism to develop a policy for independent system-wide evaluations. Joint evaluations remain important instruments for addressing efficiency within the UN and particularly at field level where evaluation capacity is generally low. UNEG's role has been limited in supporting building capacity at field level and this is an emerging theme as some UNEG members have a large field presence and are responsible for evaluation at country level.

UNEG has developed partnerships over time with regional evaluation networks, associations and with other non UN professional networks. Its strongest partnerships are with the OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation and with the Evaluation Cooperation Group. It is also an active member of Network of Networks on Impact Evaluation (NONIE). Apart from the afore mentioned networks UNEG's cooperation with other partners is limited, which both UNEG members and outsiders regret as it makes UNEG more inward looking at a time when its environment is rapidly changing. New concepts such as increased accountability to beneficiaries or the Transformative Agenda developed by humanitarian organisations represent opportunities for UNEG to explore new themes. Moreover, there is a growing demand from outsiders who wish to engage more strategically with UNEG such as Member States, Boards and Partners. Partnerships within the UN are limited as UNEG, in the inter-agency set-up, failed to develop relationships with those UN groups that deal at policy level with UN programmes such as the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

UNEG's governance and management arrangements

Despite the absence of a formal mandate, UNEG has acquired legitimacy over the years and is increasingly recognised as an interlocutor that can bring value added. This legitimacy derives mainly from the recognition of UNEG's contribution to improving the evaluation function and from its contributions to UN reform processes from the evaluation perspective.

UNEG members are very diverse in terms of their mandate and orientation, their financial and human resources, their reporting lines within organisations and their geographical location. This diversity is considered an asset as well as a challenge for managing the network. An example of such challenges is the need to ensure that products are relevant to all and that specific groups of

members, such as those working in a particular field, feel that their needs are met. Another challenge is to address the needs of smaller organisations which have limited capacity and cannot participate in all Task Forces relevant to them.

The decision-making process in UNEG is a highly centralised one in which the UNEG heads take decisions at the annual meeting and in between AGMs hold electronic consultations for urgent decisions; this approach is considered ineffective. The post of Vice-Chair was introduced in 2009 to ensure continuity and both the Chair and Vice-Chair have always been elected from among UNEG heads and divide tasks between them informally. The Executive Coordinator is a UNDP staff member who spends 20% of his time working on UNEG and is assisted by a full time staff member. They jointly make up the Secretariat which is responsible for a number of activities, including organising meetings, distribution of documents and communication with UNEG members. UNDP hosts the Secretariat and provides major support for its work.

The Chair, the Bureau and to a limited extent the Task Forces (TF) can take a number of initiatives but their roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined and the PoWT could better reflect the reality of the functions. The TFs have in some cases had problems with producing timely outputs and have too many members. The Bureau consisting of the Chair, the Vice-Chair, the Executive Coordinator and the Secretariat was introduced in 2011 to improve processes and assist the Chair in managing the network in between AGM's. Despite the introduction of the above changes many of the members would like to see the respective roles of the Chair and Vice-Chair clarified and the two positions strengthened in terms of authority and accountability. Many have also suggested that a more authoritative, representative and accountable body could be created to replace the current set-up.

UNEG relies entirely on voluntary financial contributions and contributions in kind from its members. Since 2006 disbursements have been less than contributions, resulting in a carry over each year and culminating at the beginning of 2012 in an amount of US$ 147,713. Many consider a predictable resource base desirable but that a fixed and mandatory annual membership fee would alienate many of the smaller organisations and work against the notion of inclusiveness that UNEG promotes.

The existing governance arrangements served UNEG well during the initial period of development of the network but are not necessarily fully in tune with its new environment.

Conclusion

UNEG did to a large extent succeed in fulfilling its mission through improving the professionalism, quality and rigour of evaluation in the UN. The voluntary character of the network combined with strong leadership over the years has provided members with a sense of ownership, thereby increasing the cohesion of the network. Inclusiveness and the participation of all members in the network has proven a strong and positive principle but over time it has also prevented UNEG from making sustained efforts to encourage and support more intensive cooperation and co-ordination for mutual benefit among members and with the outside world. In that sense, UNEG has missed opportunities to capitalise more systematically on the diversity of its membership while also developing strong partnerships.

It has introduced valuable principles, guidance and instruments to professionalise the evaluation function over time within the UN and contributed to reforms. Within the UN, UNEG failed to develop sustained relationships with inter agency groups and its partnerships with non UN networks are limited.

UNEG has become more bureaucratic and its governance structure is too centralised and focussed on Head Quarters and it does not sufficiently address needs at field level.

At the same time UNEG could be considered an inward looking network that does not sufficiently reach out to a world that is both changing rapidly and impacting the UN, UNEG and its members. The evaluation function is evolving and demands on UNEG members and UNEG are increasing; UNEG needs to respond to this evolution while preserving its unity as a network. Evaluation is an important tool for ensuring cost-effectiveness, accountability and the impact of programmes.

UNEG is now at a turning point and the following recommendations provide it with opportunities to adjust its strategy, its operations and its governance arrangements and to reach out in order to remain relevant in the new context in which the UN operates.

Recommendations

1. UNEG to revise its mission statement and develop a 2013-2016 strategy reflecting key priorities. A revised mission statement and development of a strategy will mark UNEG's turning point, strengthen its position and effectively support its members, including partners, Member States (MS) and Boards.

a) Developing specific products addressing areas of work that have received insufficient attention and reviewing its product portfolio
b) Developing guidance for specific evaluations such as SWE, thereby contributing to UN reforms which will strengthen UNEG's position within the UN
c) Undertaking a major outreach effort to strengthen partnerships in and outside the UN, advocating the objectives and values of UNEG and mobilising resources for specific projects.

2. Increase effectiveness of AGMs through new working arrangements, including the revision of TF's rules of the game.

3. Create additional Vice-Chair posts reflecting UNEG's diversity, which share responsibilities for priority themes and oversee the development of products and activities.

4. Create an Executive Group with the authority to oversee UNEG's work and take necessary decisions between AGMs.

5. Strengthen the Secretariat as it will need to play a key role in implementing UNEG's revised mission statement and strategy.

In addressing these recommendations, UNEG should keep in mind and build on the key strengths it has shown up to now and which are valued by its members. The latter have clearly indicated during this assessment that UNEG should preserve its voluntary, inclusive and collaborative ethos. It should keep an eye on maintaining cohesion of purpose where possible among its diverse membership and avoid becoming too formal or bureaucratic. It should continue to offer a learning and networking forum for evaluators from the agencies to help each other and learn from other networks, possibly continue to provide a forum for developing joint evaluations and certainly continue to provide leadership on promoting high professional standards in UN evaluation and evaluation skills among its members.

1 Introduction and Methodology

1.1 Introduction

The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) is a professional, voluntary network that brings together the units responsible for evaluation in the United Nations (UN) system including the specialized agencies, funds, programmes and affiliated organisations. UNEG currently has 43 such members and 3 observers. This report assesses UNEG's contribution to its mission from May 2004 – 2012. It reviews UNEG's work against the OECD DAC evaluation criteria.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) clearly state the objectives of the assessment:

1. To assess the contribution made by UNEG against its "Mission Statement and Strategic Approach" (Principles of Working Together, PoWT, part II) through making judgements using evaluation criteria based on evidence; and against the role that UNEG could most usefully play, as seen by its members and by relevant stakeholders;
2. To assess UNEG's internal structure and functioning against the membership criteria, governance principles and working modalities laid out in the PoWT (part III to VI);
3. To identify the factors that have enabled and affected UNEG in fulfilling its mission, responding to members' expectations, and in its functioning, by answering the question of why the performance is as it is and explaining the enabling factors and bottlenecks;
4. To reach conclusions concerning UNEG's achievements, innovations and strategic approach, based on the assessments and analyses as above;
5. To provide actionable recommendations for improving UNEG's work, especially for incorporation into the revised Principles of Working Together document and a UNEG Strategic Plan.

The purpose of the independent UNEG assessment is to provide a summative analysis about what has worked in UNEG, what has not and why, and a formative view to enhance learning about what could be done to further improve the work of the group. For an overview of the ToR, see Annex A.

This assessment is about UNEG and not about its member agencies' work. The assessment addresses how UNEG has supported its members in the period under review and what value added it has produced.

1.2 Methodology

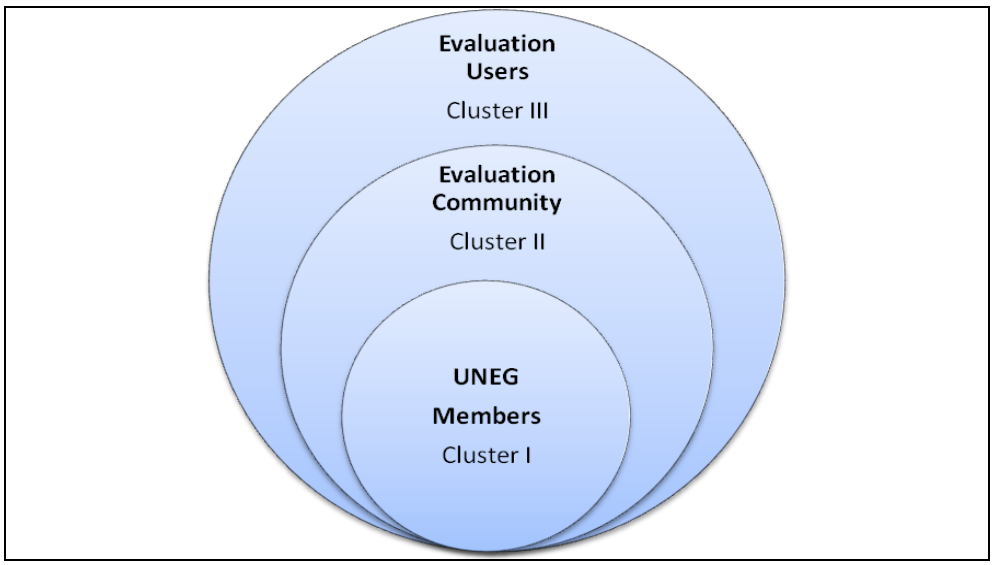
The team designed a participatory methodology ensuring participation of UNEG members and staff, UN agencies with responsibility for oversight and evaluation, Members States, other evaluation networks outside the UN and professional networks in the UN. The team employed a mix of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Given the variety of different actors participating in and relating to UNEG in and outside of the UN different clusters were established to collect data from different perspectives and increase triangulation opportunities.

UNEG members are often active in more than one theme and their evaluation units may be differently positioned in organizations as well as their reporting lines. Moreover, some units are co-

located with other functions such as audit or oversight. For an overview of the current situation of UNEG's members' placement and reporting lines see Annex B.[1]

Three clusters have been established:

Figure 1. Clusters for the assessment



Cluster I consists of the 46 members and observers in the network itself, co-Chairs of Task Forces, current and past Chair, Executive Coordinator and Secretariat members;

Cluster II consists of the non-UN evaluation community at large, including other evaluation networks such as OECD/DAC, the Evaluation Cooperation Group and regional evaluation associations;

Cluster III consists of the users of evaluation, including (a) other UN entities that share an interest in promoting quality evaluation such as the UN Development Group (UNDG), the Interagency Standing Committee (IASC) on the humanitarian side and senior UN management responsible for UN reform and (b) Member States and bilateral partners (donors and aid receiving countries). In addition, the team has identified key Member States involved in the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) and System Wide Evaluations (SWE) discussions and the top 10 donors to UN agencies as key evaluation users.

The list of persons met from each of the three clusters is attached as Annex C. In addition, the team has introduced additional data collection methods to respond to the ToR as outlined below.

1. The team conducted a comprehensive document review based on public information available on UNEG's website or those of other UN agencies. For an overview of key documents consulted, please see Annex D.
2. The team conducted semi-structured interviews with persons from the cluster list based on an evaluation matrix. Please see Annex E for the matrix.

[1] The placement, co-location and reporting lines of UNEG members is complex as those organisations also differ in mandate and size. The team prepared the overview in Annex B based on the recent UNEG publication: Evaluation Capacity in the UN, UNEG 2012.

3. The team conducted a survey (monkey survey tool) to collect data from UNEG members, including UNEG heads and staff. The survey was sent to heads and staff in UNEG members organisations and the list of individual names was provided to the team by UNEG's secretariat. Please see Annex F for an overview of key results
4. The team conducted a SWOT exercise with UNEG members in Geneva and New York. Please see Annex G.
5. The team prepared a matrix to benchmark UNEG against other professional networks. Please see Annex H.
6. The above five steps enabled the team to collect, triangulate and validate data and assess the performance of UNEG in relation to the ToR questions and to prepare conclusions and recommendations.

Table 1: Overview of response rate of the different data collection tools

Instrument	Number of people targeted	Response rate	Number of UNEG heads
Survey	233 questionnaires sent	115 responded (rate of 50%)	Including 29 heads out of 43 (67.4%)
Interviews (use of matrix and clusters)	89 persons	Cluster 1 : 52 persons or 58.4% of total	Cluster I included 23 UNEG heads
		Cluster 2 : 14 persons or 15.7% of the total	
		Cluster 3 : 23 persons or 27.6 % of the total	
SWOT meetings in Geneva and New York	18 participants		13 UNEG heads

2 UNEG: an overview

2.1 The origins and some key dates

In 1984 UNDP's newly established Central Evaluation Office took the initiative of creating an Inter Agency Working Group (IAWG) on evaluation. Initially, the IAWG was mainly composed of UNDP itself together with its "executing agencies".[2] From 18 members in 1986, the IAWG grew to 29 in 1999. It remained a very informal body, meeting irregularly with UNDP acting as the convenor and Chair. The stated objective of the group was to promote the simplification and harmonisation of evaluation practices among its members.

