

# Evaluation Policy



UNITED NATIONS

الأمم المتحدة  
ESCWA

# Evaluation Policy

JULY 2017



UNITED NATIONS

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ESCWA

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## FOREWORD

I am pleased to introduce the updated ESCWA Evaluation Policy (July 2017). The update reflects a robust and dynamic policy, one that responds to the changes and challenges of our development work. Our commitment to the function of Evaluation in ESCWA is fundamental to our mandate in serving the Arab region. We do not consider Evaluation an after-the-fact exercise; it is a crucial pillar of our thinking, planning and delivery as we work to advance the social, economic, political and environmental wellbeing of the people of this region.

In line with the UN Evaluation Group's revised Norms and Standards for Evaluation, the current update takes into account the global development advances represented by the 2030 Agenda and the focus on sustainable, inclusive development. The Policy pushes our collective thinking on how we design and implement programmes and activities that are reflective of the global call to leave no one behind. Practically, this means guiding evaluations to address the long-term impact of our work, the extent to which our interventions address the root causes of inequality and injustice, and our efforts to push for transformative change. The Evaluation Team in ESCWA will work with colleagues across the UN system to elaborate methodologies that best capture this global shift.

Our region continues to experience advances and upheavals. We need to be even more responsive, to deliver more effectively and more efficiently, and to strive for stronger impact. We renew our commitment to provide our member States with policy advice that facilitates their work and to advocate for the region on the global stage. We are accountable to them and to ourselves. We also renew our commitment to uphold and advance the UN principles of Human Rights and Gender Equality across our programmes and our outputs, and to conduct evaluations that analyse and enhance these efforts.

In that context, ESCWA has already made significant achievements in elaborating and enabling the Evaluation function in the Organization. In addition to this Policy, we created and revised tools and modalities that are clear and useful; we instituted a new system to monitor and follow up on evaluation results; and we now publicize our evaluation findings systematically to all our stakeholders. And subprogramme evaluation recommendations now form a pillar in every Management Performance Compact signed between senior managers and the Organization, holding us all accountable to using and building on evaluation results.



Mohamed Ali Alhakim  
Under-Secretary-General  
Executive Secretary

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## ACRONYMS

<b>CPC</b>	Committee for Programme and Coordination
<b>DA</b>	Development Account
<b>ESCWA</b>	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
<b>JIU</b>	Joint Inspection Unit
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>OIOS</b>	Office of Internal Oversight Services
<b>PPRs</b>	Programme Performance Reports
<b>RB</b>	Regular Budget
<b>RBM</b>	Results Based Management
<b>RPTC</b>	Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation
<b>StEPS</b>	Strategy, Evaluation and Partnership Section
<b>PPTCS</b>	Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Section
<b>TORs</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>UNEG</b>	United Nations Evaluation Group
<b>UN SWAP</b>	United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>XB</b>	Extra-budgetary

## INTRODUCTION

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ESCWA's Evaluation Policy is revised to provide updated and clear directives for ESCWA staff and management in the design and delivery of evaluations, and to articulate to member States and partners a coherent vision for the use and implementation of evaluation to improve the work of the Commission and its impact on sustainable development in the region.

The policy elaborates an understanding of evaluation concepts and processes in accordance with the principles, norms and standards of the UN Office of Internal Oversight (OIOS) and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

The policy emphasizes accountability, managing for results, and continuous learning. It promotes the integration of human rights and gender equality principles across the planning and implementation of ESCWA programmes, projects, initiatives, and institutional processes. Attached to this policy is a set of guidelines to aid in the planning, design and implementation of evaluations and the use of evaluation findings according to the terms set in this document.

ESCWA will periodically review the Evaluation Policy to ensure consistency and coherence with new developments in UN Evaluation policies and processes.

## CONCEPT AND ROLE OF EVALUATION AT ESCWA

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**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.<sup>1</sup>

For the purposes of this policy, Evaluation shall refer to all activities included in the above definition provided that the evaluation process is independent, i.e. is not managed and/or conducted by the activity manager. All evaluations according to this Policy will be managed and/or coordinated by the Strategy, Evaluation and Partnership Section (StEPS), and supported by external consultants whose independence from the evaluation subject is evident.

**Evaluation at ESCWA is intended as a strategic function, forward looking, methodologically rigorous, and analytically ambitious.**

Therefore, the Policy excludes from its purview "internal self-assessments" otherwise known as the Programme Performance Reports (PPRs) as those are undertaken by ESCWA's Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Section (PPTCS). The Policy also excludes any, and all, routine assessments, reviews and surveys initiated, administered, and conducted by activity managers in the course of implementation of activities (for example, meeting evaluations).

Evaluation at ESCWA is intended as a strategic function, forward looking, methodologically rigorous, and analytically ambitious. It aims to assess as independently and logically as possible the effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, and sustainability of ESCWA's work. In addition, evaluations assess the extent to which evaluation subjects promote UN

1. UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation, June 2016, page 10.



norms and values and specifically those related to human rights and gender equality. Evaluations are initiated and conducted with the purpose of improving ESCWA's ability to deliver on its mandate and to enhance the impact of ESCWA's work in promoting sustainable development in the region.

