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Evaluating Policy Influence Stocktaking Report

This document was prepared by a consultant managed by the UNEG Working Group on Evaluating Policy Influence.

It is being submitted to the UNEG AGM for approval for it to be published as a **UNEG Reference Document**

This stocktaking study was prepared by Ms. Isabela Rae, consultant, under the guidance of the UNEG Working Group on Evaluating Policy Influence. It had the threefold purpose of:

- Taking stock of different definitions/understandings of policy support and types of policy influence interventions within the UN system, in order to derive commonalities;
- Reviewing existing frameworks, tools and methods for monitoring and evaluating policy influence interventions across the UN system;
- Identifying good practices, relevant methods, and areas to improve the UN system's approach to monitoring and evaluating policy influence interventions, thus contributing to strengthening the UN system's policy support to Member States.

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Background and Introduction

In October 2021, the UNEG Sub-Working Group on Evaluating Policy Influence (UNEG SWG-EPI) commissioned a stocktaking exercise on UN agencies' approaches to monitoring and evaluation of policy influence interventions.

The study was envisioned in the context of the emerging demand for policy influence monitoring and evaluation, stemming from the renewed emphasis placed on interventions aimed at strengthening national policies and policy coherence arising from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

Contributing to the process of policy reform is one of three key functions of the development cooperation sector, together with that of service delivery and capacity building. It looks further upstream to the conditions and policies that lie behind those social and environmental concerns we try to confront, recognising that programmes and services have a limited outreach if they are not accompanied by *structural change*. In this sense, policy influencing aims to address those systemic and structural challenges within a given operational context and contribute to the creation of an enabling environment conducive to inclusive sustainable development.

While the importance of regulatory reform in catalysing change at *systems level* has been widely acknowledged by development agencies and donors alike, the measuring of same remains a challenge.

In this light, the study had the threefold purpose of:

- Taking stock of different definitions/understandings of policy support and types of policy influence interventions within the UN system, in order to derive commonalities;
- Reviewing existing frameworks, tools and methods for monitoring and evaluating policy -influencing interventions across the UN system;
- Identifying good practices, relevant methods, and areas to improve the UN system's approach to monitoring and evaluating policy influence interventions, thus contributing to strengthening the UN system's policy support to Member States.

For the purpose of this stocktaking exercise, the expressions 'policy influencing' and 'advocacy' are used interchangeably and refer to interventions aimed at providing a contribution to legal, policy and regulatory reforms at either national, regional or global levels.

This study aims to contribute to raising awareness and enhancing knowledge and capacities of UNEG member agencies and partners on evaluating policy influence interventions and inform further UNEG work in this direction.

Approach and Methodology

The study followed a collaborative and participatory mixed-methods approach that drew on both existing and new quantitative and qualitative data.

The study started with an initial document review and scoping based on the previous work of the UNEG Sub-Working Group on Evaluating Policy Influence (UNEG SWG-EPI) that had been conducted through exchange of experiences and collation of a resource library on the topic between 2018-2021.

An online survey was sent to 53 UNEG member agencies (to the entire list of Heads of Evaluation made available by the UNEG Secretariat). The survey was carried out between December 2021 and February 2022 and received responses from 30 organizations (DCO, ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP, FAO, ICAO, IFAD, ILO, IMO, IOM, OIOS, UN Department of Communications, UN Secretariat, DPPA, PBSO, UN Women, UNAIDS, UNCDF, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNOCT, UNODC, UNRWA, WFP, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO).

For in-depth review, the study sampled 16 organizations that were purposefully selected based on the extent of their engagement in policy influencing work and their availability to participate in this exercise. It started with those agencies who indicated their interest and availability by replying to the original request for information which was sent out to UNEG members in October 2021. These agencies were then complemented by other organisations selected with a view to ensuring diversity and representativity of different mandates. The purposeful sample included the following agencies: ESCWA, FAO, GEF, IFAD, ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UN Women, UNCDF, UNDP, UNEP, UNICEF, UNOCT, UNODC, WHO, WIPO. The data on the sampled agencies was collected through the desk review of documents related to evaluation of policy influence (strategies, evaluation reports, M&E frameworks) and interviews.

Findings

The exercise was well received and welcomed by all agencies approached. In particular, the relevance of looking at the role of policy influence as a key driver of Agenda 2030 and the importance of effectively evaluating this area in the face of current challenges was highlighted. For most organisations, policy influence is core to their mandates and therefore permeates programmes and projects alike.

It should be noted that agencies participated in this exercise through their Evaluation Offices and therefore feedback was provided primarily from an ‘evaluation’ angle.

For the purpose of the present report, findings are presented under the following five headings:

a) Policy influencing interventions and their effectiveness

b) Ceiling of accountability

c) Evaluation frameworks

d) Key challenges

e) Emerging trends and support needs

The above headings cover answers to the core questions addressed by the study.

a) Policy influencing interventions and their effectiveness

While different agencies define their policy and advocacy work differently, the focus appears to be mainly on three levels:

- ***Direct support to structural reform***: technical advice and knowledge transfer interventions to promote changes in legal, policy and institutional frameworks at either national, regional or global level (often at all three levels)
- ***Capacity enhancement***: changes in the skills and ability of different agents, including decision makers, to effectively influence relevant legal and policy processes
- ***Dialogue space creation***: changes in terms of the dialogue space available for different stakeholders as a way to generate consensus and momentum around particular issues of interest.

While most agencies do not specifically articulate at what stage of the policy process they exercise their influence (*agenda setting, policy formulation, policy approval, policy adoption, policy implementation, policy monitoring and evaluation*), the study found that the majority intervene at the *policy formulation* stage (***technical advice towards influencing the product***), as opposed to the *policy approval and implementation* stages (***advocacy towards influencing the process***).

When asked what they would consider as the most effective form of policy influence intervention, surveyed agencies reported:

1) **Research and analysis** carried out with a view to generating evidence to back a policy/advocacy 'ask' / 'argument' (identified as the most effective form of policy influencing by 11 out of 27 respondent agencies)

2) **Capacity development** aimed at improving skills and ability of change agents (identified as the most effective form of policy influencing by 9 out of 28 respondent agencies)

3) **Dialogue facilitation** among actors belonging to different sectors, with particular emphasis on government, civil society, and the private sector (identified as the most effective form of policy influencing by 7 out of 28 respondent agencies)

4) **Technical contributions** formulated with a view to informing reform in legal, policy and institutional frameworks (with particular emphasis placed on legal and policy texts) (identified as the most effective form of policy influencing by 7 out of 27 respondent agencies)

In one instance *research and analysis* was rated at the same level as *stakeholder mobilisation*: in two instances, same as *capacity building,* and in two other instances same as te*chnical* contribution.

The 30 survey respondents included 13 of the 16 sampled agencies (who were also interviewed). The 3 who did not participate in the survey provided answers that were broadly in line with the above classification.

While those types of intervention appeared clear, what remained poorly articulated in most cases was the understanding of the steps going *from intervention to change*. In particular:

- ***Research and analysis:*** how do we get from evidence to influencing policymaking?
- ***Capacity development:*** how do we ensure institutionalisation of skills beyond individuals?
- ***Dialogue facilitation:*** how did we go from policy dialogue to engagement and influence?
- ***Technical contributions***: what are the key steps that brought your contribution to informing a text amendment?

Articulating those *trajectories to change* and demonstrating a thorough understanding of *how change happens* through *unpacking the arrows* within a Theory of Change remains a challenge to evaluate policy influence interventions properly (see related discussion in Annex III, section 3b).

Interesting discussions arose around the importance of identifying ways to effectively assess the translation of ***research*** **into** ***policy influence***, with particular attention to the investment not only in *evidence generation* but also in policy dialogue, particularly on actors' *engagement* and *ownership.* The ***knowledge-politics dichotomy*** appeared to be a central challenge within this discourse, in an attempt to achieve solutions that are both 'technically sound and politically viable'.

Particular attention was drawn to the importance of robust ***context analysis*** – and, where possible, political economy analysis – as a pre-requisite for evaluation of policy work. In approaching the evaluation of policy work, there is need for a perspective that is *evidence-based* and *politically-informed*.

b) Ceiling of accountability

Agencies were asked about the level at which they currently set their highest-level accountability ceiling. Can they accurately account for changes at output, outcome and/or impact level?

All agencies assessed indicated **Outcome Level** as their accountability ceiling. In reality, what most agencies appear to be engaging in is what one could call '*outcome monitoring'*, intended as a way to account for the performance of their programme in the achievement of set results, without thoroughly analysing them as part of a process in a qualitative manner.

The typical outcomes identified by surveyed agencies are:

1) The coming together of actors in a multistakeholder platforms (identified as the most commonly observed outcome by 15 out of 30 respondent agencies)

2) The inclusion of a particular aspect into a government/donor partner agenda (identified as the most commonly observed outcome by 10 out of 29 respondent agencies)

3) The adoption of a policy (identified as the most commonly observed outcome by 9 out of 30 surveyed agencies)

4) Enhanced capacities of actors now able to have a voice at a different level (identified as the most commonly observed outcome by 8 out of 30 surveyed agencies)

5) A change in government/donor/partner budgets (identified as the most commonly observed outcome by 8 out of 29 respondent agencies)

6) The presence of a particular topic in the press or on social media (identified as the most commonly observed outcome by 5 out of 30 respondent agencies)

7) The implementation of a policy (identified as the most commonly observed outcome by 2 out of 29 respondent agencies)

8) The passing of a law (identified as the most commonly observed outcome by 3 out of 29 respondent agencies)

Similarly to what was mentioned in *section a*, the three agencies who did not participate in the survey provided answers that were broadly in line with the above.

The focus in most cases appears to be on '***counting results'*** as opposed to '***understanding processes'*** which significantly affects agencies' learning agenda, at times becoming an 'after thought'.

This tendency to undervalue the importance of processes often led to underestimation of achievements, as in many circumstances ***achievements pertain to processes***. For instance, in the context, of fragile and conflict-affected situations, the role of processes is critical. As pointed out by GEF in a recent webinar on '*Lessons from an Evaluation of GEF's Interventions in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations'*[1] process dynamics in these contexts can determine the course of post conflict recovery, cooperation and transformation. In this sense, *process milestones* such as changes in ways of operating, in ways of actors coming together, and in building consensus, to name but a few, become of critical importance.

While most agencies have Theories of Change in place –few utilise them effectively as a means to assess ***how change happens.*** This aspect is not tracked systematically in any of the agencies assessed. While evaluations do attempt to look at *pathways of change*, time and resource constraints appear to affect the extent to which this type of analysis is carried out.

No agency presently measures the ultimate impact of policy interventions, understood as "*the holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms, and potential effects on people's wellbeing, human rights, gender equality, and the environment"*[2] resulting from a legal, policy or institutional reform. The perception is that such an exercise is too complex, timely and expensive and currently there is not sufficient interest and investment on the part of donors to support ex-post evaluations and impact assessments. One interesting suggestion came from OHCHR who use an approach called *Orientations to Impact* as a way to assess the

[1] See webinar recording and related reports at https://www.gefieo.org/events/glocal-webinar-fragility-2021

[2] OECD, *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully*, p.64 https://doi.org/10.1787/543e84ed-en

programmes' *likely direction towards impact*, as opposed to actual *impact results*.[3] Specific indicators for these criteria are currently being developed by the agency.

Preliminary ones have been suggested in the context of recent evaluations, in particular:

- Changes in government discourse, indicating potential for changes in actions and/or policy.
- Evidence of changes in knowledge, attitudes, capacities and behaviours (short to medium term) of target groups and institutions within the project results areas.
- Evidence of new or enhanced partnerships, policies, linkages and capacities in place which demonstrate plausible possibilities of exerting longer term influence on improving the promotion and protection of human rights in the project results areas.
- Programme systematically joins forces with strategic and influential partners for maximum impact
- Degree of structural change sought by Programme

All agencies recognise the importance of advocating for greater investment in assessing policy implementation (if not impact as such), given the links to *sustainability* and *relevance.* In particular, FAO emphasised the need to assist governments in assessing the degree of implementation and effectiveness of existing policies, and their coherence with one another, prior to investing in new ones whereby solid evidence regarding the benefits of adopted policies was seen as a pre-requisite to extending further *policy advice* support.

c) Evaluation frameworks

Written standards

With the exception of a few agencies currently in the process of developing policy M&E frameworks, and a number of organisations who do not have any level of formalisation of same, the majority of agencies (ECLAC, ESCAP, FAO, GEF, IFAD, IOM, OHCHR, UN Department of Communications, UNCDF, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNECE, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNODC, UNRWA, WHO,WIPO, WMO, WTO) were found to incorporate policy/advocacy considerations within the broader scope of their M&E system. This included policy evaluation being reflected in broader M&E manuals, RBFs, ToCs and good practice related documents. In most cases, however, the specificity and unicity of influencing interventions is not accompanied by related frameworks

[3] OHCHR, *Model Terms of Reference for Evaluations*, January 2021. For more information on measuring impact see OECD, *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully*, 2021, p.64 https://doi.org/10.1787/543e84ed-en

Out of the 20 agencies mentioned above, only 3 were found to have specific organisational M&E guidelines on policy/advocacy work captured in a separate document:[4]

- UNICEF: Monitoring and Evaluating Advocacy Manual– Companion to the Advocacy Toolkit[5]
- IFAD: Country Level Policy Engagement in IFAD - Guidebook, 2017[6]
- UN Department of Global Communication: Communications Measurement and Evaluation.[7]

While the majority of organisations did not appear to have specific manuals/guidance documents on M&E for policy/advocacy work, most presented *policy-specific indicators* as part of their organisational or project-specific Results Based Frameworks. These were found in ECLAC, ESCAP, FAO, GEF, IFAD, IOM, OHCHR, UN Department of Communications, UNCDF, UNDP, UNECE, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNODC, UNRWA, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO.[8]

Five agencies were found to have relevant material such as reports, manuals or evaluations which elucidate policy influence specific aspects and ways to approach the area:

- FAO: Capacity Development Evaluation Manual (containing core policy influence-related questions)[9]
- GEF: Impact of GEF Support on National Environment Laws and Policies[10] (see related Case Study in Annex I)

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[4] The extent to which these are systematically used within organisations was not assessed as out of scope in terms of the present study.

[5] UNICEF, *Monitoring and Evaluating Advocacy, Companion to the Advocacy Toolkit* https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/Advocacy_Toolkit_Companion%20%281%29.pdf.

[6] IFAD, *Country Level Policy Engagement in IFAD - Guidebook*, 2017 https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40196529/CLPE_book_170412_W.pdf/a203813d-8918-43ac-a94c-ad700bcca036

[7] A presentation titled *Communications Measurement and Evaluation was shared with the UNEG Sub-Working Group on Evaluating Policy Influence.* The agencies confirmed the presence of related manuals; however these were not shared with the Sub-Working Group.