In 1999 UNDP commissioned a review of the IAWG[3] to assess the usefulness and value added of the mechanism so as to give the Group a new impetus and make it more relevant and efficient for its members. While noting that members from smaller organisations valued occasions for informal exchanges and interaction with peers provided through IAWG, a number of weaknesses were identified. These included: i) a lack of focus and the absence of a systematic approach to the choice of topics; ii) a loose agenda for the annual meetings; and iii) the absence of an appropriate follow-up

[2] This reflected the implementation mechanisms of that period for development work, when UNDP worked principally through UN specialised agencies.
[3] The two senior consultants, Pierre Spitz and Abdul Maal A Muhith issued their report on 2 January 2001.

mechanism for decisions.[4] The report recommended a number of reforms to transform the IAWG into a more proactive and structured network by introducing annual work plans, creating Task Forces, a website and city-based informal groupings. The Spitz/Muhith report was discussed at the Geneva annual meeting of 2001 and a number of its recommendations were implemented, including the creation of working groups and a website.

The major landmarks of the emerging UNEG may be summarised as follows:

i. 2003: The name of the IAWG is formally changed to UNEG;

ii. 2005: The UNEG Norms and Standards are adopted;

iii. The 2006 Annual General Meeting (AGM), held in Paris, approves the hiring of a dedicated professional officer for the Secretariat. The first incumbent takes office in 2007;

iv. 2007: Adoption of the Principles of Working Together (PoWT); UNEG members also agreed to be engaged in the evaluation of the One UN Pilots and the development of a UN system wide evaluation mechanism;

v. 2008: Adoption of the UNEG Code of Conduct and Ethical Guidelines; the Core Competencies for Evaluation Heads and the generic job descriptions (P1-P5). The first Evaluation Practice Exchange (EPE) seminar is held;

vi. 2009: The PoWT are amended to include the post of Vice-Chair;

vii. 2011: For the first time, a Chair is elected who is not a UNDP Director of evaluation. Unexpectedly, the newly elected Chair cannot take up the post and is replaced by the Vice-Chair. The 2011 AGM also decides to revise the Norms and Standards for which a new Task Force is created. The UNEG Handbook "Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation" is endorsed;

viii. 2012: For the first time ever, a vote takes place on an issue presented for decision, namely the admission of a new member. At the AGM, a discussion is initiated through the 'Open Café' methodology about the PoWT and how to move forward.

2.2 The governance and financial arrangements

The Principles of Working Together (PoWT) adopted in 2007 identified the mission statement of UNEG, established the criteria for membership and defined the governance arrangements of the network and its working modalities.

UNEG's mission is to "promote the independence, credibility and utility of the evaluation function and evaluation across the UN system and to promote the visibility and advocate the importance of

[4] It is interesting to note that many of our respondents for the 2013 assessment made exactly the same comments.

evaluation for learning, decision-making and accountability".[5] Eight areas of work are identified to achieve this mission and these are reviewed more closely in chapter 4.

The network currently comprises 42 full members, three observers and one organisation whose application for membership is pending approval. Membership is not individual but institutional for units and their professional staff with the main responsibility for evaluation in a UN organisation. Heads of evaluation units are referred to as "UNEG heads". As discussed later under section 6.1, membership is very diverse in terms of size, mandate and position in the organisation's internal structure. Other evaluation networks may be invited to participate in AGMs as observers and UNEG participates regularly in the same capacity in the OECD/DAC Evaluation Network (OECD DAC EvalNet) and the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG).[6]

UNEG defines itself as a professional and voluntary network ensuring common standards, quality and rigour of the evaluation function within the UN. Moreover, it does not define itself as an operational entity with implementation responsibilities in the conduct of evaluations. Task Forces (TF) composed of volunteers are charged with developing most deliverables mandated by UNEG heads at the AGM.

UNEG's central decision-making body is the AGM where UNEG heads responsible for individual evaluation units of UN agencies agree on priorities, adopt annual work plans, create TFs or working groups, approve applications for membership and elect a Chair and Vice-Chair. Decisions are reached by consensus on the basis of one vote per member. The Chair and Vice-Chair are elected for a two year term and are charged with facilitating the conduct of business between AGMs.

A Secretariat hosted and financed by UNDP provides support to the Chair and Vice-Chair and to the Coordination Committee (CC). It also oversees and supports the various services provided to members such as the website, the hiring of consultants, the organisation of annual meetings and the general flow of information. The Secretariat is headed by an Executive Coordinator appointed by the UNDP Director of the Evaluation Office from among senior staff of the unit.[7] The Executive Coordinator is assisted by a professional officer, the only full time staff dedicated to UNEG. Administrative support is provided by staff of the UNDP Evaluation Office or outsourced. Over the years, UNDP has thus made quite substantial contributions to the work of UNEG, both financially and in kind.

Since 2011, the Chair, Vice-Chair, Executive Coordinator and the Professional Assistant have formed a 'Bureau' which meets regularly and provides support to the Chair. In addition, the CC comprising the Bureau and the co-Chairs of Task Forces is responsible for monitoring progress towards deliverables identified for each Task Force.

There are no mandatory membership fees in UNEG but the PoWT, recognising that the success of the network depends on financial and in-kind contributions, invites members to contribute voluntarily to joint activities, to the Secretariat and to the AGM.

2.3 UNEG and key General Assembly resolutions

[5] UNEG, Principles of Working Together, Foundation Document, May 2012 (revision)
[6] The ECG includes the international financial institutions.
[7] Until 2011, the post was held by the Deputy Director of the UNDP Evaluation Office and since then by another senior officer.

In its last two periodic comprehensive policy reviews, the General Assembly (GA) made reference to UNEG and tasked the network with specific requests for action:

The "Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system" adopted in March 2008[8] contained the following paragraphs, the first acknowledging the contribution of UNEG to the strengthening of the evaluation function in the system and the second requesting UNEG to support programme country pilots to evaluate and exchange their experience with the One UN approach:

> *130. Notes the endorsement in 2005 of the norms and standards for evaluation by the United Nations system through the United Nations Evaluation Group, constituting a contribution to strengthening evaluation as a United Nations system function; (...)*
>
> *139. Notes the voluntary efforts to improve coherence, coordination and harmonization in the United Nations development system, including at the request of some "country programme pilots"; encourages the Secretary-General to support "programme country pilot" countries to evaluate and exchange their experiences, with the support of the United Nations Evaluation Group; and emphasizes, in addition, the need for an independent evaluation of lessons learned from such efforts, for consideration by Member States, without prejudice to a future intergovernmental decision;*

More recently, the "Quadrennial comprehensive policy review"[9] also encouraged the use of UNEG's Norms and Standards in the UN and, in addition, requested UNEG to be part of a coordination mechanism to develop a policy for independent ystem-wide evaluation and submit rapidly a proposal for pilot system-wide evaluations:

> *178. Encourages the enhanced coordination and exchange of experience among the United Nations entities engaged in system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development, namely, the Joint Inspection Unit, the United Nations Evaluation Group, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs; (...)*
>
> *180. Also notes the development of the norms and standards for evaluation by the United Nations Evaluation Group as a professional network, and encourages the use of these norms and standards in the evaluation functions of United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies, as well as in system-wide evaluations of operational activities for development;*
>
> *181. Requests the Secretary-General to establish an interim coordination mechanism for system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development of the United Nations system composed of the Joint Inspection Unit, the United Nations Evaluation Group, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Office of Internal Oversight Services, and also requests the*

[8] General Assembly, "Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system", document A/RES/62/208, 14 March 2008

[9] General Assembly, "Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review", Resolution A/RES/67/226 adopted on 21 December 2012.

Secretary-General, through the interim coordination mechanism, to develop a policy for independent system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, including submitting a proposal for pilot system-wide evaluations, for discussion at the operational activities segment of the Economic and Social Council in 2013...

Such requests have had and will continue to have important implications for UNEG. First, UNEG has gained legitimacy through the recognition of its work by the central decision-making body of the UN. Second, UNEG will have to interact more intensively with a number of UN Secretariat entities and with intergovernmental bodies. From the internal governance perspective, it will have to face increased demands on human resources to ensure that the network maintains its good reputation and its relevance to the process of UN reform. These considerations relating to changed expectations and the consequent necessity to adapt the pace of doing business have guided much of our analysis throughout this assessment.

3 UNEG's Contribution to Its Mission

The Principles of Working Together identify eight areas of work or themes that UNEG addresses in fulfilling its mission. For the purpose of this assessment, the eight areas have been regrouped into the following six categories:

1. Developing normative work through:
    a. the adoption and application of the UNEG common set of evaluation norms and standards and
    b. support to common positions on independence, objectivity, integrity and the role and function of evaluation;

2. Strengthening the evaluation function in the UN through:
    a. the improvement of the professional and technical competence of evaluation staff and
    b. the facilitation of mutual support and learning through the exchange of knowledge and discussion of best practice in evaluation;

3. Promoting innovation and joint initiatives

4. Encouraging the use of evaluation for learning, decision-making and accountability, including the use of evaluation in inter-governmental and inter-agency processes;

5. Facilitating support to member countries in building evaluation capacity at national level to better equip them to evaluate their own programmes; and

6. Facilitating appropriate partnerships and capacity development beyond UNEG, including among UN regional monitoring and evaluation networks, regional evaluation associations, the OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet), and the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) of the Multilateral Banks.

In pursuing activities in these areas, UNEG has used TFs as its principal working modality. The Principles of Working Together define the role of TFs, their membership and their functioning as follows:

I. Task Forces consist of members who are willing to produce 'deliverables' on behalf of UNEG. Their creation, time-frame and tasks will normally be agreed at the AGM. Ad-hoc Task Forces may be established, in full consultation with all UNEG heads, to address tasks arising between AGMs.

II. Membership of Task Forces is on an organizational basis. The initial membership of the Task Force will be decided based on commitments by UNEG heads during the AGM. UNEG heads will agree on a convener to hold the first Task Force meeting, thereby permitting absent members to participate in the Task Force. Within one month of the AGM, the convener will inform the Secretariat of the names of the selected Task Force co-Chairs. The co-Chairs or a designated representative will report on the work of the Task Force at the AGM. UNEG's wider membership will have the opportunity to comment on deliverables before 'products' are finalized.[10]

The present chapter examines the various products developed by UNEG, mainly through its TFs, and analyses the contribution of those products to the mission of the network. For an overview of the different UNEG products, including how often they have been downloaded from the website, please see Annex I. The functioning of TFs in terms of effectiveness and efficiency will be examined in chapter 6, section 6.4.

3.1 Normative work

3.1.1 The adoption and application of the UNEG common set of evaluation norms and standards

UNEG's Norms and Standards were first developed in 2004/05. The Standards for Evaluation in the UN system date from 2005 and build upon the Norms for Evaluation for the UN system. They are drawn from best practice of UNEG members and guide the establishment of the institutional framework, management of the evaluation function, conduct and use of evaluations.

The Norms for Evaluation in the UN system seek to facilitate system-wide collaboration on evaluation by ensuring that evaluation entities within the UN follow agreed-upon basic principles. They provide a reference point for strengthening, professionalizing and improving the quality of evaluation in all entities of the United Nations system.

The Norms are consistent with the uniqueness of the United Nations system, characterized by its focus on people and respect for their rights, the importance of international values and principles, universality and neutrality, its multiple stakeholders, its needs for global governance, its multidisciplinarity, and its complex accountability system. Last but not least, there is the challenge of international cooperation embedded in the Millennium Declaration and Development Goals. In addition to the Norms and Standards, UNEG developed additional guidance documents to respond to UNEG members' needs, to strengthen functions in each UNEG member organisation, to increase

[10] UNEG, Principles of Working Together, New York, 2012 (revised)

collaboration among UNEG members and to develop methodologies and approaches that reflected emerging topics in the UN system and to which UNEG wished to respond. It also developed additional guidelines for specific UN values. The 'Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation' document (2011) builds on the UNEG Norms and Standards for introducing rights and gender equality in evaluation and evaluators' work. It is the second best known UNEG product after the Norms and Standards as the survey indicates and interviews with cluster members confirm.

The above documents have proven valuable to UNEG members and the Norms and Standards constitute the heart of and rationale for UNEG's existence. The documents have guided members in further professionalising the evaluation function and continue to do so. The Norms and Standards provide a tool for UNEG members to discuss their evaluation function, position and policies and serve as a commonly agreed and accepted reference point.

The survey, SWOT and interviews confirm the significant contribution of the Norms and Standards to date. Out of 116 respondents, 94 consider the adoption of common Norms and Standards for UN evaluation very relevant to their work.

