



unrwa evaluation policy 2022



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unrwa evaluation policy

i. overview

The Evaluation Policy defines the overall framework for the evaluation function of UNRWA. It provides definitions, principles, norms and standards, and outlines roles and responsibilities for the function. It guides UNRWA staff and partners on the Agency's requirements for evaluation planning, conduct, quality assurance and use.

a. background for the revised policy

1. The UNRWA Evaluation Policy was first adopted in 2016 in an effort to strengthen the evaluation function. It was based on [Organization Directive \(OD\) 14, the Charter of the Department of Internal Oversight Services \(DIOS\) of 2012](#) and was developed in conformity with the [United Nations Evaluation Group \(UNEG\) norms and standards](#), taking into account the advice of the Advisory Committee on Internal Oversight (ACIO), inputs from discussions with senior management, the analysis and recommendation of a [2015 UNEG Professional Peer Review](#) and comments from the Subcommittee of the Advisory Commission.

2. The updated evaluation policy (2022) builds on and supersedes the 2016 policy, and aligns to revisions to [OD 14 made in 2020](#). It responds to both Article 22 of the 2016 policy, which calls for its review at the end point of the Medium-Term Strategy (2016-2022), and to UNEG Standard 1.2 which states that *Organizations should establish an evaluation policy that is periodically reviewed and updated in order to support the evaluation function's increased adherence to the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation*¹.

3. This Policy was prepared taking stock of lessons learned from six years of evaluation practice, and feedback provided by the UNRWA Evaluation Network, the Senior Management Team (SMT) and the ACIO.

b. purpose and scope of the revised policy

4. The purpose of the updated Evaluation Policy (2022) is to define the overall framework for the evaluation function at UNRWA. It provides definitions, principles, and norms and standards on evaluation in addition to outlining roles and responsibilities for the UNRWA evaluation function. The revised policy aims to foster the culture and use of evaluations by UNRWA for learning, evidence-based decision making and accountability. It guides UNRWA staff and partners on the Agency's requirements for the conduct of evaluation to facilitate the quality, utility and conformity of evaluation with best practices and with UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation. It is supplemented by the [Agency's guidelines for quality assurance in evaluation](#) that will be periodically updated.

5. The updated policy was informed by existing evaluation policies of United Nations system entities² while meeting the specific needs of UNRWA. It situates independent evaluations at UNRWA within the larger context of evaluations in the United Nations system and reflects the experience accumulated by UNRWA's evaluation function during the course of implementing the Agency's Medium-Term Strategy (2016-2022) and in adapting the function to emerging organizational, accountability and learning needs.

¹ <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>

² The Agency reviewed and considered elements of the policies of FAO, IAEA, ICAO, ILO, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNODC, WHO and WIPO.

ii. evaluation purpose, definition and types

The evaluation function undertakes centralized and decentralized evaluations to provide systematic and objective assessments of UNRWA programmes and projects for the purpose of accountability, organizational learning and evidence-based decision making.

6. Evaluation is an essential function at UNRWA, carried out at all levels of the Agency, for the purpose of providing evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful for accountability, decision making and organizational learning. Evaluations provide accountability for internal and external stakeholders by assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of funding used for UNRWA interventions. They provide evidence for management decision-making, informing planning processes for operational work and strengthening the Agency's ability to plan strategically. They also contribute to learning within UNRWA and the improvement of programmes and operations by providing insights on factors influencing performance and expanding the knowledge base on lessons learned.

7. Evaluation findings should also serve as an input to the Agency's programme management cycle informing the development of the UNRWA medium-term strategic plans and annual operational, programme and budget plans.

8. UNRWA applies the UNEG definition for evaluation:

"An evaluation is an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders."

9. Evaluations conducted by UNRWA can be categorized into centralized and decentralized evaluations. As part of the UN Development System reforms, the Agency may also engage in the conduct on joint evaluations, either centralized or decentralized, with pertinent UN system entities.

a. centralized evaluations

10. Centralized evaluations are conducted to assess issues of strategic significance and Agency-wide interest that contribute to achieving the goals of the UNRWA Strategic Plan. These can include evaluations of an organizational strategy, programme, policy, or thematic area of work. Centralized evaluations typically emanate from a multi-year evaluation plan which is developed to complement the Agency's six-year Strategic Plan. The plan provides a framework for coverage across each of the Agency's strategic objectives during its six-year implementation cycle, with at least one evaluation focused on each outcome of the UNRWA Strategic Plan.

