



# PROFESSIONAL PEER REVIEW OF THE UNITAR EVALUATION FUNCTION

September 2021



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The views expressed in this report are those of the Peer Review Panel on the basis of their individual capacities.

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

BOT	Board of Trustees
DSPP	Division for Strategic Planning and Performance
EAB	Evaluation Advisory Board
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
PPME	Planning, Performance Monitoring and Evaluation
PVSA	Peer-Validated Self-Assessment
RBM	Results Based Management
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TOC	Theory of Change
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research

## Executive Summary

Evaluation plays a key role in contributing to a more effective, efficient and impactful United Nations (UN) system. It provides evidence-based information; identifies areas for improvement; and presents management, partners and member states with lessons and recommendations to address issues, or identify best practices for replication and scale-up. Evaluation is an important component in the governance landscape of UN organizations and serves to further enhance confidence and trust in its work.

The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards (N&S) for Evaluation in the UN System (2016) establish a set of elements, principles and guidance that all UNEG members follow and adopt. The N&S ensure compliance with the three foundational pillars of evaluation (independence, credibility and utility), ultimately contributing to organizational learning and accountability. Peer Reviews are a mechanism to assess an organisation's evaluation function against the UNEG N&S.

Upon request, UNEG conducted a professional Peer Review of the evaluation function of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) between June to September 2021. The specific objective of the Peer Review is to provide insights that can be used to strengthen the UNITAR evaluation function, and further improve its products and services. The Peer Review findings and recommendations are addressed to the UNITAR Executive Director, the Evaluation Advisory Board (EAB), the Division of Strategic Planning and Performance (DSPP) and the Planning, Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (PPME) Unit.

## Key Findings

The strategic role of the UNITAR evaluation function is well recognized and acknowledged within the organisation. Evaluation staff are highly appreciated for their professionalism, technical expertise, oversight functions and support to organizational processes.

The current Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Policy Framework adheres, to a large extent, to UNEG evaluation policy standards.

At the senior management level, there is a good understanding of the strategic role of evaluation and the importance and benefits of high-quality independent evaluations for the organization. However, a culture of evaluation and results needs to be further developed, in particular at the mid-level where some internal stakeholders do not see evaluation as a priority.

The Peer Review panel noted an increased interest and demand for evaluation from some donors, in particular for more outcome and impact-related evaluations.

Decentralized and self-evaluation are an important part of the organization's monitoring function. However, the line between monitoring and evaluation seems "blurred". In general, UNITAR's management recognizes that self-evaluations are useful and, with the support of the evaluation function, more can be conducted.

The quality and content of evaluation reports are acknowledged as "honest, critical and objective", although there is some scope to improve user friendliness and dissemination.

## **Key Conclusions**

The Peer Review panel finds that:

- Over the last few years, UNITAR has established a well-functioning evaluation function with an adequate evaluation governance structure. In particular, it is commendable that the UNITAR evaluation function is actually “doing a lot with little”.
- Evaluation in the organization is appreciated; evaluation reports are critical and used; and accountability is important to donors. However, evaluation can be used more for organisational learning (“walk the talk”).
- The evaluation function operates within its boundaries. The roles and functions of evaluation staff are sufficiently defined in the M&E Framework, but it will be useful to further specify and clarify the role of programme staff for independent and self-evaluations.
- Despite evaluation resources (staff, budget and time) being overstretched, the evaluation function is achieving a lot due to the outstanding commitment of the evaluation staff.

### ***Independence***

The evaluation function is separate from Programming and Operational Divisions meaning it has a certain degree of organizational independence. The Head of Division is responsible for the evaluation function and reports to the Executive Director. The evaluation function can also commission and publish evaluation reports at its discretion.

The evaluation function has a limited degree of financial independence. The budget for independent project evaluations comes from the Programme Divisions meaning it is therefore dependant on projects being financed, project planning processes and project budgets.

Evaluation staff are able to conduct their work without undue influence from outside parties demonstrating a good level of behavioural independence.

### ***Credibility***

The evaluation function is both credible and professional. Staff in the evaluation unit are highly appreciated and considered knowledgeable about the entire organization. They are engaged in management processes, and facilitate and support other institutional entities. While the unit is organizationally independent, it is not isolated and engagement of the evaluation function within the organization is clearly identified.

The evaluation process provides for adequate impartiality at all stages of the evaluation process including the planning of evaluations, selecting the evaluators, providing access to stakeholders, managing the evaluations. A robust quality assurance system is also in place.

The evaluation reports analysed were of high quality and adhered to the UNEG Norms and Standards. Only gender and human rights issues were not sufficiently considered in all of the reports analyzed.



## Utility

Whilst evaluations in UNITAR are found useful, not all UNITAR staff are fully aware of the benefit and scope of independent evaluations. There is room to improve and enhance an evaluation and results-oriented culture by, for example, systematizing the sharing of information, including evaluation results, between Divisions.

An evaluation management response system is in place. However, implementation of evaluation recommendations could be further improved.

## SWOT Summary

A snapshot of “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats” (SWOT) is presented in the table below.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Strong professional capacity and commitment in the evaluation unit.</li><li>2. Strong and clear policy framework, guidance documents, and tools for evaluation.</li><li>3. Well-aligned to UNEG N&amp;S.</li><li>4. The quality of evaluations is well recognised.</li><li>5. Good functional independence for evaluation (behavioural).</li><li>6. Evaluation Advisory Board strengthens the evaluation governance structure.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Under-staffed for the current demand of project evaluations, and to expand coverage of strategic evaluations.</li><li>2. Coverage of project evaluations limited by threshold of USD1.5 million and does not have a representative coverage of the UNITAR portfolio.</li><li>3. Room for improvement on gender and other cross-cutting issues in evaluation reports.</li><li>4. Room for improvement in the follow-up of recommendations and use of evaluations.</li><li>5. Room for more awareness on the evaluation function and its work in the organization.</li></ol>
Opportunities	Threats
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Increasing demand and attention to evaluation by donors and partners</li><li>2. Support the Kirkpatrick/Phillips Training Evaluation Model and use findings for donors in particular and for communication in general.</li><li>3. Use the Kirkpatrick/Phillips Training Evaluation Model to strengthen impact.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Increasing demands with remaining resources</li></ol>

## Recommendations

The Panel offers eight recommendations to address issues and areas for improvement that will enhance the evaluation function and bring added value to the organization. Below is a summary of the recommendations:

**Recommendation 1:** Evaluation culture. The Peer Review Panel recommends that UNITAR Senior Management (Executive Director and Heads of Divisions) continue to strengthen the evaluation culture in UNITAR (“walk the talk”), while ensuring that learning and accountability dimensions are well balanced through the evaluation products. Management should use evaluations more strategically with partners and donors, and strengthen communication using adapted or new evaluation products.