At the same time, the Norms and Standards are the result of a compromise in that the "lowest common denominator" was adopted. The latter reflects the diversity of UNEG's membership which includes:

I. large versus small organisations, including the available resources for evaluation;
II. evaluation units that report directly to Executive heads or Boards versus those that are co-located with oversight, programming, audit or inspection functions;
III. differences in scope and focus: normative, development, humanitarian, peace and security and other areas of the UN.

There is a growing recognition among UNEG members that the lowest common denominator will not suffice if UNEG is to advance and become more effective and efficient. The lowest common denominator approach has often been necessary to ensure that all members can effectively participate in UNEG, enjoy its benefits and use its normative work within their own organisations. Over the years, however, it has become clear that some UNEG members experience limitations in terms of participating in UNEG and adhering fully to the Norms and Standards. Some UNEG members consider it important that such differences be recognized. In particular smaller agencies, which have limited capacity to contribute to UNEG and to fully adhere to the Norms and Standards, are requesting that their limitations be accepted. Moreover, in many cases their evaluation function is part of co-location with other functions.

In the past, the discussion appears to have concentrated on 'independence' of the evaluation function while more recently the discussion has shifted towards the quality and credibility of evaluations, including the evidence to support the latter. This shift is also a result of other factors: declining resources in UNEG member organisations, a focus on accounting for results of programmes and pressure from Boards, Member States and donors to demonstrate results in order to justify contributions to the UN and/or to individual UN agencies.

UNEG has recently increased its focus on Normative Work. The latter has been defined as: "the support to the development of norms and standards in conventions, declarations, resolutions, regulatory frameworks, agreements, guidelines, codes of practice and other standard setting instruments, at global, regional and national level. Normative work also includes the support to the implementation of these instruments at the policy level, i.e. their integration into legislation, policies

and development plans, and to their implementation at the programme level".[11] A significant number of UNEG members conduct normative work.[12] The Task Force on the Evaluation of Normative Work is preparing a Handbook for Conducting Evaluations of Normative Work in the UN System. Increased attention is now being paid to Normative Work while in the past the development oriented work prevailed.

The table below illustrates the continued relevance of the Norms and Standards, the Evaluation of Normative Work and Human Rights and Gender Equality. The latter is the most quoted and well known guidance document as shown by both the following table and Annex I.

Table 2: Relevance of Normative work, Human Rights and Gender, Norms and Standards:

	Relevant	Less relevant	No opinion
Evaluation of normative work	**83.5%**	14.7%	1.8%
Human Rights and Gender Equality	**63.3%**	36.7%	0.0%
Norms and Standards	**90.8%**	7.3%	1.8%

Source: UNEG assessment survey 2013, all respondents

3.1.2 Supporting common positions on independence, objectivity, integrity and the role and function of evaluation

Most of the normative work in fact constitutes common positions of UNEG on all the above issues. In reality, however, UNEG and its members had to continue to apply these pragmatically. In addition to the diversity of the membership, the capacity of individual member organisations and the support or resistance from senior management has to be taken into account.

The role of the Chair has also supported common positions over time. The chair has in particular contributed to: i) building consensus at AGMs; ii) representing UNEG in other networks; iii) briefing senior UN management and Member States on behalf of UNEG; and iv) facilitating the development of UNEG position papers on issues such as United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) evaluation, Independent Review of SWE Mechanisms, etc.

Almost 50% of the survey respondents indicate that they consider the development of common positions relevant (see table 4 below) as it strengthens UNEG and serves as a reference point for members to fall back on. It permits them to illustrate that the evaluation function in their organisation can adapt over time and that specific guidance documents as well as the Norms and Standards are used as benchmarks. Interviews with cluster one representatives confirm this view.

3.2 Strengthening of the evaluation function in the UN

3.2.1 The improvement of the professional and technical competence of evaluation staff

[11] Proposed definition of Normative Work, UNEG, AGM 2012/5a adopted at the 2012 AGM

[12] Most UNEG heads consider that their organisation is involved in more than one areas of work, including in normative work, thus making it impossible to classify survey replies according to areas of work.

The Norms and Standards serve as the main reference point. In addition UNEG has created within the Task Forces opportunities to develop specific knowledge leading to UNEG products such as guidelines, handbooks and notes and specific guidance on building capacities of UNEG members. UNEG developed additional normative guidance such as the Ethical Guidelines (2008) and a Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN (2008) to further strengthen the standards. UNEG also prepared job descriptions as part of UNEG's efforts to professionalize and harmonize the evaluation function. [13] In particular the competencies and job descriptions are considered a unique product by informed observers. In addition to job descriptions, different products, training and knowledge exchange seminars have contributed to strengthening the evaluation function of UNEG members. It could be argued that the majority of Task Forces have constituted a key source for learning over time for those who participated in them as well as for UNEG members who use their products. UNEG piloted evaluation training courses at the UN Training Centre in Turin, Italy. This initiative failed, however, as it was found that the institute could not provide trainers with a strong evaluation background and UNEG could not provide its own trainers or sign an agreement with the Centre given UNEG's lack of legal status. Alternatively, UNEG considered providing e-learning courses but did not have the necessary resources.

3.2.2 The facilitation of mutual support and learning through the exchange of knowledge and discussion of best practice in evaluation

The survey results and additional data indicate that peer reviews, despite their costs, are considered useful and relevant, in particular since they are widely shared and discussed at the highest level of UNEG member organisation. UNEG members also indicate that self-assessments are a useful tool and are more appropriate for smaller organisations which cannot afford peer reviews. The OECD-DAC Network on Development Evaluation (OECD DAC EvalNet) has been an essential partner in conducting peer reviews and a Joint Task Force was established to support professional peer reviews. The Task Force on peer reviews is currently at a crucial point, in that those who have led the first phase of the work so successfully now wish to hand over to others, and the continuation of this work now depends on members of both UNEG and OECD DAC EvalNet coming forward to take over.

The reviews are conducted by an independent Peer Panel consisting of professional evaluators who use a framework developed by the two groups. Organizations are reviewed on a voluntary basis and these reviews assess independence, credibility and utility of the evaluation function as well as the effectiveness, capacity and quality of the organisation's evaluation. The results of the review build greater knowledge, confidence and use of evaluation systems by management, governing bodies and others, while also sharing good practice, experience and mutual learning. Evaluation users consider it an important instrument for increasing trust in the UN. The first peer review was undertaken in 2005 and UNDP was the first UN organization to benefit from a peer review of its evaluation function. At the time no agreed framework for these peer reviews existed. This pilot peer review together with a subsequent peer review of UNESCO's evaluation function led to a first framework for peer reviews as agreed by the joint Task Force on Peer Reviews of the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) and the OECD DAC EvalNet. Several peer reviews have been undertaken on the basis of this first framework. Through a continuous process of learning from these reviews the framework was improved and updated, finally leading to a UNEG framework for professional peer reviews, adopted at the UN

[13] These include: UNEG Job Description for Evaluators in the UN System - Associate Evaluation Officer (P1-P2) Evaluation Officer (P3), UNEG Job Description for Evaluators in the UN System - Intermediate Evaluation Officer (P4), Senior Evaluation Officer, Core Competencies for Heads of Evaluation in the United Nations and competencies for evaluators

Evaluation Group's Annual General Meeting in April 2011. This peer review is based on the UNEG framework. In total 9 peer reviews have been conducted.

Webinars and training events have been organised but appear to be less effective while the EPE seminar, which takes place each year before the AGM, is popular. EPE, which was introduced in 2008, provides a platform for information sharing and learning and many participants consider it more important than the AGM. EPE provides an opportunity for UNEG members to discuss their area of work, receive feedback and introduce new topics.[14] Participation levels are high, reinforce unity and a sense of belonging and are less formal then the AGM. Interviews with cluster one representatives confirm the importance of Evaluation Practice Exchange (EPE) seminars and in particular its informal character. UNEG heads consider learning as UNEG's key contribution to strengthening evaluation capacity in their organisations in comparison to any other contribution.[15]

The above tools and mechanism constitute formal ways of learning while UNEG members in Geneva and New York meet informally to discuss issues and share information. There is also a growing discussion on whether learning and information sharing could be organised along different interest groups, which would increase effectiveness and efficiency while responding to more specific needs of groups which share a common interest or identity. Suggestions have been made to organise groups for UNEG members residing in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi. Alternatively, UNEG members could meet around a common area of work such as development, humanitarian, peace and security, and normative work. The latter could reinforce mutual learning and exchange, joint work, and developing UNEG specific products that would serve the needs of the UNEG sub group has also been suggested. If such developments were to take place, members indicate that it should be made clear that the Norms and Standards apply to all members and fragmentation within UNEG must be avoided.

Table 3: Areas of work which will continue to be relevant to UNEG members

	Relevant	Less relevant	No opinion
Evaluation of normative work	**83.5%**	14.7%	1.8%
Human Rights and Gender Equality	**63.3%**	36.7%	0.0%
Impact Evaluation	**85.3%**	14.7%	0.0%
Strengthening National Evaluation Capacity	41.3%	**54.1%**	4.6%
Joint Evaluations	**66.1%**	31.2%	2.8%
Strengthening of the Evaluation Function	**89.0%**	10.1%	0.9%
Norms and Standards	**90.8%**	7.3%	1.8%
Peer Reviews	**67.0%**	26.6%	6.4%
Knowledge Management	**70.6%**	27.5%	1.8%
Cooperation with non-UN evaluation networks or groups	**47.7%**	46.8%	5.5%
Exchange of practice among UN evaluators	**82.6%**	14.7%	2.8%

Source: 2013 UNEG survey: data based on all respondents.

[14] A committee is established at the AGM host entity which prepares the EPE, including selection of topics and presentations.

[15] UNEG assessment survey: out of 27 heads: with 9 considering it 'useful' while 16 consider it 'somewhat useful'.

Survey results indicate which future areas of work continue to be of relevance to UNEG members. Strengthening the evaluation function has been considered a past strength and continues to be important, while the balance appears to be shifting to demands for a strengthened evaluation function in the field. UNEG members who are dependent on results in the field (development, humanitarian) and have responsibilities for such functions would like to see this topic receive more attention. This tendency is reinforced by an evolving discussion about holding UN agencies accountable by governments and beneficiaries and by the discussions in the General Assembly about system wide evaluations. (See below chapter 4.3)

Although learning has been a central theme in strengthening the evaluation function, the demands for accountability need to be carefully weighed. UNEG members consider both important but the pressure is increasing to deliver trustworthy evaluations of high quality and which can be used to show results. Some interviewees make specific reference to Results Based Management (RBM) and the need to ensure that evaluation contributes to it; this perception in turn calls for a clear role of UNEG. The above implies that UNEG needs to show that learning improves organisational performance and that the evaluation meets quality standards. UNEG developed quality standards in 2010but they are not often consulted in comparison to other documents.[16]

Impact evaluation has received attention within UNEG since 2008. Several impact evaluations have been conducted by members on different areas of UN work, from humanitarian interventions, through a variety of approaches and methods. UNEG guidance on impact evaluation will be available in 2013 in its final version.

The importance of impact evaluation was acknowledged across several evaluation networks and resulted in the creation of a Network of Networks for Impact Evaluation (NONIE). This network includes the OECD/ DAC EvalNet, the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG), and the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE)—a network drawn from the regional evaluation associations. It was formed to promote quality impact evaluation and it fosters a program of impact evaluation activities based on a common understanding of the meaning of impact evaluation and approaches to conducting impact evaluation. Since its creation six meetings have been organised and UNEG hosted the 2012 meeting. UNEG's Task Force on impact evaluations contributed to NONIE's guidance document. Although the majority of survey respondents consider NONIE only partly useful it is considered a good example of cooperation among networks. At the same time the survey indicates that 85% of the respondents consider impact evaluations a relevant area of work in the future (see table 3).

3.3 Promoting innovation and joint initiatives

UNEG has contributed significantly to promoting innovation in evaluation in the UN. Initiatives such as peer reviews (see section 4.2.2 above) and joint evaluations, both supported by UNEG, illustrate this capacity to innovate. Other organisations, however, also contributed to innovations and in particular joint evaluations such as the OECD DAC EvalNet.

UNEG has initiated work on guidance for UNDAF evaluations and has participated actively in the discussions on the evaluation of the One UN pilots and the System Wide Evaluation (SWE) Mechanism. In promoting and supporting such new approaches UNEG contributed substantially to the UN reform in full conformity with the TCPR of 2007 and the recently adopted QCPR.

[16] UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports (UNEG/AGM2010/3b/iii).

The quasi-operational role entrusted to UNEG in preparing and organising the Delivering as One pilots evaluation and, in an initial phase, discussions about a possible lead role in the development of a SWE mechanism raised the issue of the nature of the network and its capacity to deliver on the new challenges. Some members feared that UNEG was overstepping its role and did not have the capacity to engage directly in evaluation work. Informal discussions among Member States, organised in May 2010 by the United Nations System Chief Executives' Board For Coordination (CEB) Secretariat, considered that "UNEG is not appropriate for conducting system wide evaluation" and that "the evaluation of the Delivering as One pilots revealed some institutional gaps".[17] Interviewees from cluster two and three assert that UNEG should be responsible for setting standards and promoting quality evaluation in the UN and not for the actual implementation of evaluation work. This is echoed in the final report of the 2011-12 independent comprehensive review of the system wide evaluation mechanism and in the most recent QCPR resolution. [18] UNEG members (cluster one) again in the course of our interviews provide a clear signal the UNEG should refrain from being involved in the actual conduct of system wide evaluations activities.