Rooted in regional priorities, ESCWA's approach to evaluations also adds as a guiding principle the extent to which the organization's work supports regional integration as an enabler of inclusive development in the region.

In adopting this policy, ESCWA is cognizant of the importance of evaluating the impact of normative work in particular and of the global challenges associated with such evaluation. The impact of normative work can be difficult to delineate and more

difficult to measure. However, as an organization that strives for sustainable improvement in the social and economic development of the region and the welfare of its people, ESCWA is committed to a diligent and continuous process of improving its programmatic capacities and delivery on its mandate. This includes the ongoing identification of new and better methods to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate the work of the organization to achieve clearer and stronger results.<sup>2</sup>

As such, evaluations are planned, designed and implemented to feed into all levels of ESCWA's planning and implementation processes, including the elaboration of a strategic vision, the strategic framework and work programme, the coordination and management of partnerships and resource mobilisation, as well as the management of specific sub-programmes and activities.

## OBJECTIVES

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### EVALUATIONS AT ESCWA HAVE THREE MAIN OBJECTIVES:

#### **Accountability**

Evaluations enhance the organization's ability to ascertain and report on its achievements, the extent to which the organization was able to deliver on its mandate as effectively and efficiently as possible, and the organization's contribution to social and economic development in the region. In holding ESCWA accountable for delivering on its mandate, evaluations enhance ESCWA's credibility in the region, and facilitate a stronger engagement with member States, partners, donors and beneficiaries.

#### **Managing for Results**

Evaluations improve the organization's ability to plan strategically and for maximum impact. Evaluation results inform planning processes and contribute to ongoing efforts to clarify the objectives, improve the modalities, and identify the impact of normative and technical advisory work to achieve concrete results. Evaluations aid ESCWA as a whole and programme managers in particular to refine modalities of work and ensure more concrete results and tangible impact.

2. For reference, see UNEG Handbook for Conducting Evaluations of Normative Work in the UN System, 2013.



**Continuous Learning**

Evaluations contribute to an organizational culture of continuous learning and improvement, distilling lessons learned, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and promoting diligence and creativity in addressing challenges. Evaluations are constructive and forward looking and strive to create ownership of findings by all primary stakeholders.

“ The evaluation gathered objective views from participants in our capacity building training project, which enabled us to use the lessons learned and design a follow-up project that we are sharing with MedStat programme managers. ”

Ms. Wafa Aboulhosn  
Chief of Economic Statistics Section

**SCOPE OF EVALUATION****TYPES OF EVALUATIONS****Internal and External Evaluations**

Evaluations within the UN System and according to the guidelines of OIOS are classified as Internal or External. Broadly defined, Internal Evaluations are managed by staff or offices internal to the organization (in this case ESCWA) while External Evaluations are managed by entities outside the organization: OIOS, JIU or their consultants.

**Mandatory and Discretionary Evaluations**

Evaluations according to OIOS are also further divided into Mandatory or Discretionary. Mandatory Evaluations are those that are required by the General Assembly, the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) or other Intergovernmental

Entities (IGs) such as the ESCWA Commission. Evaluations may also be required by donors in the case of extrabudgetary (XB) projects or by funding source in the case of Development Account (DA) projects.

Discretionary evaluations, on the other hand, are undertaken at the discretion of ESCWA – the request for evaluation originates within ESCWA and is not mandated or required by an outside entity.

For a full list of how evaluations are mandated/ requested and managed please see Figure 1 on page 9, and Figure 2 on page 10.