**Recommendation 2:** Evaluation Advisory Board. The Peer Review Panel recommends that DSPP/PPME: engage with the EAB to discuss organizational data and information needs; explore potential synergy effects by reviewing available data and findings from self-evaluations and independent evaluations; and analyze themes, topics and projects which were not yet evaluated or sufficiently evaluated and link them to the current Strategic Framework and identify future priorities.

**Recommendation 3:** Evaluation Policy. The Peer Review Panel recommends that DSPP/PPME develop a standalone Evaluation Policy, separate from the important and complementary monitoring dimension, using the analysis already undertaken by the evaluation function and the finding of this Peer Review.

**Recommendation 4:** Kirkpatrick Training Evaluation Model. The Peer Review Panel recommends that DSPP/PPME: keep using the Kirkpatrick Training Evaluation Model as a strategic communication and fundraising tool strategically with donors and potential new donors; develop new or revise existing guidelines to ensure visual coherence or include the training evaluation model (Level 1 to 3 and Level 4) into the new Evaluation Policy; and increase the visibility of respective document(s) on the website.

**Recommendation 5:** Evaluation Plan. The Peer Review Panel recommends that DSPP/PPME prepare and publish a two-year tentative “Evaluation Plan” on the UNITAR website for scheduled independent evaluations, as well as a separate “Overview List“ of independent evaluations already conducted.

**Recommendation 6:** Evaluation Guidelines/Manual. The Peer Review Panel recommends that, based on the “Entry Conference Notes for Independent Evaluations of Projects” and other existing guidelines, DSPP/PPME prepare and publish operational “Evaluation Guidelines/Manual” for independent evaluations, which includes guidance for self- evaluations.

**Recommendation 7:** Evaluation Reports. The Peer Review Panel recommends that DSPP/PPME: further strengthen gender, human rights and other cross-cutting issues in its evaluation reports; adapt evaluation guidelines and templates; and continue strengthening quality assurance with consultants on these matters.

**Recommendation 8:** Management Response. The Peer Review Panel recommends that DSPP/PPME: strengthen the management response process in the new Evaluation Policy; follow-up more frequently on evaluation recommendations; invite respective divisions to report on the implementation status of evaluation recommendations in relevant management meetings periodically and inform the EAB on the status of implementation; ensure that all management responses fully adhere to the format; and establish an electronic tool with automated reminders.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 About the Peer Review

1. This professional Peer Review (hereafter Peer Review) of the Evaluation Function of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) was carried out under the provisions contained in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)<sup>1</sup> updated Guidance Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Function of UN organizations, and the specific Terms of Reference of this Peer Review (Annex 1).

2. It is the first Peer Review of the UNITAR evaluation function and was conducted at the request of UNITAR. The Peer Review Panel comprised:

- Ms. Claudia Iburguen, Peer Review Chair, Head of Evaluation, Internal Oversight Service, UNESCO
- Mr. Javier Guarnizo, Director, Office of Evaluation and Internal Oversight, UNIDO
- Ms. Taipei Dlamini, Associate Evaluation Specialist, Internal Oversight Service, UNESCO
- Ms. Karin Kohlweg, Senior Evaluation Consultant to the Peer Review

## 1.2 Purpose, Subject and Scope

3. The main purpose of the UNITAR Peer Review is to provide insight to strengthen the UNITAR evaluation function, so that it can effectively contribute to organizational decision-making, learning and accountability for results and programme effectiveness<sup>2</sup>.

4. In order to do so, the Peer Review looks to determine if the evaluation function and its products are independent, credible, and useful for learning and accountability purposes, as assessed against UN standards, and in relation to what is fit-for-purpose for UNITAR.

5. With the overall goal of improving the overall quality of the evaluation function, the Peer Review will provide actionable recommendations to the UNITAR Executive Director, the Evaluation Advisory Board (EAB), the Division of Strategic Planning and Performance (DSPP) and the Planning, Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (PPME) Unit.

6. The scope of this Peer Review focuses on the performance of the evaluation function since 2016 in relation to the updated UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System<sup>3</sup>. The

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<sup>1</sup> UNEG is an interagency professional network that brings together the evaluation units of the UN system, including UN departments, specialized agencies, funds and programmes, and affiliated organizations. It currently has 50 such members and observers.

<sup>2</sup> The main purpose derives from the key question common to all UNEG assessments: Are the agency's evaluation function and its products; independent, credible, and useful for learning and accountability purposes?

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>.

findings will also feed into the revision process of UNITAR's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Policy Framework towards the end of 2021.

### 1.3 Approach, Process and Limitations

7. Compared to other UN evaluation units, the UNITAR evaluation function is relatively small and so the UNEG Peer-Validated Self-Assessment approach was used (afterwards Peer Review)<sup>4</sup>. This lighter approach is based primarily, but not exclusively, on the validation of a self-assessment carried out by the reviewed agency to help assess the maturity of its evaluation function against the established norms and standards for evaluation. UNITAR conducted this self-assessment, critically rating itself against a set of organizational and performance criteria.

8. During the data collection phase, several tools were used to gather and analyze qualitative and quantitative information. Sources included:

- The review of the self-assessment prepared by PPME was used for the initial phase of the Peer Review in order to see how it positions itself, and identifies strengths and weaknesses<sup>5</sup>. It also helped to further specify review questions and supported the triangulation process.
- Interviews with relevant stakeholders, including UNITAR staff and governing body representatives (Annex 2).
- A desk review of strategic and operational guidelines and documents, in particular the M&E Policy Framework (Annex 3).
- An assessment of 15 out of 21 UNITAR evaluation reports available on the website.<sup>6</sup>
- An analysis of the management responses to the 15 evaluation reports (Annex 5).
- A summary of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) based on findings.

9. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, members of the Peer Review Panel could not travel to UNITAR premises to conduct fieldwork in person. All interviews were undertaken remotely, missing out on personal face-to-face interactions. In addition, the Peer Review also started with a two-week delay which shifted the analysis work into the summer holiday season. These limitations were overcome through intensive interactions with UNITAR stakeholders, as well as continuous discussions between the panel members.

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<sup>4</sup> In the PVSA, a self-assessment against the UNEG normative framework is prepared by the evaluation function itself. The self-assessed "maturity" of the function with respect to each criterion is supported by reference to sources of evidence. The collated evidence is assessed, verified and triangulated by a small team including two senior UNEG members.

<sup>5</sup> Due to its length (31 pages) and format, the self-assessment is available as a separate document.

<sup>6</sup> Since this was a PVSA and therefore a "lighter" review exercise, the evaluation reports were assessed on a more generic level against the UNEG standards (Annex 4).