[8] The extent to which these are systematically used within organisations was not assessed as out of scope in terms of the present study.

[9] FAO, *OED Capacity Development Evaluation Framework*, 2019 https://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/CA5668EN/.

[10] GEF, Impact of GEF Support on National Environment Laws and Policies, 2017 https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.ME_C.52_Inf.05_Env_Policy_Reform_May_2017.pdf.

- IFAD: Approach to Policy Engagement [11]
- IFAD: Exploration of a Methodology for Assessing the Impact of Policy Engagement: What Impact and How to Assess it?[12]
- UNICEF: Global Communication and Advocacy Strategy 2019-2021
- WHO: Evaluation of WHO Normative Function[13] (see related Case Study in Annex I)

Meta evaluations were mentioned by a small number of agencies as playing a particular role in providing some insight into the assessment of policy work: FAO, OHCHR, UNODC, UNCDF.

The practice

In terms of the practice of evaluating policy-related work, most agencies reported evaluating policy as part of broader initiatives and hardly ever separately. Most reported reference to UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation and the use of:

- Theory based approaches (used often to refer to the use of Theory of Change)
- Mixed methods
- Participatory approaches

Use of Theories of Change

Process and pathways of change were found to be poorly articulated in Theories of Change, where little attempts were made to ***unpack the arrows*** linking outputs to outcomes and impact, resulting in a limited understanding of the drivers of change, and of risks and assumptions. What are the key steps that shape the change process? A more detailed description of processes would assist in establishing a plausible causal association between the intervention and the intended policy change. Such plausible causal association should be built into programme design in order to meaningfully inform evaluations. *Solid process monitoring* is an aspect that should be part of regular programme assessments.

[11] IFAD, *IFAD Approach to Policy Engagement* https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40196529/CLPE_Teaser_web.pdf/89e3b627-2f6a-4343-828d-50126bae0d05#:~:text=What%20is%20country%2Dlevel%20policy%20engagement%3F,themselves%20the%20policy%20change%20required

[12] IFAD: *Exploration of a Methodology for Assessing the Impact of Policy Engagement: What Impact and How to Assess it?* IFAD Research Series, 2018 https://www.ifad.org/en/web/knowledge/-/publication/research-series-issue-26-exploration-of-a-methodology-for-assessing-the-impact-of-policy-engagement-what-impact-and-how-to-assess-it-

[13] WHO, *Evaluation of WHO's Normative Function*, 2017 https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/documents/evaluation/who-normative-function-final-report-july-2017.pdf?sfvrsn=6da62ea6_2

Out of the 16 sampled agencies, two (IFAD and UNICEF) presented policy influencing-specific Theories of Change[14] whereby positive efforts were made to account not only for *results* but also for *pathways of change*. The two examples are presented below.

IFAD's Country Level Policy Engagement Theory of Change

IFAD's Country Level Policy Engagement Theory of Change describes a sequenced pathway of change whereby activities are captured under three main pillars: i) policy dialogue ii) evidence generation and knowledge management and iii) capacity development. Each group of activities respectively lead to three results: enhanced *participation* of smallholder farmers in policy processes, increased production and utilisation of *evidence* for the policy processes, and enhanced policy capacity of governments. These results, in turn, lead to *improved policy and regulatory frameworks* at local, national and international levels and *strengthened in-country institutional capacities* for pro-poor agricultural and rural development. The combination of improved regulatory frameworks with enhanced institutional capacity is what ultimately represents the contribution to *the creation of an enabling institutional and policy environment* for poor rural people. While several related IFAD documents emphasise the importance of outlining process and causal linkages, going beyond a logical and chronological flow alone, a representation of how these *processes of change* are expected to unfold is not evidenced in this ToC.

UNICEF's Global Communication and Advocacy Theory of Change

Starting with *data*, *knowledge* and *evidence base*, UNICEF's Communication and Advocacy Theory of Change describes a series of advocacy-related activities leading to outputs and intermediate outcomes in areas of *partnerships*, *attitude and behaviour change*, and *support base*, among others. These, in turn, lead to the ultimate outcomes of *policy and legislative change* on the one side, and of *support mobilised for UNICEF* and *for child's rights* on the other, which are expected to directly feed into the organisation's overall goals, and ultimately contribute to realising the *rights of every child especially the most disadvantaged.*

Two particular aspects are of interest: the ToC not only presents the sequence of steps leading to incremental change but also highlights the *linkages* these have to both the Communication and Advocacy Strategy, and to the overall organisational strategic goals. Furthermore, it briefly describes *how* those step changes are expected to occur and the *basic requirements* that will drive change at different levels. While this *process description* is captured only briefly, it certainly represents a very good example of how to address process elements within a pathway of change.

While the two ToC above are very good examples of how the policy/advocacy causal linkages can be outlined across different steps in a trajectory of change, they could be strengthened by adding further details, particularly in terms of:

- Process-related information (*unpacking the arrows*: how will we get from A to B?)

[14] IFAD, *Country Level Policy Engagement in IFAD-Guidebook*, 2017, p.18 https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40196529/CLPE_book_170412_W.pdf/a203813d-8918-43ac-a94c-ad700bcca036 and UNICEF, *Global Communication and Advocacy Strategy* 2019-2021, p.20.

- Reference to external context (*enablers and disablers* of change) and external factors/actors likely to affect influencing work, internal values, culture and behaviours
- Listing of *assumptions*
- Highlighting the particular stages in the *policy cycle* at which these interventions are expected to exert their influence

Further discussion in relation to the development of a policy-influencing ToC can be found in Annex III.

Evaluation Methodologies

Only occasionally, specific formalised qualitative methodologies were mentioned. This aspect often appears to be left at the discretion of individual evaluators who conduct a specific evaluation, as opposed to being part of the organisation's evaluation standards.

In the few instances where these were mentioned, reference was made in particular to three methodologies: Contribution Analysis, Outcome Harvesting and Most Significant Change. Here below are related examples from sampled agencies.

Contribution Analysis: An example from UNCDF

See Case Study 3 in Annex II.[15]

Outcome Harvesting: An example from FAO

Outcome Harvesting was the main approach utilised by FAO in the 2021 Evaluation of Projects related to the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) funded by Germany.[16] The evaluation aimed at assessing results and drawing lessons from the implementation of the activities covered by the projects with a view to informing future interventions on the operationalisation of the VGGT. Many of these activities aimed at influencing policies.

The evaluation recognised the fact that changes resulting from policy influencing work are not always predictable, depend on many evolving dynamics and do not always mirror pre-defined objectives in project documents. It also noted that the initiatives under evaluation were the result of several global-regional projects with no overall logical framework to assess them against. In order to overcome these challenges, the evaluation adopted Outcome Harvesting as the main approach. Outcome Harvesting is an evaluation methodology aimed at collecting ('harvesting') evidence around changes and subsequently working

[15] Genesis-UNCDF, *Mid-term Evaluation of MM4P Final Report*, December 2018 https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/10018

[16] FAO, Evaluation of projects related to the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security funded by Germany, 2021 https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cb4876en/

backwords to determine whether and how an intervention has contributed to those changes.[17] Within this approach, outcomes are defined as *changes in actions, relationships, policies and practices* of one or more social actors influenced by an intervention.

In this evaluation, outcomes were initially identified through documents review and a stakeholder workshop involving country representatives from implementing partners, governments, technical FAO/VGGT staff and the donor. The outcomes identified covered changes in *policy and legal frameworks*, changes in *tenure security*, and changes in the *political agenda*, *perceptions*, *relationships, knowledge and attitude*. These 'harvested' outcomes were then verified by country-level data collection, which, due to COVID-19 restrictions, had to take place for the most part remotely. Key informants included representatives from FAO country offices, local and national level government implementing partners, civil society, farmer organizations and donors. Two surveys were also conducted, the first one to assess the relevance of a learning programme and the second to determine the uptake of technical guides.

Among the key achievements of the programme, the evaluation found: inclusive dialogue through multi-stakeholder platforms which led in most countries to the emergence of a common vision on land governance; changes in mind-set in terms of recognition of customary land rights and women's land rights; changes in policy and institutional frameworks; and changes in capacity development and awareness raising.

The use of Outcome Harvesting was particularly appropriate in this evaluation due to the complexity of the programming context and the many variables at play. It helped in assessing both *regulatory and behavioural changes* as well as providing useful insights into understanding the *process of change*

Most Significant Change: An example from UNDP

The Most Significant Change was one of the approaches used by UNDP in its 2015 *Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.*[18] The evaluation aimed at assessing: i) UNDP's contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment during the period 2001-2013; ii) the extent to which gender equality had been integrated across the institution at programme, policy, technical and cultural level; and iii) what institutional changes had been most and least successful in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment development results.

The evaluation availed of the Most Significant Change as a methodology aimed at collecting and selecting *stories of change* produced by programme/project stakeholders, actively engaging stakeholders in discussing and analysing those stories, and finally verifying same through, for example, field visits.[19] During data collection at country office level, focus groups were conducted whereby staff were asked to to reflect on what was the most significant change in their thematic area over the 2008–2013 period. Follow-

[17] On Outcome Harvesting, see Ricardo Wilson-Grau and Heather Britt, *Outcome Harvesting*, 2012. and https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/outcome_harvesting

[18] UNDP, Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, August 2015 https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/8794

[19] On Most Significant Change see Rick Davies and Jess Dart, *The 'Most Significant Change' Technique*, 2005 and https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Most-significant-change.pdf

up questions then addressed UNDP's role in that change process; other actors or factors that contributed to that change; any evidence that supported these changes; and whether any unexpected changes had occurred.

Results were categorised into four major areas of change: i) consciousness and awareness; ii) access to resources and opportunities; iii) informal cultural norms and deep structure; and iv) formal policies, laws and institutional arrangements. Democratic governance, in particular, related to the areas found to be the most gender-responsive thought effective support provided to legal and institutional reform that addressed the needs and priorities of women and men.

The use of the Most Significant Change provided a useful lens through which to assess where interventions had gained the most significant traction and the specific role of UNDP in contributing to the change process.

d) Key challenges in evaluating policy influence

Challenges were found both in the way policy as a function is articulated within organisations, as well as monitored and evaluated.

Challenges related to articulating policy influence (planning stage):

- ***Absence or poor articulation of policy influence as a function within organisations*** (aim, scope, responsibilities, type of interventions, sphere of influence, stages of the policy process at which the organisation intends to exert its influence, reform space, value added proposition, comparative advantage). This has major implications in terms of precisely defining the core objectives of an organisation's influencing strategy as well as defining the core characteristics of both processes and results forming the ultimate object of such evaluations.

- ***Insufficient detail regarding process, drivers, risks and assumptions in Theories of Change***. Theories of Change have become a 'default' component of most programme and project documents (funding applications, to organisational strategies, thematic briefs etc.). In many cases, however, as mentioned above in section 3b, these are not sufficiently detailed and present gaps particularly in relation to articulating process-related information (*how change happens*).

- ***Absence of policy influencing strategies***. The majority of organisations assessed did not appear to have a specific policy influencing/advocacy strategy in place. Most included policy/advocacy related aims in broader organisational strategic documents. This often resulted in little detail being provided around influencing *objectives*, *strategies and deliverables* resulting in less-than-optimal guidance in terms of both planning and evaluating related work.

- ***Limited attention to context analysis and socio-economic processes***. Understanding the policy environment, the *interplay of power and interest*, the socio-economic and political dimensions underpinning legal, policy and institutional reforms is an essential pre-requisite to identifying the key *drivers of change*, the *nature of the processes* agencies'

will be engaging with, and the ultimate *likelihood of success.* The absence of or limited content of these assessments can result in unrealistic expectations in planning.

- ***Knowledge management systems not always 'fit for purpose'*** in terms of facilitating learning and exchange. While all agencies were found to appreciate the importance of learning, key challenges were noted in terms of capturing the same in a way that would prompt follow-up and course-correction. A lot of information is frequently not recorded or under-reported often due to the very nature of influencing work which can at times deliver results 'in the background' and not within the set parameters of a Logframe. Secondly when information is recorded, and lessons captured, they are not necessarily 'learned' as in 'used in a proactive manner' to inform strategic thinking and planning within an organisation.

When asked what they considered to be the greatest obstacles to the success of policy-influencing/advocacy work, surveyed agencies responded as follows:

- Political nature of processes (*indicated as the greatest obstacle by 13 out of 28 respondent agencies*)
- Lack of linearity in policy processes (*indicated as the greatest obstacle by 10 out of 27 surveyed agencies)*
- Policy process timeline (*indicated as the greatest obstacle by 7 out of 28 respondent agencies)*
- Quality of evidence and the value it holds in the eyes of different audiences (*indicated as the greatest obstacle by 5 out of 29 respondent agencies)*
- Limited interaction between policy makers and development practitioners (*indicated as the greatest obstacle by 4 out of 28 respondent agencies)*
- Unique nature of policy influencing work, non-replicability (*indicated as the greatest obstacle by 3 out of 28 respondent agencies)*
- Stakeholder engagement (*indicated as the greatest obstacle by 1 out of 28 respondent agencies)*

Suggestions on how to address some of the above-mentioned challenges can be found in Annex III, section 1 and 2.

Challenges related to evaluating policy influence:

- ***Lack of standardisation and absence of counterfactual***. Policy influencing is often seen as a difficult area to monitor and evaluate, as the more traditional conceptualizations of monitoring do not apply to policy work in the same way and with the same linearity as they do to service delivery work. This is due to the highly flexible elements that characterize policy making as a process. In policy related work, the hypothesis itself can change at any time, due to external variances and shifts in political dynamics, and the

pace of change can often be unpredictable. For the same reason, data collection can be challenging and needs to avail of multiple corroborative sources of different kinds (qualitative and quantitative).

- ***Difficulty in isolating contributions***. Policy influencing takes place increasingly as a collective effort through networks and coalitions and at times it is hard to isolate the contribution of a particular organisation.

- ***At times disconnect between programme design and evaluation departments***, and lack of uniformity in the use of Theories of Change. Policy change is a *process* and needs to be understood and evaluated as such. This naturally presents challenges and unpacking change into its many *process-related* variables is certainly a much more complex task than that of *counting* result. Theories of Change rarely manage to adequately capture *process-related* information and when such gaps present themselves at both *planning* and *evaluation* stages, this can be partially due to a disconnect between the two functions.

- ***Policy influencing as a process is non-linear and long-term in nature***. Consequently, changes resulting from policy influencing work which can be in *knowledge, attitudes* and *practices* as well as in *legal, policy and institutional frameworks* often materialise over a very long period that can supersede the life of the supporting project. Given the constantly changing dynamics and the difficulty to predict exact final outcomes resulting from policy support interventions, the specific objectives and outcomes defined in project documents might not hold overtime. This should not suggest poor performance of the project, but rather encourage the use of a less prescriptive approach in defining both results and successes.