11. Centralized evaluations are managed by the Evaluation Division of DIOS and may be carried out by its staff, commissioned to external independent evaluation consultants or implemented using a hybrid approach utilizing both Evaluation Division staff and external independent consultants. They are managed in consultation with respective managers to ensure the overall quality, validity, relevance and usefulness of evaluation products.

b. decentralized evaluations

12. Many evaluations completed of UNRWA activities are decentralized, which means they are managed and commissioned by field offices or headquarter departments responsible for the work being

assessed and are conducted by independent external evaluators. Decentralized evaluations focus on specific programmes or projects and are mostly requested and funded by donors. The Evaluation Division provides technical support to decentralized evaluation managers and a quality assurance framework to help ensure high quality and credible assessments. The Evaluation Division publishes final reports, oversees a periodic external assessment of report quality, and promotes the use of decentralized evaluation results in programme planning.

13. UNRWA directors are required to notify the Chief of the Evaluation Division of plans for decentralized evaluations.

c. external evaluations

14. In principle, donors should entrust the UNRWA evaluation function to commission, manage and conduct evaluations of activities which they have financially supported. Donors should also be cognizant of the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit recommendation³ which calls for reducing the burden of additional bilateral assessments through engaging in high-level dialogue with the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination to determine shared priorities.

15. If external evaluations are mandatory, the project or funding agreement between UNRWA and the donor should clearly state such a requirement, including requirements for allowing the Agency the opportunity to review and provide inputs to the evaluation scope, design and reporting to support credibility and utility. Such evaluations are subject to the UNRWA Regulatory Framework and should not constitute a financial, compliance or project audit. Findings from these evaluations can be useful for UNRWA but cannot replace the Agency's own organizational learning and accountability needs. The Agency shall provide appropriate support upon request, subject to the UNRWA regulatory framework.

³ Recommendation 6 of JIU/REP/2017/2

iii. principles and norms of evaluation

UNRWA strives for the highest international standards in its evaluation practice, is a member of the United Nations Evaluation Group and has adopted its Norms and Standards for Evaluation.

16. UNRWA strives for the highest international standards in its evaluation practice. It is a member of UNEG and has adopted its Norms and Standards for Evaluation, which provide a benchmark against which all organizations and programmes of the United Nations system can gauge their performance and aim to strengthen, professionalize and improve the quality of evaluation. The key principles set out below are interrelated and underpin the approach to evaluation in UNRWA and are applicable to both centralized and decentralized evaluations.

a. internationally agreed principles, goals and targets

17. Within the United Nations system, it is the responsibility of evaluation managers and evaluators to uphold and promote, in their evaluation practice, the principles and values to which the United Nations is committed. They should respect, promote and contribute to the goals and targets set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

b. utility

18. In commissioning and conducting an evaluation, there should be a clear intention to use the resulting analysis, conclusions and recommendations to inform decisions and actions. Evaluation products must be timely and tailored to meet the needs of its intended users. The analysis of findings by evaluators should consider the realities of the programme or project context, and recommendations should be practical and realistic to be implemented. The evaluation should be timed to fit into the management decision-making process, recommendations must be systematically followed-up on and public access to evaluation reports must be guaranteed.

c. credibility

19. Evaluations should command a high degree of credibility which is grounded on independence, impartiality and a rigorous methodology. Key elements of credibility include transparent evaluation processes, inclusive approaches involving relevant stakeholders and robust quality assurance systems. Each evaluation should employ design, planning and implementation processes that are inherently quality oriented, covering appropriate methodologies for data-collection and analysis.

20. Credibility requires that evaluations are ethically conducted and managed by evaluators that exhibit cultural and professional competencies in the area under evaluation and its context. Independent quality assurance peer reviews of evaluation reports also reinforce their credibility. Evaluation results (or findings) and recommendations should be derived from – or informed by – the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of the best available, objective, reliable and valid data and by accurate quantitative and qualitative analysis of evidence. The evaluation report should contain details of evaluation methodologies, approaches and sources of information.

d. independence

21. Independence of evaluation is necessary for credibility, influences the ways in which an evaluation is used and allows evaluators to be impartial and free from undue pressure throughout the evaluation process. Independence should be protected throughout the evaluation process: policy, institutional framework, management of the evaluation function, conduct of evaluations and follow-up. The independence of the evaluation function comprises two key aspects: behavioral independence and organizational independence.