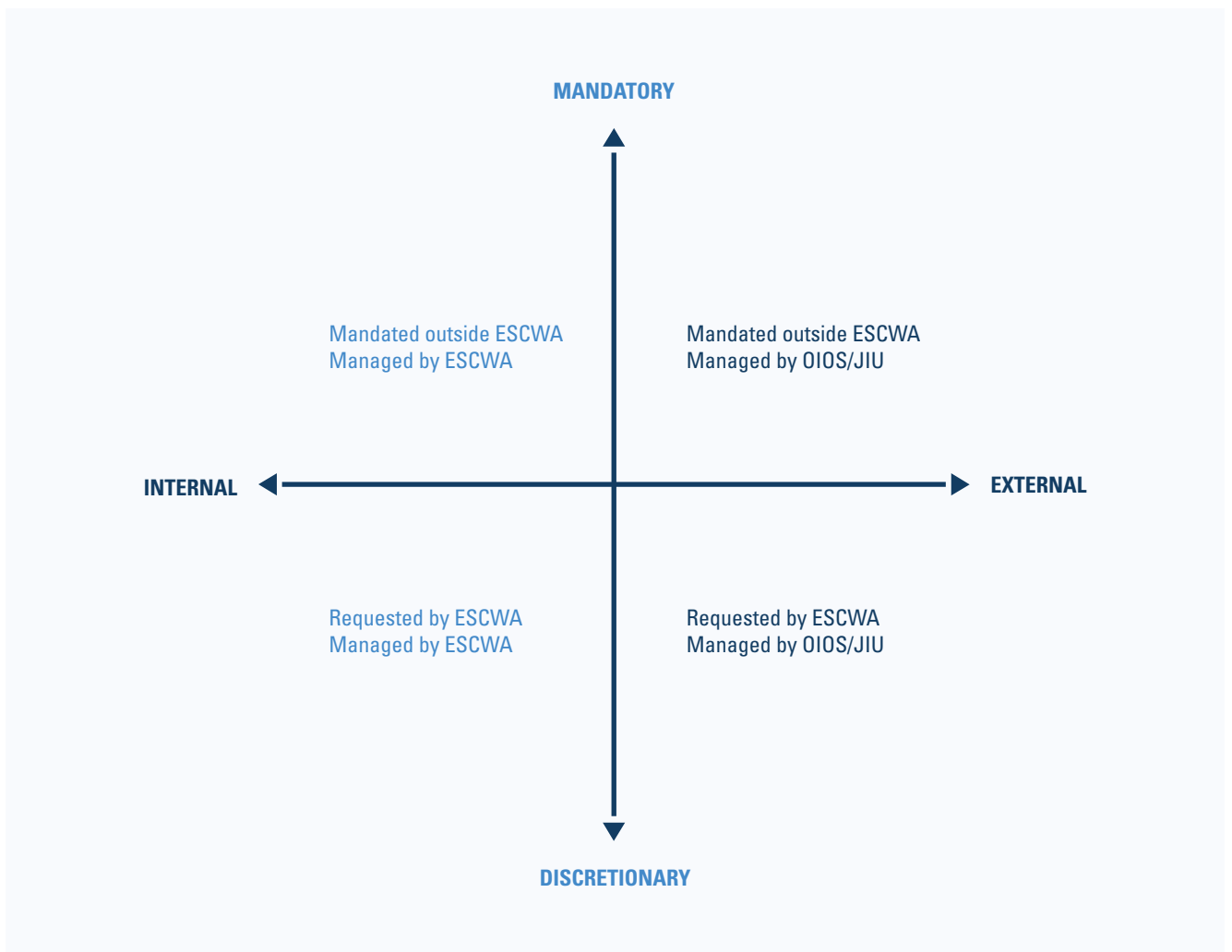
**EXCEPTION:**

“Mandatory Self-Assessments”, referred to in ESCWA and regional commissions as the PPR (Programme Performance Report), are distinct and outside the scope of the ESCWA evaluation manager. These reports are generated on a regular basis according to a set template and in line with planning and monitoring processes. ESCWA

continues to consider ways to improve mandatory self-assessments, including through biennial self-reflections by the Subprogramme directors, and develop meaningful and systematic approaches to the PPR under the management of the ESCWA Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Section (PPTCS).



FIGURE 1



**The ESCWA Evaluation Policy is therefore an internal policy. It governs any and all internal evaluations whether discretionary or mandatory (including those relating to XB and DA). The Policy does not extend to external evaluations whether discretionary or mandatory. It also does not extend to the management of the PPR.**



FIGURE 2

MANDATORY

**EXTERNAL**

**INTERNAL (COVERED BY POLICY)**

**Requested by:**

- GA
- CPC
- Donors
- External stakeholders

**Requested by:**

- ESCWA Commission
- Donors and /or partners (includes DA and XB projects)

**Managed by:**

- OIOS
- JIU
- OIOS or JIU consultants

**Managed by:**

- ESCWA Evaluation Team

**Used by:**

- GA
- CPC
- IG Bodies
- Donors
- External stakeholders
- Senior managers
- ESCWA staff

**Used by:**

- ESCWA Commission
- Donors and/or partners
- Senior managers
- ESCWA staff

DISCRETIONARY

**Requested by:**

- Senior Managers

**Requested by:**

- Senior Managers
- ESCWA specialized committees

**Managed by:**

- OIOS
- JIU
- OIOS or JIU consultants

**Managed by:**

- ESCWA Evaluation Team

**Used by:**

- Senior managers
- ESCWA staff

**Used by:**

- Senior managers
- ESCWA staff

Table adapted from OIOS List of Key Oversight Terms, April 2013.

## WHAT IS EVALUATED

Discretionary Internal or Self-Evaluation at ESCWA covers the following:

- ESCWA Strategic Framework and Biennial Programme of Work
- ESCWA Subprogrammes
- Cross-cutting themes or issues
- Flagship publications or a set of publications
- Programmes, projects or initiatives (including RPTC)
- Processes or Mechanisms (ex. RCM, IGM)

OIOS and UNEG work with five broad criteria of what is evaluated in regard to any evaluation subject.

However, evaluations do not have to evaluate according to all five criteria every time.