- ***Tendency to rely on feedback from implementers*** as opposed to feedback from beneficiaries. This relates to limited investment made in impact evaluations related to policy work. Often organisations set their accountability at 'outcome level' (e.g., a *new policy is developed or adopted*) and refrain from engaging in implementation. This removes the requirement of consulting beneficiaries (as in the case at hand, the organisation is not assessing the actual benefits the newly adopted policy is having on individuals) and therefore limits the extent to which it can determine the *effectiveness* of its work and learn about both its *relevance* and *sustainability*.

- ***Unique nature of policy interventions***: many complex dynamics at play and the political nature of same. Furthermore, the sensitive nature of policy influencing makes it difficult to identify all factors/variables contributing to or hindering the achievement of results. Moreover, actors are often not too keen to reveal what particular strategy or tactic has worked in generating a result in one direction as opposed to another. Lastly, policy is at the interface of science and politics and the two rarely converge in a smooth manner – effectively science does not often talk to policy, and political opinion can take precedence over hard evidence.

- ***Sensitive nature of some thematic areas*** (such as those of migration, terrorism, and drug control, to name but a few) which makes access to relevant stakeholders and info very challenging.

- ***Staffing levels and varying capacity levels in country offices***. Policy influencing is a technical specialisation in terms of both planning and evaluation. The absence of related skills in evaluation offices/teams at different levels naturally constrains the ability of the organisation to address policy influencing *specificities* when planning for and evaluating related work.

In particular, when asked what they would consider to be the greatest challenges in monitoring and evaluation of policy-influencing/advocacy work, surveyed agencies rated them as follows:

1) Difficulty in isolating individual actors' contribution ((indicated as the greatest challenge by 12 respondent agencies out of 30)

2) Data availability (indicated as the greatest challenge by 9 respondent agencies out of 30)

3) Absence of a plausible counterfactual ((indicated as the greatest challenge by 8 surveyed agencies out of 30)

4) Standardisation applied to other fields is not applicable to influencing work and its complex dynamics ((indicated as the greatest challenge by 7 respondent agencies out of 29)

5) Constantly changing nature of the political context: objectives formulated at the outset of influencing work may not be the best yardstick against which to judge its progress ((indicated as the greatest challenge by 6 respondent agencies out of 28)

Suggestions in terms of how to address some of the above-mentioned challenges are discussed in Annex III, sections 4 and 5.

e) Emerging trends and support needs

Interesting emerging trends were noted in relation to efforts made to better understand the complexities underpinning policy influencing interventions and the evaluation of the same. In particular, the study found:

- ***Evolving role of evaluative evidence*** within organisations and increased appreciation of its role as key in influencing strategic planning and programmes. Across agencies, evaluations were reported to have played a key role at different times in terms of, for instance, informing the restructuring of the advocacy function, influencing the organisation's thinking around policy/advocacy priorities, and assisting in the re-conceptualisation of aspects of the work. Of particular interest is the recent work led by UNEG Evaluation Use Interest Group on Advancing the Measurement of Evaluation Use.[20] Their working paper distinguishes between evaluation use and influence whereby the former relates to the effects the evaluation has on organisational learning, decision

[20] UNEG Evaluation Use Interest Group, Advancing *the Measurement of Evaluation Use*, Working Paper, December 2021.

making and accountability (in line with UNEG norm 3)[21], and the latter to the impact of evaluations on behaviours, social norms, or global agenda. The group documented practices with a view to identifying elements that can facilitate the capturing of *use* or *influence* of evaluation.

- ***Greater emphasis being placed on learning*** (as opposed to accountability alone) for those organizations in the process of reviewing their M&E frameworks. Several agencies are currently discussing ways to best capture policy influencing-related learning with a view to identifying elements that can inform influencing strategies going forward. This includes a focus on enablers and disablers of success, the understanding of how changes take place and the sharpening of organisations' influencing propositions.

- ***Recognised role or meta-analysis as a learning vehicle*** to better understand policy influencing processes. Meta evaluations were reported as instrumental in filling some critical knowledge gaps in terms of policy influencing and providing guidance for future evaluations. Areas of focus included: better understanding of the policy engagement parameters within which organisations operate, capturing organisations' evolution of thinking in those areas, and assessing the effectiveness of particular interventions versus alternatives, and their contribution to the overall organisation's strategic objectives.

- ***Policy coherence and convergence gaining greater attention***, particularly over the past decade, in the recognition of the interconnectedness of all sectors and the need to manage trade-offs, as well as the growing interest of governments to bring their policies into greater convergence with those of their neighbours within major regional blocks. Policy coherence has been recently added to the OECD DAC evaluation criteria with a particular focus on highlighting the synergies and linkages between one's intervention with those of others and the need to ensure complementarity, harmonisation, coordination and value addition across different development interventions. Trading blocks and regional organizations are emerging as useful entry points for policy work and evaluation by UN agencies.

- ***Increased attention being given not only to policy change but also to social change*** understood as changes in power dynamics within a country related to societies' norms and values. When looking at *changes* in the enabling environment (*structural /system changes*) resulting from influencing work, organisations often refer to changes at the level of regulatory reforms (changes in legal, policy and institutional frameworks). This, however, represents only one side of the coin. True structural change requires not only modifications in the *architecture* of the environment but also in the *knowledge, attitudes* and *practices* that *de facto animate* structures and systems. The latter include changes in power dynamics, in decision making processes, in individuals' voice and agency, their exercise of rights, to name but a few. While this is a particularly challenging area to address, let alone to evaluate, growing emphasis is being placed on it, also in response to

[21] United Nations Evaluation Group, *Norms and Standards for Evaluation*, 2016, p.10 http://www.unevaluation.org/document/download/2787

the Leave No One behind transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda. The question arises here in relation to the role UN agencies can play in this space.

A number of agencies reported the emergence of particular approaches in the evaluation of policy influence within their organisation,[22] in particular:

- ESCWA: Work on sequencing (identifying the core steps in policy influencing processes to come up with 'influencing models')
- FAO: Use of cybernetic analysis to assess the uptake of FAO's policy influencing/advocacy on COVID-19
- ILO: Tracer studies (looking at changes in beneficiaries' conditions within set intervals)
- UNDP: Artificial Intelligence Tool: prototype piloting initiative (capturing learning)
- OHCHR: Orientations to Impact (indicators related to the likely pathway to impact)
- UNEP: Work on science-policy interface
- UNOCT: Use of Behavioural Insight for planning and evaluation of policy influence
- WIPO: Use of Behavioural Science in Evaluation

Agencies all recognised the critical role played by UNEG and its working groups in providing guidance to members in different areas. With particular regard to the area of evaluating policy influence, major support needs were identified in the following:

- Practical guidance and examples of "how to" in different contexts
- Training and mentoring
- Sharing of examples of policy influencing evaluations
- Support with promoting a learning agenda within M&E

Conclusions

There is a significant opportunity and momentum generated by this stocktaking exercise which comes at a time where policy influence is being increasingly recognised as a core driver of inclusive and sustainable transformation as per Agenda 2030.

Agencies have responded enthusiastically to the exercise and have very openly shared experiences and current thinking which can inform future guidelines in this area.

[22] The use and/or effectiveness of these approaches was not assessed as part of this study.

Those agencies that have achieved a solid level of formalisation in systems and processes, together with those who are currently piloting approaches, can offer useful insights into both the thinking and the practice around evaluating influence.

In particular:

- All agencies assessed recognise the importance of influencing work and of regulatory reform as a key component of sustainable development.

- Agencies define their policy/influencing work differently with a focus that varies from research and analysis to capacity development, to technical contribution, and dialogue facilitation. Most agencies do not present a formal articulation of the function in writing, with little detail provided particularly in relation to *what the function is expected to deliver for the organisation*, the organisation's *value proposition* in policy reform, the *stage of the policy cycle at which they are gaining more traction,* and the overall qualification of *what success looks like.* This, however, does not reflect the longstanding experience and expertise most of the organisations assessed have in this area. The issue appears to be one of *poor documentation* as opposed to *engagement*. Successful experiences in achieving results at different levels through influencing work were reported by the majority of agencies.

- Related to the above-mentioned point: with the exception of one agency alone, all other organisations do not appear to have a policy/advocacy strategy and/or related Theory of Change. A number of organisations are however in the process of developing these documents.

- In terms of formal methodologies, little standardisation was found across agencies with regard to the measuring of influencing work. In most cases, policy work appears to be measured using the same methodologies availed of for other areas of work, with little attention to the uniqueness of influencing work. However, policy-related indicators appear in most agencies' M&E manuals and/or Results Based Frameworks and discussions around strengthening both the function and ways for evaluating it were found in several organisations.

- Very few agencies are currently documenting learning arising from influencing work. This is an important aspect in terms of *understanding how change happens* and *validating the effectiveness* of agencies' contributions to it.

- The question of long-term sustainability of influencing work and of policy coherence remains a challenge. Most agencies appear to be looking at impact on an individual project/programme basis with little or no consideration given to the possibility of addressing it through a 'consortia/partnership lens'.

The greatest challenge appears to be that of identifying ways to approach the evaluation of policy influence that are both *robust* and *viable* in the face of current time and resource constraints. Given the highly varied nature of policy interventions across different organisations and the differences agencies present in terms of size, funding and operations, detailed guidelines may not be the best solution as they would need to be

highly flexible and adaptable to different contexts. What agencies appeared to be mostly interested in is possible guidance in terms of core principles and questions they can easily apply and incorporate within their existing evaluation frameworks.

Annex I: Policy Influence Evaluation in Sampled Agencies

Organisation	Definition of policy influence	Most effective policy intervention	Ceiling of accountability	Evaluation Framework	An experience to share / suggestion	Perceived challenges in the evaluation of policy influence	Suggested future priorities
1. ESCWA **Main field of operation: Economic and Social Policy**	Interventions aimed at promoting and advancing relevant norms and standards in the region.	Currently being assessed across the core functions of: -Knowledge think tank: generation of knowledge. -Regional convener of member states to pursue agreement on standards. -Provider of technical expertise and advice (technical cooperation).	Outcome level. Examples of typical outcomes: -Changes in knowledge of actors; -Standards adopted by member states; -Revised budget allocations; -Changes in policy texts.	No *policy influencing-specific* framework. Existing overall M&E framework currently being revised. *Policy-influencing related* indicators included in programmes RBFs.	Work on sequencing and quality assurance with a view to developing effective *models* of policy influencing (*forthcoming*)	Over-emphasis on *results*, little attention to *process* and *learning.* Often insufficient feedback from beneficiaries.	UNEG to increase efforts to: -Influence donors evaluation agenda and the evaluation agenda of the UN Secretary General. -Amplify findings from members' studies. -Strengthen its learning focus.
2. FAO **Main field of operation: Food and Agriculture**	Sector reform for the achievement of inclusive agricultural transformation and improvements	Research and analysis. Technical contributions.	Outcome level. Examples of typical outcomes:	No *policy influencing-specific* framework. Organisational M&E Framework contains	Use of cybernetic analysis to assess the uptake of FAO's policy influencing/advocacy on COVID-19.	Data availability. Limited monitoring and evaluation culture	Investments should be made in ex-post assessments to validate the effectiveness of policy interventions.

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	in food and nutrition security.		-Changes in legal and policy frameworks; -Changes in government officials' capacities; -Multistakeholder platforms established.	references to policy work. *Policy influencing-related* indicators included in programmes RBFs.	FAO Capacity Development Evaluation Manual including sections on institutional capacity which are very relevant to policy influencing work.	within organisations. Limited engagement with policy implementation which affects both relevance and sustainability of the work.	Emphasis should be placed on collecting *'stories of change'.*
3.GEF **Main field of operation: Global Environment**	Interventions aimed at strengthening policy and legal frameworks in member countries (*regulatory reforms*).	Research and evidence generation. Capacity building of government officials.	Outcome and impact level – the latter understood in the context of sectoral reforms. Examples of typical outcomes: -Changes in legal and policy texts; -Development of new regulatory framework for renewable energy; -Adoption of administrative reforms.	No *policy influencing-specific* framework. Organisational M&E Framework contains references to policy work. *Policy influencing-related* indicators included in programmes RBFs.	Learning around change processes from the 2017 "Impact of GEF Support on National Environment Laws and Policies" report. See case study in Annex I.	Accurately articulating causal chains within the process of influence.	Translating the recognised importance of evaluating policy influence into concrete efforts to devise appropriate methodologies.

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4.IFAD **Main field of operation: Rural Poverty and Agriculture**	Supporting and encouraging national policies that promote inclusive and sustainable rural transformation.	Research and analysis. Technical contribution. Capacity building. Dialogue facilitation.	Outcome level. Examples of typical outcomes: -Space for dialogue created; -Inclusion of particular aspects in Government agenda; -Changes in institutional processes and in budgets; -Changes in capacity of actors; -Changes in legal and policy frameworks.	No *policy influencing-specific* methodology, except for Client Surveys (*performance-related*) and a *policy influencing-specific* Theory of Change. Organisational M&E Framework contains references to policy work. Methodology for assessing impact of specific country level policy engagement initiatives currently being designed (focus on qualitative dimension only). *Policy influencing-related* indicators included in programmes RBFs. New evaluation manual currently	Assessment of policy standards present in all country programme evaluations. Very good articulation of policy work in *"IFAD's Approach to Policy Engagement Note"* and in "*Country Level Policy Engagement-Guidebook*". Policy Influencing Theory of Change, referenced in the present study.	Complex political dynamics. Difficulty to isolate contribution.	From UNEG: -Sharing of effective policy evaluation examples and policy-specific questions to include in related evaluations. -Sharing of menu of methods that provide a sufficient level of formality and rigour while also being viable for different organisations to use in evaluation.

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				being finalised which makes reference to Outcome Harvesting in relation to evaluating policy dialogue.			
5.ILO **Main field of operation: Labour and Employment**	Labour standard setting and development of policies aimed at promoting decent work for all women and men.	Research and analysis. Capacity building. Social dialogue.	Outcome level. Examples of typical outcomes: -Adoption of a policy; -Passing of a law; -Coming together of actors in multistakeholder platforms; -Changes in institutional frameworks; -Changes in budgets.	No *policy influencing-specific* methodology. Organisational M&E Framework contains references to policy work. *Policy influencing-related* indicators included in programmes RBFs.	Decent Work Meta Study. Tracer Studies.	Policy process timeline. Stakeholder engagement. Political nature of processes.	-Need to add policy influence-related questions to existing broader evaluation frameworks. -More attention to be paid to national development policy contexts. - Need to assess contribution 'in the context of the whole'. From UNEG: Guidance on the specifics of the 'how to evaluate policy influencing work'.
6.IOM **Main field of operation: Migration**	Integrating migration across different sectors at national level and as a	Capacity development. Dialogue facilitation.	Outcome level. Examples of typical outcomes: -Coming together of actors;	No *policy influencing-specific* methodology. Organisational M&E Framework contains	The recent strategic/thematic evaluation on IOM's approach to Migration and Environment is a	Data availability. Isolating contribution. Often sensitive nature of	From UNEG: More guidance specific to policy influencing.