22. **Behavioural independence** entails the ability to evaluate without undue influence by any party. Evaluators must have full freedom to conduct their evaluative work impartially and express their assessment freely, without the risk of negative effects on their career development (for UNRWA evaluation staff) or to be selected for future evaluations (for external consultants). The independence of the evaluation function underpins the free access to information that evaluators should have on the evaluation subject.

23. **Organizational independence** requires that the Evaluation Division is positioned independently from management functions and those responsible for the design and implementation of the policies and operations that are evaluated. It requires that DIOS have authority for setting the evaluation agenda as well as adequate resources to implement its work plan. It requires independence of the Director of DIOS to directly commission, produce, publish and disseminate duly quality-assured evaluation reports without undue influence by any party. It requires commissioning of decentralized evaluations to independent consultants, with Field Office and Programme Directors being responsible for ensuring independence in the management and conduct of evaluations their offices commission.

24. Organizational Directive 14 (2020) guarantees the independence of DIOS and the Evaluation Division from line management in the conduct of its work. The Chief of the Evaluation Division reports to the Director of DIOS who reports directly to the Commissioner-General and independently prepares and submits an annual report to the ACIO and the Advisory Commission of UNRWA highlighting significant evaluation findings as well as any issues affecting the Department's ability to operate independently (OD 14, Article 18). All evaluation reports are made available to the ACIO (OD 14, Article 17) and published on the Agency's website.

25. Article 23 of OD 14 outlines the authority of the Director and staff of DIOS to unrestricted access to all functions, records, property, premises and personnel to enable the Department to fulfil its responsibilities free from interference in determining the scope of work, performing its work and communicating results. Furthermore, it outlines the need for the necessary resources in terms of budget and staffing in DIOS to adequately maintain its independence and objectivity.

26. For evaluations where external independent consultant(s) may constitute the evaluation team, they bear responsibility for the views and professional opinions expressed in the draft and final reports. While the report is owned by the Agency, where there is significant disagreement between external independent consultants and DIOS and/or the Agency's management, these may be noted through a relevant disclosure in the evaluation report, including in the management response to the report.

27. The UNRWA policy for Protection against Retaliation and other relevant policies shall protect staff participating in evaluations, as well as members of the evaluation team, from retaliation or repercussions.

e. impartiality

28. The key elements of impartiality are objectivity, professional integrity and the absence of bias and conflict of interest. The requirement for impartiality exists at all stages of the evaluation process, including planning and designing an evaluation, formulating the objectives and scope, selecting the evaluation team, providing access to stakeholders, conducting the evaluation and formulating findings and recommendations. Evaluators need to be impartial, implying that evaluation team members must not have been (or expect to be in the near future) directly responsible for the policy setting, design or management of the evaluation subject. Because no individual is totally impartial, evaluation teams should balance different perspectives and backgrounds.

f. ethics

29. Evaluation at UNRWA should adhere to high standards of ethics and integrity in line with the [UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation](#) and the [UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the United](#)

[Nations system](#). Staff responsible for managing evaluations should follow these ethical guidelines and ensure that staff and consultants conducting evaluations are aware of and follow these guidelines.

30. Evaluators should systematically consider ethics throughout the evaluation cycle and ensure respect for the beliefs, manners and customs of the social and cultural environment; for human rights and gender equality; and for the principles for humanitarian assistance of ‘do no harm’ and ‘leave no one behind.’ Evaluators should also ensure alignment to ethical standards in interactions in conflict settings and with vulnerable groups, including women, children and persons with disabilities.

31. Evaluators must respect the rights of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence, should obtain informed consent for the use of private information from those who provide it, and must ensure that sensitive data is protected and that it cannot be traced to its source.

32. Evaluators uncovering evidence of wrongdoing, should report it confidentially through the [established reporting channels](#), and reporting procedures should be explicitly incorporated into pertinent documents such as requests for proposal and terms of reference.

g. transparency

33. Transparency is an essential element of evaluation that establishes trust and builds confidence, enhances stakeholder ownership and increases public accountability. To achieve transparency, stakeholders should be aware of the reason for the evaluation, the selection criteria, and the purposes for which the findings will be used.

