

UNEG
AGM 2025



UNEG
United Nations Evaluation Group

UNEG Chair's Annual Report 2024

UNEG AGM 2025: UNEG Business Session

Hosts: UNU, Tokyo, Japan

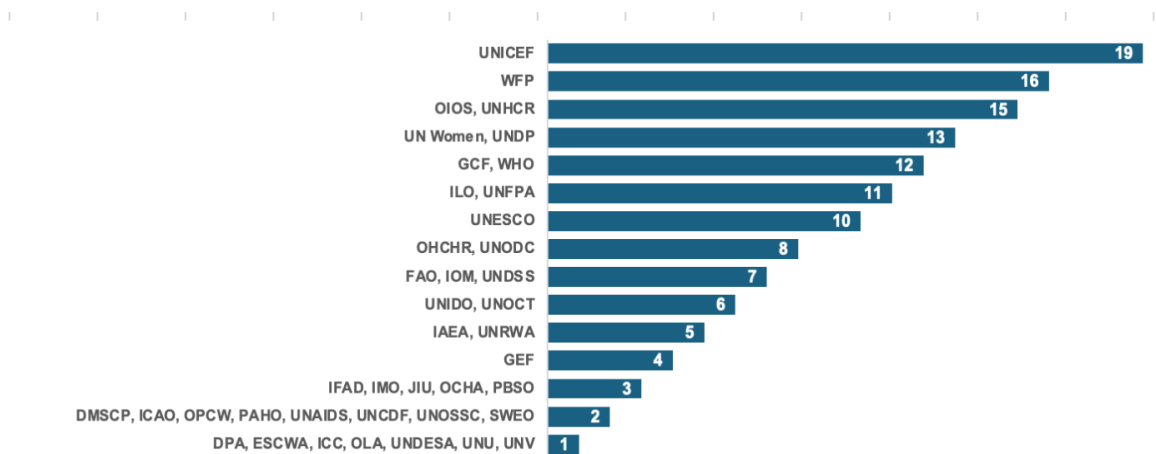
This report was prepared by Isabelle Mercier, UNEG Chair for the UNEG AGM 2024, in consultation with the UNEG vice-Chairs and support of Bo Weston, UNEG Secretariat.

1. The UNEG Chair's Annual Report presents an overview of UNEG activities in 2024, as well as some personal reflections by Isabelle Mercier, UNEG Chair. It has been prepared in consultation with the UNEG vice-Chairs – Claudia Ibarguen, Deborah McWhinney, Julia Engelhardt, Lori Bell and Srilata Rao.

Overview of 2024 work and achievements

2. In 2024, there were 18 Working and Interest Groups, two Task Forces (Strategy and website development) and one Organising Committee. 44 UNEG member agencies and three partners participated in the 2024 work groups (see Chart 1).

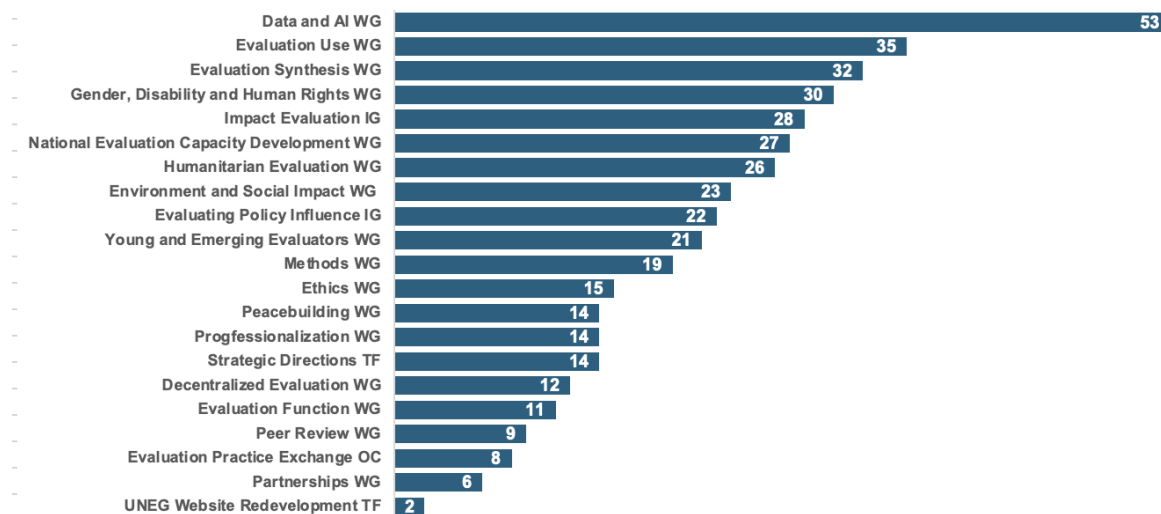
Chart 1 Number of work groups in which member agencies participated in 2024