Some UNEG members are not convinced that themes such as SWE and One UN are critical or useful areas (in terms of comparative advantage vis à vis other parts of the evaluation system) for UNEG to focus on, although they are clearly of great interest to UN stakeholders and the agencies themselves. At the same time, UNEG's future contribution to such evaluations is considered relevant in terms of UNEG's positioning and recognition as a professional network.[19] The debate over the years has centred on UNEG's own capacity to contribute to such work, as well as on the role and mandates of others UN entities and in particular the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). Although the JIU has an exclusive mandate to conduct such evaluations, many interviewees indicate that its capacity is limited and that the preparation and implementation of SWEs will be slow. [20] There is recognition among some Member States that UNEG's Chair played a constructive role in discussions leading to the adoption of the QCPR and, on that occasion, helped dispel impressions that there was a conflict between UNEG and JIU.

UNEG members consider joint evaluations important and they will continue to be an important area of work in the future. About 46% of the respondents to the survey consider promoting innovation and joint initiatives partly relevant. Joint evaluations are receiving growing attention within the UN and with external evaluation networks. UNEG developed toolkits for joint evaluations as well as various documents on lessons learned from such exercises in South Africa (pilot).[21] UNEG members consider UNEG's role important for both joint evaluations and UNDAF evaluations. The latter are particularly relevant as they provide an opportunity to break down the silo approach to evaluation by individual agencies, while at the same time providing a single delivery mechanism at field level. Some Member States clearly value joint evaluations, particularly in the field, because they can be relevant to their needs and also share costs and reduce the burden of having numerous individual evaluations. This discussion has also revealed the need to develop capacity in the field and at national level, including a role for the regional evaluation societies. UNEG's role has been limited in

[17] UNEG, "UNEG Secretariat report on the sixty fourth plenary session on system-wide coherence: informal consultations, 6 May 2010, New York", document UNEG/SYS(09-10)4

[18] Bester and Lusthaus, "Independent System Wide Evaluation Mechanism – Comprehensive review of the existing institutional framework for system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development of the United Nations system mandated in Resolution 64/289: Final Report", March 2012

[19] The latter must be understood in the context of the latest resolution being published in 2013 and dominating the discussions while collecting data.

[20] The mandate of the JIU dates back to 1967 and the latest revision was approved but the GA in 1976.

[21] Lessons learned on conducting a country-level joint evaluation: Government of South Africa and UNEG

support of building capacity at field level and it has not produced any guidance that could assist UNEG members which have the mandate to operate at field level.

Joint evaluations are increasingly on the agenda from the perspective of Member States and the OECD DAC EvalNet. Member States consider joint evaluations more effective and efficient and particularly in the field. The OECD DAC EvalNet includes joint evaluations among its four key areas of work and pioneered joint evaluations in 2006. Given OECD DAC's development focus, joint evaluations have enabled cost sharing and pooling of resources. It can also inform a large audience and has the potential to inform policy makers and contribute to programme development and decision-making. Cluster two and three respondents consider the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) complementary to UNEG as it is more focussed on accountability and it permits its members to assess multi-lateral effectiveness.[22]

3.4 Encouraging the use of evaluation for learning, decision-making and accountability, including its use in inter-governmental and inter-agency processes

In general UNEG members acknowledge that evaluation for learning and to a lesser extent for accountability has been strongly developed in UNEG but several UNEG members assert that the use of evaluations for decision-making, programming and policy development has been limited. The main reason for this is that UNEG's focus has been on strengthening (which has also included increasing credibility and independence) UNEG's members' evaluation function as a goal in itself. The utility of evaluations for decision-making and programming is progressing. In addition, some UNEG members continue to experience resistance from senior management in pursuing more ambitious goals through the evaluation function. At UNEG level, there is limited information about how evaluation results are used beyond management responses and how evaluation is successfully used for decisions and programming. UNEG has not systematically made a comparative analysis on the impact of evaluation on decision-making and policy development and whether such impact could be related to UNEG's contribution. Discussions appear to centre around the strategic importance of evaluation within UN agencies and on how management and Boards can ensure using evaluations for programming and decision-making. Some Member States and Board members indicate that, although they are not evaluation specialists, discussions about the use of evaluations for programming take place within programme committees as well as at capital level. The latter is relevant if donors provide direct support to UNEG member organisations and there is pressure to demonstrate evidence based results. In this case Boards and donors are provided with opportunities to influence programming and decision-making.

UNEG members who have decentralised their evaluation function while they remain responsible for results at Head Quarters' level identify the lack of strong evaluation capacity at national and country level as a serious challenge. UNEG has not defined its role in support of field level operations, regional bodies and evaluation capacities at the national level nor how it could avoid duplicating or treading on the jurisdictions of the agency-based functions. The survey indicates that a limited number (less than 12%) of UNEG members consider this relevant. See below table 4.

[22] MOPAN is a network of 17 donor countries with a common interest in assessing the organisational effectiveness of the major multilateral organisations they fund.

The Working Group on Knowledge Management has also contributed to learning and inter-agency processes. Working definitions were recently developed on knowledge management for members[23] and an approach to using knowledge management for evaluation and impact. Knowledge management through learning and sharing can contribute to strengthening evaluation capacity but it can also improve programme design and influence national policy formulation. At the latest AGM the Working Group also presented a possible UNEG Knowledge Management Strategy. The work is ongoing and needs further attention as the survey indicated that 70% consider it relevant.

The table below provides additional evidence on the important role UNEG plays in setting common goals and facilitating support, exchanging information and strengthening capacity.

Table 4: Roles of UNEG, which have been particularly relevant to UNEG members needs and objectives and those of UNEG members´ evaluation unit or organisation

ROLES OF UNEG	Very relevant	Partly relevant	Not relevant	No opinion	Not applicable
Encourage the adoption of common norms and standards for UN evaluation	**86.2%**	12.8%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%
Develop and support common positions on evaluation issues	**49.5%**	38.5%	8.3%	3.7%	0.0%
Strengthen the competence of UN evaluation staff	**43.1%**	38.5%	13.8%	3.7%	0.9%
Serve as a forum enabling networking among members	**58.7%**	36.7%	2.8%	1.8%	0.0%
Facilitate mutual support and learning through the exchange of knowledge and best practices	**52.3%**	39.4%	5.5%	2.8%	0.0%
Promote innovation and joint initiatives	34.9%	**45.9%**	12.8%	6.4%	0.0%
Encourage the use of evaluation for learning, decision-making and accountability	31.2%	**39.4%**	21.1%	5.5%	2.8%
Contribute to the independence of evaluation as a practice in UN organisations	**45.0%**	39.4%	11.0%	3.7%	0.9%
Support member countries in building national evaluation capacity	11.9%	23.9%	**38.5%**	14.7%	11.0%
Facilitate partnerships and capacity development through networking beyond the UN	19.3%	**34.9%**	32.1%	11.9%	1.8%

[23] UNEG Knowledge Management Definitions, 2013.

Work in project format on specific topics	6.4%	**47.7%**	23.9%	17.4%	4.6%

Source Survey UNEG 2013: data based on all respondents.

3.5 Facilitating support to member countries in building evaluation capacity at national level

In 2012, UNEG prepared a document entitled "National Evaluation Capacity Development: Practical tips on how to strengthen National Evaluation Systems". The document targets technical and non technical staff in the UN to show how national evaluation capacities can be strengthened and provides a framework, including good practices. As indicated earlier, this theme is not relevant to all UNEG members as the above Table 4 confirms. Despite repeated calls for the UN to strengthen the evaluation capacity of programme countries (TCPR-2007 and QCPR-2013); nearly 39% of UNEG members surveyed consider this theme irrelevant for them and their work. This result seems to derive from: i) the generally inward looking nature of UNEG, and ii) differences in mandate between larger and smaller agencies and between those which are focused on development and those which are not.

There has been one promising initiative in cooperation between UNEG and UN Evaluation Development Group for Asia and the Pacific (UNEDAP), which is the development of a pilot project for strengthening Vietnamese national evaluation capacity following a specific request from that country. Progress, however, has been extremely slow.[24]

3.6 Facilitating appropriate partnerships and capacity development beyond UNEG

UNEG's partnerships can be categorised as follows:

I. Those that enjoy observer status in UNEG and are associated networks: the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG), the Development Assistance Committee evaluation network (OECD DAC EvalNet), and the International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE). UNEG is an observer in all three;
II. Those network organisations that are part of NONIE and of which UNEG is a member (see above);
III. Participation of UNEG in evaluation initiatives such as the EvalPartners International Evaluation Partnership Initiative to Strengthened Civil Society Evaluation Capacities;
IV. Participation of UNEG members in regional evaluation societies such as the European Evaluation Society and the American Evaluation Society;
V. Informal interaction with other evaluation networks such as Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP).

UNEG has undertaken several joint initiatives in partnership with other networks such as peer reviews (OECD DAC EvalNet) and the evaluation of specific interventions such as the Haiti Response

[24] United Nations Evaluation Development Group for Asia and the Pacific. Strengthen capacity and create an evaluation culture in Asia and the Pacific.

(ALNAP, OECD DAC EvalNet).[25] The OECD DAC EvalNet has been the closest associate over time and an important partner and source of inspiration in terms of normative work, including the development of UNEG's Norms and Standards and peer reviews.

The interaction with other networks has contributed to UNEG's own development and learning by providing UNEG members with relevant products. UNEG members active in the humanitarian field consider ALNAP a more relevant network as it interacts with donors and NGOs. ALNAP has a strong learning focus and offers a variety of products and services. Given the mix of organisations and individuals who are members and observers in ALNAP, the evaluation community is not a dominant group. The general feeling is that over time the development oriented agencies in UNEG have been dominant.

The positioning of UNEG in networks and partnerships manifests itself in various ways:

UNEG´s products:
The nature of UNEG's products and focus areas are a subject of debate in other networks. It is generally felt that UNEG's products should be UN specific in order to avoid duplication. Task Forces should therefore efficiently address UN specific needs or use and adapt products from elsewhere if these already exist. UNEG members indicate that they can also access technical papers, tools and generic instruments elsewhere.

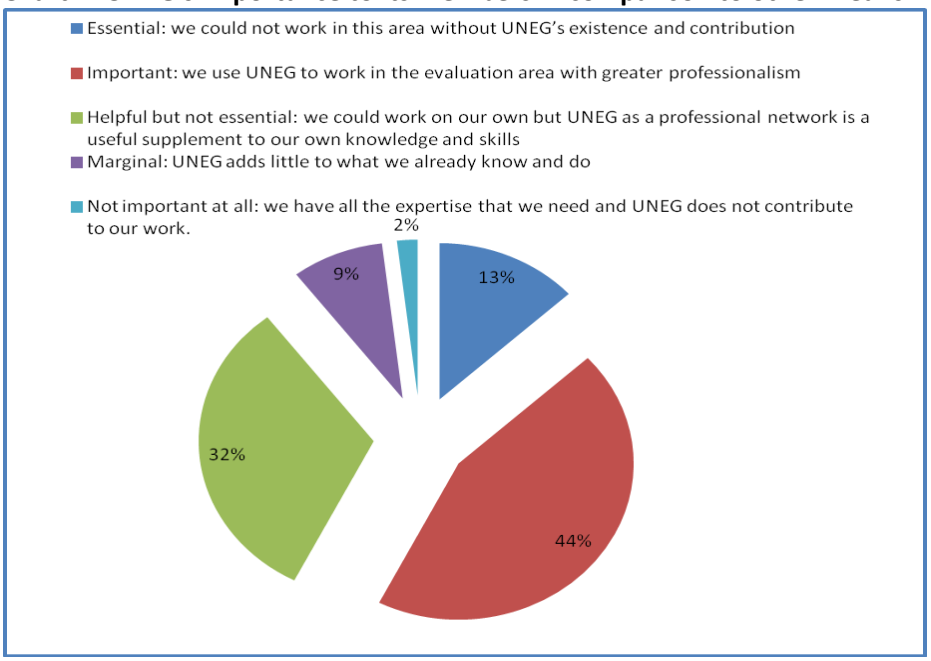
UNEG's focus:
UNEG members and representatives of other networks consider UNEG quite inward looking and claim that it does not use partnerships to learn about developments in the regions (regional evaluations associations) or participate in broader evaluation themes that are relevant to UNEG members. Examples include the Transformative Agenda developed by humanitarian organisations and the introduction of new concepts such as increased accountability to beneficiaries and governments. Members indicate that UNEG could intensify existing partnerships and develop new ones to ensure visibility, play an advocacy role and develop new products or services.

UNEG's interaction with other networks:
NONIE is perceived as a good example of interaction with another network focusing on a specific type of evaluation and for which there appears to be a growing demand. UNEG contributed to NONIE's guidance. It is an excellent source for those UNEG members who wish to focus on impact evaluations. The OECD DAC EvalNet and ALNAP are also considered essential in terms of focus (development and humanitarian) and their specific evaluation methodologies and tools are relevant to UNEG members.

Other networks provide exposure to other groups such as NGOs, donors and academics. Some UNEG members appreciate this as it broadens their understanding of approaches to evaluation.
Overall, however, 57% of UNEG members consider UNEG important and essential to improving their professionalism.