34. To strengthen transparency, the evaluation process should involve relevant stakeholders at key stages of the evaluation process. Evaluation processes should be complemented through an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) mechanism to support engagement of key stakeholder groups including Agency staff at headquarter and field locations, and Advisory Commission representatives (donors and host government representatives). ERGs can also provide the Agency with a mechanism to involve relevant subject matter experts from United Nations system organizations or United Nations Country Team (UNCT) members in evaluation exercises.

h. mainstreaming and contributing to human rights, gender equality, environmental and social sustainability

35. In line with guiding principles and objectives of the United Nations system, UNRWA aims to strengthen human rights, gender equality, and environmental and social sustainability. It is the responsibility of evaluators and evaluation managers to ensure that these goals and values are respected, addressed and promoted, underpinning commitments to the principles to ‘leave no one behind’ and ‘do no harm’.

36. Evaluation managers should ensure that evaluation designs, analysis and reporting adequately consider human rights, gender equality and other risk factors such as age, disability, marital/parental status and refugee status that may contribute to vulnerability, addressing UNEG guidance on [Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation](#) (August 2014) and [Integrating Disability Inclusion in Evaluations](#). Evaluators should also assess the Agency’s participatory approaches and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) mechanisms.

37. Further, the UNRWA evaluation function should aim to strengthen environmental and social sustainability in evaluation activities, including when carrying out evaluation research and reporting on results. Evaluation coverage should also include assessments of the Agency’s alignment with the guiding principles of the UNRWA Environmental Sustainability Policy and relevant [UN frameworks](#), including the strategy for sustainability management in the United Nations system, 2020-2023.

i. national evaluation capacities

38. The effective use of evaluation can make valuable contributions to accountability and learning and thereby justify actions to strengthen national evaluation capacities. In line with General Assembly resolution A/RES/69/237 on building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level, national evaluation capacities should be supported by involving UNRWA national staff in decentralized evaluation management and national consultants on commissioned teams.

j. professionalism

39. Evaluations should be conducted with professionalism and integrity. Professionalism should contribute towards the credibility of evaluators, evaluation managers and evaluation heads, as well as the evaluation function. Key aspects include to knowledge; education and training; adherence to ethics and to these norms and standards; utilization of evaluation competencies; and recognition of knowledge, skills and experience. This should be supported by an enabling environment, institutional structures and adequate resources.

iv. evaluation procedures

Evaluations are conducted at different levels of analysis, focusing on either a thematic area of work, a programme, a policy, a project or field of operation. Evaluations should be planned, managed and conducted in line with UNEG norms and standards, with processes consultative and participatory to ensure evaluation relevance and use.

a. planning and prioritization of evaluations

40. The Evaluation Division is committed to providing relevant, utilization focused evaluations. A six-year evaluation plan for strategic centralized evaluations is prepared to align with and accompany the Agency's multi-year strategic plan. The six-year evaluation plan will, in turn, inform the Agency's costed annual evaluation plan prepared by the Evaluation Division to record work that needs to be undertaken. The Evaluation Division proposes, prioritizes and finalizes topics for its work plan through consultations with fields and headquarters departments/divisions and through the consideration of current and emerging organizational issues. The six-year evaluation plan will aspire to ensure coverage of all key strategic areas, while allowing for flexibility to address urgent, emergent needs.

41. The annual evaluation work plan:

- a) includes centralized evaluations expected of the Evaluation Division of DIOS as well as decentralized evaluations that will be conducted by fields and headquarter departments/divisions;
- b) indicates the resources required to conduct centralized evaluations, indicating those that can be done with Agency resources and those for which external funding may be required; and
- c) takes into account available resources and is reviewed by the ACIO, as part of the DIOS annual work plan, before submission to the Commissioner-General.

42. All Agency programmes, projects, activities and emergency appeals can be subject to evaluations. The selection of evaluation subjects will be guided by the following criteria:

- a) **Strategic relevance.** Is the subject of strategic significance to the achievement of the Agency's six-year strategic plan;
- b) **Risk.** Are there socio-economic, political, funding, operational or other factors that present a risk to the Agency's activities for which an evaluation is needed to inform decision-making;
- c) **Significance of investment.** Is the subject significant to the Agency's portfolio of work considering its allocated budget and expenditure;
- d) **Knowledge gap.** Has the subject not been adequately covered through an evaluation? How much time has elapsed since it was last evaluated;
- e) **New policies and innovative programmes.** Would an evaluation provide valuable knowledge to managers in a pilot phase of a programme or policy implementation;
- f) **Formal commitments.** Is the subject important to evaluate given a commitment to a UN protocol (UNSWAP or UNDIS) or donors; and
- g) **Feasibility to implement.** Does the commissioning office have the resources available to conduct and manage a high-quality evaluation? Is the intervention sufficiently evaluable to enable sound findings, conclusions and recommendations.