3. As introduced by Eddie Yee Woo Guo - former UNEG Chair and my predecessor - work plans were circulated for approval as soon as they were received, rather than waiting for all to be submitted before distribution. This allowed work groups to begin their activities promptly upon approval by UNEG Heads. While some delays remained due to the time required to form group memberships, identify coordinators, and organize initial meetings, the process was significantly smoother and minimized delays in launching the groups' work.

4. Over-subscription and lack of commitment to the work groups, already highlighted by the 2023 work group coordinators, continued to be an issue in 2024. This should be a focus to address in 2025, as well as some emerging concerns, such as: some groups established sub-groups to deliver on specific deliverables. Should this become common practice, especially in groups with larger memberships? Were these sub-groups effective? How did they contribute to the larger group's work? Should working groups be limited in size?

Chart 2 Number of members signed up to the 2024 UNEG work groups



5. Another concern is the uneven distribution of effort among WG members, with a small number of participants carrying the bulk of the workload. **I urge UNEG Heads to ensure that staff who join work groups are committed to actively contributing and participating.** To reinforce this, the expectations for WG members will be further clarified in the updated FAQs and the Principles of Working Together, both of which will be revised in 2025 following the approval of the new UNEG Strategy.

6. Learning from experiences from this and previous years, the ESC members will periodically check in with the coordinators of the groups they mentor to discuss member attendance and participation. If the lack of either is affecting the functioning of the group, then they will collaboratively look at ways to perhaps readjust the work plan or the way that it is being implemented.

Achievements

7. We set ourselves an extensive work plan in 2024 and I'm pleased to see the number of outputs that the WGs are bringing to the AGM including:

- i. A FAQ on the peer review process and roles, to complement the Guidelines and help new members of the working group or those considering joining (Peer Review Working Group);
- ii. A proposed standard text on ethics for inclusion in evaluation policies of UN system entities (Ethics Working Group);
- iii. The launch and dissemination of the revised HR&GE guidance (Gender Equality, Disability and Human Rights Working Group);
- iv. A redrafted Environmental and Social Impact Norm and Standard (Environmental and Social Impact Working Group);
- v. The revised Small Evaluation Function Strategy (Evaluation Function Working Group);

- vi. The draft mapping and synthesis on decentralized evaluation functions across UN entities (Decentralized Evaluation Working Group);
- vii. A toolkit of generic theories of change (ToCs) for two of the four dimensions of evaluating policy influence identified in the UNEG Evaluating Policy Influence Stocktaking Report (Evaluating Policy Influence Interest Group);
- viii. An initial draft of the UNEG Evaluation Synthesis Guidance (Evaluation Synthesis Working Group);
- ix. A finalized mapping of UNEG agencies' engagement with Young and Emerging Evaluators (YEE) and the launch of the first cycle of the UNV-YEE partnership (YEE Working Group);
- x. A draft diagnostic review on the use of methodological approaches and evaluation methods in UN evaluations using machine learning (Methods Working Group);
- xi. Launch of Evaluation Certificate Course in July 2024 (Professionalization Working Group);
- xii. Drafting of the UNEG Ethical Principles for Harnessing AI in UN Evaluations (Data and AI Working Group);
- xiii. Multiple interactive and engaging webinars on the use of evaluation (Evaluation Use Working Group);
- xiv. Finalization and publication of the Guidance on the Integration of Humanitarian Principles in Evaluation of Humanitarian Action (Humanitarian Evaluation Working Group); and
- xv. Dissemination and presentation of the 2024 NECD Comparative Analysis (National Evaluation Capacity Development Working Group).