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	cross cutting issue in different UN development processes and frameworks.	Technical contribution. Research and analysis.	-New aspects introduced in government agenda; -Adoption and implementation of a new policy.	references to policy work *Policy influencing-related* indicators included in programmes RBFs. Focus on process and learning.	good example as it establishes the contribution of IOM to global dialogue on the topic and further steps among other results.	gathered information.	
7.OHCHR **Main field of operation: Human Rights**	Support to the development of human rights legal and policy frameworks.	Drafting of policy and legislation. Capacity building. Mediation and dialogue facilitation.	Outcome level. Efforts to account for impact through indicators called "*Orientations to impact*" (see description in the present study). Examples of typical outcomes: -Dialogue space created among actors; -Awareness of actors raised; -New policy or legislation developed;	No *policy influencing-specific* methodology. Organisational M&E Framework contains references to policy work. *Policy influencing-related* indicators included in programmes RBFs. Focus on process and learning.	"*Orientation to impact*" used to capture interventions' likely impact (see description in the present study).	Resources. Limited risk assessment, and assumptions related to the context we work in.	Having access to Model ToRs; examples of questions to ask in policy evaluation.

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			-Capacity of actors strengthened.				
8.UNCDF **Main field of operation: Economic Development**	Supporting policy and regulatory changes to ensure ecosystem transformation and wider market and systems development (policy and market reform) in government financing.	Evidence generation, research and analysis. Capacity building Technical contribution Dialogue facilitation	Outcome level. Examples of typical outcomes: -Inclusion of aspects in government agenda; -Passing of a law; -Adoption of a policy.	No *policy influencing-specific* methodology. Organisational M&E Framework contains references to policy work. *Policy influencing-related* indicators included in programmes RBFs. *Policy-related* considerations included in organisational ToC.	Example of evaluations recognising that market development is not just about trying to support individual market actors but really taking a system-wide approach with policy makers at the centre of it.	-Data availability -Isolating contribution -Monitoring culture within organisations.	Being more ambitious in articulating how policy change happens and adjusting tools and instruments to support that. Making better use of evidence generated by others. From UNEG: Guidance work on this important topic would be important, including a focus on evaluability, helping programme colleagues articulate expected results in this area.
9. UNDP **Main field of operation: Human Development**	Interventions in three directions: Structural Transformation, *Leaving No One Behind,* Building Resilience.	Capacity development of government and civil society. Contribution to the development,	Outcome level. Examples of typical outcomes: -A changed legal/policy document;	No *policy influencing-specific* framework. Organisational M&E Framework, ToC and RBF contain	Artificial Intelligence Tool: prototype piloting initiative (capturing learning).	-Projects timeframe -Insufficient understanding of the context	Developing *policy-specific* methodologies that work for large complex evaluations. Raising the importance of

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		implementation and monitoring of legal and policy frameworks. Dialogue facilitation.	-The passing of a law; -Dialogue facilitated among actors.	references to policy work.		(drivers of change). -Large scope of evaluations, difficult to get depths in terms of policy processes. -Often too much emphasis on 'self-assessment/performance' and not enough on beneficiaries' feedback.	evaluation as a whole.
10.UNEP **Main field of operation: Environmental Protection**	Building strong institutions and supporting the development of legislative and policy frameworks.	Research and analysis. Technical contributions to legal and policy texts.	Outcome level. Examples of typical outcomes: -Passing of a law; -Adoption of a policy. Often the focus in on monitoring of output production.	No *policy influencing-specific* methodology. *Policy influencing-related* indicators included in programmes RBFs.	Science-Policy interface studies.	-Lack of process monitoring. -Lack of standardisation.	Looking beyond outputs. Focussing on process of change. From UNEG: Good practice principles that can be tailored to different evaluative contexts
11. UNICEF **Main field of operation: Protection of**	Interventions aimed at changing *a system* intended as legal, policy and institutional	Technical assistance. Awareness raising. Dialogue facilitation.	Outcome level. Examples of typical outcomes: -Change in legal / policy frameworks;	Policy-specific methodology: "UNICEF Monitoring and Evaluating Advocacy, Companion	"UNICEF Monitoring and Evaluating Advocacy, Companion to the	Projects timeframe. Demonstrating contribution.	Importance to draw attention to *social change*, not only policy change.

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Children Rights	frameworks, as well as actors' behaviours and beliefs.		-Partnership established; -Constituency grown.	to the Advocacy Toolkit", ToC and indicators.	Advocacy Toolkit" (see references).		
12.UNODC **Main field of operation: Drugs and Crime**	Promote countries alignment with international standards.	Normative and policy support for the implementation of international standards. Dialogue facilitation.	Outcome level. Examples of typical outcomes: -Dialogue facilitated between governments; -Convention implemented at country level; -New legislative text drafted.	No *policy influencing-specific* methodology. *Policy influencing-related* indicators included in programmes RBFs. Recently developed Toolkit for Evaluators references a number of methodologies relevant to policy evaluation. In particular: Outcome Harvesting, Process Tracing, Most Significant Change, Social Network Analysis, and Qualitative Comparative Analysis.	Toolkit for Evaluators.	Finding evaluators who are well versed into specific policy related evaluations methodologies. UNODC area of work is a sensitive one to get full and participatory engagement from actors.	Emphasis to be placed on contextualisation of methods and clear stakeholder analysis From UNEG: Examples on the use of different methodologies to evaluate influence Discussion around the role of SDG related information (e.g.VNRs) in the context of policy evaluation.
13..UNOCT	Country level, regional and global support to the development	Capacity building. Dialogue facilitation.	Outcome level. Examples of typical outcomes:	No *policy influencing-specific* methodology.	Use of Behavioural Insight for policy	Projects timeframe.	From UNEG: Practical guidelines policy evaluation

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Main field of operation: Terrorism	and implementation of counter-terrorism frameworks.	Technical support.	-Change in legal / policy frameworks; -Dialogue space established.	Currently in the process of developing new Strategy, RBM, indicators and ToC	planning and evaluation.	Absence of counterfactual. Difficulty to isolate contribution.	methodologies, including ones related to impact evaluation.
14.UN Women **Main field of operation: Women's Rights**	Support to the development and implementation of gender responsive normative and policy frameworks aiming to bring about change to the structural causes of gender inequality.	Dialogue facilitation (as convener). Research and analysis. Policy/technical advice.	Outcome level. Examples of typical outcomes: -Passing of a law; -Adoption of a policy;	No *policy influencing-specific* methodology. *Policy influencing-related* indicators included in programmes RBFs. Reference made to Outcome Harvesting, Contribution Analysis and Most Significant change. Focus on process, as well as results.	Corporate evaluation on policy and advocacy work currently being conducted.	Influencing work often takes place outside of the strict parameters of a projects and is therefore difficult to capture.	From UNEG; Practical examples of influencing at country, regional and global level.
15.WHO **Main field of operation: Global Health**	Normative and standard setting interventions.	Difficult to indicate a most effective intervention given the tailored nature of each one. Among them: research and analysis, dialogue	Outcome level. Examples of typical outcomes: -Adoption or implementation of a policy; -A change in institutional processes.	No *policy influencing-specific* methodology. *Policy influencing-related* indicators included in programmes RBFs.	Learning around process-oriented approaches to normative work from 2017 "Evaluation of WHO Normative Function".	Data availability. Difficulty in isolating contribution. Lack of standardisation.	It would be useful to have a model policy influence ToC and model indicators that can be tailored.

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		facilitation and capacity development (often combined).		ToC featured in 2017 "Evaluation of WHO Normative Function".			
16.WIPO **Main field of operation: Intellectual Property**	Interventions aimed at supporting regulatory frameworks that enable all countries to use IP for economic, social and cultural development.	Research and analysis. Technical assistance. Capacity building. Dialogue facilitation.	Outcome level. Examples of typical outcomes: -Adoption of a policy; -Passing of a law; -The coming together of actors in a multistakeholder platform; -The inclusion of a particular aspect on the government agenda.	No *policy influencing-specific* methodology. *Policy influencing-related* indicators included in programmes RBFs.	Use of Behavioural Science in evaluation.	Data availability. Lack of standardisation. Constantly changing nature of the political context.	From UNEG: Merging other UNEG WGs looking at similar issues. .

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Annex II: Insights from Agencies

To illustrate findings of the stocktaking study, this annex provides examples of evaluations carried out by the GEF, WHO, UNCDF, and IFAD which offer insights into ways of approaching the evaluation of policy influence.

In answering our question about 'how do we evaluate policy influence,' the study availed of these evaluations as examples of studies which rather than advocating for a particular evaluation methodology, illustrate angles through which one can approach policy evaluation. In particular, they offer insights that go beyond '*accounting for results'* and more into '*understanding change'*.

The aim is to shed some light in relation to moving beyond simply determining which results were directly caused or informed by an intervention to rather understanding the *complex systems* within which these results are expected to occur, the *specific offering* different actors/agencies put forward in an attempt to influence such complex dynamics, and the way in which *context interacts with interventions* often leading to unpredictable changes and unintended results.[23]

Case study 1: Global Environmental Facility (GEF) – ***Regulatory Reform: Understanding Change Processes in Context***

The GEF strategies recognize the importance of strong environmental laws to protect human health and the natural environment and call for the GEF partnership to support efforts to strengthen national legislative and policy frameworks in compliance with international environmental conventions. In this light, several GEF-funded projects have been directed specifically towards supporting legal and policy reform in member countries.

In a 2017 evaluation report called ***Impact of GEF Support to National Environment Laws and Policies,***[24] the Independent Evaluation Office of the GEF assessed its role in strengthening policy and legal (regulatory) environmental frameworks through an analysis of six country case studies: Namibia, Kazakhstan, Vietnam, Philippines, Belarus and Brazil. Work cut across the thematic areas of biodiversity, climate change, and land degradation.

In terms of data sources, the study drew on:

- Review of project materials, a meta-analysis of the country portfolio evaluations and secondary research, studies prepared during the projects, and relevant legislative regulatory texts.
- Interviews with representatives of GEF agencies, officials from relevant ministries, members of project management units and other key stakeholders during country visits.
- Questionnaires sent to representatives of the implementing agency and government partners.

[23] See Garcia J.R., Zazueta A., *Going Beyond Mixed Methods to Mixed Approaches: A System Perspective for Asking the Right Questions,* in IDS Bulletin Volume 46 Number 1, January 2015.
[24] Full evaluation report available at https://www.gefieo.org/evaluations/regulatory-reform-2017

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- Examined history and context of the laws addressed, the role that projects played in the law-making process, the purpose and content of the law, the process and current status of its implementation, and an assessment of results in terms of stated policy aims.

The emphasis was placed on assessing *how support led to amendments in legislative statutes and regulations* and, consequently, to *changes in services and practices* (e.g., government allocations, energy savings, improved energy efficiency, aggregate energy savings, wildlife protection, to mention but a few).

A summary of key results is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of outcomes of legal and regulatory reform in country case studies [25]

Country	Law drafted or amended with GEF support	Results
Namibia	Development of a Regulatory Framework for Renewable Energy and Government Directive	Power purchase agreements signed with 13 solar photovoltaic projects and 1 wind project. An 800 MW gas-fired power station will come online this year.
Kazakhstan	Law on Energy Saving and Energy	Efficiency Improvements The government allocated $62 million to improve energy efficiency in residential buildings between 2011 and 2014. Heating systems were renovated in 1,000 residential buildings.
Vietnam	National Strategy for Urban Lighting	Twenty-five provinces have developed regulations on public lighting, and electricity consumption for public lighting has declined from 6.71% per year in 2010 to 4.8% in 2014–16 (estimated).
Philippines	Administrative Reforms to Promote Energy Efficiency Lighting Systems	Aggregate energy savings through the project is 7,684 GWh and total greenhouse gas emission reduction is 3.4 million tons carbon dioxide.
Belarus	National Strategy for Peatlands and the Scheme for Wise Use of Peat Deposits and Sustainable	Twenty-four project sites have been restored for a total area of

[25] Global Environmental Facility Independent Evaluation Office (GEF IEO), *Impact of GEF Support to National Environment Laws and Policies*, 2017, p.viii

	Management of Peatlands to 2030	more than 51,000 ha (10% of the area of degraded peatlands). A significant decrease in the square ha of fires with a high of 18,500 ha in the early 2000s to only 184 ha in 2015.
Brazil	National Systems of Conservation Units Law	Forty-three new protected areas were created by legal decree totalling 24 million ha.

While the main focus of the evaluation was that of assessing the extent to which GEF-funded projects led to changes in regulatory frameworks with a specific focus on *results*, significant insights were provided in terms of the overall *role played by legal and policy reform* within a transformation agenda, the *nature of change* within the policy reform space, and the *dynamics* underpinning the complex system within which projects operated.

In particular, the evaluation highlighted:

The nature of change within an enabling environment

As mentioned above, strengthening national environmental policy and legislation in member countries is a clear priority in GEF recent strategies. In assessing the agency's role in this space, the study presupposed an in-depth understanding of what an 'enabling environment' for environmental protection entails, and the role development partners can play to enhance it.

GEF defines an appropriate ***enabling environment*** as one that is characterised by "effective policies, legal and regulatory frameworks, capable institutions and mechanisms for monitoring and knowledge sharing" (GEF – 6). Contributing to the creation and strengthening of such an enabling environment therefore requires investments in legal and policy reform understood by GEF as a process implying several forms of support, from research and analysis to capacity development, dialogue facilitation, technical inputs to legal and policy texts, political advocacy, follow-up and implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

While the extent to which a development partner may contribute to any of the steps above is naturally dependent on several factors including available resources, mandates and capacities, what needs to be stressed is that meaningful changes at the level of the enabling environment can only be obtained if due consideration is given not only to the *development of appropriate regulatory frameworks*, but to their *application and validation* and to the *capacitation of agents* responsible for their execution (individuals and institutions).

Looking at the enabling environment through this multifaceted lens forces us to redefine the ***nature of the expected changes*** within our influencing portfolio and to go beyond single and separate outcomes (often *products*) to a broader understanding of *processes*.

Assessing impact

While the evaluation defined as its main aim that of assessing the role GEF played in strengthening policy and legal frameworks, in reality the study did more than that. It went beyond assessing those 'outcome level changes' in regulatory frameworks, and, where possible, documented *results deriving from the enactment and implementation of same*. This second part is defined as an

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"assessment of results in terms of stated aims", looking for instance at the question: 'did the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation consideration into national policy and legal frameworks translate into the *de facto* establishment and consolidation of protected areas, wildlife protection and the protection of indigenous rights?