43. It is the responsibility of the planning functions at the central programme and at the field level to support the evaluability of projects and programmes, including emergency programming, i.e. Agency activities can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion. Evaluability is supported, inter alia, through defined programme theories or logical frameworks, monitoring data, and reporting on implementation and results.

44. For projects and multi-year agreements where it is likely that a donor may require an evaluation, UNRWA should ensure that adequate consideration is given to incorporating the requirements for such an evaluation and its estimated cost into agreements with donors. DIOS should be given sight of the

proposed documents to provide advice on what will be needed to facilitate an evaluation. This will assist in ensuring the likelihood of evaluation results that will meet internal and external stakeholder expectations.

b. evaluation conduct and methodology

45. The evaluation process for centralized and decentralized evaluations in UNRWA is informed by UNEG norms and standards, detailed in the Agency's guidelines for quality assurance in evaluation, and consists of three broad phases: evaluation preparation, implementation and use. Evaluations may be carried out during programme or project implementation to identify areas for improvement (formative evaluation) or at the end of the programme or project to determine the extent to which intended outcomes were produced (summative evaluation).

46. UNRWA evaluations are guided by the standard, internationally recognized criteria developed by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD-DAC), which presently include coherence, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. They are also informed by guidance for the evaluation of humanitarian work developed by the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP).

47. Evaluations should be carried out using a participatory approach, seeking and sharing opinions with stakeholders, including rights holders typically underrepresented and vulnerable, such as women, girls and boys, older persons and persons with disabilities. Stakeholder participation at different points in time in the evaluation process is important for learning and acceptance of evaluation findings. There is a need to capture a diversity of views, including those views that are likely to be contrarian, through allocating adequate time to map out the key informants who have been closely part of and are impacted by the project.

48. The evaluation methods and tools used should be tailored to the individual evaluations and their key questions and include a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods and data sources. Triangulation of information across sources is a key tool for the gathering and validation of evidence. All relevant information available, including material from programme or project monitoring and assessment, data collection tools, vulnerability criteria, performance measurement systems, and assessments by the internal and external auditors should be utilized as appropriate. Tools most frequently used include semi-structured interviews, focus groups, checklists, desk studies, direct observation through field visits and surveys.

c. management response and follow-up

49. To develop an effective evaluation system, mechanisms must be in place to ensure that evaluation reports are fully considered and agreed recommendations are acted upon. This is vital for ensuring learning and feedback into the programming cycle as well as ensuring accountability for implementation.

50. Evaluation reports should be shared with the primary evaluation stakeholders, which include the main internal clients of the evaluation, i.e. the key organizational units that are the subject matter of the evaluation, and all other internal stakeholders who participated in the evaluation. The clients of the evaluation are responsible for a timely management response to recommendations, outlining the decisions concerning each evaluation recommendation and specifically whether they accept, partially accept or reject each recommendation.

51. For each recommendation, managers are required to formulate action(s) specifying how the recommendation will be implemented, by who and the implementation timeline (Evaluation Action Plan). For rejected or partially accepted recommendations, managers are required to articulate the factors influencing acceptance. The clients of the evaluation should ensure that accepted evaluation recommendations are implemented and monitored in their areas of responsibility and commit to

appropriate and ongoing follow-up on the status of implementation and, in the case of centralized evaluations, keep DIOS updated on the process.

52. DIOS will report on the progress in implementation for centralized and decentralized evaluation recommendations twice annually to the Executive Office and ACIO, as well as reporting on progress through the DIOS Annual Report and UNRWA Annual Operational Report. This reporting will highlight recommendations where progress is considered slow or not satisfactory, and the Executive Office will be consulted during follow-up for recommendations pertaining to centralized evaluations where progress is of concern. For decentralized evaluations, the commissioning office is responsible for verifying, tracking and reporting on recommendations and actions points to DIOS, which will utilize such data at face value.

d. communication and use

53. Evaluation results should be communicated to all relevant stakeholders and utilized in the development of UNRWA strategies, projects, operations and emergency appeals. To ensure the utilization of results and transparency to evaluation findings and management action plans, the full final reports of centralized and decentralized evaluations and the management response to the reports are published on the UNRWA website. Further, evaluation results are promoted through summary communication products and briefings with staff and subcommittees of the Agency's Advisory Commission. Fields and headquarter departments and divisions are required to take relevant evidence from the evaluation into account when developing strategic response plans and annual work plans.

v. quality assurance

Evaluations should be properly supervised and carried out in conformity with UNEG norms and standards, this Policy and the Agency's guidelines for quality assurance in evaluation.