8. In addition to the above, we now have a more modern and user-friendly website, with some great new features, including: a comparative Evaluation Functions Stats table; pages dedicated to our work area and working groups; and a more intuitive and visually appealing document repository (although many member reports still need to be added). Initial feedback has been very positive, and I thank the UNEG Secretariat and UNEG vice-Chair Deborah McWhinney for delivering on this important work area. Further work is foreseen in 2025, including a proposal to integrate AI to help with automating the import of members' evaluation reports; creating abstracts for these reports; and automating the import of data from members' databases to the repository for future reports. I strongly encourage you to support and engage in this second phase in 2025 to ensure that our website remains up-to-date and showcases the huge body of valuable UN evaluative evidence.

UNEG Strategy

9. The development of the new UNEG Strategy has also been a central focus this year. I am grateful to Eddie for starting the process and to members of the Task Force for their subsequent and enduring support.

In September, Dorothy Lucks was hired, and she has done an excellent job – in a short space of time – in drafting a new Strategy in a thoroughly consultative manner. I look forward to the discussions on the Strategy at the in-person workshop prior to the AGM and at the AGM itself, where I hope it will be approved.

10. Notably, the development of the new Strategy has had implications for two key areas: **partnerships and membership**.

11. There has been continued interest from the wider evaluation community to partner with UNEG this year. The Global Evaluation Initiative ([GEI](#)); the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development DAC Network on development Evaluation ([OECD EvalNet](#)); the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe ([OSCE Evaluation Unit](#)); and the Council of Europe Evaluation Division ([COE](#)) have all participated in the UNEG working groups and UNEG continues to be invited to the meetings of the OECD-DAC Evaluation Network (EvalNet) and Evaluation Cooperation Group of the Multi-lateral Development Banks ([ECG](#)).

12. However, the Partnership Working Group has come to a crossroads. At the beginning of the work year, it was led by three coordinators but ended the year with just one. I would like to thank all three for their contributions, in particular, Thomas Rossmueller, for his contribution and commitment during unsure times. The question surrounding the role and objectives of the Working Group, raised previously by Eddie, remain and will require both discussions and decisions at the AGM 2025. It continues to be essential to unpack how we want to engage with our partners and assess the adequacy of our current approach to partner engagement.

13. The UNEG Membership Committee, constituted at the UNEG AGM 2022, has acted as the first point of contact for prospective members and provides ongoing support to newly-admitted members and observers. At the beginning of the year, the ESC agreed there be a moratorium on membership applications in 2024 while the new Strategy was being developed. For agencies whose membership applications have been on hold, we recognize that this has been frustrating, and your patience has been appreciated.

14. The issue of UNEG membership is crucial to the success and functioning of the network. The ESC has continuously emphasized throughout the year that UNEG **membership applies to an evaluation function**, as opposed to an office with one full-time person who works on evaluation. Moreover, evaluation offices within oversight functions should be represented in UNEG by the Head of the evaluation function rather than the head of the oversight function. While stated in the Principles of Working Together, the application of this principle has not been strictly enforced. Going forward, we reconfirm the legitimacy of this principle and will put this into practice to ensure that UNEG remains a network of evaluators.

Ways of Working

Executive Steering Committee

15. Following my election in May, I have had the great pleasure to work a team of five supportive and active vice-Chairs. Alan Fox (UNDP) retired in September 2024 and Srilata Rao (OIOS) was subsequently elected. For the first time in UNEG history, we have an all-female Executive Steering Committee.