[25] Haiti Earthquake Response Mapping and analysis of gaps and duplications in evaluations February 2011, ALNAP, UNEG and OECD DAC EvalNet;

Chart 1: UNEG's importance to its members in comparison to other means



Source: UNEG Survey 2013. All respondents

3.7 Summary of evaluation criteria for UNEG achieving its mission

UNEG´s Norms and Standards have been relevant and effective in assisting members to professionalise their evaluation function. Additional normative guidance has been useful to most members. UNEG is operating in a changing environment, therefore its Norms and Standards as well as its guidance documents need to remain relevant and reflect how the evaluation profession is evolving.

Learning and networking are critical ways for UNEG members to share knowledge and experiences but more effective and efficient tools tailored for specific audiences would deepen their knowledge especially for those agencies that depend on national evaluations.

There is a growing demand from outsiders who wish to engage more strategically with UNEG such as Member States, Boards and Partners. This demand implies that UNEG needs to understand their needs and could at the same time use such partnerships for advocacy and resource mobilisation. This improvement would also increase UNEG´s sustainability as contributions from members remain irregular and uneven.

UNEG´s role within the UN and its contribution to reforms have grown over time and could be further consolidated. The recent QCPR resolution provides UNEG with the opportunity to show its value added and how it can contribute to UN wide evaluations and other reforms.

4 Partnerships and positioning

UNEG has developed partnerships over the years as highlighted in the previous chapter. In general there is an emerging consensus that UNEG is too inward looking and should take a more prominent role in building partnerships and advocate for evaluation within and outside the UN. Although its primary focus should remain on its members, it is considered important for UNEG to strengthen its

position as a professional network within the UN while providing information about its mandate and objectives to outsiders. UNEG members indicate that UNEG should in first instance be UN focussed but it needs to identify how it can be relevant to the whole UN system and beyond. This implies that UNEG needs to do more than meeting the needs of its members. Moreover, some interviewees (all clusters) consider it critical for UNEG to define how it can contribute to Results Based Management (RBM), accountability processes and broader governance and learning issues.

In particular Members States appreciate UNEG's growing role within the UN and at agency level. In the latter case, outsiders would like to have a better understanding of UNEG's mandate and objectives so that they can make reference to UNEG as a body which contributes to the professionalization of evaluation and supports the evaluation units at agency level through their Boards. As table 3 also indicates, almost half of the survey respondents consider cooperation with non-UN evaluation networks or groups relevant.

4.1 Partnership and cooperation with other evaluation networks

The best known and closest partnership has been with the OECD DAC evaluation network. The OECD DAC network is close to certain UNEG members since its focus is on development and the peer reviews are a concrete output of the partnership. Since ALNAP's creation in 1997 it has been particularly relevant to humanitarian UNEG members as its mandate is focused and permits membership outside the UN.

Out of all the respondents to the survey, 34,9% indicate that facilitating partnerships and capacity development through networking beyond the UN is not a high priority but this response may be influenced by smaller organisations which would not have the capacity to do so.

For the purpose of this assessment, the ToR requested that the team use other comparable evaluation networks to benchmark UNEG. After discussions with the Steering Group it was decided that UNEG would be benchmarked against two other international networks, OECD DAC EvalNet and ALNAP and two UN professional networks: UN-RIAS and MERG. For an overview of the benchmarking results please see Annex H.

The above exercise shows that UNEG, like other networks, brings together a particular group of professionals and has a strong focus on serving its members based on principles and a governance structure. UNEG's objectives and mission are clear and most other networks have strategic principles that guide their operations. Only ALNAP has a strategy which covers a time span of 5 years. Other networks use annual programmes which permits them to adapt rapidly to changing circumstances within the network or respond to changes outside the network.

UNEG has no formal mandate and most other networks are in the same position, a status which does not hamper their functioning. All networks have a founding document which reflects key principles and so does UNEG with its PoWT. In some instances other networks have arranged a legal status through their hosting agency.

UNEG membership is institutional and primarily UN focussed while other networks often have a diverse membership consisting of different types of organisations with different mandates, including NGOs. They also include sub groups, committees or individuals to broaden participation such as MERG and ALNAP. OECD DAC EvalNet membership reflects the OECD DAC membership. The number of observers and who is eligible to become an observer are limited in UNEG while other networks show more openness and in ALNAP anybody can be an observer.

Membership fees cover the range from no fee (MERG) to the definition of a specific formula depending on the kind and size of the organisation (ALNAP). In some cases additional contributions are made by the host.

All other networks, like UNEG, have Norms and Standards and guidance documents depending on their profession, thematic area or mission. They all operate with working groups or Task Forces to develop guidance and instruments.

Except for ALNAP most networks provide ad hoc training and use their annual meetings and policy papers or guidance notes as tools for learning. ALNAP has structured its training and serves a large audience.

Communication to members in the networks takes mostly place through closed websites in addition to mailings and distributing specific notes and papers.

All networks have identified governance and management arrangements and defined specific rules about voting; membership; selection of Chairs and Vice-Chairs and support functions such as Secretariats and it staff.

All networks have a Secretariat to support the network in its daily operations. ALNAP's Secretariat is large and more formal while the OECD DAC EvalNet has a small Secretariat that works informally. UNEG's secretariat is considered small.

Some key observations on the benchmarking and what UNEG could learn from others:

I. UNEG has a strong foundation in its Norms and Standards like other networks, in particular OECD DAC EvalNet.

II. It has useful guidance documents which support its members. Other networks review and update these regularly and UNEG could consider updates to ensure that these remain relevant to UNEG members and reflect emerging needs within the UN itself and its wider environment.

III. No standard or specific training modules have been prepared that could be used by members, regional networks and associations. ALNAP could serve as an inspiration and UNEG may consider this example as a model for a more cost effective and efficient way of sharing knowledge and capacity building. There is, for example, scope for UNEG to partner with other networks such as OECD DAC EvalNet and its member agencies (working through the TF on evaluation capacity development) on developing evaluation training materials including e-learning and sharing the costs of investing in this area and to help meet the needs of member states.

IV. Communication could improve to reach a larger audience within the UN and beyond. The website is relevant but few other communication channels are in use. ALNAP and OECD DAC Evalnet could serve as an inspiration for outreach, including for advocacy and resource mobilisation purposes.

V. The governance arrangements of UNEG could be further strengthened and both OECD DAC and other networks could serve as a source for developing a 'governance, management and membership' manual.

VI. The Task Forces modus operandi could be improved and both UN-RIAS and MERG could serve as inspiration as they both have strong rules of the game.

VII. UNEG could benefit from developing a separate strategy to position itself within and outside the UN; to contribute to the strategic evaluation function of UNEG members; to demonstrate reliable results and increase accountability; to develop and share products for learning and professionalization; to mobilise resources beyond its membership; and to contribute to UN reforms. ALNAP could serve as a source.

4.2 Cooperation within the UN

Interviewees made frequent reference to the fact that UNEG should intensify its partnership with regional evaluation associations such as UNEDAP. Some of the regional evaluation associations appear to be working in an informal way and their connections to UNEG are unstructured. They are not members of UNEG but do participate in UNEG events. UNEDAP's evaluation function, for example, is evolving and refers to UNEG Norms and Standards. It uses UNEG products such as job descriptions and guidance documents. Association members contribute to TFs and received training from UNEG. They would all prefer to become a member or observer and suggest that UNEG could play a more prominent role in their association, including contributing to common positions among members. UNEG could also play a role in building capacity at national level and UNEDAP could represent UNEG in regional networks. The United Nations regional economic commissions, which are UNEG members, have also benefitted from UNEG and in particular from the Norms and Standards and different guidance documents such as guidance on impact evaluations, impact criteria and quality standards. The UN-Economic Commission for Europe (UN ECE), for example, created a network in order to ensure coherence and consistency and UNEG could play a useful role in such networks. The Commission claims that 'if they had a good evaluation function they would not need to be reviewed'.

UNEG itself in its Norms and most if not all of the evaluation policy papers of member organisations refers to one of the essential roles of evaluation as improving programme design and management:

> *"1.3 Evaluation feeds into management and decision making processes, and makes an essential contribution to managing for results. Evaluation informs the planning, programme, budgeting, implementation and reporting cycle. It aims at improving the institutional relevance and the achievement of results, optimizing the use of resources, providing client satisfaction and maximizing the impact of the contribution of the UN system."*[26]

While individual UN organisations have developed mechanisms to ensure that the results of evaluation feed into their own decision-making processes related to programming, UNEG, in the inter-agency set-up, has not developed sustained relationships with the two major UN groups dealing at policy level with UN programmes in either the development or the humanitarian spheres, i.e. the UN Development Group (UNDG) or the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

Relationships with the UNDG or its Secretariat (the United Nations Development Operations Co-ordination Office – DOCO) have been sporadic, partly because for a long period DOCO did not consider the subject a priority. In the past, evaluation was only discussed at the UNDG in relation to particular evaluation reports of common interest but not in general terms as a tool for decision-

[26] UNEG, "Norms for Evaluation in the UN System", document UNEG/FN/NORMS(2005), April 2005

making. This situation appears to be changing and DOCO expects to build on past experiences with the discussions on the SWE Mechanism and the guidance for UNDAF evaluations in order to develop an even more constructive relationship with UNEG, in line with the emphasis on results and on monitoring and evaluation in the latest QCPR.
The relationship with IASC and its Secretariat has been almost non-existent. IASC had a working group on evaluation up to very recently but the IASC Secretariat was not aware of any coordination or exchanges between that group and UNEG, except through OCHA, an organisation belonging to both UNEG and IASC where it has a lead role.

Most humanitarian organisations do not consider UNEG as highly relevant to their expectations and needs. It is significant to note, in that context, that substantive questions related to evaluation in humanitarian situations have been discussed only twice in a UNEG AGM. At the 2005 AGM, a session was devoted to a briefing by DANIDA and ALNAP on the "Evaluation of Humanitarian Assistance" and a second session to a briefing on "Real Time Evaluation" by four different UN organisations (WFP, UNHCR, OCHA and UNICEF). The second occurrence of a substantive interaction was on the occasion of the 2010 AGM to discuss cooperation between the OECD DAC network, ALNAP and UNEG on an evaluation of the earthquake response in Haiti.

4.3 Interaction with Member States

UNEG has interacted with Member States in preparing sections of resolutions relating to evaluation and has also given presentations about UNEG's mission and products. This has been mostly undertaken by UNEG Chairs and the secretariat. As indicated earlier, there is a growing demand from outsiders to understand what UNEG is doing and how its products and position can help Member States in supporting the evaluation function of UNEG member agencies and in SWEs. Sharing more information about UNEG can assist Member States in advocating building capacity (including at field level) and in learning as well as in accountability.

UNEG could do more to understand the needs of Member States and how the latter could contribute to UNEG's strategic position within the UN system. They could also be an important source for financing UNEG activities of strategic and mutual interest and for strengthening its role in support of evaluation in the UN.

4.4 Summary of the evaluation criteria for partnership and positioning

UNEG has benefitted from partnerships like the OECD DAC EvalNet with which it initiated peer reviews. Its focus on partnerships with evaluation networks and regional evaluation associations appears limited. In most cases UNEG is an observer and vice versa; other partners are observers in UNEG, which creates opportunities for exchange. These partnerships, with the exception of the OECD DAC EvalNet and NONIE, seldom translate into concrete joint activities. This is one of the elements contributing to the outside perception that UNEG is inward looking.

UNEG can learn from the other networks in different areas, as outlined above, building a more robust governance system, creating more effective TFs that produce up-to-date- products for UNEG members and interacting more effectively within and outside the UN.

UNEG's partnerships with other UN groups are weak and incidental. Other UN groups in their turn contribute to UN reforms and joint initiatives or cooperation agreements on specific themes would make UNEG more visible and show its value added.

5 GOVERNANCE

5.1 The mandate and the Principles of Working Together

No mandate but increased legitimacy

UNEG was created in 2003 and came to life at the Bonn Annual General Meeting of 2004. The creation of the network was a decision of the evaluation units of UN organisations previously meeting as the Inter Agency Working Group (IAWG) on evaluation and it never received a formal mandate either from an intergovernmental body such as the United Nations Economic And Social Council (ECOSOC) or the General Assembly or from the Secretary General. UNEG remains a professional network of evaluators and its work is based entirely on voluntary contributions and participation by its members. It is not engaged in the actual conduct of evaluations but develops norms, standards and guidance aimed at increasing the capacity of its members and at ensuring professionalism and rigour of evaluation within the UN.

Despite the absence of a formal mandate, UNEG has acquired legitimacy over the years and is increasingly recognised as an interlocutor that can bring its specific value added. This legitimacy derives mainly from the recognition of UNEG's contribution to improving the evaluation function based on its Norms and Standards.[27] It is also a result of the various requests addressed to the network to participate in the UN reform process from the evaluation perspective or to guide various reviews. The Chief Executive Board (CEB)[28] and the General Assembly have recognised the contribution of UNEG and requested the support of the network to pursue new approaches such as the evaluation of UNDAF, Delivering as One pilots, and for the reflection on a SWE mechanism.