54. The Evaluation Division is responsible for establishing and maintaining a quality assurance programme with the aim to:

- a) provide reasonable assurance to stakeholders that evaluations have been performed in accordance with the Agency's guidelines for quality assurance in evaluation and add value to the Agency;
- b) assess and ensure that field and headquarter units engaged in evaluation are operating in an efficient and effective manner; and
- c) ensure that the decentralized evaluation function is adequately equipped to commission evaluations.

55. The quality assurance of centralized evaluations is the responsibility of the Evaluation Division. The quality assurance of decentralized evaluation activities is the responsibility of the decentralized evaluation managers in UNRWA field offices and headquarter units, with the Evaluation Division providing guidance and training to support their capacity to do so.

56. Quality assurance of centralized and decentralized evaluations include:

- a) ensuring that evaluations are properly supervised and are carried out in conformity with UNEG norms and standards, this policy and the Agency's guidelines for quality assurance in evaluation for planning, conducting and reporting of evaluation assignments;
- b) ensuring adequate representation and participation of typically marginalized individuals and groups;
- c) ensuring that findings and recommendations are adequately supported by relevant and sufficient evidence, including data-driven evidence;
- d) ensuring that reports are accurate, objective, clear, concise and timely;
- e) monitoring adherence to annual work plan and ensuring that work is achieved within resource budgets, or approved variations;
- f) ensuring a review and comment period for the draft report, including by the evaluation's reference group and the owners of recommendations;
- g) conducting lessons learned exercises at the end of each assignment;
- h) periodically reviewing field and headquarters arrangements for evaluation, including training and skills of staff managing or conducting evaluations;
- i) reviewing arrangements for hired consultants, and performance assessments of work performed by consultants; and
- j) periodically reviewing arrangements for recommendation follow-up.

57. DIOS has the responsibility to keep the Agency's guidelines for quality assurance in evaluation updated in line with UNEG norms and standards, including, among others, checklists relating to evaluation terms of references and inception and evaluation reports. The Evaluation Division assesses the adherence of centralized evaluation reports to the criteria of the [UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports](#), and should additionally follow best practice within the UN system and have the quality of central evaluation reports regularly assessed by an independent external service provider.

58. Following the Agency's guidelines for quality assurance in evaluation, evaluation managers and independent consultants will work according to clearly assigned roles in the evaluation process. The evaluation function will be reviewed every five years as proposed by the UNEG.

59. UNRWA may engage external, independent consultants to conduct evaluations and selects them competitively based on their competence, independence and integrity. For all evaluations,

evaluators are selected by means of a transparent process following the rules of either the UNRWA human resources or procurement functions, as well as the Agency's guidelines for quality assurance in evaluation. The DIOS manages resourcing for centralized evaluations while headquarter or field office units manage resourcing for decentralized evaluations.

60. Independent consultants must have an understanding and experience of evaluation concepts, techniques and ethics, and be able to work as part of an international team. Whenever possible, the composition of evaluation teams should be gender balanced and include national consultants located within the relevant fields of operation. Involving national consultants can support contextual awareness within the evaluation and contribute towards building national evaluation capacity.

vi. roles and responsibilities

The UNRWA evaluation function is a shared function and its effectiveness depends on the involvement and contributions of organizational units from across the Agency. This Policy delineates roles and responsibilities.

a. evaluation division (department of internal oversight services)

61. The Evaluation Division is the custodian of the evaluation function at UNRWA, which consists of the central evaluation function in DIOS and decentralized evaluation functions in headquarter departments and field offices. The Director of DIOS has the authority to select staff, allocate resources, determine the subjects and scope of evaluation work, and apply the techniques required to accomplish evaluation objectives. The Director is also responsible for establishing a quality assurance and development programme that covers all aspects of the UNRWA evaluation function. The Director reports to and is accountable to the Commissioner-General and is advised by the ACIO.

62. The Chief of the Evaluation Division reports to the Director of DIOS and is responsible for ensuring that the Division meets high professional standards in the implementation of its annual evaluation plan. The plan provides an overall framework and allows for the scheduling and prioritization of evaluations, while allowing flexibility and responsiveness to evolving needs with provisions for changes when required. The Chief is also responsible for administering the budget of the Division.