These criteria are:

- **Relevance**
- **Effectiveness**
- **Efficiency**
- **Impact**
- **Sustainability**



### Relevance

The extent to which an activity, expected accomplishment or strategy is pertinent or significant for achieving the related objective and the extent to which the objective is significant to the problem addressed.

### Effectiveness

The extent to which an intervention's objectives are achieved or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.

### Efficiency

Measurements of how well inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into results (outputs, outcome, impact).

### Impact

The change produced by an intervention, including positive or negative, direct or indirect effects.

### Sustainability

The extent to which a programme or activity will have long term benefits and impact.

## PRIORITIZING EVALUATIONS

**For evaluations to achieve the three objectives of accountability, managing for results, and continuous learning, they must be planned strategically.**

The following should be taken into account in the design of the evaluation plan.

### Timing

Will the results of the evaluation be incorporated in a timely manner into ESCWA's planning, monitoring, and implementation processes?

### Usability

Will the findings be relevant and contribute to ongoing and/or future work? Does the institutional or the environmental context support change and improvement in the design and implementation of the evaluation subject?

### Feasibility

Will the evaluation achieve its objectives? Is the data available or adequate to address the evaluation objectives? Does the environmental context allow for a thorough assessment?

**Cost benefit**

Will the projected findings of the evaluation contribute to the improvement of ESCWA's work and its impact on socio-economic development taking into account the projected cost and the limited human and financial resources available for evaluations?

**Impact**

Will the evaluation serve the organization's evaluation objectives in multiple ways, and are the results and lessons learned beneficial beyond the timeline of the evaluation?

**Risk**

Will the evaluation findings feed into the organization's assessment and mitigation of risk (to its mandate, reputation or credibility) as a result of projects or initiatives that may be deemed critical,

sensitive, or controversial, or those which carry a significant financial commitment?

**Institutional Learning**

Will the evaluation contribute something new to institutional learning? Is the evaluation subject a pilot initiative with the possibility of replication?

To the extent possible, Evaluation Plans should link evaluation priorities to regional and institutional priorities in terms of thematic evaluations as well as those focused on structure, mechanisms, or modalities of work.

In addition, evaluations of Subprogrammes should be staggered to ensure that adequate time is given to absorb findings and institute change before subsequent evaluations are planned.

**To ensure consistency and comparability across Subprogramme evaluations, each should address issues of:**

- Strategic Vision
- Impact
- MS Support: Technical Cooperation, DA and XB
- Partnerships, Outreach and Advocacy
- Managing for Results

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

**Human Rights and Social Justice**

Evaluations assess and promote the adherence of ESCWA activities and products to the principles of human rights and social justice in the design, implementation and expected achievements.

Evaluations should question the extent to which efforts were made to utilize a rights-based approach, to acknowledge and respect the rights of individuals as well as vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, and to identify and tackle issues of access, equity and equality. Evaluations should also assess the extent to which activities and products are participatory and inclusive.<sup>3</sup>

**Gender Equality**

Evaluations strengthen institutional accountability for mainstreaming gender in all activities and products and assess the extent to which these activities and products support the empowerment of women and girls in the region and promote gender equality. In the design, implementation and expected accomplishments, evaluations will question the extent to which efforts were made to work with a gendered perspective, to identify and strengthen opportunities for the inclusion of women and girls in the development process, and to ensure greater representation of women and girls as stakeholders in the design and implementation of ESCWA activities.<sup>4</sup>

3. See UNEG Handbook, "Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation—Towards UNEG Guidance."

4. UNEG Handbook, "Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation—Towards UNEG Guidance", stipulates the following: "Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men, girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same, but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. It implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men." (page 13)

Evaluations shall be assessed against gender-related UNEG norms and standards as required by the UN SWAP Evaluation Scorecard.

### **Regional Integration**

Evaluations will assess the extent to which ESCWA's activities and products support the organization's commitment to promote regional integration for social and economic development. Evaluations should consider the analysis provided, the modalities of work, as well as the partnerships and networks formed to assess the organization's contribution to regional integration

### **Internationally Agreed Development Goals**

Evaluations assess the extent to which ESCWA activities and products respect, promote and contribute to the internationally agreed development goals, and in particular to the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda and its call for transformative change. ESCWA has a role to bridge the gap between regional and global perspectives and to ensure that development priorities are supported by and feed into global frameworks.<sup>5</sup>

## **NORMS AND STANDARDS<sup>6</sup>**

### **Utility**

Evaluations are planned and conducted with a clear intention to use the resulting lessons learned and recommendations to inform ESCWA's future decisions and actions. The subject of evaluation, including the evaluation scope and questions, are identified to provide timely and relevant contributions to organizational learning, informed decision-making and accountability for results.

Biennial evaluation plans should be clearly accounted for in ESCWA's overall work programme and budget, and should correspond to a strategic multi-year evaluation work programme. Evaluation plans are reviewed annually and shared with ESCWA's Commission and made public.