**Table 1: Timeline of the UNITAR Peer Review**

Activity	Date
Scoping discussion with full Peer Review Panel and the Evaluation Unit	17 June 2021
Desk review	June – July 2021
Interviews with Stakeholders	28 June – 2 July, early August
Assessment of UNITAR evaluation reports & management responses	July – August 2021
Submission of the zero draft review report submitted to the UNITAR evaluation unit	17 September 2021
Preliminary feedback on the zero draft review report	23 September 2021
Submission of the final report to the UNITAR evaluation unit	27 September 2021

## 2. Context

### 2.1 Background and Mandate

10. UNITAR, founded in 1963, is an autonomous entity and one of the UN’s research and training institutes. Its mandate is to develop the individual, institutional and organizational capacities of countries through different learning solutions and related services to enhance decision making and support country-level action to overcome global challenges.

11. UNITAR’s projects are highly diverse. They range from short-term, small-scale, stand-alone learning events to long-term, large-scale technical capacity development projects, many of which are implemented with partners and involve activities linked to multiple outputs and outcomes. Means of delivery are equally diverse and include face-to-face, technology-enhanced, and blended forms of training, networking, and knowledge sharing and analysis<sup>7</sup>.

12. In 2020, UNITAR organized 621 events with specific learning outcomes reaching 209,881 participants<sup>8</sup>.

13. UNITAR training covers various thematic areas including: activities to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; multilateral diplomacy; public finance and trade; health; environmental issues, including climate change, environmental law and governance, and chemical and waste management; peacekeeping, peacebuilding and conflict prevention; social development; and resilience and disaster risk reduction.

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<sup>7</sup> UNITAR Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, April 2017, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> <https://unitar.org/sites/default/files/media/file/KPI-2020.pdf>

## Box 1: UNITAR's Vision, Mission and Key Objectives<sup>9</sup>

**Vision:** A world in which individuals, institutions and organizations are equipped with the knowledge, skills and other capacities to overcome global challenges.

**Mission:** To develop the individual, institutional and organizational capacities of countries and other UN stakeholders through high quality learning solutions and related knowledge products and services to enhance decision making and to support country-level action for overcoming global challenges.

### Key Objectives:

Peace	Promote peace and just and inclusive societies.
People	Promote people's well-being and support equitable representation of countries in global decision-making fora.
Planet	Support the conservation, restoration and safeguarding of our planet for present and future generations.
Prosperity	Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth.
Cross-fertilizing knowledge	Knowledge and Expertise. Promote the indivisible and integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda including optimize the use of technologies, including geospatial technologies, for evidence-based decision making and Support coherence and evidenced-based policies of the 2030 Agenda.

14. UNITAR is project-based and does not receive any funds from the UN regular budget. It is therefore financed entirely from voluntary contributions from UN Member States, the business sector, UN agencies, public institutions, universities, NGOs and affiliation fees from CIFAL<sup>10</sup> centres.

15. UNITAR's overall programme budget for 2020-2021 was USD69.4million<sup>11</sup>.

16. UNITAR's Strategic Framework 2018-2021 highlighted its need to "Become Fit-for-Purpose", referring to the interconnected, universal and transformational nature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also emphasized the importance of evaluation:

*"Our approach to evaluation will be forward-looking and strategic. In addition to performance and accountability, we will focus on lesson learning and quality improvement. Self-evaluations will continue to be undertaken regularly, but we will further strengthen our independent evaluation practices to ensure that credible, evidence-based information informs decisions, while also engaging in joint evaluation undertakings with other UN entities"*<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> [https://www.unitar.org/sites/default/files/media/publication/doc/unitar\\_strategicframework\\_web-new.pdf](https://www.unitar.org/sites/default/files/media/publication/doc/unitar_strategicframework_web-new.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> International Training Centres for Authorities and Leaders.

<sup>11</sup> Revision to the Programme Budget for the Biennium 2020-2021, p. 76.

<sup>12</sup> UNITAR Strategic Framework 2018-2021, p. 16.

17. The reconstructed Theory of Change<sup>13</sup> for UNITAR’s Strategic Framework provides a graphical representation and overview of its five key objectives, as well as the different output and outcome level results indicating the four different levels of “training evaluations” used in UNITAR (see Section 4.3.4 “Kirkpatrick Evaluation Training Model and Impact”).

18. Since 2007, as part of its organizational reforms, UNITAR designed an integrated results-based management (RBM) framework that links strategic planning, results-based budgeting, and annual and individual work plans to M&E, as well as programme and staff performance reporting. Initial work to harmonize RBM across UNITAR was conducted in 2007 with the preparation of the 2008-2009 Biennium Programme Budget<sup>14</sup>.

19. Although there is no explicit RBM strategy, the document “Results-based Management at UNITAR. Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Performance Reporting” (January 2019), refers to performance reporting, monitoring and evaluation taking place at two organizational levels. Monitoring and evaluation is also discussed in a separate chapter.

20. To respond to the increasing need to focus on learning outcomes and strengthen the quality of training products and services, UNITAR also established a Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) in 2012. The Framework was updated in 2017 and refers to evaluation<sup>15</sup>.

21. UNITAR also tracks a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to assess organizational performance against its intended outcomes and strategic objectives. KPIs serve as the corporate performance dashboard, measuring event delivery; types of programming; gender and development status of beneficiaries; participant feedback and use of knowledge/skills; and financial metrics<sup>16</sup>.

## 2.2 The UNITAR Evaluation Function

22. In 2009, UNITAR established a formal evaluation function and unit located in DSPP. Its purpose, amongst others, was to lead the development and implementation of an M&E Policy Framework<sup>17</sup>.

23. UNITAR acknowledges that, whilst monitoring and evaluation are different functions, they are complementary and interdependent and this is reflected in the Evaluation Policy (see Section 2.2.4).

*“Monitoring progress, evaluating and regular reporting on the implementation of the strategic framework will be essential. Performance monitoring will be enhanced, with a set of indicators and metrics to link our result areas to the SDG global indicators. Monitoring will be undertaken at both the managerial and corporate levels based on the indicators and performance measures in the programme budgets, with performance reports issued to the*

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<sup>13</sup> Mid-Term Evaluation of the Implementation of the Strategic Framework 2018-2021, p. 24-25.

<sup>14</sup> Results-based Management at UNITAR. Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Performance Reporting, January 2019, p. 5. This document, initially prepared in April 2009 as a discussion paper, was revised in November 2016.

<sup>15</sup> UNITAR Quality Assurance Framework (2017).