Assessing the extent to which a regulatory reform led to changes in access to resources or in the exercise of individuals or groups rights is what marks the shift from outcome to impact level. It tells *us something about relevance and effectiveness* beyond the attainment of the specific project aim. In this sense GEF was able to demonstrate its contribution to both the development and passing of relevant legal texts, their enactment, and the strengthening of relevant institutional capacities underpinning their execution.

As the study indicates, the effectiveness of a particular regulatory framework is dependent on many factors, such as strength of administrative and judicial enforcement and implementation capacity. If not to all, at least to some of these aspects development cooperation can provide essential support.

Assisting governments in assessing the degree of implementation and effectiveness of particular legal and policy frameworks can be critical evidence to inform new and future investments and validate or rescope GEF's strategic priorities. It is an aspect that informs both the *relevance* and *sustainability* claims of development work and one that should not be underestimated in the face of resource and time constraint. Going beyond legal and policy development into implementation can also assist in demonstrating the *feasibility* of particular approaches (for instance through pilots) and in this sense provide the foundation for further reforms.

GEF's positioning within the legal and policy reform space

GEF support to the strengthening of policy and legal frameworks was carried out through a wide range of activities, including technical inputs to proposed legislation and regulation, studies, capacity building, research, reviews of existing frameworks, technical drafting, facilitation of consultative processes and political advocacy work. By assessing the effectiveness of these different interventions and ***the extent to which they exerted influence*** vis-à-vis an actor or a process, one can define where the organisation positions itself within the policy/legal cycle.

By looking for instance at the *core stages of the policy cycle* (with the understanding that policy processes are not linear and do not always follow this theoretical sequency) - *agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation,* from the evaluation it would appear that GEF influence was exercised at different levels. The strength of each is to be determined. Thinking about one's role within the policy cycle is useful in that it can assist in sharpening the focus, clearly defining a value proposition and helping to channel resources in the direction where the organisation is more likely get traction and succeed.

The evaluation also highlighted the fact that many of these *enabling activities* played an important catalyst role, particularly in the area of biodiversity and climate change, in leveraging further expertise and resources to scale up the work. The catalyst role of influencing work is often underestimated by development practitioners and is a strategic function that should be leveraged.

Context matters

As mentioned above, the evaluation documented results arising from legal and policy reforms within the specific contexts of the six selected countries, and provided insights into *whether, how and why projects* work under different circumstances. This provided learning around the particular

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dynamics of the legislative-making process in context, the key enablers and disablers of change, a better understanding of factors affecting success, and of core implementation challenges – all of which inform both the likelihood and the pace of reforms.

Context analysis – and, more specifically, political economy analysis – is an aspect often insufficiently addressed in both planning and evaluation of policy influencing work. Understanding change and how change happens requires understanding the nature of such change *in context,* in the context of the many and complex variables underpinning sector reforms, of the interaction among actors and systems, competing interests and influences.

Case Study 2: World Health Organisation – *A Process Oriented Approach to Normative Work*

In 2017 WHO Evaluation Office commissioned an evaluation of its normative/standard setting work through an assessment of selected normative products and processes.[26] The overall purpose of the exercise was to analyse *if, how and why* these had contributed to enhancing WHO's normative function with a view to strengthening it going forward. Interestingly, the focus was not on the *technical content* of the products but on their *role* (*relevance and effectiveness*) within a policy making process.

Starting from the recognition of an inherent lack of clarity in relation to a defining framework for its normative work – which had resulted in challenges in both the articulation and the evaluation of related work - the study first set out to classify the different types of *normative products* and second to assess their effectiveness in terms of contributing to *normative processes.*

In so doing, the study provided insights which went beyond *measuring results* to *understanding change* and the particular *role played by the organisation* in pursuing it through its normative function.

Defining normative work: from product to process

The ability of an organisation to clearly articulate its core functions is an essential requirement of its offering, as it not only qualifies its mandate and identity but also specifies its value proposition and competitive advantage as well as detailing what the function is expected to deliver internally for the organisation and externally for its development partners.

With particular regard to influencing work, clarity in terms of defining the function is particularly important in that it will define *where the organisation positions itself within the reform space,* its *core levers* and *sphere of influence*.

Normative products

The evaluation described two main groups of products:

[26] Full evaluation report available at https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/documents/evaluation/who-normative-function-final-report-july-2017.pdf?sfvrsn=6da62ea6_2

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- World Health Assembly (WHA) based products: Conventions, Regulations, Regulatory Recommendations

- Secretariat based products: Scientific and technical normative products (guidelines, standards), health trends assessments

The '*strictly normative'* nature of these was analysed through an assessment of the key characteristics of each and covered a range of different instruments from the most to the least binding.

Through the assessment of ten case studies, the evaluation found that greater emphasis was placed on product design and formulation (*product quality*) than on dissemination and follow up (*product uptake*) for which often only anecdotal evidence was available. Little use of Theory of Change in articulating the way in which these products were intended to achieve results was also reported.

While the products' relevance was found to be strong, with evidence pointing to the use of several publications at country level to inform decision and policy making, the need to maximise *reach and impact* was highlighted as a way to enhance return on investment. This would require greater clarity in terms of target audiences, as well as a more detailed 'unpacking' of the causal chain linking normative products to health outcomes.

Normative processes

Looking at the policy process cycle, defined in the study by the three stages of *problem identification*, *policy formulation* and *policy implementation and follow-up*, the evaluation highlighted that while WHO tended to relate its normative work to stage two alone, normative elements could in fact be found in all of the stages:

Stage of the policy process cycle	Elements of WHO's normative work
Problem identification	Research and analysis
Policy formulation and development	Translating research into normative instruments
Policy implementation and follow up	Dissemination and advocacy, support to adaptation, capacity building and implementation

Viewing normative work as permeating the full cycle of a policy process is in line with UNEG's definition of normative whereby: *"Normative work in the UN is the support to the development of norms and standards in conventions, declarations, regulatory frameworks, agreements, guidelines, codes of practice and other standard setting instruments, at global, regional and national level. Normative work may also include support to the implementation of these instruments at the policy level, i.e. their integration into legislation, policies and development plans."*

To capture the breath of WHO's normative work within a clear defining framework, the evaluation identified four options:

- ***A constitutional perspective***: *normative* pertaining to those instruments endorsed by the World Health Assembly based on the *legitimacy of their status and approval.* Somewhat limited as it would only cover

- ***A scientific evidence-based perspective***: *normative* products are only those based on *scientific principles and empirical evidence*

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- ***A global public goods perspective***: *normative* are global products and functions of salience to all Member States

- ***A policy process perspective***: *normative* as part of all phases in a policy process. This would include normative products as well as normative processes within which the products are placed and operate. This definition, which is broader than all of the above ones, could in principle cover all types of products that fit in one or more stages of the policy process but as the evaluation points out "it is their *implementation and follow up* that will determine their ultimate *normative value"*

For the purpose of the present UNEG stocktaking exercise the ***policy process perspective*** is a particularly interesting one. While most agencies do not specifically articulate at what stage of the policy process they exercise their influence (*agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, policy implementation, policy monitoring and evaluation*), the study found that the majority of agencies intervene at the *policy formulation* stage (***technical advice towards influencing the product***) of the policy influence process, as opposed to the *policy approval s*tage (***advocacy towards influencing the process***) and implementation. As the WHO evaluation points out, it is the implementation and follow up that ultimately determine the value of a product or an intervention.

In this light, equal attention should be given to both *product and process* and with regard to process, efforts should be made to support *implementation on the ground* as a way not only to foster effectiveness and sustainability, but also to test and validate products and interventions with a view to informing decisions regarding extension and replication.

Effectiveness of normative products

Another very interesting discussion addressed by WHO's evaluation is the one on ***effectiveness.*** As the evaluation specifies, there is a need to shift focus *from assessing quality* of normative products and their recommendations to *documenting effects.*

Effectiveness is often interpreted in evaluations as the extent to which an intervention achieved its intended results., Again here, the evaluation went beyond looking at results *per se*, into the more complex analysis of *what constitutes and fosters strong and effective normative products*. While factors determining the effectiveness of a product will naturally vary from product to product, the evaluation suggested eight different variables that can be considered as contributing factors to a product's effectiveness. These factors accompany the product throughout its journey from *initiation* to *design and formulation*, to *quality assurance*, to *dissemination and incorporation* at country level, to *implementation and follow-up*.

In particular, the evaluation highlighted eight factors influencing relevance and effectiveness

- Source and extent of demand for normative action.

- Process for developing the normative product and level of involvement of and consultation with stakeholders.

- Quality of the normative product.

- Level of ambition – or expected scope of change – "significant" and complex change or "simple" - from global policy change to reforms in technical solutions.

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- Normative strength – level of binding and non- binding characteristics.
- Extent of effective dissemination and reach (whether the product is available among target groups).
- Evidence of relevance and results (adaptation/incorporation/changes in practices) based on available data and information.
- Effective systems for monitoring and evaluating progress and non-compliance – reporting and enforcement mechanisms.

All those factors are undoubtably context specific.

Theory of Change for normative products

A final reflection relates to the observations made by the evaluation in relation to the Theory of Change.

An original WHO 'Normative Work Theory of Change' depicted four sequences with little articulation of the arrows in between:

Country needs/demands > global normative process & product > country adaptation/adoption > changes in health policies/practices.

The evaluation suggested a more refined pathway of change aimed at better articulating the nature and role of different contributing factors.

In the original description, the ultimate impact on health is expected to derive from a high quality product backed by countries' support in identifying needs and adaptation to context with little or no details in relation to how making a high-quality document available is intended to have an impact on health. A new Theory of Change was proposed highlighting *what contributes to the active utilisation* of the product and the *translation of its recommendations into changed country health policies and practices*.[27]

Use of evaluative evidence

This evaluation was particularly significant in that it informed both strategic and operational changes within the organisation in relation to the structuring of the Quality, Norms and Standards department, quality assurance protocols for norms and standards, and the prioritisation of normative work.

Case Study 3: UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) – Unpacking Contribution

In 2018 UNCDF commissioned a mid-term evaluation of its Mobile Money for the Poor (MM4P)[28] programme, aiming to assess the relevance and performance of this initiative to date. The programme was originally designed with a view to demonstrating how a mix of technical, financial, and policy

[27] In relation to the new Theory of Change proposed by the evaluation, see WHO, *Evaluation of WHO's Normative Function,* 2017, p.18.

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[28] Genesis-UNCDF, *Mid-term Evaluation of MM4P Final Report*, December 2018 https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/10018

support can assist in scaling digital financial services (DFS) that reach the poor in very low-income countries. Initially, the programme was rolled out in the challenging markets of Laos PDR, Liberia, Malawi and Nepal. In 2014 the programme was revised to better incorporate a market development approach and was expanded to Uganda, Benin, and Zambia.

The evaluation adopted a theory-based approach in *assessing change* at the different levels envisaged in a market development programmes and paid particular attention to *defining the precise contribution of the programme* to change within a complex market system. A market development approach was used in framing the evaluation approach.

Contribution Analysis was employed as the core methodology, aimed at understanding, among other issues, why the observed results had or had not occurred, and the *specific role* played by the intervention.

Similarly to the case studies discussed above, the present is only a summary of evaluation elements to illustrate particular angles of interest in going beyond *accounting for results* to *understanding change.*

The programme's unique selling points

The evaluation refers to MM4P's 'ecosystem role' – described through the three core functions of convening, capacity building and research –and recognises positive achievements for the programme in the areas of organisational processes, strategy and increased managerial buy-in and investment in DFS and in the regulatory environment.

One of the programme's central elements was working with both public and private sector actors which is a key modality in market development initiatives for the poor under the SDGs and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to finance the SDGs - an example of broader blended finance initiatives to unlock private investment into development through public subsidy.

In an attempt to clearly define and unpack the programme's contribution to the achieved results, the evaluation defined the *programme's uniqueness* (*competitive advantage*) as the way in which it employed and combined the following characteristics:

- A global programme with country implementation (characterised by in country-teams with strong technical knowledge and DFS experience, as well as cross country lesson sharing and collaboration)
- Responsiveness and engagement with partners (country teams working hand-in-hand with partners)
- Convener and honest broker (connecting public and private sector actors)
- UN market facilitation programme (MM4P perceived as a neutral and credible party, able to leverage different types of support)

Qualifying a programme – or an agency's – unique selling points is an aspect often under-estimated in studies and reports and one that in reality should represent the starting point in planning and a core element of monitoring and evaluation. Clearly articulating the unique selling points for an organisation/programme is essential in the formulation of a strong business case and for the organisation to effectively communicate its value proposition/offering to others. Agencies often resort to describing their mandates as a way to convey their offering, but this is not sufficient. A value proposition needs to

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be specific. It should detail the core elements that represent the organisation/programme's essential *operational strengths* and *distinctive features* in terms of technical specialisation (*capability statements*), structural set-up, *modus operandi* etc. References to MM4P's unique traits (including, and not limited to, the ones above) are frequent in the UNCDF evaluation report and point to a clear understanding - on the part of both the organisation designing the evaluation and the team carrying it out – of the importance of defining *role* and *sphere of influence* as a pre-requisite to determining *contribution to change*.

Contribution and spheres of influence

Through work at *micro, meso and macro levels*, the evaluation found that the programme contributed to:

- Supporting broader UNCDF strategy, lending MM4P knowledge and expertise in support of other initiatives within UNCDF and UN system
- Catalysing engagement and collaboration with other stakeholders
- Supporting (through its knowledge management framework) broader communities of practice active in DFS promotion at the global level
- Building the capacity of DFS providers and regulators in the programme countries.
- Helping organisations improve internal processes, strategic focus and capacity
- Building awareness, interest and commitment of stakeholders in expanding DFS
- Changing the perceptions of private providers and increasing senior management buy-in in expanding DFS.

In particular, the programme influenced:

- How organisations conduct product design and implementation
- Increasing buy-in and investment from senior management to either introduce, expand or improve DFS

The evaluation drew attention to those spaces where the programme gained *greater traction*, such as for instance that of provider/distribution workstreams, and to what it saw as being the key *drivers of success:*

- Local presence of MM4P team
- MM4P team's DFS expertise, professionalism and reliability
- Flexibility

The two aspects (*spaces of greater traction* and *drivers of success*) are ones agencies often do not document in detail, or at all, and ones that are particularly relevant in assessing both the *relevance* and *effectiveness* of an intervention and its likely future success (*replicability and scalability*).

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Moving to the specific sphere of policy and regulatory reform, the evaluation described the programme's contribution to change through powerful statements which combined the description of results with a brief articulation of the *way in which* these were achieved.