### **Impartiality**

The key elements of impartiality are objectivity, professional integrity and absence of bias. The entire evaluation process should be governed with impartiality, including the planning, design, selection of evaluators, and implementation. Evaluators must not have been directly responsible for the design or management of the evaluation subject and should be impartial with regards to the subject being evaluated and in formulating findings and recommendations.

“ The evaluation helped us see that, in our ambition to address all needs, we were spread too thin. It gave our experts the chance to speak anonymously about their real views, so that we could formulate our work more effectively. ”

Mr. Bassel Kaghadou  
Senior Technical Advisor  
National Agenda for the Future of Syria Project (NAFS)

### **Independence**

The day-to-day management of evaluations at ESCWA is undertaken by a team in StEPS, which is institutionally independent from the programme planning and monitoring function. The DES as overall head of evaluations at ESCWA, reports to the Executive Secretary on evaluations. To ensure further independence, ESCWA staff do not participate as evaluators but limit their work to the planning and management of evaluations and the facilitation of evaluation follow up. Evaluators must have the full freedom to undertake their evaluative work without any undue influence of any party, and are expected to provide their findings and recommendations independently.

5. Adapted from UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation, June 2016, page 10.

6. Adapted from UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation, June 2016.

### Quality

Evaluation reports must present in a complete and balanced way the findings, conclusions, and recommendations. They must be brief and to the point and easy to understand. They must explain the methodology, including its limitations, present evidenced-based findings, dissident views and consequent conclusions, recommendations and lessons. They must have an executive summary that encapsulates the essence of the information contained in the report, and facilitates dissemination and distillation of lessons.

The Evaluation Team holds the evaluators accountable for their deliverables. Throughout the evaluation process, the Evaluation Team will use a quality assurance mechanism to verify compliance of all deliverables with this Policy, UNEG Norms and Standards and UN SWAP criteria.

### Transparency

All relevant stakeholders should be consulted in a transparent manner. The executive summaries of all

evaluation reports produced by ESCWA should be made public through ESCWA's website along with ESCWA's evaluation plan and this Policy.

### Ethics

The Evaluation Team and evaluators must conform to the UNEG Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct.<sup>9</sup> Evaluators must make every effort to avoid conflict of interest, and must uphold the principles of independence, impartiality, integrity and accountability. Evaluators must engage evaluation participants respectfully, and uphold the principles of confidentiality and anonymity, along with the principles of human rights, gender equality, and the avoidance of harm.

In cases where wrong doing is uncovered, evaluators must report the evidence to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate the personal performance of individuals and must balance an evaluation of management functions with due consideration for this principle.

## INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK, ROLES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Evaluations are managed within ESCWA by a team in StEPS in the Office of the Executive Secretary. Evaluations is one of several functions carried out by the Section. In the absence of a fully distinct unit or section dedicated to evaluations, the Chief of Section of StEPS reports to the Deputy Executive Secretary who acts as the UNEG Head and in turn reports to the Executive Secretary and the Commission on Evaluations.

The Section's mandate is to promote policy coherence, interdisciplinary thinking, and strategic partnerships and resource mobilisation within the organization. The Section's work is distinct from planning and monitoring functions within ESCWA.

### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**The Commission** is responsible for strategic guidance and oversight of ESCWA's programme of work. The intergovernmental body may request project, programme or other level evaluations by resolution (as Mandatory Internal Evaluations). Specialised Committees of the intergovernmental mechanism may refer suggestions to the Commission for consideration or recommend evaluations directly to ESCWA senior management—those recommendations remain at the discretion of ESCWA pending availability of resources.

9. The UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation (available at: [www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102](http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102)) and UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System (available at: [www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100](http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100)) provide more details on the ethical principles to be upheld and specific guidance on how to do so.

**The Executive Secretary** is responsible for all ESCWA activities including evaluations. The Executive Secretary ensures that ESCWA evaluation activities are in line with UN norms and promotes the use of evaluation to strengthen accountability, managing for results and continuous learning in the organization. The Executive Secretary approves ESCWA's evaluation plans, signs Performance Management Compacts arising from Subprogramme evaluations with Division Directors, and holds them accountable for their implementation. In addition, the Executive Secretary ensures adequate allocation of resources, human and financial, to the evaluation team.

**The Deputy Executive Secretary** acts as UNEG Head and is responsible for the overall strategic guidance of the programme regarding evaluations.

**Division Directors** are accountable for ensuring the full cooperation of their staff with the evaluator(s) during the evaluation of Subprogrammes under their leadership. Based on the accepted evaluation recommendations, Division Directors are responsible to develop a two-year, multi-level action plan, to sign it with the Executive Secretary as a Management Performance Compact, to implement it and report on its progress.

**Project Managers** are responsible to ensure full cooperation of the entire project team with the evaluator(s) during the evaluation of projects. Project Managers are accountable for implementing the accepted evaluation recommendations directed to the project team, and to report on their progress to the Evaluation Team.