63. The main roles and responsibilities of the Evaluation Division with respect to both the centralized and decentralized evaluation function are to:

- a) develop and periodically update the Agency's guidelines for quality assurance in evaluation to serve as guidance documents for: a) programme and project managers to commission and fully manage decentralized evaluations, b) Evaluation Division staff to conduct centralized evaluations, and c) independent consultants conducting evaluations;
- b) promote the use of evaluations through managing a follow-up system for evaluation recommendations, assessing progress on recommendation implementation, and ensuring that internal and external stakeholders have access to evaluation findings and recommendations;
- c) ensure an assessment every five years of the function's adherence to UNEG Norms and Standards through the UNEG peer review mechanism; and
- d) contribute to the enhancement of evaluation within the United Nations system through active participation in UNEG.

64. The main roles and responsibilities of the Evaluation Division with respect to the centralized evaluation function are to:

- a) prepare a multi-year evaluation plan supportive of the Agency's six-year strategic plan, and annual evaluation plans for review by the ACIO and approval by the Director of DIOS, based on a process of consultation, a clear rationale for selection, and prioritization of the subjects for evaluation;
- b) design, commission, manage and carry out independent centralized evaluations;
- c) ensure a consultative and participatory approach to evaluations, including a thorough assessment of all comments made by programme and project managers during an evaluation;
- d) ensure the communications and use of evaluation results through the use of stakeholder briefings, the publication of evaluation reports and a periodic meta-analysis of evaluation results;
- e) follow-up on recommendations generated by centralized evaluations and report on implementation rates twice annually; and
- f) ensure an external analysis of the quality of central evaluations on a regular basis through an independent external service provider.

65. The main roles and responsibilities of the Evaluation Division with respect to the decentralized evaluation function are to:

- a) Provide guidance, technical support and capacity development for the management of decentralized evaluations and promote an evaluation culture in the Agency, through periodic updates to the UNRWA guidelines for quality assurance in evaluation, training, and review of evaluation capacity in field offices, while minimizing day to day individual support;
- b) conduct regular meetings of the UNRWA Evaluation Network to provide a forum for peer-to-peer exchange and learning among programme and project managers and monitoring and evaluation officers on evaluation planning, implementation, use and follow-up;
- c) conduct a regular analysis of the quality of decentralized evaluation reports, as well as a meta-analysis of evaluation results; and
- d) maintain a register of decentralized evaluations conducted at UNRWA.

b. commissioner-general

66. The main roles and responsibilities of the Commissioner-General are to:

- e) safeguard the integrity and independence of the evaluation function in UNRWA by ensuring compliance with OD 14 and the UNRWA Evaluation Policy;
- f) ensure adequate staff resources to support centralized and decentralized evaluations in pertinent organizational units;
- g) foster a corporate culture of accountability and learning as an enabling environment for independent evaluation by requiring that senior management utilize the evaluations in their operational, strategic, policy and oversight roles;
- h) ensure the independence of evaluation in terms of access to data and information and the establishment of a financing mechanism that provides adequate resources for evaluation;
- a) ensure that substantive management responses to evaluation recommendations are prepared; and
- b) make proposals on the work plan for central evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Division, and decentralized evaluations managed by field offices, headquarter departments and divisions.

c. fields and headquarter departments

67. The main roles and responsibilities of field and headquarter departments are to:

- a) contribute to the multi-year and annual work planning for evaluations in UNRWA;
- b) ensure that the Evaluation Division is informed of annual decentralized evaluation requirements;
- c) take full responsibility for the resourcing, commissioning and management of decentralized evaluations, with minimal engagement from DIOS;
- d) ensure that decentralized evaluations meet the Agency's guidelines for quality assurance in evaluation;
- e) ensure that evaluation results are shared with Agency stakeholders and evaluation reports are provided to the Evaluation Division to publish on the Agency website;
- f) draw on evaluation findings and recommendations to guide strategic decision-making on future programming;
- g) conduct a twice-annual follow-up on recommendations generated by decentralized evaluations and report on implementation rates;
- h) assist in evaluation reference groups on individual evaluations; and
- i) nominate relevant focal points to the UNRWA Evaluation Network, identifying staff involved in the planning, commissioning and managing of evaluations, or accountable for strengthening results-based management within the Agency.

d. unrwa evaluation network

68. The purpose of the UNRWA Evaluation Network is to serve as a community of practice of staff involved in supporting or managing evaluations to support peer-to-peer exchange on challenges, opportunities and lessons learned in the conduct of evaluations, raise awareness of the UNRWA Evaluation Policy and guidelines for quality assurance in evaluation, and to strengthen the capacity of staff in their use.