From a "Constitution" to "Principles of Working Together"

The 2005 AGM decided to request the Secretariat, in consultation with some of the members who formed a Working Group, to prepare a "constitution/ways of working" for presentation at the 2006 Paris AGM. The Secretariat prepared an initial issues and options paper and in the course of the process, the rather formal and somewhat pompous name of "constitution" was dropped in favour of "Principles of Working Together". In 2006, the first four sections of the PoWT were formally adopted, including: i) the mission statement and strategic approach; ii) membership; iii) governance: the role and function of the AGM and Coordinating Committee; and iv) ways of working. A consensus could not be reached on the sections related to the roles and functions of the Chair and the Secretariat and the Working Group was requested to undertake additional consultations to prepare for a final decision at the next AGM. The PoWT were finally adopted at the Geneva AGM in 2007.

Since their adoption, the PoWT have been revised three times. The first revision, in 2009, resulted in the creation of a Vice-Chair "to allow a more equitable distribution of work; provide a think tank between AGMs; helping maintain the strategic direction of UNEG; and allow smaller organisations to become actively involved in the leadership of UNEG".[29] The revision of 2011 PoWT concerned minor procedural aspects related to the admission of new members and the introduction of a temporary

[27] See in particular paragraph 130 of the TCPR resolution of March 2008 and paragraph 180 of the recent QCPR resolution, both quoted in section 2.3 above.

[28] The Chief Executive Board for Coordination (CEB) is the highest level coordination forum in the UN system where the Secretary General meets with all Heads of Departments, Organisations and Agencies.

[29] UNEG, "Report of the UNEG Annual General Meeting 2009 – Nairobi, 25-27 March 2009, document UNEG/AGM/MR(2009)

General Management Support (GMS) fee of seven percent for contributions channelled through UNDP. The 2012 revision added procedures for the election of a new Vice-Chair when the need arises between AGMs.[30]

The core paragraphs concerning the mission statement and strategic approach were never revised despite important changes in the UN environment characterised by a marginalisation of the institution, serious financial constraints and the launch of several UN reform initiatives. As mentioned earlier and particularly since 2007, UNEG itself has come under increasing pressure to engage more directly in UN reform processes through demands from both management entities of the UN such as the CEB and from Member States in ECOSOC and the General Assembly. Such a role is not reflected in the PoWT despite its growing importance and relevance. A majority of interviewees claim that changes are required to allow UNEG to move forward and respond to new challenges. Such recommended changes varied greatly, however, between calls for an overhaul of the mission and strategy at one end of the spectrum to minor procedural changes at the other end.

5.2 Membership and diversity

The members of UNEG are very diverse in terms of their mandate and orientation, their financial and human resources, their reporting lines within organisations and their geographical location. The following broad categories can be identified and very often, a single organisation can belong to more than one, even within the first group:

1) Mandate and area of work:
   a) The development group;
   b) The humanitarian group;
   c) The Peace and Security group, and
   d) The Human Rights and International Law group (normative).

2) Financial and human resources (size):
   The recently published booklet on evaluation capacity in the UN illustrates the vast differences that exist between evaluation units in terms of financial resources, staff and number of evaluations undertaken.[31]

3) Reporting lines
   The main difference under this heading is between evaluation units that report directly to an inter-governmental governing body or to executive heads of organisations and those forming part of a larger administrative unit, often a unit encompassing oversight, audit and evaluation. There is on the one hand a growing opinion that real independence derives from professionalism more than a place in an administrative structure, and on the other an increasing tendency by Member States to insist on a direct accountability line to Boards. For an overview of the reporting lines for UNEG members, please see Annex B.

4) Geographical location
   Nearly 75% of all members are located in one or the other of the following five major UN locations:
   a) New York : 13

[30] Such was the case in 2011 when the Vice-Chair became Chair and an ad-hoc procedure had to be put in place for the selection of a successor. The new formula had to be applied again at the end of 2012.
[31] UNEG, "Evaluation Capacity in the UN System", New York, 2012

b) Geneva : 12
c) Vienna : 4
d) Rome : 3
e) Nairobi : 2

There are currently no formal arrangements for coordination among members sharing either a thematic area or a geographical location. The development group is often considered dominant in UNEG while most members of the humanitarian group believe they benefit more from specifically humanitarian networks such as ALNAP.

Smaller organisations experience constraints in participating in Task Forces as their capacity is limited. Similarly, they consider the flow of (electronic) information and the number of requests for inputs by the Secretariat as excessive and overwhelming.

5.3 Decision-making and governance mechanisms

The following paragraphs examine the decision-making arrangements in UNEG, the support functions provided by the Secretariat and UNDP, the role of Task Forces and Working Groups and, finally, resources and budget.

5.3.1 The Annual General Meetings

Paragraphs nine and ten of the PoWT, under the heading of "UNEG heads", refer to the Annual General Meeting as the central decision-making mechanism of UNEG:

9. UNEG is governed by the heads of evaluation units that are members of UNEG. The UNEG AGM will provide the forum for UNEG heads to:

a. Review progress and results from the work programme agreed in the previous AGM;

b. Decide on specific strategies and work areas for the following year including:

i. Defining priority deliverables;

ii. Establishing and/or continuing Task Forces or sub-groups to work on these deliverables;

iii. Make a commitment to be an active member of the Task Forces; and

iv. Selecting one co-Chair to convene the Task Force.

c. Elect the Chair and Vice-Chair of UNEG during an election year (see below).

10. Decisions at the UNEG AGM will normally be reached by consensus of the members. Voting will only take place in exceptional circumstances. Decisions apart from elections will only be put to a vote if requested by a minimum of five members present. Decisions will be taken by a simple majority vote of those present. Observers will not have votes.

Thus, the PoWT describe a decision-making process that is highly centralised. The text goes to the extent of stating that one of the roles of the Chair is to "refer all issues affecting UNEG's mission to

UNEG heads for decision".[32] In between AGMs, the only decision-making mechanism described in the PoWT is electronic consultations of UNEG heads. The reality, however, is that the Chair, the Bureau and – to a more limited extent – the Task Forces can and do take a number of initiatives. This *de facto* authority and the accountability that should derive from it are not properly reflected in the PoWT.

Table 5: Clarity of roles and the different bodies that constitute the governance and management of UNEG

	Role is clear	Role is clear but should be revised	Role is not clear and should be revised	No opinion
Annual General Meeting	**42.1**	21.5	12.1	24.3
Chair / Vice-Chair	**40.2**	16.8	15.0	28.0
Executive Coordinator/ Secretariat	**41.1**	13.1	15.0	30.8
Coordinating Committee	23.4	11.2	23.4	**42.1**

Source: UNEG Survey 2013. All respondents.

As shown in the above table, there is a consensus that the role of the AGM is clear and a vast majority of respondents and persons interviewed saw the AGM as useful. The occasion to network is often cited as the most valued contribution of AGMs although some consider that the meetings are too formal and could be better prepared and structured. However, more than a third of our respondents, both among the UNEG heads and other members of evaluation units, balance this generally positive appreciation with a strong desire to revise the role and function of AGMs. There is also dissatisfaction with the quality of decisions made at AGMs: only 28% of respondents believe that decisions taken by AGMs are results oriented, clarify implementation responsibilities, timeframes and accountability. Suggestions made by proponents of change include

- Prepare AGMs better by making issues and options papers available well ahead of meetings and limiting the agenda to a few priority issues so that discussions remain substantive and strategic;
- Turn AGMs into a more creative mechanism using innovative approaches such as brain storming groups, thematic sub-groups, open cafés, etc;
- Open the AGM to regional UN evaluation groups and to outsiders who can usefully contribute;
- Find mechanisms to go beyond a UNEG heads forum to allow more participation of "rank and file" evaluators.

Finally, it should be noted that 10 out of 46 members and observers or some 22% of the total did not attend a single AGM for the last three years (2010-12)[33]. The organisations concerned are among the ones with smaller evaluation units and include most of the UN regional commissions.

[32] UNEG, "Principles of Working Together", 2012, article 12, page 4
[33] See Annex J

5.3.2 Decision-making between AGMs

Some of the persons interviewed voiced the opinion that UNEG is cyclical and that it really comes to life only once a year for the AGM.[34] There is a feeling among some members that this pace of doing business is no longer adequate if UNEG wishes to remain relevant in a changing environment where expectations from both management and Member States are high. In addition, there is a strong concern that UNEG needs to develop an approach that allows it to become more effective while avoiding an overly bureaucratic set-up.

Many of the members interviewed voiced the opinion that a stronger decision-making mechanism is required, particularly between AGMs, as the existing mechanism of ad-hoc electronic consultations of heads is considered ineffective. A limited number of persons believe that the answer is to have more AGM sessions in the course of the year but the meetings themselves are often viewed as overly expensive and time consuming. Many more believe that a new decision-making mechanism is required with the authority to follow up on the work of Task Forces, to hold them accountable, and to take urgent decisions and initiatives to keep pace with developments between annual sessions. One possible mechanism mentioned by some of our interlocutors is the creation of a board that would have executive authority and would meet regularly throughout the year. The existing Coordination Committee does not perform such a role and only 16% of persons surveyed consider it an effective mechanism.

The following table reviews some aspects of decision-making arrangements and perceptions as to their effectiveness.

Table 6 Decision-making process: Respondents opinions of the decision-making processes in UNEG

	Agree	Do not agree	No opinion
Decisions taken by the AGM are results oriented and clarify implementing responsibilities, timeframes and accountability	28.3	**36.8**	34.9
There is an effective mechanism (the Coordination Committee) to monitor the implementation of decisions between AGMs	15.9	38.3	**45.8**
Organisations with smaller human and financial resources for evaluation can participate in decision-making and can contribute as effectively as other members.	**43.9**	27.1	29.0
Larger organisations and those contributing financially to UNEG should have a greater say in the direction of the network	17.8	**57.0**	25.2
At each AGM, the Bureau of UNEG reports in a satisfactory manner on the implementation of past decisions	38.3	14.0	**47.7**
The Bureau of UNEG reports candidly on problems arising and issues, even contentious ones	22.6	23.6	**53.8**
The Task Forces report according to schedule and are	25.5	**36.8**	37.7

[34] Task Forces meet more regularly during the year but much more intensively as the deadlines linked to the AGM get closer.

held responsible by the AGM			

Source: UNEG Survey 2013. All respondents

5.3.3 The UNEG Bureau

The existence of a "Bureau" is not foreseen in the PoWT. From 2011, however, the name was *de facto* introduced to refer to the core group composed of the Chair, the Vice-Chair, the Executive Coordinator and the Secretariat. The Bureau meets formally or informally throughout the year and all of its members also participate in the Coordination Committee.

As mentioned above in section 5.3.1, the Chair and the Vice-Chair have no executive authority based on the PoWT but enjoy a *de facto* right of initiative and their role is limited to facilitating the management of the network.[35] The post of Vice-Chair was introduced in 2009 and, although this is not a formal requirement, both the Chair and Vice-Chair have always been elected from among UNEG heads. They are expected to agree between themselves on respective roles and responsibilities. Both perform tasks related to their position in UNEG in addition to their normal workload as head the evaluation unit of their own organisation.

Many of the members would like to see the respective roles of the Chair and Vice-Chair clarified and the two positions strengthened in terms of authority and accountability. The idea of having more than one Vice-Chair to better reflect the diversity in membership was also voiced.

Until 2012, the Executive Coordinator was the Deputy-Director of the UNDP Evaluation Office. The function is currently held by another senior officer appointed by the UNDP Director of evaluation. The staff member spends up to 20% of his time working on UNEG matters and continues to report to the Director of the UNDP-Evaluation Office.

The Secretariat is composed of one full time professional officer employed by UNDP. Both the Executive Coordinator and the Secretariat are responsible for a number of activities, including organising meetings, distribution of documents and communication with UNEG members. UNEG also benefits from the staff time of several UNDP-Evaluation Office support staff who, *inter alia,* process consultancy contracts, and payments and maintain the website. Members recognise and appreciate the generous and important contribution of UNDP to UNEG's Secretariat.

Task Forces appreciate the support they receive from both the Executive Coordinator and the Secretariat, in particular for their timeliness in responding to requests for funding or recruitment of consultants. There is a general sense that the Secretariat is very responsive but that it is understaffed. The UNEG website is highly appreciated by the membership.

5.3.4 The Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee (CC) is composed of the full Bureau, the member(s) hosting the next AGM, Task Forces co-Chairs and any other members as decided by the AGM in the interest of representation of the membership at large. The functions of the CC are given as follows:

[35] Articles 11 and 12 of the PoWT define the roles and responsibilities of the Chair and the Vice-Chair as one of facilitating the management of the network.

"The Coordination Committee will:

a. Facilitate and track implementation of the work programme agreed at the AGM, including cross-fertilization and coordination between Task Forces.

b. Prepare the draft agenda and make arrangements for the next AGM."[36]

The CC has developed into a monitoring mechanism to follow up on the implementation of the work programme agreed at the last AGM. The organisation of the next AGM is largely left to the Bureau and the hosting organisation(s). The CC meets (physically or electronically) about once every second month, but more intensively during the period preceding an AGM. Co-Chairs of Task Forces describe these meetings as extremely long and often superficial, with very little substantive inputs that benefit their work. The Committee is generally considered inefficient[37] and many of the persons interviewed thought it should be abolished in favour of a different mechanism that could oversee the Task Forces and provide stronger leadership between sessions of the AGM.