**The Strategy, Evaluation and Partnership Section (The Evaluation Team)** is considered the evaluation manager and is responsible for planning and managing evaluations as well as facilitating follow up to evaluations and capturing lessons learned. The Section:

- prepares biennial evaluation plans, yearly work plans, and considers ad hoc evaluations as necessary;
- drafts Terms of Reference for evaluations, sets up Steering Committees or Reference Groups, reviews inception and draft reports and ensures that they comply with UNEG and UN-SWAP requirements;
- identifies consultants, ensures the quality throughout the entire evaluation process, and approves final report;
- presents evaluation findings to the Commission, the Executive Secretary and Senior Management and disseminates results as appropriate; manages the production and dissemination of evaluation reports and summaries;
- facilitates the production of management responses to evaluation recommendations and the preparation of action plans where applicable;
- liaises with OIOS, UNEG, Regional Commissions, UN entities, and evaluation networks to ensure continuous improvement of evaluation at ESCWA and to share lessons learned;
- reviews ESCWA's Evaluation Policy at regular intervals and suggests changes as necessary;
- where relevant, acts as focal point for external evaluations of ESCWA that have a strategic or thematic dimension;
- captures lessons learned to inform planning and other strategic functions; and
- monitors the implementation of accepted evaluation recommendations.





## THE EVALUATION PROCESS

### PLANNING

The Evaluation Team, in consultation with ESCWA Executive Secretary, and taking into account any recommendations by the ESCWA Commission and subsidiary committees, prepares a Biennial Evaluation Plan, submitted as Form 12 during the preparation of the ESCWA Programme Budget submission to the Office of the Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts in the Department of Management and to the General Assembly. Following approval, the Plan is then further elaborated to confirm purpose, scope, outputs and timeframe.

**As per the norms outlined in this Policy, evaluation plans should be strategic in identifying the subjects of evaluation:** they should justify why the subject is chosen, the timing of the evaluation, and the expected outcome and its usability in accordance with the purpose of the evaluation.

Evaluation plans may be amended as necessary in the course of the Biennium.

### BUDGETING

ESCWA has dedicated human resources to the Evaluation Team as part of the work plan of StEPS and covered by ESCWA's regular budget. In allocating funds for evaluations, ESCWA will aim for 1% of its overall budget in a given biennium. The sum total of available financial resources will be allocated to cover costs associated with activities in the Evaluation Plan and at the discretion of StEPS. Those costs include:

- Consultancy fees
- Travel of consultants and ESCWA staff
- Editing and translation of evaluation reports
- Evaluation training needs

#### Subprogramme Evaluations

Subprogrammes provide resources from their own budget in order to complement the budget made available by the Evaluation Team. Programme Support

Cost revenues may be used to supplement the evaluation budget, especially where extrabudgetary projects make up a significant part of the Subprogrammes activities.

#### RPTC Evaluations

At regular intervals, ESCWA allocates at least 1% of the operational funds of the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation to cover evaluation of RPTC activities and projects.

#### Development Account Evaluations

DA guidelines stipulate that at least 2% of the project budget should be earmarked for end of project evaluation.

#### Extra-budgetary Evaluations

A mandatory requirement for each XB project over US\$500,000 is the incorporation of appropriate resources for monitoring and evaluation functions, ranging from 2-4 % of the overall project budget.

**For all evaluations**, the full budget, including travel expenses, should be disbursed on a lump sum basis to the evaluator. The lump sum may be paid in different installments linked to the evaluation deliverables.

### MANAGING THE PROCESS

In accordance with the Evaluation Plan and the directives of ESCWA's Commission and/or the Executive Secretary, StEPS as the Evaluation Team will manage evaluations as per Roles and Responsibilities above. StEPS is responsible for the implementation of evaluations according to the terms of this Policy.

Subprogramme and activity managers are responsible for ensuring adequate logistical support to the evaluator(s), including through the provision of data, contact information and liaison with stakeholders, and other similar support.

Evaluations will proceed in four stages: Inception; Data Collection and Analysis; Reporting and Dissemination; and Follow-up – see Figure 3 below. For detailed descriptions, please consult the ESCWA Guidelines on Evaluation.

ESCWA will make evaluation findings public. An Evaluation Report or Summary will be uploaded to the ESCWA website.

ESCWA will also report on evaluation findings to the Commission Session and subsidiary committees relevant to the evaluation subject.

For DA and XB projects, ESCWA will report evaluation findings to the DA Programme Manager and donors respectively.

**QUALITY ASSURANCE AND COMPETENCIES**

The following competencies and criteria contribute to overall quality assurance of evaluations at ESCWA. In addition, a series of guidelines are developed along with the Policy and covering all steps related to the design, implementation and follow up to evaluations. These guidelines are in line with OIOS and UNEG norms and standards.