69. Members include field and headquarter level programme officers who are involved in planning, commissioning and managing decentralized evaluations, or staff interested in strengthening the culture for evaluation and its use within the Agency's results-based management framework. Members should regularly attend the meetings and webinars of the network.

e. external relations and communications department

70. The main role and responsibility of the department of external relations is to assist UNRWA with ensuring that donor agreements, where pertinent and relevant, include a clause for evaluation, with specific percentages or amounts of the total contribution set aside for evaluations, as per the parameters noted in paragraph 76. It should also inform DIOS about any requests or plans for external evaluations received from donors.

f. department of planning

71. The main roles and responsibilities of the department of planning are to:

- a) ensure that results from evaluations are used during the planning process (annual and strategic);
- b) ensure that the Strategic Plan 2023-2028 and emergency appeals are evaluable;
- c) ensure that evaluation is adequately covered in the planning guidelines; and
- d) maintain the recommendations in the RBM system.

g. advisory committee on internal oversight

72. The ACIO provides a mechanism to oversee the use, implementation and follow-up to lessons learned and recommendations resulting from UNRWA evaluation activities. Its objective is to review and advise DIOS and the Commissioner-General on the Agency's evaluation system including on:

- a) the annual work plan of the Evaluation Division;
- b) the effectiveness and efficiency of the evaluation function;
- c) the adequacy of planned and actual evaluation coverage, with due regard to the balance between evaluations carried out by the centralized evaluation function and those carried out by decentralized evaluation functions in programme departments and field offices; and
- d) the evaluation reports issued by DIOS and the status of implementation by the Agency of the findings and recommendations.

h. unrwa advisory commission and the harmonized results working group

73. The main role of the Advisory Commission and the Harmonized Results Working Group (HRWG) is to advise and assist the Commissioner-General on UNRWA's planning, implementation and evaluation of its programmes for the benefit of Palestine refugees. The Evaluation Division will regularly brief the HRWG on the evaluation work plan and results, and report to the Advisory Commission annually.

vii. evaluation function resources

An effective evaluation function requires secure and adequate investments in financial and human resources. This Policy recommends a target of 0.5% of organizational expenditure to the evaluation function, which is the minimum level of investment recommended by the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit.

74. The Commissioner-General should ensure that there are adequate human and financial resources to support the Agency's evaluation function, which includes not only the evaluations to be conducted, but all activities required to ensure the strengthening of the evaluation culture and the professionalization of evaluation conduct across the Agency. An appropriate evaluation budget should be an integral part of the Agency's operational workplan and consideration for evaluation resources should be embedded in annual planning processes.

75. The UNRWA annual programme budget should serve as the primary source of funding for the centralized evaluation function, through the allocation of a set percentage or amount of the programme budget to the Evaluation Division. The Commissioner-General should aim to allocate adequate resources to the central evaluation function, with a target of 0.5% of organizational expenditure, which is at the minimum end of the 0.5% to 3% range recommended by the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (JIU/REP/2014/6) to implement the evaluation workplan.

76. Fields and headquarter departments should ensure that adequate resources are reserved to commission and supervise decentralized evaluations and allocate 0.5% to 3% of the overall project budget for evaluation purposes, as part of the direct cost of the project.

a. staffing of the evaluation division

77. All appointments for evaluation, including that of the Chief of the Evaluation Division, staff and consultants follow transparent and professional procedures with the primary criteria being those of technical competence and behavioral independence but also with considerations of gender balance. Additionally, field offices should have staff with the required capacities to support both centralized and decentralized evaluations. Key competencies for evaluators include:

- a) good technical knowledge of evaluation components, including evaluation design, data collection, data analysis and reporting;
- b) knowledge of and commitment to human rights, disability inclusion, environmental sustainability and gender equality issues;
- c) excellent oral and written communication skills and ability to effectively convey complex information in a clear and concise manner;
- d) a high level of expertise in the distilling, communication and reporting of findings, recommendations, best practices and lessons learned;
- e) thorough understanding of the UNRWA and regional context; and
- f) relevant language proficiency.

viii. effect and review

78. This revised policy comes into effect on 17 October 2022 following the approval of the Commissioner-General and supersedes the 2016 Evaluation Policy. It should help strengthen the evaluation culture across the Agency and further understanding of UNRWA evaluation norms, standards and practices. It will be reviewed at the end point of the Strategic Plan 2023-2028, to assess its impact on the functioning and performance of the Agency.