5.4 The Task Forces

The Task Forces (TF) are the principal mechanism for UNEG to develop its products and implement the work programme approved at each AGM. While chapter 4 above examined the products themselves, this section will review the functioning of TFs, mainly in terms of their efficiency. As shown in the following table, there is a consensus that Task Forces should not remain the almost exclusive instrument for UNEG to develop products.

Table 7 Current format of UNEG events (AGM, Seminars, networks, taskforces, and use of the website) and whether these are the best modes of operating and delivering on the intended results

	Adequate	Inadequate	No opinion
Annual General Meeting	**44.9**	27.1	28.0
Seminars / EPE	**55.1**	18.7	26.2
Task Forces	37.4	**40.2**	22.4
Website	**52.3**	25.2	22.4

Source: UNEG Survey 2013; all respondents

During the first three years of UNEG, an effort was made to limit the number of Task Forces to four but since 2006, their number has grown to six and more, reaching ten in 2008-2009. There is a general opinion that there are too many TFs and that UNEG would benefit from prioritising among the various proposals to create new ones or by extending the existing ones. Several TFs have produced guidance documents considered of a very high calibre but the effectiveness of many others is perceived as being unequal, with one of them being qualified as "totally dysfunctional".

Annex J provides a chart showing the participation in TF for the years 2011-12 and 2012-13. The membership of TFs is based on the expression of interest and commitment by UNEG heads at the AGM or shortly thereafter. UNEG heads are often placed in a situation where they have to approve

[36] Article 21 of the Principles of Working Together

[37] Only 15,9% of members surveyed agreed with the statement that "There is an effective mechanism (the Coordination Committee) to monitor the implementation of decisions between AGMs"

TFs and express interest in participating in them without prior consultation within their unit or without a clear definition of the requirements of a TF's work plans in terms of staff time or financial resources.

The size of TFs is unpredictable, with some having more than 20 members, at times with several staff attending from the same organisation. Several respondents thought that this was excessive and would advocate a membership not exceeding ten. Many others feel that the TFs are a way of encouraging broad participation and providing learning opportunities for less experienced staff.

The reality, however, is that almost every TF relies on a core group of highly interested and committed members and that a majority participate only occasionally in TF meetings and do not contribute to the drafting of and commenting on documents. It appears that the most effective type of participation occurs when an organisation or an individual can establish a strong convergence between institutional or professional priorities and the particular theme addressed by the TF. Larger organisations often play a prominent role in TFs as they have the human resources to devote staff time to UNEG work and the necessary financial resources to directly finance some of the TF's activities. TFs can request financial support from the Secretariat up to a maximum of US$ 10.000 and individual members often contribute additional funds for more expensive activities such as the hiring of consultants.

Some smaller organisations consider that participation in a TF places an undue burden on their limited resources. In general, few organisations formally recognise work on behalf of UNEG as a legitimate part of a staff's work plan and it is generally excluded from regular performance assessments.

With the notable exception of the Peer Review Task Force and its links with OECD DAC EvalNet, the TFs very seldom establish linkages with external evaluation networks or even with other UN bodies. It is interesting to note, for example, that DOCO was not invited to participate in the Task Force on UNDAF evaluation.

In most cases Task Forces were extended beyond the initial one year period foreseen for their work. Indeed, the pace of progress in a TF is often slow: the Human Rights and Gender Equality TF took four years to develop a guidance document that is not yet considered final. Many of the co-Chairs of TFs interviewed considered the working methods of the Task Forces obsolete and that alternative, more efficient ways of doing business needed to be explored. [38] Suggestions made to improve the TFs functioning include:

I. Insisting that all creations or extensions of Task Forces or Working Groups should be accompanied by a written proposal clearly stating the expected outputs and results, time-frame and human and financial resources required to achieve the work. This should foster accountability and enable UNEG heads to make well informed commitments on behalf of their organisation;

II. Limiting the number of TF to three or four, based on a prioritising exercise and limiting membership to a maximum of ten;

[38] The assessment team interviewed 13 TF co-Chairs who were members of UNEG and 6 UN Heads also acting as co-Chair of a TF.

III. Exploring more intensive and efficient means of developing UNEG products, other than TFs;

IV. Inviting non-UNEG entities to participate in the development of UNEG products to increase effectiveness. On a case by case basis, such contributions could be sought from other evaluation networks, UNDG/DOCO, IASC, UN field offices, etc;

V. Requesting member organisations to introduce measures recognising staff participation and consider that contribution as part of their performance assessment, and

VI. Exceptionally, agree to make staff available on a full time basis for limited periods with a view to accelerating the pace of production of essential documents.

5.5 Resources and budget

As already mentioned, UNEG relies entirely on voluntary financial contributions from its members. As shown in the table below, about half of the members have contributed at least once between 2004 and 2011. It should be mentioned, however, that this table does not give a complete picture of the resources put at the disposal of UNEG as the numbers represent only financial contributions and exclude in-kind contributions by members and more particularly the important inputs of UNDP in support of the function of Executive Coordinator, the Secretariat and various administrative tasks. [39] Since 2006, disbursements have been less than contributions, resulting in a carry over each year and culminating at the beginning of 2012 in an amount of US$ 147,713.[40]

Table 8: UNEG voluntary contributions 2004-2011 (in US$ - from highest total to the lowest)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	TOTAL
UNDP			45,000		30,000			45,000	**120,000**
UNICEF		10,000		10,000		22,000	20,000	10,000	**72,000**
IFAD				50,000			20,000		**70,000**
FAO				5,000	10,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	**60,000**
UNIDO				5,000	3,700	17,700	6,800	7,000	**40,200**
UNEP		10,000					10,000		**20,000**
WFP			5,000			13,000			**18,000**
UNESCO					15,000			2,000	**17,000**
UNWOMEN								15,000	**15,000**
OCHA					5,000	4,250	5,000		**14,250**
UNCDF				5,000	5,000			2,000	**12,000**
GEF-EO				5,000			5,000		**10,000**
OIOS							5,000	5,000	**10,000**
UNHCR	10,000								**10,000**
HABITAT						6,000			**6,000**
UNFPA			5,000						**5,000**

[39] In addition to formal contributions, there are considerable hidden costs for running and participating in UNEG in the form of staff time, travel and other administrative costs, depending on how the agencies choose to participate in meetings and TFs.

[40] The Secretariat has informed the assessment team that expenditures have been much higher in 2012, increasing support to Task Forces and dissemination of products, facilitating this independent assessment and supporting the organisation of the AGM.

UNODC						5,000			**5,000**
ILO						3,000			**3,000**
WIPO	3,000								**3,000**
UN OHCHR							1,000		**1,000**
TOTAL	**13,000**	**20,000**	**55,000**	**80,000**	**68,700**	**85,950**	**87,800**	**101,000**	**511,450**

Source: Executive Coordinator Annual and Financial Report 2011-12

A majority of UNEG heads believe that a predictable resource base is desirable but that a fixed and mandatory annual membership fee would alienate many of the smaller organisations and work against the notion of inclusiveness that UNEG promotes. [41] In parallel, there is a feeling among some of the organisations supporting the brunt of the financial effort that their inputs should be recognised through a greater role in the direction of the network. There is widespread recognition (two-thirds of the UNEG heads participating in the survey) that possibilities should be explored for obtaining additional financial support for UNEG activities from bilateral or multilateral institutions.

5.6 Summary of evaluation criteria concerning governance arrangements

The existing governance arrangements served UNEG well during the initial period of development of the network but are not necessarily fully in tune with the new environment that emerged since 2007. UNEG has gained legitimacy over the years, thanks mainly to flagship products such as the Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN. In general, UNEG has developed governance arrangements that enabled the network to be relevant to expectations of its membership and to the improvement of the evaluation function in the UN system. At the same time, resources throughout the system have become more difficult to secure and pressure for "doing more with less" is intensifying in a climate where the status and role of the UN is being questioned in many quarters.

In parallel, expectations are growing regarding the potential contribution of evaluation in reforming the UN and UNEG has specifically been asked to participate in that process. Many members of UNEG see this as an opportunity to strengthen the relevance of UNEG and its mission in the UN. Issues that need to be addressed to make UNEG more relevant in this new environment include measures to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of decision-making processes, the Secretariat function, the work of Task Forces or alternative and innovative means of developing products and, finally, ways to increase resources and make that resource base more predictable.

6 Achievements and challenges to date: contributing factors and dilemmas

UNEG did to a large extent succeed in fulfilling its mission through improving the professionalism, quality and rigour of evaluation in the UN. Whilst the overall emerging picture is positive, some specific factors have affected UNEG´s performance. Often, the positive and the negative factors represent two sides of the same coin. This chapter analyses the major factors influencing the

[41] Our survey indicates that 52% of UNEG Heads are of the opinion that "UNEG should develop a more predictable resource base (...)".

performance of UNEG over the years. It also identifies issues and dilemmas that represent critical challenges which need to be addressed if UNEG is to remain relevant, effective and efficient.

6.1 Commitment and sense of ownership

Most UNEG members have demonstrated strong commitment and a sense of ownership. A majority of the members see the network and UNEG products as relevant to their own needs and those of their organisations. This commitment and sense of ownership is illustrated by:

I. The voluntary character of contributions: most UNEG members voluntarily contribute human and financial resources to pursue the objectives of the network and implement its work plans. This is a rather unique feature in the UN. It is highly appreciated by Member States and has contributed to UNEG´s good reputation. The two main disadvantages, however, are (i) that the financial resources base of the network remains unpredictable and (ii) that organisations with large budgets and staff have a dominant position. This voluntary nature of inputs represents a challenge for smaller organisations with limited resources.

II. The cohesion of the network: members of UNEG are professional evaluators who share common standards, working methods and objectives. Despite the diversity in the nature of mandates, size, reporting lines and position of the evaluation units, UNEG´s members through their professional identity contribute to coherence in approaches to evaluation in the UN thereby forming a cohesive group. This strong cohesion, however, also has its drawbacks as many perceive UNEG as an inward looking network that does not reach out sufficiently to the outside world. In addition, it appears that the development theme has been dominant in the network over other themes such as humanitarian action, normative work and peace building.

III. A strong leadership: over the years, UNEG benefited from a stable and strong leadership that succeeded in attaining crucial achievements and products, some of which significantly contributed to the legitimacy of the network in the eyes of Member States, UN management and peers. This leadership was represented first and foremost by the Chair of UNEG assisted by a small core group of competent and dedicated members. The strong cooperation among the Chair, who was also the Director of the UNDP Evaluation Office, an Executive Coordinator who was her Deputy and a Secretariat located in and supported by UNDP contributed to pushing UNEG´s agenda forward during the initial years of the network. This set-up, however, has also been perceived as reflecting the dominance of a single UNEG member. The creation of the position of Vice-Chair, who would represent a different UNEG organisation, balanced this perception. In addition, the Chair could only serve for a period of two years with the possibility of a single second term of two years (Article 16 of the PoWT). In 2011, this rotation took place in accordance with the PoWT. Successive changes in the Chair and Vice-Chair occurred in 2011 and 2012 and weakened the continuous leadership resulting in what has been perceived as ´a period of transition´.

6.2 Diversity in membership and a changing environment

The diversity in the membership is often presented as a positive feature of UNEG. It enabled cross-fertilisation and learning among evaluation units and staff of organisations that have different mandates, constituencies and size. UNEG´s diversity in membership has been preserved at the same time as a common identity was developed based on a set of Norms and Standards developed

through collaboration among members. The evaluation profession is evolving and UNEG members identify additional needs often as a result of demands on their organisation and thus the evaluation function. Decentralisation of organisations, including the evaluation function, cooperation among members at national level and growing demands from donors, governments and NGOs affect UNEG members. The need to produce strong evidence based evaluations that demonstrate results, are trustworthy and adhere to accountability principles will further challenge UNEG to respond effectively and support its members. UNEG will need to ensure that it responds to changes in its environment, support UNEG members to be ´fit for purpose´ while preserving its unity as a network.

6.3 UNEG´s partnerships in and outside the UN

UNEG has benefitted from its partnership with the OECD DAC EvalNet from the beginning. The introduction of peer reviews has been a powerful instrument for discussing the role, independence and location of the evaluation function in UNEG member organisations and has contributed to professionalising the evaluation function over time. UNEG is also an observer in other networks and is a member of NONIE. Information exchange and mutual learning appear key elements of such partnerships but few concrete activities emerged that added value to UNEG members except for NONIE. Members often refer to advantages of other networks and in particular the mix of organisations and individuals that are network members and attend meetings. Other networks invite guest speakers and prominent individuals participate and donors, academics and NGOs are eligible to join, contribute to debates and play a role in programming, decision-making and implementation of programmes. Within the UN, UNEG failed to develop sustained relationships with inter agency groups dealing at policy level with programmes such as the UNDG and IASC. Member States, however, appreciate UNEG and they acknowledge UNEG´s role and would like it strengthened. Overall, UNEG appears to have paid little attention to other actors who work in and for the UN and interact with UNEG members. UNEG enjoys only a marginal position in other networks and partnerships except for the OECD DAC EvalNet and NONIE since it ignored opportunities to undertake joint work.