**FIGURE 3**

	RECEPTION	DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS	REPORTING AND DISSEMINATION	FOLLOW-UP
ESCWA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft TORs</li> <li>• Recruit consultant</li> <li>• Set up Steering Group and/or Expert Reference Group</li> <li>• Compile background documents</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review report</li> <li>• Approve and produce report (editing/printing)</li> <li>• Disseminate Report and/or Summary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support preparation of Management Response</li> <li>• Support preparation of Action Plan and signing of compacts where relevant</li> <li>• Monitor the implementation of recommendations</li> <li>• Distill lessons learnt and recommendations and feed into planning and other processes</li> </ul>
CONSULTANT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk Review</li> <li>• Prepare Inception Report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Field visits, interviews, surveys, Focus Groups</li> <li>• Analysis of data and findings</li> <li>• Initial debriefing on findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft Evaluation Report</li> <li>• Finalize and submit Report</li> <li>• Formal presentation of findings</li> </ul>	

### Evaluating Normative Work

Given the difficulties and nuances of measuring and evaluating the impact of normative work, Evaluations focused on impact should set out clear definitions and scope of short, medium and long term results. They should clearly identify duty bearers and rights holders. The evaluation should also address the extent to which the planning and implementation processes serve and strengthen the adoption and implementation of UN norms relevant to the evaluation subject. In addition, in evaluating normative work in particular efforts should be made to work with local experts and utilize local knowledge to the extent possible in the design and implementation of the evaluation.<sup>10</sup>

### Profile of the Evaluator (consultant)

- Thorough understanding of the UN context and familiarity with the role of programming in the UN Secretariat
- Thorough understanding of the regional context and experience working in the region
- Good technical knowledge of evaluation components, including evaluation design, data collection, data analysis and reporting
- Knowledge of and commitment to human rights and gender equality issues
- Excellent oral and written communication skills and ability to effectively convey complex information in a clear and concise manner
- A high level of expertise in the distilling, communication and reporting of findings, recommendations, best practices and lessons learned
- Relevant language proficiency
- Knowledge of technical area being evaluated (desirable)

In line with UNEG Norms and Standards, evaluators should make every effort to avoid conflicts of interest

in all aspects of their work, thereby upholding the principles of independence, impartiality, credibility, honesty, integrity and accountability<sup>11</sup>.

### Evaluation Deliverables

#### *Terms of Reference*

In consultation with the programme or activity manager, the Evaluation Team will draft initial TORs outlining the objectives and scope of Evaluation, which will be revised by the evaluator following a desk review.

#### *Inception Report*

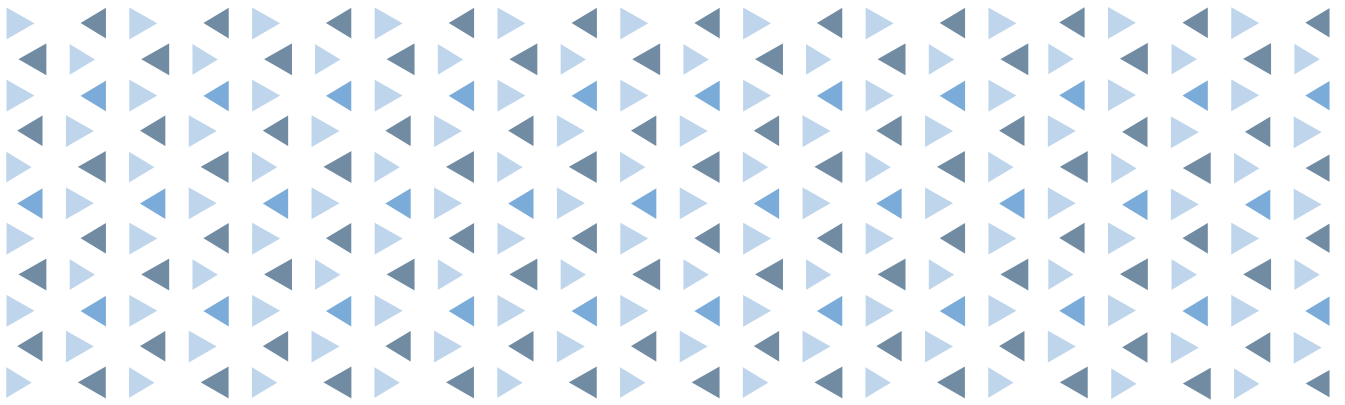
The evaluator will submit an Inception Report, which serves as the Evaluation Plan and addresses the evaluation questions mentioned in the Terms of Reference (ToR). It may also include proposed revisions to the ToR, and add relevant questions to be considered in the evaluation. It is written after an initial desk review of main project/programme documents and consultations with core staff. It will clarify the objectives and scope of the evaluation, present preliminary questions for investigation raised by the desk review, propose a methodology for data collection and analysis, identify a quality assurance mechanism for the Draft Report, and include an evaluation matrix specifying which questions will be asked of the different categories of stakeholders and key informants.