[https://www.unitar.org/sites/default/files/uploads/pprs/quality\\_assurance\\_framework\\_revised\\_april\\_2017\\_with\\_annexes.pdf](https://www.unitar.org/sites/default/files/uploads/pprs/quality_assurance_framework_revised_april_2017_with_annexes.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> <https://unitar.org/sites/default/files/media/file/KPI-2020.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> UNITAR Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, Revised April 2017, p. 5.

*Board of Trustees on an annual basis, as well as a mid-term evaluation. Moreover, we will contribute actively to UN system-wide reporting efforts as required. In addition to serving as an accountability tool, such evaluation will support organizational learning and inform any revisions to the framework”<sup>18</sup>.*

24. As part of DSPP, PPME works towards strengthening UNITAR’s accountability, programme effectiveness, efficiency, and organizational learning thereby contributing to strategic planning, corporate monitoring and organizational reporting.

### **2.2.1 Evaluation Budget**

25. DSPP’s budget includes the budget for PPME and is approved by the Executive Director. It is then considered and adopted by the Board of Trustees as part of the UNITAR programme and budget process.

26. The M&E Policy Framework sets a threshold amount to guide decisions on the need to undertake an evaluation of a UNITAR project. Based on this policy, all projects budgeted at USD1.5million and above are subject to an independent evaluation. Mandatory project evaluations should be budgeted at 2.5 per cent of the project’s budget (e.g., USD37,500 for a project of USD1.5 million). The threshold requirement was introduced and endorsed by the Board of Trustees at its Fifty-seventh Session in 2016.

27. For corporate level independent evaluations, i.e. those not specifically related to a project, relevant budgets are identified in the annual evaluation workplan.

28. While PPME’s staff costs are covered by UNITAR’s general fund, consultants and other costs required to undertake independent project evaluations are covered through project budgets. PPME also has its own operational budget of USD60k-80k per year to undertake independent evaluations at its discretion.

29. DSPP’s budget amounts to USD1.2million in 2020-2021<sup>19</sup>, including PPME’s budget of about USD1million. Of this, 83% covered regular staff costs, consultancy costs and office rent<sup>20</sup>. Even though PPME is multifunctional, its resources are primarily used for evaluations. The evaluation plan generally foresees two strategic and/or policy evaluations, as well as five to ten independent project evaluations per biennium to be managed by PPME.

### **2.2.2 Governance Structure and Staffing**

30. The evaluation function is under the overall responsibility of DSPP, through PPME. DSPP is independent from programming divisions and also includes the Partnership and Resource Mobilization Unit. PPME reports to the Director of DSPP who, in turn, reports to the Executive Director.

31. The evaluation function is composed of:

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<sup>18</sup> UNITAR Strategic Framework 2018-2021, p. 18.

<sup>19</sup> Revision to the Programme Budget for the Biennium 2020-2021, p. 76.

<sup>20</sup> Some project evaluation costs fall under the respective programme unit budgets or are shared between programme units.



- The Director of DSPP who is ultimately responsible for the evaluation function (evaluation head). The Director works part-time on evaluation.
- PPME staff which includes one full time staff member (P-3), one trainee and a part-time consultant (since April 2021). Consultants (evaluators) are hired on an as needs basis for independent evaluations.

32. To further strengthen the evaluation culture, UNITAR recently established an Evaluation Advisory Board (EAB) which serves as a forum to discuss evaluation matters, and support the Executive Director, the Board of Trustees and the Director of DSPP. The functions of the EAB are to:

- Advise the UNITAR Executive Director and DSPP Director on the conduct, use and follow-up on evaluations.
- Provide DSPP with strategic direction and expertise on matters relating to organizational performance and learning.
- Discuss draft evaluation plans and propose corporate evaluations to the Executive Director or PPME, as appropriate.
- Review independent evaluations undertaken by PPME.
- Review the evaluation policy.
- Provide advice and recommendations on other matters related to evaluation and performance monitoring functions; and
- Revise the EAB Terms of Reference and propose candidates to the Executive Director for appointment to the Board<sup>21</sup>.

33. The EAB consists of four external advisors, the Executive Director, and the Director of DSPP. The EAB met for the first time on 17 June 2021 and additional meetings are planned for this year. All four advisors are senior, have been engaged in evaluation and learning assignments, and will bring a variety of different organizational perspectives and evaluation expertise. One member currently serves on UNITAR's Board of Trustees whilst another just finished a term<sup>22</sup>.

34. The EAB is expected to help identify information, learning and evaluation needs for UNITAR as a whole, as well as those of donors. Donors are crucial for UNITAR since the organization is entirely dependent on external funds.

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<sup>21</sup> UNITAR ToR Evaluation Advisory Board, undated.

<sup>22</sup> Members of the EAB were appointed by the Executive Director for a term of three years, renewable once. Source: UNITAR ToR Evaluation Advisory Board.

### **2.2.3 Role of the Evaluation Function in the Organization**

35. According to the M&E Policy Framework, evaluation in UNITAR serves the following purposes<sup>23</sup>:

- a. Organizational learning and quality improvement: Perhaps more than other purposes, UNITAR views evaluation as an opportunity to learn how to do things better, more effectively, with greater relevance, with more efficient use of resources, and with greater and more sustainable impact. Evaluation results need to contribute to knowledge management and serve as the basis for enhancing the quality of products and services.
- b. Accountability: As an organization receiving funds in the form of voluntary contributions from public and private donors, in addition to funds from fee-based training services, the Institute is answerable to its sources of funding for delivering results.
- c. Improved decision-making: Results from evaluations provide the basis for informed, responsible decisions. Such decisions may include, for example, scaling up, replicating, or phasing out a programme, project or undertaking; adjusting learning objectives; redesigning content, changing methodologies, assessment activities or modes of delivery; etc.

36. For the most part, PPME's evaluation portfolio entails managing independent evaluations of projects developed and implemented by UNITAR's programming divisions.

37. PPME also monitors the management responses of independent evaluation, shares evaluation findings, evaluation reports and ensures dissemination throughout UNITAR. It also undertakes other evaluations or evaluation-related activities at its discretion within budget allocations.

38. At the decentralized level, UNITAR's programme units undertake self-evaluations of projects and activities, the results of which are usually incorporated in project narrative reports.

39. PPME has developed several self-evaluation guidance documents and offered backstopping support, e.g., preparing surveys; commenting on drafts reports; and preparing lessons learned based on findings from self-evaluations and independent evaluations. The unit also organized internal learning events, most recently on how to incorporate gender considerations into monitoring and self-evaluation. It also contributed to the draft syllabus of the "Foundation Course on Learning Development", which was developed to train UNITAR staff on the value and process of evaluations for training-related programming.