For example:

> *"MM4P has influenced the policy and regulatory environment by building the capacity of regulators. Through the provision of trainings such as the Digital Frontiers Institute on Mobile Money, MM4P has strengthened the knowledge and capacity of regulators on DFS. By successfully building relationships with the Central Bank and providing TA, MM4P has contributed to the increase in the regulators' commitment to building a supportive environment for providers to offer digital solutions. Through work with MM4P and FSDA, the government in Sierra Leone has implemented the development and piloting of the Sandbox framework which has allowed for the crowding-in of smaller players, such as fintechs, and has encouraged the innovation and testing of new products. In Uganda, MM4P works closely with the Bank of Uganda's Financial Inclusion unit and the government now recognise the importance of DFS and has resulted in the development of policy on social protection and mobile money."*[29]

Even when extracted from the evaluation report itself, this type of statement is a perfect way to articulate both a change process and a contribution narrative in a high-level synthesis and powerful way. Something that could be used for donor pitches, communication and PR purposes, to name but a few.

Likely impact and sustainability

The evaluation describes the impact and sustainability of the programme by qualifying them as 'likely'. What is interesting is not the word *per se* but the fact that it points to the recognition of the challenges involved in the pursuit of both these elements and the acceptance of a certain level of 'assumption' in stating the current status of both. Of course, in the case of a mid-term evaluation, impact and sustainability are often not even mentioned; however, even in the case of final evaluations findings can often only suggest a positive or negative *propensity to long term lasting achievements, which in reality only ex-post assessments can confirm.*

Statements related to both impact and sustainability are again very well-articulated in that they assign the 'likelihood' to specific programme's characteristics (versus those of others, versus needs and demand etc.), and not to external factors, as often happens. For instance:

Sustainability

1. Sustainability of MM4P versus other types of donor support

"Overall the type of support and nature of engagement provided by MM4P is better for the continuation of partner outcomes compared to other types of donor support such as large grant-making that subsidised providers' costs of operation"[30]

2. Sustainability versus ongoing demand for support

"At the ecosystem level, there is an ongoing need for a market facilitator to catalyse DFS development to the tipping point at which market development takes off organically. This suggests a strong potential role for MM4P to play going forward, particularly within the regulatory and policymaker space and

[29] *Ibid*. p.30.
[30] *Ibid*., p.xi.

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playing a strong convening role within the ecosystem. Where funding and programming will end, this means MM4P requires a plan to continue the programme's convening role in its absence. However, the programme's early ecosystem work has already generated outcomes which are contributing to the momentum of DFS market development."[31]

Impact

- Likely impact based on Theory of Change and achievements to date

"Considering MM4P's theory of change, and achievements at the DFS stakeholder outcome level, it is likely that MM4P will contribute (and has already contributed in specific instances) to increasing access to DFS for underserved clients"[32]

- Likely impact based on programme's influence on overall UNCDF approach to future programming

MM4P has had a significant impact on how UNCDF is approaching future programming and is considered critical to the agency's new strategy, which is centered on leveraging digital solutions to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.[33]

The concept of *likely impact* reminds us of a similar approach employed by OHCHR in its *Orientations to Impact* (see discussion in the present stocktaking study).

Use of evaluative evidence

By unpacking the programme's contribution to change into the different elements mentioned above, the evaluation offers insights into several aspects that could be central in strategic discussions at organisational level with regard to future programming, investment decisions, and policy priorities. The evaluation's conclusions are structured under three headings: overall assessment, recommendations and lessons learned (at both *market level* and *programme level*). Separating *learnings* from findings *and recommendations* is particularly interesting in that it zooms in on the key *enablers* and *disablers* of change (internally and externally), the recording of which is of strategic importance for future planning.

Case study 4: International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) – A Theory of Change Approach to Evaluating Policy Dialogue

In 2017 the Independent Evaluation Office of IFAD published its *Country Level Policy Dialogue – Evaluation Synthesis,*[34] looking at the role of policy dialogue in addressing policy and regulatory constraints in the performance of rural development projects. This was based on the premise that improving the policy environment contributes to the creation of the necessary conditions to scale up successful development approaches and initiatives to reach a much larger number of poor people, in line with the Leaving No One Behind agenda (a central role in the creation of an enabling environment for the rural poor). Policy Dialogue is defined in IFAD as: "*a process to engage, directly and indirectly,*

[31] *Ibid*., p.xi.
[32] *Ibid*., p.x.
[33] *Ibid*., p.x.
[34] IFAD's Country Level Policy Dialogue – Evaluation Synthesis, July 2017 https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714182/39721299/Country-level+Policy+Dialogue+ESR+-+Full+Report+for+web.pdf/e0721f2e-f84b-40e5-9526-edbf6b54a9e3

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with its partner governments and other country-level stakeholders, to influence policy priorities or the design, implementation and assessment of formal institutions (e.g., laws, administrative rules), policies and programmes that shape the economic opportunities for large numbers of rural people to move out of poverty."[35]

The study reviewed country programme evaluations, corporate level evaluations and a selected number of project evaluations covering the period 2010-2015, as well as external literature on policy dialogue. It aimed at drawing lessons, identifying critical factors of success, as well as risks and challenges with a view to informing the strengthening of this function going forward.

Work on evidence-based policy dialogue was found to positively contribute to changes in legislation, policy and procedures at national, regional and local level in favour of most marginalised groups. The most prevalent type of policy dialogue supported by IFAD was identified in that of "*creating spaces for dialogue where farmers organizations could be represented and interact with other development actors*."[36]

Evolution of thinking

Interestingly, early in the study, the synthesis evaluation shared a table on the *evolution of thinking* around this area in IFAD, starting with the 2002-2006 Strategic Framework 2002-2006 up to the most recent 2016-2025 one.[37] This excursus documented the increasing interest in policy dialogue over the years and the incremental shift from policy dialogue being acknowledged as one of the areas in which IFAD was well placed to operate in, to its becoming central to the organisation's business proposition and ultimately one of the four pillars of its results delivery. This type of reflection on the chronological evolution of an organisation's approach to a technical area can be an important vehicle for both learning and strategic planning and can provide useful insights into better articulating the function (in this case that of *policy dialogue facilitation*) in a way that both recognises (in the case of IFAD) shifts in operational models and programme priorities and promotes acquired strengths with a view to leveraging interest and support going forward.

Theory of Change

The evaluation synthesis used a *Theory of Change approach* in the analysis of the performance and achievements of policy dialogue in IFAD. This provided insights that are more *process-based* than *result-oriented* and therefore helpful in understanding the steps through which policy dialogue can be a vehicle to leverage IFAD's *knowledge management* and *partnership engagement* towards the achievement of regulatory change.

Policy dialogue is an area in which most agencies engaged in influencing work are involved; however, it is an aspect that is often under-reported. As the evaluation synthesis rightly points out: "*It is convenient to distinguish between different levels of policy dialogue, either 'technical' or 'high-level policy dialogue', as well as among 'micro', 'meso' and 'macro' policy dialogue; this prevents the bias*

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[35] IFAD, *A Plan for Country-level Policy Dialogue*, Information Paper endorsed by the IFAD Executive Management Committee at its 137th meeting and presented during the 108th Session of the Executive Board (March 2013), EB 2013/108/INF.3, p.1, and I*FAD's Country Level Policy Dialogue* – Evaluation Synthesis, July 2017, p.iii.

[36] IFAD, IFAD's Country Level Policy Dialogue – Evaluation Synthesis, July 2017, Preface.

[37] *Ibid*., Table 1.

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of focusing only on 'high-level' policy dialogue and neglecting other types of policy dialogue that are important and that may contribute to the achievement of the country's and IFAD's objectives".[38]

As mentioned in the stocktaking study, policy influence can be part of a broader organisational Theory of Change, can have its own Theory of Change or be represented by area-specific Theories of Change, such as in the case of IFAD and the synthesis evaluation which depicted a policy dialogue specific Theory of Change.[39]

According to the ToC, IFAD, through its grants and loans, creates the space (*window of opportunity*) for local stakeholder organizations to engage in policy dialogue processes. This leads to the generation of outputs such as policy analyses, trainings, and workshops (*research and analysis*) which, in turn, contribute to enhancing the capacity of national stakeholders to participate in national policy processes and that of government agencies to formulate national policies and programmes (*improved in-country institutional capacities*). This ultimately provides the basis for influencing adjustments on policies, legislation and procedures, the scaling up and adoption by government of successful models or initiatives, and the operationalisation of policies and programmes at national level (*creation of a policy and institutional environment for the rural poor*).

This representation is particularly effective in a number of respects:

- It singles out the creation of a *window of opportunity* as a product in itself of IFAD support. The opportunity to intervene in an area is often considered to be an *external factor* and one for development agencies to take advantage of as a pre-requisite to investment. In this sense, opportunities are rarely reported as results *of an intervention*, but more often as contextual assumptions. Generating a window of opportunity is in reality an achievement *per se* and worthy of mention as a core element of a pathway of change – a *process* element, as defined in IFAD's evaluation.

- It provides an interesting depiction of *policy influence,* broken down into the elements of: a) research and analysis *feeding into* b) capacity development *feeding into* c) legal and policy contributions *leading to* the creation of an enabling environment. While this description emphasises the role of skills and research as a basis for policy influencing, bringing about the whole concept of *evidence-based policy making,* one main shortfalls in the move from intermediate to final outcomes can be identified. It is between enhanced capacities of stakeholders to *formulate policies* and programmes on the one hand, and policies and programmes being *adopted and operationalised* on the other, whereby there is an assumption about the former automatically leading to the latter, with no reference to intermediate political factors (i.e. structured engagement with decision making mechanisms). Unpacking this 'assumption' would require a clear understanding of where the real *sphere of influence* lies for the organisation. It may lie at both the level of policy formulation and adoption, in which case the exact change mechanisms leading from one to the other should be detailed.

- It highlights the particular role played by *knowledge management* and *partnership* in the achievement of outputs and outcomes, whereby, in the recognition of the 'project

[38] *Ibid*.,p.11.
[39] *Ibid*.,p.11.

context limitations' emphasis is placed on the need for rigorous policy analysis and sustained partnership with local stakeholders as the key enablers of effective policy dialogue processes.

The role of policy dialogue in different stages of the policy cycle

Within a Theory of Change, or a Results Based Framework, policy dialogue does not always need to be linked to a single outcome but can rather represent a *process* adding value to different results at different stages of the policy cycle. Policy dialogue platforms – which in IFAD's case bring together grass-root organizations, national institutions and rural stakeholders – may play a role in the setting up of a policy agenda, the formulation of policies, and the monitoring and evaluation of same during implementation.[40]

In particular, policy dialogue can play a major role in enhancing the aid effectiveness agenda and in line with the SDGs, by promoting coherence in development assistance, fostering inclusion and supporting policy reform as the backbone of systematic change. Within an existing project or programme, policy dialogue can be central in catalysing support and investment and represent a vehicle through which to extent both the scope and scale of initiatives.

What needs to be strengthened is the monitoring and evaluation of this central function within the broader spectrum of policy influencing work, something for which IFAD's synthesis evaluation provided extremely useful insights.

[40] See related observations in, IFAD, *Country Level Policy Engagement in IFAD - Guidebook*, 2017, p.20. https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40196529/CLPE_book_170412_W.pdf/a203813d-8918-43ac-a94c-ad700bcca036

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Annex III: Elements to Consider when Planning for and Evaluating Policy Influence

Some operational tips

As discussed in this stocktaking study, at the core of policy influencing work there is an overall intent to address systemic and structural challenges (legal, policy and institutional frameworks) within a given operational context and to contribute to the creation of an enabling environment conducive to the achievement of our set development goals.

Intervening in this area fundamentally requires understanding ***what drives change*** and our ***likelihood to influence*** it *(carving a unique sphere of influence).*

This annex is a brief description of suggested core elements to consider when starting to engage in influencing work, all of which are relevant in the context of evaluating policy influence. The discussion is not intended to represent an exhaustive list of all the steps in sequence under each section but rather an extract of highlights.

1) Clarity in the articulation of the function

One of the challenges often mentioned when approaching the evaluation of policy influencing work is lack of clarity in: a) *defining the function* and what it is to deliver for the organisation, b) understanding the *ceiling of accountability* the organisation has set itself for this type of work (impact/outcome/output) and c) clearly articulating the *areas of change* (and unpacking them into tangible results).

Let's start by asking ourselves:

- What does policy influencing /advocacy mean for my organisation?
- What is this function expected to deliver for my organisation internally, and externally for beneficiaries and partners?
- Are we clear about our value-added proposition/ competitive advantage? What is our *offering* in the context of a particular reform area?
- At which stage of the policy influencing cycle do we think our contribution can be maximised? (*agenda setting/issue identification; policy formulation; policy adoption, policy implementation; policy monitoring and evaluation*) Where are we more likely to gain traction?
- Are we going to be operating at *micro, meso or macro level*? (one or more)
- Have we the credibility and legitimacy to operate as a serious player in this particular reform space? Who else is active in it? Who will we be working with?
- Have we clarity in terms of the areas of change/reforms we want to address? And can we translate those into tangible and measurable results?
- Have we set an honest and realistic accountability ceiling?

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- What levels of accountability will we have? And how is the information flow going to work?
- How much do we know about the logic of *how change happens?*
- What will success look like for us?
- What approaches and tactics are we going to use? (research/technical advice/dialogue facilitation)?
- Are we prepared to 'resource the rigor' – allocate the required resources for the exercise to be rigorous?
- Have we the means to carry out an in-depth context analysis (legal, policy, institutional frameworks)?
- With regard to the evidence, we will be generating or availing of, have we thought of the quality of same? Aspects of credibility, relevance, accessibility, and usability come into play
- What resources can we invest in documentation and learning?

In Practice

Organisations should consider developing a Policy Influencing/Advocacy Strategy to define the function, set priorities and articulate approaches and strategies.

A simple template is suggested here below:

1. Function articulation (defining influence, our value proposition)
2. Context analysis
3. Issue identification
4. Identification of the reform space
5. Definition of goals and objectives
6. Identification of key audiences and related engagement vehicles
7. Implementation plan
8. Risk management
9. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan

Two interesting examples are:

- IFAD, *Approach to Country Level Policy Engagement* (a function description more than a strategy *per se*) https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40196529/CLPE_Teaser_web.pdf/89e3b627-2f6a-4343-828d-

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50126bae0d05#:~:text=What%20is%20country%2Dlevel%20policy%20engagement%3F,themselves%20the%20policy%20change%20required

- UNICEF, Global Communication and Advocacy Strategy 2019-2021

2) Understanding the Policy Environment – Policy Analysis

Understanding how change happens: the interplay of power and interest

Policy analysis is important not only in order to understand the key determinants of policy change, but also to get a better sense of power and process, going beyond the description of *what happened*, to an analysis of *why and how it happened*. Policy analysis is often an underutilized tool and the poor knowledge of *contexts* as well as *power* and *control* issues can lead to capturing an inaccurate picture of the institutional landscape of a country, with consequent unrealistic and unsustainable development/policy reform planning. Best practice normally assesses and analyses an institutional/policy context according to the following categories:

- Legal Frameworks
- Policy Frameworks
- Institutional Frameworks
- Resources and Incentives (i.e., investment policies, private sector initiatives, cost recovery and pricing policies to name but a few)

Among the policy analysis frameworks that are often referred to is the Policy Triangle Framework[41] – a tool which focuses on policy ***content, actors, context and processes*** and on how all four elements interact to shape policymaking.