#### *Draft Evaluation Report*

The evaluator will submit a Draft Evaluation Report in accordance with the Outline for Evaluation Reports, which will be attached to the Terms of Reference. The report must comply with UNEG and UN-SWAP requirements and include an executive summary and a section on the scope, objectives and methodology. The report is written at the end of the data collection and field visit phase and includes the analysis and findings drawn from a range of primary evidence gathered, including extensive review of relevant documents, interviews with a broad array of stakeholders and sectoral informants, meetings with participants, and visits to programme activities. The Draft Evaluation Report should be a complete report, presenting findings, recommendations,

10. See UNEG's Handbook for Conducting Evaluations of Normative Work in the UN System.

11. UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation, June 2016, page 21.



lessons learnt and conclusions in a concise, logical, and coherent manner, with relevant citations. It is submitted to the Evaluation Team for circulation to the Steering Committee, where applicable, and other select recipients for review, comments and proposed corrections.

#### *The Final Evaluation Report*

The Evaluation Team and the Steering Group, where applicable, will assure the quality of the Final Report and submit comments and proposed corrections to the evaluator on the Draft Evaluation Report in a timely manner. The evaluator will prepare a matrix to address each comment and the proposed revision, with a rationale for each response. Once the evaluator and the Evaluation Team agree on the revision of the points in question, those changes will be formalised in the submission of the Final Evaluation Report. The dissemination of the Final Report will be in accordance with the terms of the Evaluation Policy.

#### **Stakeholder Engagement and Inclusivity**

To enhance the validity and objectivity of the design and implementation of the evaluation, every effort should be extended to identify and involve all relevant stakeholders (see Evaluation Scope above). Efforts should also be made to respect geographical and gender representation. Key stakeholders should be consulted in the design and implementation of the evaluation process to clarify objectives and ensure ownership of results.

#### **Key stakeholders should be consulted in the design and implementation of the evaluation process to clarify objectives and ensure ownership of results.**

Two further modalities may be employed to ensure greater engagement and inclusivity<sup>12</sup>:

#### *Steering Groups*

To include all primary stakeholders – the ESCWA Evaluation Team; the evaluator; the project or programme manager; a member of ESCWA's Senior Management assigned by the Executive Secretary; person or persons in a governing position at the discretion of the ESCWA Evaluation Team (for example, a member of a Board of Governors or an Advisory Group). Steering Groups advise and provide guidance throughout the evaluation process and review and approve the Inception and Final Evaluation Reports.

#### *Reference Groups*

To include external experts on the subject of evaluation. Reference Groups provide different insights to the subject and enhance the relevance, quality and credibility of evaluation processes. They should be consulted during the evaluation process to review the Inception Reports and Final Evaluation Reports, and at any point when needed. Reference Groups are necessary and feasible when further independent technical input is needed and when—at the discretion of the ESCWA Evaluation Team – the scale and objectives of the Evaluation warrants the establishment of such a group.

12. UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation, June 2016, page 24.

## USE OF FINDINGS

### DISSEMINATION STRATEGY

Findings and recommendations of all sub-programme and project evaluations, regardless of their nature, will be made available to stakeholders, beneficiaries, the UN system and the general public through executive summaries posted on ESCWA's evaluation webpage. In addition, Evaluation Reports will be disseminated to all staff through the iSeek page of the UN Secretariat. Subprogrammes will also be encouraged to table a discussion on specific evaluation results at relevant ESCWA inter-governmental meetings. Some evaluation reports may also be shared publicly, through the UNEG evaluation database, pending the approval of the evaluated project/programme team. Finally, each biennium StEPS will produce a biennial report on evaluations which will be made public on ESCWA's website.

### MANAGEMENT RESPONSES AND MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE COMPACTS

All evaluations solicit an explicit management response addressing each recommendation within one month of the submission of the Final Report submission. The management response consists of an action plan and a timeline specifying how the accepted recommendations will be implemented, and provides a detailed justification when a recommendation is not accepted.

**For Subprogramme evaluations**, the management response will take the shape of a two-year, multi-level

action plan. The action plan will be reviewed by the Executive Secretary and signed as a Management Performance Compact between the Executive Secretary and the Division Director. StEPS, under the leadership of the Head of Evaluations, acts as a facilitator for this process and follows-up on the implementation of commitments in the Compacts.

### MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND FEEDING INTO PLANNING

StEPS will monitor the implementation of all accepted recommendations for the period of two years. Every Division or organizational unit is responsible to track the status of implementation of all relevant evaluation recommendations. For this purpose, Subprogrammes, the Office of the Executive Secretary, and the PPTCS will each nominate an Evaluation Focal Point.

StEPS will collect the updated Management Responses from the Evaluation Focal Points and prepare a Summary Report and an ESCWA-wide Repository of Key Lessons Learnt and Recommendations.

The Repository will be shared with the Programme Planning and Technical Cooperation Section, the Projects Committee, and all Directors and Section Chiefs to allow them to integrate the lessons learnt and recommendations in all levels of planning.

## COORDINATION AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

StEPS will also engage with evaluation units or similar entities within the Regional Commissions, with UNEG and OIOS and with other UN entities. StEPS will also engage with non-UN evaluation networks including EVALMENA.

The aim is to address global evaluation issues and improve evaluation capacities internally and the use of evaluations to strengthen the impact of social and economic development globally, including in particular the impact of normative work.