40. To improve self-evaluation reports, PPME also conducts reviews / meta-analysis analyzing the quality of reports. In the last report (August 2021), 17 self-evaluations were analyzed and both shortcomings and good practices were highlighted.

41. The UNITAR evaluation function conducts different types of independent evaluations as defined in the M&E Policy. These include:

- Strategic and policy evaluations

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<sup>23</sup> UNITAR M&E Policy Framework, 2017, p. 7-8.

- Project and programme evaluations
- Thematic evaluations
- Cluster evaluations
- Meta-evaluations
- Reviews of self-evaluations (quality assurance)

42. According to the number of evaluation reports on the UNITAR website, PPME has undertaken 21 independent evaluations since 2016.

### **2.2.4 Evaluation Policy**

43. UNITAR currently does not have a stand-alone Evaluation Policy in. The M&E Policy Framework was issued in 2012 to strengthen accountability and programme effectiveness and efficiency under the 2010-2012 Strategic Plan. The M&E Policy Framework was reviewed in 2015 and 2016, with the last review in 2017<sup>24</sup>.

44. A review of the M&E Policy was foreseen in 2019 but was postponed to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, an internal review by PPME has already identified some changes which will be further considered.

45. The UNEG Norms and Standards<sup>25</sup> provide key elements for an evaluation policy, namely:

- Purpose, concepts, rules and use of evaluation within the organization.
- Institutional framework and roles and responsibilities of evaluation professionals, senior management and programme managers with regards to evaluation.
- A disclosure policy for the dissemination of evaluation results.
- Measures to safeguard evaluation independence and public accountability.
- Benchmarks to ensure that the resources of the evaluation function are commensurate with the size and function of the organization and allow for the conduct of high-quality evaluation activities to meet organizational needs for learning and accountability.
- Measures to ensure the quality and the use of evaluations in post-evaluation follow-up.
- Framework for decentralized evaluations, where applicable.
- Framework for evaluation capacity development, where applicable; and
- Provisions for peer or external review.

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<sup>24</sup> Results-based Management at UNITAR. January 2019, p: 14.

<sup>25</sup> UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation, 2016. <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>

### 3. Peer Review Panel Observations on UNITAR’s Self-Assessment

46. Based on the “self-assessment” of its evaluation function previously conducted by UNITAR, the Peer Review Panel reviewed it with the purpose of validation and/or identification of any relevant discrepancy to highlight it.

47. Overall, the self-assessment provides an adequate self-critical approach by DSPP/PPME recognizing room for improvement in several areas. A summary of the self-assessment on the criteria is presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Summary of Self-Assessment of UNITAR’s Evaluation Function**

Level of Compliance	No. of Criteria	Examples of Different Criteria
Level 1 - Low Compliance	1	No formal reference to bias mitigation in current M&E policy
Level 2 – Average Compliance	14	Sharing evaluation results internally & externally; contribution to EVALSDGs; effect of evaluation use linked to organisational effectiveness; others.
Level 3 Good Compliance	29	Dissemination & communication strategy; professional integrity; methods & types of evaluations; quality of reports; controls; work plan; others.
Level 4 Excellent Compliance	6	Independence; role of governing bodies; accessibility & transparency of evaluation reports, participation in UNEG; mandate in M&E policy; monitoring & review of M&E policy.
Not applicable	3	Regular reports to Member States; others.

48. To avoid repetition, references to the self-assessment ratings can be found throughout the report but not all criteria are referred to as the Peer Review mainly focuses on “independence, credibility and utility issues”.

49. Overall, the Peer Review Panel agrees with the assessment and judgements of DSPP/PPME. The only criterion where the Peer Review Panel disagrees with PPME’s rating relates to human rights and gender equality<sup>26</sup>. PPME rated the criterion level 3 whereas the Peer Review Panel would rate it more at level 2 because human rights and gender issues were only considered in one third of the 15 evaluation reports analyzed. This is further discussed below in section 4.3.2 “Quality of Independent Evaluation Reports”.

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<sup>26</sup> “The universally recognized values and principles of human rights and gender equality need to be integrated into all stages of an evaluation. It is the responsibility of evaluators and evaluation managers to ensure that these values are respected, addressed and promoted, underpinning the commitment to ‘leaving no one behind’”.

50. The Peer Review Panel finds that self-assessments are indeed a good practice for all Peer Review exercises.

## 4. Findings and Assessment Against the UNEG Norms and Standards

### 4.1 General Findings and Observations

51. The Peer Review Panel found that UNITAR has established a well-functioning evaluation function over the last few years with a clearly established evaluation governance structure. It is particularly commendable that the UNITAR evaluation function “does a lot with little”.

52. The Peer Review Panel found that the strategic role of DSPP/PPME is acknowledged in UNITAR. PPME staff are highly appreciated for their professionalism, technical expertise, oversight functions, support in organizational processes, general flexibility, and their approach to plan one to two years in advance.

53. It was evident that the majority of interviewees interact frequently with PPME staff and the relationship was described as “*positive and cooperative*”. PPME colleagues are perceived as “*highly credible and consistently professional*”.

54. Overall, the Peer Review Panel noted great awareness about the importance of having a well-established evaluation culture in UNITAR. At senior management level, there is a good understanding about the strategic role of evaluation and the importance of high-quality independent evaluations.

55. However, there is also a certain level of ambivalence towards evaluation in the organization. Interviews revealed that the evaluation culture is not yet fully part of the organization’s “DNA”. At management level, the evaluation culture is more “variable”. While some interviewees seem to have a very good level of “evaluation demeanor”, others appear to fail to “walk the talk”. The Peer Review Panel identified a certain resistance from stakeholders, who mainly argued that given their “*lack of time*” and the “*need to secure funds*”, evaluation was neither feasible nor a priority for them.

56. The Peer Review Panel also found that interest in evaluation and the increasing demand for evaluations from some donors play an important role in UNITAR’s evaluation culture. Some donors assign less value to evaluations, and that inevitably results in a decreased commitment to evaluation. Therefore, if donors pay less attention to evaluations, this affects the evaluation culture within the organisation. There seems to be potential to engage interested donors who could provide additional funds for more outcome evaluations and impact-related assessments as is discussed below in Section 4.3.4 “Kirkpatrick Evaluation Training Model and Impact”.

57. The Peer Review Panel concludes that the current M&E Policy Framework adheres to a great extent to UNEG evaluation policy standards.

58. Besides the M&E Policy, the internal guidance document “Entry Conference Notes for Independent Evaluations of Projects”, prepared by PPME, is available and includes some descriptions of further roles for programme management and evaluators. The Peer Review Panel finds that this document does not sufficiently specify the roles and responsibilities of other organizational entities which may impinge on the evaluation culture as the roles of different actors is not clear.