Policy analysis should also assess the possibilities, limits and risks in starting a policy influencing exercise, emphasizing key issues such as interests, costs, benefits, opportunities and constraints.

It should include a stakeholder analysis as well as an analysis of sector trends, incentives and powers, stakeholders' influencing ability, and their readiness and capacity to negotiate.

Political economy analysis, in particular, refers to the preliminary analysis of the openings for and obstacles to a given reform determined by the political economic structures and the power dynamics of a country/context. This type of analysis is aimed at better understanding the political space surrounding given interventions in different socio-economic contexts so as to ensure maximum benefits out of project/programme interventions, and the leveraging of synergies with the work of others.

[41] Walt G, Gilson L., *Reforming the Health Sector in Developing Countries: The Central Role of Policy Analysis*, *Health Policy and Planning,* 1994, vol. 9, pg. 353 - 370.

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In Practice

Organisations should undertake a thorough context analysis that takes into account the powers and dynamics at play within the legal, policy and institutional frameworks underpinning the reform area of interest. A political economy analysis, or elements of it, should be included where possible.

Some useful examples to guide this type of analysis are:

- IFAD, *Guidance on Institutional Analysis in Rural Development Programmes*, 2008 http://www.ifad.org/english/institutions/guidance/0.pdf
- ODI, *An Analytical Framework for Understanding the Political Economy of Sectors and Policy Arenas*, 2005 http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/3898.pdf
- ODI, *Mapping Political Contexts: Drivers of Change*, 2009 http://www.odi.org/publications/5399-drivers-change-dfid-doc

3) Planning to Influence

a) Defining areas of change

Most of the challenges encountered when evaluating policy influence related to poor planning. Ideally, planning for a policy influencing intervention should be based on an organisational influencing strategy which determines priorities and approaches within which to detail specific interventions.

With particular regard to defining areas of change/ ***dimensions of change***, and particularly for those organisations who are only starting to take a more systematic approach to their influencing work, a number of sources offer 'menus' of output and outcome categories to assist practitioners in the 'unpacking' of change.

Among the most commonly used outcome categories for policy work there are:

- Shifts in social norms
- Strengthened organizational capacity
- Strengthened alliances
- Strengthened base of support
- Improved policies
- Changes in impact

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In Practice

Organisations should start by translating desired policy changes into specific output and outcome-level results.

This presupposes clarity in terms of the agreed ceiling of accountability.

Examples of different output and outcome categories can be found in:

- Anne E. Casey, *A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy,* 2007, The Anne E.Casey Foundation https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-aguidetomeasuringpolicyandadvocacy-2007.pdf
- UNICEF, *Monitoring and Evaluating Advocacy, Companion to the* Advocacy *Toolkit*, https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/Advocacy_Toolkit_Companion%20%281%29.pdf
- Harry Jones, *A Guide to Monitoring and Evaluating Policy Influence*, 2011, ODI https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/6453.pdf

Useful guidelines on both planning and M&E for policy influence can be found in:

- IFAD, *Country Level Policy Engagement in IFAD - Guidebook*, 2017 https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40196529/CLPE_book_170412_W.pdf/a203813d-8918-43ac-a94c-ad700bcca036

b) Articulating how we expect change to happen

As we plan for a policy influencing intervention, and even more so as we attempt to evaluate it, we first need to *understand the processes by which policy change happens*.

A Theory of Change is a practical planning, monitoring and evaluation approach, the rigour of which varies depending on many factors that are both context and resource specific. It is a particularly useful tool in that not only it describes the *expected pathway of change,* but it helps in understanding:

- the nature of change
- the process by which the change will happen
- our role in the context of the change process

A Theory of Change is often summarised in a diagram but should always be accompanied by a narrative explaining *how and why* we see change happening in the way described in the diagram. Policy influence can feature as part of a broader Theory of Change of which influencing work is one component, or it can have its own Theory of Change (function or engagement-specific).

A policy influencing Theory of Change should be based on a thorough context/situation analysis and contain the following core elements:

- Sequencing of incremental steps leading to change, ensuring the emphasis is on what the organisation itself will contribute as opposed to external things happening (i.e., a step should be 'influencing adoption' as opposed to 'policy is adopted')
- Description of mechanisms of change / change processes
- Listing of risks (and moderating factors) and assumptions
- Description of core existing or possible influencing factors coming from the external environment (these may often occur unexpectedly and can therefore be added in the ToC 'as they happen')
- An indication of the exact stage/s of the policy cycle within which the interventions aim to exert their influence
- A clear indication of the organisation's competitive advantage across the spectrum of interventions or at each intervention stage
- An indication of the point at which it expects (or is found in the case of an evaluation) to exert the maximum influence and why
- A description of the contribution narrative they foresee (or find in the case of an evaluation) in relation to the intervention and their particular role within it

In its graphic representation, all of the above elements do not need to be very detailed. Details can be elaborated in an accompanying narrative.

By their very nature, policy and advocacy work, and related products and processes, are varied in theme, scope, scale, and complexity, and therefore no one single template is applicable to all.

For guidance purpose, here below is a template tailored to the case of interventions aimed at contributing to the formulation and adoption of a policy document – presented as an example of elements agencies should consider when creating a Theory of Change (at either/or planning and evaluation stage) for policy/advocacy work.

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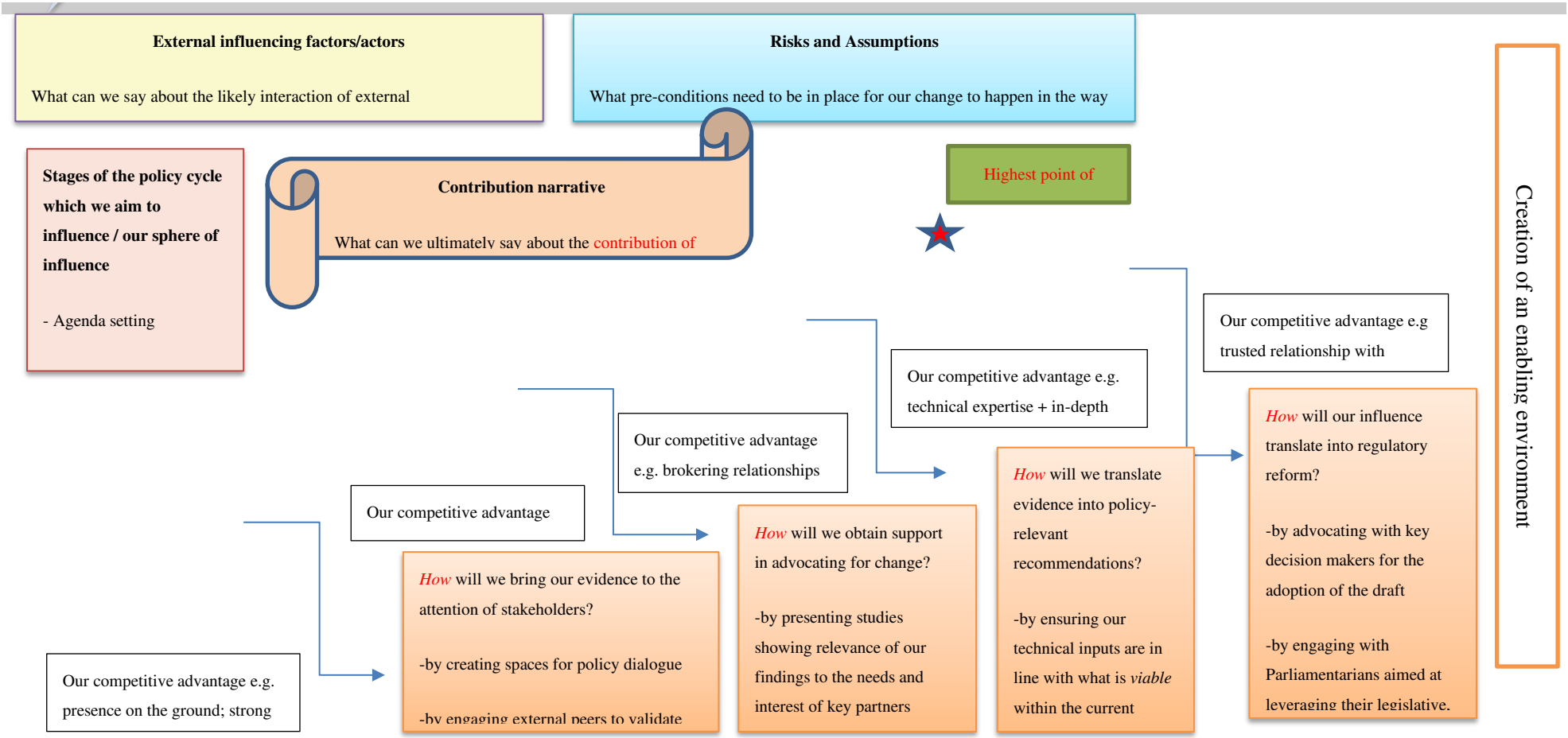
Figure 1 Suggested template - Policy Influencing Theory of Change

This template is tailored to the example of policy influencing interventions aimed at contribution to the formulation and adoption of a new policy document. Theories of change relating to other policy influencing interventions will need to be tailored accordingly.



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The ToC describes the causal chain of interventions aimed at informing the formulation and adoption of a new policy document with a view to contributing to the creation of an enabling environment conducive to the achievement of (in this case) unspecified goals. These could be, for example: the realisation of women's rights, the protection of smallholders' interest in agricultural reform, or the improvement of levels of malnutrition.

Here below is a description of all the elements contained in the ToC.

Steps along the pathway of change

The change process is described through five core steps: 1. Evidence generation, 2. Evidence positioning 3. Leveraging of support, 4. Contribution to a policy draft, 5. Influencing policy adoption – the latter representing the ultimate contribution to the creation of an enabling environment. Under each step, interventions/activities are listed: research and analysis, awareness creation, multistakeholder engagement, technical contribution to policy formulation, and political advocacy for policy adoption.

Two *caveats* should be noted here:

- Policy adoption is a political process and one on which most agencies have little or no influence. There are instances, however, where organisations have in fact been able to exert a level of influence at that stage, influencing not only a *product* (a policy draft) but also a *process* (the adoption of the draft).

- There are many interpretations of what an *enabling environment* constitutes. In reality, for a policy environment to be *truly conducive to the achievement of set goals* which could be realisation of human rights, better access to food for certain groups etc.. it would require not only the *adoption* of appropriate regulatory frameworks, but also their *implementation*. In the example at hand, we are assuming the agency is settings its 'accountability ceiling' (always talking about *contribution* accountability only) at policy *adoption*. Depending on the organisation and the specific way it builds its RBF, this result could be considered either at *outcome level* or at *impact level*.

It is not required for a ToC to use the same denominations as an RBF. It can refer to *outputs, outcomes and impact*, or use broader concepts such as steps, results, or milestones which can then be detailed in an RBF.

This section should include a statement on who the *drivers of change* are.

Do we understand *what* and *who* drives change in this particular reform area? And what is our likelihood of influencing them?

A ToC should be specific in identifying:

- ***What*** the agency is trying to influence (e.g. the content of a policy text, the monitoring framework of a new strategy, the budget allocated to a particular area, the implementation mechanisms related to a policy etc.)

- ***Who*** the agency is trying to influence (e.g. the Minister…the Drafting Committee…representatives from a Ministry, Parliamentarians…relevant constituencies etc)

Both the *what* and the *who* may change at different stages/steps of the ToC.

Competitive advantage

It would be advisable for a ToC to include the particular offering (value proposition/competitive advantage) the organisation holds overall, or at each step of the change process. This can refer to the technical specialisation of the agency, its ability in terms of brokering relationship/maintaining a solid network of partners, its funding base (or the nature of same), its track record in a particular area, its flexibility in operations due to its mandate, its trusted relationship with government/civil society/private sector, and its close linkages with research and academia, to name but a few.

This will help in clearly identifying where investments (time, human and financial resources) should be made (in the case of ToC used for planning) based on validated strengths.

How change happens

A recurring gap noted in many ToCs is the absence of process related information pertaining to how the change is expected (or found, in the case of an evaluation) to occur. Most ToCs describe the causal chain of results and not the *mechanisms of change* – the latter referring to *those strategies, processes*, and *variables* that account for the relationship between an intervention and its planned outcome. These can include both aspects relating to the agency's intervention and external factors playing a role in the unfolding of a particular chain of events.

Contribution narrative

In complex areas such as those of policy and advocacy work where the absence of a counterfactual makes attribution a real challenge, having absolute clarity about *contribution* is essential. This can be based on the combination of information from the above-mentioned '*how change happens'* and *'competitive advantage'* categories*,* with particular emphasis on the specific role played by the agency.

External factors/actors

A ToC should always be based on a thorough assessment of the external environment, and possibly include reference to some core elements of it.

How much do we know about external circumstances/dynamics/actors that have an interest or a specific role in the reform area at hand? What can we say about the likely interaction of these with our intervention? Can we identify external change *enablers* and *disablers*?

Are we aware of other development interventions taking place in this area?

What are the core legal, policy and institutional frameworks currently underpinning the reform area at hand? What are the socio-economic changes currently taking place in this context?

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A context analysis and a stakeholder mapping would always be required.

Based on available resources, agencies may also undertake in-depth political economy analysis and more specific assessments such as power/interest analysis.

Risks and assumptions

The proposed chain is only going to verify itself if certain pre-conditions are in place. These can include both internal factors (such as funding availability, approval of new organisational strategy etc.) and external ones (political stability, sustained partnerships...).

The ToC should recognise risks, which again can be internal (reputational, financial…) or external (civil unrest, inability to access project areas…). Mitigation strategies should be in place to address these risks.

Stages of the policy cycle / our sphere of influence

Looking at the typical stages of the policy cycle (through acknowledging the fact that policy process are hardly ever linear), the ToC should highlight those in which interventions aim to exert their influence. This, together with a good articulation of an agency's strengths and influencing ability, will define its *sphere of influence*. The latter may also be determined by circumstances and favourable opportunities met along the pathway of change.

A ToC may also include an indication of the point on the pathway of change at which it feels it exerts the highest influence (see red star symbol in Figure 1.). This information could be very useful in terms of learning which can feed into future planning.

Articulating the change mechanisms remains the most difficult and often neglected part of ToCs, leading to gaps in assessing both processes and results, as well as contribution.

In Practice

Organisations should consider developing a policy influencing-specific Theory of Change, paying particular attention to both the steps along the pathway of change and the arrows between them.

Emphasis should be place of those causal linkages and change mechanisms that characterise the specific targeted reform area.