6.4 The UN culture

The UN culture favours dialogue, inclusiveness and consensus building. UNEG reflects those values in its methods of work and in decision-making processes and this has helped the network maintain cohesiveness. UNEG´s products and ways of developing these reflect this culture. Inclusiveness and participation of all members in the network has been a strong and positive principle but over time it has also prevented UNEG from making sustained efforts to encourage and support more intensive cooperation and co-ordination for mutual benefit among members who share similar mandates or a same geographical location. In that sense, UNEG has missed opportunities to capitalise more systematically on the diversity of its membership.

In parallel, the UN is also seen as bureaucratic, too formal and hierarchy-conscious. Some UNEG members but also outsiders perceive UNEG as displaying the same negative features. Other networks, for example, appear to work well precisely because of the informal relationships and a hands-on approach. The AGMs are often portrayed as too formal and the decision-making process as overly centralised. The prominent and central role given to UNEG heads at AGMs leaves little room for junior staff to participate. As mentioned in section 6.1 above, UNEG is perceived as inward looking. In this connection, it is significant that among the eight areas of activity listed in article 3 of the PoWT, the two that respondents to our survey consider less relevant are precisely the ones with an external outreach, namely the strengthening of the evaluation capacity of programme countries

and the development of partnerships beyond UNEG. In addition, UNEG is perceived as a Head Quarter-centric body that neglects UN country teams in field locations.

6.5 Emerging challenges

6.5.1 Developing a new vision for UNEG

The environment in which the UN works has changed considerably since UNEG was created. The relevance of the UN and even its neutrality are being questioned in many quarters; resources are declining in parallel with calls for more accountability on the part of Member States. Contributions to core resources of organisations, which generally cover costs related to evaluation, are being reduced. The across the board budgetary reductions made in recent years have also affected evaluation budgets.

On the other hand and as part of efforts to reform the UN, Member States increasingly view evaluation as an important tool to ensure cost-effectiveness, accountability and impact of programmes. Moreover, there is a need to pay more systematic attention to the contribution of evaluation to programming and decision-making, a demand which will constitute a new challenge for most UNEG members.

UNEG is clearly designated in the recent QCPR resolution as one of the five entities requested by the General Assembly "to develop a policy for independent system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development of the United Nations system".[42] This evolving environment and the expectations of Member States require that the mission statement and strategy of UNEG be revised and that its products reflect UNEG members future needs.

6.5.2 Nimbleness and efficiency

The new expectations and roles mentioned above also require efforts on the part of UNEG to address emerging challenges related to its governance arrangements. Ways will have to be found to reconcile inclusiveness and efficiency, to equip UNEG with a stronger and more effective decision-making process and to create new, lighter and more efficient mechanisms to fulfil work plans.

7 Lessons learnt

7.1 Lessons learnt

UNEG is an important source of information, learning and providing practical guidelines and tools for its members. UNEG is on the radar of Member States, Boards and donors and within the UN it contributes to the professionalization and strengthening of the evaluation function. There is limited

[42] UN-GA, "Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review", Resolution A/RES/67/226 adopted on 21 December 2012.

information on how UNEG's value added helps its members improve the performance of their evaluation function.

Its approach is UN centred which can be justified on the basis of its objectives in the past but UNEG would benefit from developing a more holistic approach to evaluation which includes those who support the UN and who work directly with the UN to implement programmes, including at field level. UNEG could develop a clearer role and guidance on how it can support field level evaluations, including joint work among members and with non members.

Learning is a key element that is valued by UNEG members but there is no evidence how such learning contributes to development and impact in UNEG's member organisations. Monitoring and evaluation of UNEG´s contribution to the evaluation function and its results are absent.

UNEG´s resources are limited and prevent it from moving forward based on the shared priorities and needs of members and outsiders. It needs to mobilise resources that go beyond funding guidelines and engage more in concrete activities and partnerships that generate knowledge, experience and that are beneficial to UNEG members.

The number of Task Forces is too high and most have too many members. In most cases developing outputs takes too long and new rules of the game for TF's should be established, including for their effective management.

UNEG needs to introduce **Value for Money** as a principle to manage costs, including developing on-line learning, training and communication mechanisms. There is growing concern at the cost of yearly meetings and UNEG needs to become smarter at recovering costs.

8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Conclusions

Between 2004 and 2012, UNEG has significantly contributed to achieving its mission "to promote the independence, credibility and utility of the evaluation function and evaluation across the UN system and to promote the visibility and advocate the importance of evaluation for learning, decision-making and accountability".[43] Despite the absence of a formal mandate, UNEG has acquired a strong legitimacy through its achievements and its recognition by Member States, management, and peers.

All UN organisations now make reference to the Norms and Standards developed by UNEG in their respective evaluation policies and these documents have been acknowledged as important contributions to strengthening of evaluation in the UN in both the TCPR of 2007 and the QCPR of 2012. UNEG has also developed and widely disseminated guidance documents such as the one on integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluation[44] and practical tools for evaluators such as the definition of competencies for evaluators in the UN [45] The Evaluation Practice Exchange

[43] UNEG, "Principles of Working Together", 20122, Mission Statement, page 2
[44] UNEG, "Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation – towards a UNEG guidance", 2011
[45] UNEG, "UNEG Core Competencies for Heads of Evaluation Offices in the United Nations", 2008, and in the same year, a series of "UNEG Job Descriptions for Evaluators in the UN System" for different UN grades

Seminars are generally considered a useful means to share concrete experiences and enhance learning.

UNEG has developed into a vibrant professional network characterised by strong cohesion and commitment to its mission among members, generating a sense of ownership.

Members are almost unanimous in their appreciation of opportunities given through UNEG for direct contacts and interaction with peers, both formally and informally. Despite pressures on staff time and limited resources of many smaller member organisations, UNEG has successfully developed an impressive number of products based mainly on voluntary work of staff members, often on top of regular working hours. UNEG has favoured inclusiveness and participation by as many members as possible, at times at the expense of efficiency. It has also adopted an egalitarian, although very centralised, approach to decision-making: all members have a single seat and vote, despite vast differences in resources. Finally, the commitment of members can also be shown through financial or in-kind contributions, although only about half of members made at least one financial contribution since 2004.

In its functioning, however, UNEG has faced several dilemmas that affected both effectiveness and efficiency.

There are four major areas where, the cultural values of the UN environment, the governance arrangements of UNEG or its focus have resulted in tensions:

1. As mentioned above, inclusiveness needs to be balanced with efficiency. In Task Forces, for example, the desire to favour participation by as many members as possible has rendered discussion and the development and finalisation of documents excessively slow. This has often resulted in frustration for the few more active members who would wish to see work being carried out more efficiently. Inclusiveness may need a broader definition to permit others to become observers at meetings or participate in specific events. This change would permit UNEG members to engage with other evaluation professionals, interested individuals or organisations and increase learning and professionalism.

2. The voluntary nature of work carried out for UNEG is a recognised strength of the network but it has to be viewed also against notions of effectiveness. Commenting on the slow and irregular pace of work in Task Forces, a number of our interlocutors have expressed the opinion that more imaginative and intensive work methods could be tested, including the use of "retreats" for smaller drafting groups, the short term secondment of staff or contributions of blocks of staff time for specific tasks. In addition, some members indicated that subgroups could be organised to discuss shared topics for mutual benefit.

3. UNEG has created a very centralised and consensual decision-making process based on annual AGMs. The drawback is that the network cannot be fully reactive and nimble in responding to new developments and requests from management or Member States. The Head Quarters orientation in general has prevented UNEG from paying attention to evaluation at the regional and field level and to changes occurring at those levels.

4. UNEG has focussed in the past decade on serving its members and its contribution is significant. UNEG is operating in a changing environment within the UN in which reforms are under way. At the same time, the world outside the UN is changing and the knowledge and understanding of evaluation as a professional and academic area are evolving and affecting

UNEG and its members. This evolution has lead many respondents (all clusters and the survey) to suggest that UNEG should become more outward looking, take such changes into account and respond to them.

UNEG is now at a turning point and will need to make some adjustments both to its strategy and to its working and governance arrangements in order to remain relevant in the new context in which the UN operates.

UNEG's increased legitimacy, the role attributed to evaluation by proponents of UN reform and the specific responsibilities assigned to the network by the General Assembly and by management call for a strategic focus, including a strong vision for the years to come. This vision needs to be supplemented by an effective decision-making structure and development of new products. These reforms should provide UNEG with the opportunity to capitalize on achievements while making the network more responsive than in the past. The strategy, areas of focus and governance arrangements adopted in 2007 through the PoWT need to be adjusted to the current environment and such periodic reviews should be institutionalised.

8.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings and conclusions of the assessment team, including reflections on lessons learned from the benchmarking exercise as discussed in chapter 4.1. They represent proposals and options for consideration at the April AGM and reflect the need for UNEG to adapt to current realities and to expectations from its members, from the senior management of the UN and from the General Assembly. The alternative of simply pursuing business as usual would make UNEG less relevant and effective as a professional network. More importantly, UNEG has reached a critical point as the team argues and failing to capitalise on past achievements combined with a pro-active strategy to support UNEG members would be a missed opportunity.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: UNEG to consider revising its mission statement and developing a 2013-2016 strategy reflecting key priorities. This initiative would enable UNEG to adapt to the changing needs of members, become more outward focussed and build partnerships within and outside the UN. A revised mission statement and development of a strategy would underscore UNEG's turning point, strengthen its position and effectively support its members, including partners, member states and board members.

Based on this assessment, the team suggests that the following points could be considered as priority options in reviewing UNEG's mission statement and strategy.

A. **The further strengthening of the evaluation capacity in the UN**. To achieve this, UNEG might consider:

- The development of a second generation of products by reviewing norms and standards, finalising the guidance on human rights and gender equality in evaluation and exploring new themes such as accountability to programme countries and to beneficiaries and governments;
- The further development of knowledge management, including on-line workshops and seminars;

- Permitting the creation of UNEG sub-groups to discuss joint needs and developing products and tools for mutual learning and benefit;
- Developing a Monitoring and Evaluation tool to capture how UNEG members benefit from UNEG.

B. **The development of additional specific products addressing areas of work that have received insufficient attention.** Actions in that respect could include:

- Strengthening of evaluation at field level in cooperation with others in country and, for example, with UN-DOCO;
- Strengthening of evaluation in the peace-building, normative and humanitarian pillars of UN activities, the latter in co-operation with ALNAP.

C. **The contribution to UN reform and UNEG's position within it.** Elements of this contribution could include:**:**

- Developing guidance for CCA/UNDAF and for self-evaluation, and by participating in the co-ordination effort for the development of System-Wide Evaluations.
- Developing additional guidance on how evaluation can contribute to Results Based Management.

D. **A major outreach effort.** Options to achieve this could include**:**

- Strengthening of partnerships with other evaluation networks and developing concrete joint programmes and tools;
- Advocating a role for promoting the objectives and values of UNEG with Member States, UN management and Boards;
- Developing a fund-raising effort around specific "projects" for which a convergence of interests exists;
- Developing a communication strategy, including the use of social media for both UNEG members and those who take an interest in UNEG.

Based on the above first recommendation and once such a mission statement and strategy have been developed, UNEG may need to adapt its current governance structure and management arrangements. Some options are identified below and reflect the findings and conclusions of this assessment.

Recommendation 2: To reconsider how the Annual General Meetings can be made more effective through new working arrangements ensuring a hands-on approach and improved rules for the creation or extension of TFs and for the production of outputs and their management.

Recommendation 3: To consider the creation of additional posts of Vice-Chair to reflect the diversity of the membership, share the work and responsibilities for priority themes and oversee the development of related products and activities.

Recommendation 4: To consider the creation of an Executive Group with the authority to oversee the work of UNEG between AGMs, including decision-making on urgent matters arising between annual meetings. Its membership should include the four or five top contributors as well as representatives of UNEG's diverse constituencies, including smaller organisations. As a consequence the Bureau and the Coordination Committee could be abolished as they are not considered effective and efficient and are not representative of UNEG's diversity.

Recommendation 5: To consider strengthening the Secretariat as it will play a key role in implementing the revised and more proactive mission statement and strategy. UNEG could explore alternative means of achieving this in the absence of financial resources. Secondment of staff, internships, joint work with larger UNEG members or linkages with partners within and outside the UN could be considered.

In addressing these recommendations, UNEG should keep in mind and build on the key strengths it has shown up to now and which are valued by its members. The latter have clearly indicated during this assessment that UNEG should preserve its voluntary, inclusive and collaborative ethos. It should keep an eye on maintaining cohesion of purpose where possible among its diverse membership and avoid becoming too formal or bureaucratic. It should continue to offer a learning and networking forum for evaluators from the agencies to help each other and learn from other networks, possibly continue to provide a forum for developing joint evaluations and certainly continue to provide leadership on promoting high professional standards in UN evaluation and evaluation skills among its members.

9 Annexes

In a separate document

Annex A: ToR

Annex B: Reporting lines Matrix

Annex C: Cluster list

Annex D: Documents consulted

Annex E: Evaluation Matrix

Annex F: Results of the Survey: key questions

Annex G: SWOT Geneva and New York

Annex H: Matrix benchmarking UNEG

Annex I : UNEG Products

Annex J: Participation in the Task Forces