59. The Peer Review Panel acknowledges that there are various evaluation related guidelines and guidance documents covering topics, such as gender and evaluation of learning, but they appear fragmented. There are no single operational guidelines on evaluation which define the evaluation process and responsibilities in greater detail.

60. In the self-assessment, UNITAR rated itself lower (2) on this criterion, although it did complement that *“there are a few evaluation champions across the organization”* which the Peer Review Panel verified.

61. The Peer Review Panel noted that decentralized and self-evaluations are perceived and attributed to the “monitoring function” in the organization but the line between monitoring and evaluation seems somewhat “blurred”.

62. The majority of interviewees found self-evaluations useful and there seems to be an interest in increasing their number with the support of the evaluation function. Inputs by PPME staff to self-evaluation tools and follow-up on compliance issues in general were found extremely useful by interviewees.

63. The Peer Review Panel learned that, even though significant efforts have already been undertaken by PPME to further strengthen self-evaluations, there is the potential to further create links and synergy effects between self-evaluations and independent evaluations.

## 4.2 Independence

*“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. The independence of the evaluation function comprises two key aspects — behavioural independence and organizational independence”<sup>27</sup>.*

### 4.2.1 Organizational Independence

64. Considering the organizational position of the evaluation function together with other management functions (planning, performance monitoring, reporting, quality assurance) under DSPP, the Peer Review Panel acknowledges that the evaluation function is, to a large extent, independent from management functions in UNITAR.

65. In the self-assessment, UNITAR rated itself high on this aspect as (3) stating *“it has independence but not isolation, that evaluation is not overshadowed by other disciplines and that there is equivalent treatment with other functions”*.

66. The Panel noted a potential conflict of interest where the DSPP Director/ head of the evaluation function, is also the Secretary of the Board of Trustees. In other words, the head of the evaluation function participates in Board meetings and records the minutes whilst, at the same time, manages strategic independent evaluations that inform these very decision-making processes. Furthermore, the head of the evaluation function is also responsible for the management functions of strategic planning and performance. It is important to note, however, the Board Secretary does not formally take part in

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<sup>27</sup> UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation, 2016, p. 11.

decision making, and only records decisions taken by the Board although he is privy to the Board's discussions and decision making.

67. In terms of organizational independence, there was no conclusive response to the issue of having one person in multiple organizational strategic and management functions. The Peer Review Panel considers that, due to the professional attitude of the respective staff, this risk is not currently high and not perceived as problematic by UNITAR stakeholders. However, this could change if staff were to change and if there were to be more prominent disagreements within the Board of Trustees' meetings or other management functions within DSPP.

68. Independence is also demonstrated by the evaluation function's discretion in proposing the work programme for independent evaluations with the Executive Director and programme divisions. Final approval is provided by the UNITAR Board of Trustees.

69. Financially, the evaluation function is not solely independent because budget for independent project evaluations comes from programme divisions, while PPME staff and the operational budget for corporate/strategic evaluations is funded by the UNITAR general fund.

70. Organizational independence also requires the evaluation head to have full discretion to directly submit evaluation reports to the appropriate level of decision-making and that he/she reports directly to an organization's governing body and/or executive head.

71. The Peer Review Panel acknowledges that UNITAR's evaluation function fulfills these aspects by sharing evaluation reports with the Executive Director. It also plans to do so with the EAB in the future.

#### **4.2.2 Behavioural Independence**

72. Even though PPME is multifunctional and engaged in planning, organizational performance monitoring and evaluation, its behavioural independence is not at stake thanks to the professional attitude and performance of its staff. The Peer Review Panel determines this to be a latent risk if staff were to change in future.

73. The Peer Review Panel sees behavioral independence as given because evaluations managed by PPME are conducted by external consultants. Evaluation consultancies are published and a competitive selection process has been established. PPME has also established a roster of evaluation consultants. Interviewees acknowledged that hiring external consultants adds rigour, as they are in a better position to analyze data to a greater depth than UNITAR staff who are constrained by time and heavy workloads.

74. Interviewees also indicated that using the same evaluator for a mid-term and final project / self-evaluation was administratively advantageous as they are already familiar with the project interventions and need less managerial guidance. The Peer Review Panel acknowledges this approach from an operational perspective but, from an evaluation independence perspective, using the same evaluators for the project mid-term evaluation and the final evaluation may jeopardize a "fresh or new" perspective, and the evaluator would have already some expectations from the mid-term evaluation outcomes.

75. The Peer Review Panel concluded that the selection process of consultants can be considered appropriate. The manager of the programme unit of the project under evaluation co-signs the Special

Service Agreement (SSA) form for recruitment, but selection of the consultant is done solely by PPME without any interference or validation by the programme unit.

76. In the self-assessment, PPME rated the relevant criterion as high (3), whereby “*evaluators and evaluation managers usually abide by accepted norms, standards and guidelines of professionalism...*”. This was validated by the Peer Review Panel.

77. Feedback also suggests that evaluation consultants were able to conduct the evaluations without interference by any UNITAR parties. Staff indicated that it was sometimes necessary to engage consultants in more in-depth discussions to make them better aware of the historical context of projects, e.g., why certain decisions were taken at the time of project planning and implementation. Negotiations about wording and critical findings are common towards the end of an evaluation process.

78. The Peer Review Panel found that the impartiality of evaluation consultants was recognized in the organization. To further support this, the sample of independent evaluation reports showed that consultants were objective, professional and able to work independently. Consultants are required to sign the UNITAR PPME’s code of conduct and the UNEG Ethical Guidelines before they engage in an evaluation<sup>28</sup>. The Peer Review Panel found that consultants considered for evaluative work have not been involved in the design, planning, implementation or monitoring of the respective projects evaluated.

79. In the self-assessment, PPME rated itself high (3), having “*controls and mechanism for stakeholder engagement and balanced perspectives / impartiality*” in place”. This was validated by the Peer Review Panel.

## 4.3 Credibility

*“Evaluations must be credible. Credibility 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”<sup>29</sup>.*

### 4.3.1 Planning and Management of Evaluations

80. At time of writing, 16 projects are budgeted at USD1.5 million or above, and therefore qualify for an independent evaluation for the period 2019-2023<sup>30</sup>. As previously indicated, projects below this threshold do not qualify for an independent evaluation.

81. The average budget for the 15 independent evaluations analyzed by the Peer Review Panel was USD22,223, not including travel<sup>31</sup>. Looking at the list of planned evaluations for 2021- 2022, it seems the budget for some evaluations has increased. However, they are still limited enough to affect the scope of evaluations.

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<sup>28</sup> The ethical pledge practice was established in the last quarter of 2020 when it was made available by UNEG. The UNEG Code of Conduct was in use before.