Some examples of policy/advocacy-specific Theories of Change among the sampled organisations participating in the stocktaking exercise can be found here below:

- IFAD, *Country Level Policy Engagement in IFAD - Guidebook*, 2017, p.18 https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40196529/CLPE_book_170412_W.pdf/a203813d-8918-43ac-a94c-ad700bcca036

- IFAD, *Country Level Dialogue - Evaluation Synthesis*, 2017, p.11 https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714182/39721299/Country-level+Policy+Dialogue+ESR+-+Full+Report+for+web.pdf/e0721f2e-f84b-40e5-9526-edbf6b54a9e3

- WHO, *Evaluation of WHO Normative Function*, 2017, p.18 https://www.who.int/about/evaluation/who_normative_function_report_july2017.pdf

- UNICEF, *Global Communication and Advocacy Strategy 2019-2021*, p.20.

External to this exercise, other examples of policy related Theories of Change can be found at:

- Sarah Stachowiak, *Pathways for Change: 10 Theories to Inform Advocacy and Policy Change Efforts,* Center for Evaluation Innovation, October 2013 https://www.evaluationinnovation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Pathways-for-Change.pdf

- Isabel Vogel and Zoe Stephenson, DFID EVD, *Examples of Theories of Change*, July 2012 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08a66ed915d622c000703/Appendix_3_ToC_Examples.pdf

4) Monitoring Progress

In most organisations, monitoring is a function that rests with programme management, quite distinct, though complementary, from the evaluation function which rests with the evaluation units. Given the complexity of policy influencing work, what is most important in the monitoring of same is to have absolute clarity in relation to *indicators*, *data required*, *baselines* (often overlooked in monitoring of policy and advocacy work) *and targets*.

In this regard, having clear policy influencing indicator guidelines is essential. Here below is an example from Self Help Africa (international NGO).

Policy Influencing Indicator Guidelines

Target	Progress milestones; numerical or narrative; i.e. first draft policy consolidated; budget amended
Measurement tool	Policy assessment tool
Level of disaggregation	Nature of the change; of the engagement; thematic
What is measured	Achievement of outcome; Progress towards it
How to measure	Depending on intervention area: desk review; interviews; consultations;
Data required	Information on progress / written or verbal
Data source	Document texts; reports; logs; interview write ups; media

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Frequency	Quarterly on progress; annual on outcome
Strengths and limitations	S: allows for tracking and learning; process and targets; W: lack of standardization

In Practice

Organisations should consider developing *Indicator Guidelines* for each agreed policy influencing indicator.

Indicators should be regularly assessed and their validity tested.

Is ***what we are measuring*** adequate? ***What is it telling*** us about the progress towards our expected change?

Deciding for or against a policy influencing indicator should be informed by the availability and accessibility of related data, the quality of same and the extent to which we can guarantee rigour in the process of collecting and analysing it.

Tracking progress against set targets will need to be based on solid assessment tools.

The focus will be on *progress towards results, changes in the internal and external environment and the extent to which the intervention responded to them, encountered challenges and opportunities.*

In Practice

Organisations should consider developing a *Policy/ Advocacy Assessment Tool* which can assist them in documenting progress. In tracking progress, it will be important to make sure to capture *variances* occurring between set targets and actual results with related explanations.

5) Evaluating Policy Influencing Work

All of the aspects discussed above are part and parcel of what is considered important in the evaluation of policy influence. Combining insights from both prevailing literature and emerging thinking from the present stocktaking exercise, some core principles can be derived as essential in any policy influencing evaluation. In particular:

- Start by making sure there is absolute clarity about *expected change, ceiling of accountability and intended contribution.* Often planning documents against which evaluations are made present gaps in these areas and evaluators find themselves having to reconstruct these from scratch.

- Find out whether or not a thorough context analysis was undertaken as part of the planning phase for the intervention
- Establish a clear correlation between process and results and effectively articulate *how change happens – unpacking Theories of Change*
- Think about the ultimate use of specific *evaluative evidence*
- Make sure to verify success through the *voice of beneficiaries*
- Remember: actors are never neutral nor is the lens through which they look at evidence
- Standardise approaches and methodologies to the extent possible
- Do not look for attribution; attribution is highly unlikely in influencing work. Look for *reasonable evidence of contribution*
- Pursue close collaboration between programme management and evaluation units
- Identify *learning spaces* to allow for stocktaking and reflection around the issues of *what works in terms of my organisation's offering in this reform area*, *what doesn't* and *why*.

In Practice

At a minimum, agencies should consider incorporating some key questions relating specifically to both results and processes relating to policy influencing work as part of their current evaluation frameworks. Emphasis should be placed in particular on:

- Context relevance and intervention's ability to adapt to changing circumstances and course correct where required
- Strategies and approaches employed
- Qualifying effectiveness – what in particular made our intervention effective?
- A detailed articulation and account of the organisation's contribution to the change
- Clarity in terms of the organisation's sphere of influence: at which stage of the policy cycle did we exercise our influence
- Learning around how change happened in the context of the specific reform process and this specific operating environment
- Learning around enablers and disablers or change: what key factors positively contributed or constrained the achievement of results?

In terms of specific theoretical methodologies that would appear to be most appropriate for evaluating policy-related work, those that have occasionally been referred to by sampled organisations, are listed below:

- Contribution Analysis https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Contribution-analysis.pdf
- Outcome Harvesting https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Outcome-harvesting.pdf
- Most Significant Change https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Most-significant-change.pdf
- Process Tracing https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Process-tracing.pdf
- Qualitative Comparative Analysis https://www.intrac.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Qualitative-comparative-analysis.pdf

Annex IV: List of Persons Interviewed

Agency	Department	Representative	Role
ESCWA	Strategy, Planning, Accountability, Results, and Knowledge Section	Leszek Barczak	Programme Management Officer
FAO	Office of Evaluation (OED)	Olivier Cossee	Senior Evaluation Officer
GEF	Independent Evaluation Office	Geeta Batra	Chief Evaluator and Deputy Director for Evaluation
GEF	Independent Evaluation Office	Jeneen Reyes Garcia	Evaluation Officer
IFAD	Independent Evaluation Office	Fabrizio Felloni	Deputy Director
ILO	Evaluation Office	Peter Wichmand	Senior Evaluation Officer
IOM	Evaluation Unit	Christophe Franzetti	Evaluation Officer
OHCHR	Policy, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Service	Sabas Monroy	Evaluation Officer
UN Women	Independent Evaluation Service	Ross Tanner	Evaluation Specialist
UN Women	Independent Evaluation Service	Florencia Tateossian	Evaluation Specialist
UN Women	Independent Evaluation Service	Soo Yeon KIM	Evaluation Specialist
UNCDF	Evaluation Unit	Andrew Fyfe	Head of Evaluation
UNDP	Evaluation Office	Ana Rosa Monteiro Soares	Chief of Corporate and Thematic Evaluation
UNDP	Evaluation Office	Richard Jones	Evaluation Advisor
UNEP	Evaluation Office	Michael Spilsbury	Director
UNEP	Evaluation Office	Tami Aritomi	Evaluation Specialist
UNEP	Division of Global Communication and Advocacy	Lely Djuhari	Advocacy Capacity Building Initiative (ACBI) Manager
UNOCT	International Hub on Behavioural Insights to Counter Terrorism (Doha BI Hub)	Aynabat Atayeva	Chief

Agency	Department	Representative	Role
UNOCT	Evaluation and Compliance Unit	Josephine Mwenda	Programme Management Officer
UNOCT	Evaluation and Compliance Unit	Zaheer Arif	Programme Management Assistant
UNOCT	Programme Management Unit	Yasmine Adel Refaat	Chief
UNOCT	Regional Support Section	Alice Mungwa	Chief
UNOCT	Programme Management Unit	Jacobo Tenacio Vara	Political Affairs Officer
UNODC	Independent Evaluation Section	Katherine Aston	Deputy Chief of Evaluation
UNODC	Independent Evaluation Section	Emanuel Lohninger	Evaluation Officer
WHO	Evaluation Office	Alex Ross	Director
WHO	Evaluation Office	Anand Sivasankara Kurup	Evaluation Officer
WIPO	Evaluation Section	Adan Ruiz Villalba	Head of Evaluation

Annex V: Documents Reviewed

ESCWA

- Annual SDG Review 2022 https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/annual-sdg-review-2022-english.pdf
- Evaluation Policy, July 2017
- Final Evaluation of "Facilitating the Implementation of the Arab Customs Union" Development Account Project, October 2020 - March 2021

FAO

Strategic Framework 2022-2031https://www.fao.org/strategic-framework/en

- Evaluation Manual, 2015 https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/oed/docs/OED_Evaluation_Manual_April_2015_new.pdf
- Capacity Development Evaluation Framework, 2019 https://www.fao.org/3/ca5668en/CA5668EN.pdf
- Evaluation of FAO Strategic Objective 1: Contribute to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition, thematic evaluation series, April 2018 https://www.fao.org/evaluation/evaluation-digest/evaluations-detail/en/c/1128296/
- Real time Evaluation of FAO's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme, 2021 https://www.fao.org/3/cb7263en/cb7263en.pdf
- Evaluation of FAO's contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 2 - "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture" (SDG2 evaluation), October 2020 https://www.fao.org/evaluation/evaluation-digest/evaluations-detail/en/c/1315235/

GEF

- GEF-8 Strategic Positioning Framework, January 2022 https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-01/GEF_R.08_11_GEF-8_Strategic_Positioning_Framework.pdf
- Evaluation Policy, 2019 https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.ME_C56_02_Rev01_GEF_Evaluation_Policy_June_2019_0.pdf
- Impact of GEF Support on National Environment Laws and Policies, November 2018 https://www.gefieo.org/sites/default/files/documents/evaluations/regulatory-reform-2017.pdf

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- The GEF in the South China Sea and Adjacent Areas Evaluation Report, October 2012 https://www.gefieo.org/evaluations/scs-2012

- Working Toward a Greener Global Recovery, Final Report of OPS7, November 2021 https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-01/EN_GEF_E_R.08_Inf.01_OPS7_Final_Report.pdf

- Geeta Batra, Juha I. Uitto, Osvaldo Feinstein, Environmental Evaluation and Global Development Institutions, A Case Study of the Global Environment Facility, October 2021 https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/oa-mono/10.4324/9781003207979/environmental-evaluation-global-development-institutions-geeta-batra-juha-uitto-osvaldo-feinstein

- Jeneen R. Garcia and Aaron Zazueta ,Going Beyond Mixed Methods to Mixed Approaches: A Systems Perspective for Asking the Right Questions in IDS Bulletin 2015 https://bulletin.ids.ac.uk/index.php/idsbo/article/view/122

- Jeneen R. Garcia, Network Analysis of Regional Actors in the East Asia Region, December 2011 https://www.gefieo.org/sites/default/files/documents/scs-2012-network-analysis.pdf

IFAD

- Report of the Consultation on the Twelfth Replenishment of IFADs Resources

- Recovery, Rebuilding, Resilience, January 2021 https://www.ifad.org/en/-/document/report-of-the-consultation-on-the-twelfth-replenishment-of-ifad-s-resources

- Report on the IFAD11 Results Management Framework, September 2017 https://webapps.ifad.org/members/repl/11/03/docs/IFAD11-3-R-2.pdf?attach=1

- Report of the Consultation on the Eleventh Replenishment of IFAD's Resources

- Leaving no one behind: IFAD's role in the 2030 Agenda, February 2018 https://www.ifad.org/en/-/document/report-of-the-consultation-on-the-eleventh-replenishment-of-ifad-s-resources

- Evaluation Manual, February 2016 https://www.ifad.org/en/web/ioe/w/2015-evaluation-manual-second-edition

- IFAD's Country Level Policy Dialogue, Evaluation Synthesis, July 2017 https://www.ifad.org/en/web/ioe/w/ifad-s-country-level-policy-dialogue

- IFAD'S Approach to Policy Engagement https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40196529/CLPE_Teaser_web.pdf/89e3b627-2f6a-4343-828d-50126bae0d05#:~:text=What%20is%20country%2Dlevel%20policy%20engagement%3F,themselves%20the%20policy%20change%20required.

- Report on IFAD's Development Effectiveness 2021, August 2021 https://webapps.ifad.org/members/eb/133/docs/EB-2021-133-R-9.pdf

- 2021 Annual Report on Results and Impact of IFAD Operations, October 2021 https://www.ifad.org/en/web/ioe/w/2021-annual-report-on-results-and-impact-of-ifad-operations

ILO

- Strategic Plan 2022-2025 https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_757564.pdf

- ILO Policy Guidelines for Results-Based Evaluation – Principles, Rationale, Planning and Managing for Evaluations, 4th edition, November 2020 https://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationpolicy/WCMS_571339/lang--en/index.htm

- Protocol on Collecting Evaluative Evidence on the ILO's COVID-19 Response Measures through Project and Programme Evaluations, October 2020 https://www.ilo.org/eval/WCMS_757541/lang--en/index.htm

- High Level Independent Evaluation of ILO's Research and Knowledge Management Strategies and Approaches: 2010-2019, September 2020 https://www.ilo.org/eval/Evaluationreports/Strategyandpolicyevaluations/WCMS_757214/lang--en/index.htm

- Ex-post Evaluations in the ILO, Assessing Long Term Impact of ILO's Interventions: the Case for More Ex Post Evaluations in the ILO, A Concept Note, June 2021

- ILO-IPEC, Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Strategies (CMES), January 2014

- ILO-IPEC, Impact Assessment Framework, Initial Generic Guidance Note, March 2011

- ILO-IPEC, How-To Guide for the Preparation of Outcome Sheets - as part of GAP Project's Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (CMEP), July 2012

- Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (CMEP) in Projects addressing Research, Advocacy and Policy (RAP)-related issues, March 2013

- Introduction to Child Labour Impact Assessment Toolkit, June 2011

- ILO-IPEC, Framework for the Evaluation of National Action Plans on Child Labour, August 2012

- Guidelines for Impact Assessment of Enabling Environment Interventions for the Elimination of Child Labour, July 2011

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IOM

- IOM Strategic Vision – 2019-2023: Setting a Course for IOM https://publications.iom.int/books/strategic-vision-setting-course-iom
- Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines 2021 https://publications.iom.int/books/iom-monitoring-and-evaluation-guidelines
- Report on the Policy Capacity of the International Organisation for Migration, December 2017
- Evaluation of IOM's Institutional Response to Address Migration, Environment and the Climate Change Nexus, May 2021 https://evaluation.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl151/files/docs/resources/Final%20Report_MECC%20Evaluation_May%202021_1.pdf
- Migration and the 2030 Agenda, A Guide for Practitioners, 2018 https://publications.iom.int/books/migration-and-2030-agenda-guide-practitioners
- IOM Institutional Strategy on Migration and Sustainable Development, 2020 https://publications.iom.int/books/iom-institutional-strategy-migration-and-sustainable-development
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