16. Lori Bell has come to the end of her second two-year mandate and must, unfortunately, stand down. Lori has been an excellent and engaged mentor to the working groups under her careful guidance. I am grateful for her thoughtful and careful counsel, and regret that there hasn't been a greater overlap in our tenures. On behalf of the whole membership, thank you Lori for your commitment and support to UNEG and I look forward to further collaborating with you in other capacities.

17. As per the UNEG Principles of Working Together (2022), the UNEG Secretariat circulated a call for nominations for vice-Chairs in January 2024. The elections have been conducted electronically and the results will be announced during the Business session of the AGM 2025. I look forward to working with our new incoming vice-Chair and the other members of the ESC in the coming year.

UNEG Secretariat

18. In February 2024, following the AGM 2024, it was agreed by UNEG Heads that the UNEG Secretariat would benefit by having full-time staff position (for at least a year). As the host of the UNEG funds, the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office undertook a recruitment process in line with the UNDP recruitment regulations to identify a suitable candidate. I am delighted that Bo Weston, who had been serving as UNEG Secretariat on a part-time basis, was selected and has been working full-time on an IPSA contract since November 2024. I wish to thank Bo for her continued commitment to the UNEG and her invaluable experience and expertise, which benefits our whole network.

19. Since November 2024, she has been supported by Daniel Alcazar-Timon, who IEO hired to work part-time on UNEG. Daniel has already provided important support not only to Bo but also the working groups with UNDP administrative processes. Going forward, through Daniel, IEO will now be able to facilitate more recruitment for consultants to undertake UNEG work. I hope this will relieve some of the difficulties working groups have faced over the last couple of years to hire consultants and deliver on their workplans.

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20. The ESC recognized that the costs associated with travel to Tokyo for UNEG EvalWeek 2025 could hinder the attendance of work group coordinators and ESC members. As a result, the ESC proposed that UNEG funds be used to cover their DSA and terminal charges. The proposal was approved by UNEG Heads and we are pleased that this has ensured the majority of the work groups be represented at the AGM by at least one work group coordinator.

21. It is important for work group coordinators to attend the AGM so that they can report on the work they have led over the year and contribute to the discussions on future work planning. However, the proposal to cover DSA and terminals this year was made on an **exceptional basis** and Heads are asked to take this into consideration when allowing their staff to volunteer as work group coordinators in the future.

22. The ESC has developed what I hope you will agree is an innovative and engaging agenda for the AGM. The new World Café reporting session is an attempt to shake up the work group reporting giving participants time to engage with WG coordinators or representatives in small groups to maximise exchange

and feedback. We would then have time for decision-taking during plenary sessions with outcomes that have already been identified including:

- i. Approval of the new UNEG Strategy;
- ii. A draft work plan and tentative budget envelope for 2025;
- iii. Agreement on the direction and format of UNEG's engagement with its partners;
- iv. Confirmation of venue and tentative dates for EvalWeek 2026; and
- v. Identification of an overarching theme for the EPE 2026.

23. Following the practice established at the 2024 AGM, the 2024 work groups have been asked to develop proposals for possible work in 2025. These will be presented and discussed during the World Café and plenary sessions, as well as the work planning 2025 sessions. The objective is to have a draft work plan when we leave Tokyo and that UNEG members can already start considering which of the 2025 groups they wish to join. As in 2024, sign-up to the **WGs will be limited to a two-week period after the AGM** so that coordinators can convene the first meetings of the WGs within a month of the AGM. UNEG members may still sign up after this period.

UNEG Chair's Reflections

24. These are exciting times ahead for UNEG. The new Strategy gives us a new *raison d'être* encompassing both old and news of working. Innovation and being innovative – both in the way we work and the use of new technologies – is going to be a key focus area this year and in the years to come.

25. I would like us to be more innovative in the ways that UNEG works. Through the revision of the UNEG Principles of Working Together, I propose lightening UNEG's somewhat bureaucratic ways of functioning so that the ESC can drive forward initiatives that will be of benefit to the whole membership. I would like to find ways to encourage greater engagement by work group members by looking at how these groups are organized.

26. I very much look forward to seeing and connecting with many of you in Tokyo and, more importantly, to the road ahead with your ongoing support.