<sup>29</sup> UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation, 2016, p. 10-11.

<sup>30</sup> Based on a list of projects and programmes above the threshold provided by PPME.

<sup>31</sup> Calculated based on a list of 15 independent evaluations with a total budget of USD333,345 without travel.



82. Most interviewees recognised that not all projects need or should be evaluated independently. However, it was also critically noted that some smaller projects (i.e. those with a budget below USD1.5million) never get independently evaluated.

83. The Peer Review Panel found that UNITAR has already undertaken some efforts to include lessons learned from smaller projects, e.g., self-evaluations are being reviewed and lessons learned are incorporated into the lessons learned database. However, these findings could additionally feed into the design of future similar projects. To deal with this limitation, it is suggested to continue with cluster evaluations whilst clearly identifying criteria for grouping in clusters.

84. Certain interviewees also suggested reducing the threshold from USD1.5million to USD1million. In this respect it is useful to look at UNITAR’s project portfolio from 2014- 2019 which presents the number and categories of different projects:

**Table 3: UNITAR’s Project Portfolio from 2014-2019<sup>32</sup>**

Value Group (in USD)	No. of Projects	Total Value of Projects within the value group (in USD)	Projects within this value group amongst UNITAR projects	Percentage
Over 1 million	24	USD55,188,726.56	4%	41%
500K-1 million	36	USD25,474,510.46	6%	19%
100K-500K	183	USD39,308,736.06	31%	29%
50K-100K	115	USD8,292,112.53	19%	6%
Under 50K	241	USD5,811,877.13	40%	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>USD134,075,962.74</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

The average value of the 599 projects was USD\$223,833.

85. In the table above, 36 projects are listed in the category of USD500K to USD1 million. If this entire category were to be considered for independent evaluations, it would result in an approximately 10% increase in UNITAR’s portfolio coverage, putting further strain on the already limited capacities and resources of the evaluation function.

86. Eighteen projects budgeted at or over USD1.5million<sup>33</sup> qualified for an independent evaluation for this time-period.

87. The Peer Review Panel considers that the use of a financial threshold as the only criteria for project independent evaluations might not be sufficient or adequate to ensure a representative coverage of UNITAR’s work with independent evaluations.

88. Currently, in view of the USD1.5 million threshold, the evaluation function covers 3% (18 out of 599) of UNITAR’s project portfolio. However, this coverage is not representative of the whole. Consideration can be given to define other criteria to identify which projects are to be evaluated based

<sup>32</sup> Mid-term Evaluation of the Implementation of the Strategic Framework 2018-2021, p. 52-53.

<sup>33</sup> Information provided by PPME.

on relevance, learning potential, strategic importance, representation of UNITAR’s work, etc. To limit overloading PPME, a more representative sample of projects to be evaluated can then be identified.

89. The Peer Review Panel also determined that a clear evaluation planning process has been established. Provisions for mandatory project evaluations are identified in the M&E Policy Framework, and the annual evaluation workplan is discussed with the Executive Director. From September 2021, the EAB will also be engaged in evaluation workplan discussions.

90. Project evaluations constitute most of the evaluations managed by PPME. Yet, in contrast to the strategic and policy evaluations, projects are developed and scheduled before the financial project agreements/contracts are finalized which is a challenge when preparing an overarching evaluation workplan. The number of projects can vary, and some projects get external funding while others do not. This dynamic but uncertain project planning process affects and challenges the evaluation planning process as well.

91. The Peer Review Panel found that the development of the Terms of References (ToR) for each evaluation is a consultative and participatory process between the relevant programme managers and PPME. The CVs of suggested evaluation consultants, inception reports and draft evaluation reports are also shared with respective staff, and their inputs are discussed and considered.

92. In the self-assessment, PPME rated itself high (3), having “*systems in place with some respect of the principles of transparent evaluation design and conduct in practice*”. This was validated by the Peer Review Panel.

93. In general, the professional attitude, technical expertise and managerial support by PPME throughout the entire evaluation planning and management process was highly appreciated by interviewees.

94. Therefore, the Peer Review Panel validates PPME’s self-assessment rating of high (3) on “professionalism / staff competencies”.

### **4.3.2 Quality of Independent Evaluation Reports**

95. To ensure the quality of evaluation reports, the evaluation function uses an internal quality assurance template which adheres to the UNEG Norms and Standards to assess the quality of draft evaluation reports. Quality assured evaluation reports are published once they reach at least a minimum of quality standards.

96. PPME makes use of at least four<sup>34</sup> out of nine tools/elements of controls and stakeholder engagement to ensure quality as stated in the self-assessment. Since these tools are not used consistently in each evaluation, PPME rates itself lower (2) in the self- assessment, a rating with which the Peer Review Panel concurs.

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<sup>34</sup> The four tools used are: (1) Internal quality assurance tools (checklists, templates based on evaluation norms and standards), (2) use of consultants as evaluation and thematic experts, (3) reference / advisory groups and (4) periodic meetings with stakeholders at various stages of the evaluation, validating the evaluation results. Source: UNITAR Self-Evaluation 2021: p. 8.

97. Using “an internal quality assurance template to assess quality of zero draft reports” helps PPME ensure the quality of independent evaluation reports.

98. The Peer Review Panel found that all evaluation reports analyzed were high quality and adhere to the UNEG Norms and Standards.

99. In the self-assessment, PPME rates itself high (3) on the quality of independent evaluation reports. This was verified by the Peer Review Panel.

100. However, the Peer Review Panel also noted that gender and human rights issues fell short in two thirds (10 out of the 15) of the evaluation reports analyzed as they did not consider these cross-cutting topics sufficiently or at all.

101. As such, the Peer Review Panel does not entirely agree with the rating of 3 in the self-assessment but would score it more at level 2. Nevertheless, the Panel acknowledges the efforts undertaken by PPME to strengthen gender equity in the past. For example, two documents are available to incorporate gender: “Guidance on Integrating Gender Considerations into Monitoring and Evaluation of UNITAR Programming” and “Good Practice. Gender-Responsive Monitoring and Self-Evaluation”.

102. Even though gender and human rights issues are included in evaluation Terms of Reference, they are not always fully considered in the final evaluation report.

103. In 2020, the performance indicator on gender in evaluation (indicator four) was met for the first time in the UN System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on gender equality and women’s empowerment<sup>35</sup> (see Box 2).

**Box 2: UN-SWAP 2020 / Indicator Four - “Evaluation”**

4bi. Meets the UNEG gender equality - related norms and standards. UNITAR undertook five independent evaluations in 2020 that approach or meet the UNEG definition of evaluation and are thus included in the present EPI internal assessment. While almost all included gender dimensions in the evaluation scope of analysis and evaluation criteria and questions that are designed in a way that ensures GEEW related data will be collected, they also included a gender-responsive methodology, methods and tools, and data analysis techniques are selected evaluation findings, conclusions to varying degrees. Only one evaluation included gender equality as a standalone evaluation 9 criteria with several sub-questions. Four evaluations issued a recommendation on gender/women empowerment/vulnerable groups.

4bii. Applies the UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in evaluation during all phases of the evaluation. For the first time in 2020 UNITAR applied the UNDP-developed Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES) to an evaluation and foresees to continue doing so in the future. In the UNITAR-wide lessons learned database, lessons are classified by categories and the “gender Inclusivity” category currently includes four lessons. UNITAR planned an internal UNITAR meeting in 2020 that will take place end of January 2021 and will discuss how gender and human rights considerations could be further integrated in monitoring, reporting self-evaluations.

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<sup>35</sup> UNITAR 2020 UN-SWAP 2.0, p. 8.-9.

104. Interviewees perceived evaluation reports to be “*honest, critical and objective*”. However, although they include an Executive Summary summarizing findings, conclusions and recommendations, they are not necessarily “*very user friendly, cannot be read easily and understood widely*”. It was also perceived that only a few people would read evaluation reports due to time constraints. It therefore was suggested to:

- Simplify the language;
- Introduce a colour-coding system to help senior managers and donors quickly capture key messages;
- Make the reports more concise and visual; and
- Prepare short videos summarizing the main evaluation findings.

105. The Peer Review Panel found the *Mid-Term Evaluation of the Strategic Framework 2018-2021*, which had a separate budget for layout, to be a very good example<sup>36</sup>.

106. Furthermore, it was positively noted that PPME already prepares short presentations of findings for management of the project subject to evaluation, as well as a two- pager summarizing key points. These were found to be concise and useful.

## 4.4 Utility

*“In commissioning and conducting an evaluation, there should be a clear intention to use the resulting analysis, conclusions or recommendations to inform decisions and actions. The utility of evaluation is manifest through its use in making relevant and timely contributions to organizational learning, informed decision-making processes, and accountability for results. Evaluations could also be used to contribute beyond the organization by generating knowledge and empowering stakeholder”<sup>37</sup>.*

### 4.4.1 Use of Evaluation Reports and Findings

107. The Peer Review Panel found that UNITAR senior management and staff, who have been involved in evaluations, perceive independent evaluations to be useful because they offer insights into different aspects of the programmes, offer practical solutions, and provide specific suggestions and recommendations to improve projects and programmes. Independent evaluations present an external perspective to the work of the organization and are important in reporting UNITAR’s achievements to the Board of Trustees and partners.

108. Overall, interviewees found project evaluations useful but stated that they should further feed into and link to UNITAR’s overall Strategic Framework, and that organizational indicators and evaluations need to be connected where possible and feasible *i.e. “it all has to fit together”*. Although

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<sup>36</sup> <https://unitar.org/results-evidence-learning/evaluation/mid-term-evaluation-implementation-strategic-framework-2018-2021>

<sup>37</sup> UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation, 2016, p. 10.

alignment with the strategic framework is assessed under the relevance criterion, there was a perceived gap between the project evaluations conducted and UNITAR's strategic objectives.

109. Independent evaluations are perceived as learning and communication tools that bring value to the organization and donors by demonstrating achievements and results, and making suggestions for improvements. Depending on the donor there is a strong demand for independent evaluations providing reassurance that programmes and projects are on track.

110. Good independent evaluations contribute to building trust with donors and accountability: *"Good evaluations bring new projects and more money"*, reassure and showcase results for donors.

111. Overall, the Peer Review Panel found that evaluation findings, lessons learned and recommendations were used to improve projects and programmes. Some examples provided by interviewees were:

- Improved Theory of Change (ToC) and respective narrative;
- Improved ToC helped to secure more funding and improved communication of targets and objectives;
- Improved logframe;
- Changed indicators;
- Strengthened monitoring system; and
- Recommendations for new projects.

112. Nevertheless, scope for improvement was also identified, and the need for a stronger evaluation culture, including an increase of independent evaluations, was expressed since *"not all UNITAR staff are yet fully aware of the utility of evaluations"*.

113. The utility of final project evaluations using lessons learned and recommendations when the project is completed was questioned by some interviewees. But there could be a potential to take lessons learned forward to similar projects. Despite PPME's efforts to disseminate these in-house, as described above, it seems evaluations are not yet consistently used by Division staff to inform the design of new or similar projects. Some positive examples were quoted but relate to the subsequent phases of projects where the evaluations on UN CC: Learn, CommonSensing and Peace, for example, were used to improve projects.

#### **4.4.2 Management Response and Follow-Up of Evaluations**

114. The Peer Review Panel acknowledges that a management response system for independent evaluations was established. Programme divisions are responsible for following up on the evaluation recommendations.

115. In the self-assessment, PPME rated itself high (3), having *"a follow-up system in place and well designed. There is a systematic follow-up on the implementation of the recommendation"*. This was validated by the Peer Review Panel.

116. PPME tracks implementation after six months which is perceived useful but many recommendations may still be under “implementation”. Evidence provided in PPME’s self-assessment, reveals that 36% of recommendations are implemented only within six months of issuance. Therefore, the self-assessment of the implementation rates of recommendations, with a rating of (2), is validated by the Peer Review Panel.

117. The Peer Review Panel looked at the management responses of 15 evaluation reports and concluded that many of the responses (10 out of 15) have been clearly formulated and are also comprehensible for non-UNITAR non-project staff.

118. However, not all responses fully addressed the evaluation recommendations and some statements are rather generic. Further, not all explain why they accept the respective recommendation only “partially” and it was also found that recommendations were “partially accepted” whilst the text seemed to indicate a rejection. There is potential to further increase the quality of management responses.

119. Overall, interviewees found the evaluation management response system useful. The process facilitates and encourages the division’s engagement with the evaluation findings and results. Doubts were raised as to whether or not follow-up would be conducted if no system were in place.

120. The interviewees also commented on the evaluation recommendations which in large were found relevant and useful, but sometimes perceived as “*too ambitious*” and “*not feasible or actionable*”. Staff stated that they are overwhelmed with work and little time can be made available to follow-up on evaluation recommendations more frequently. As noted by one stakeholder:

*“As we evaluate, it is important to also consider how there can be follow up – in UNITAR, the evaluations are very useful, but we have challenges with the follow-up of these recommendations as there are constraints in the units (in terms of personnel and funding). Today, out of the list of recommendations, the units prioritize those that can be achieved and that are feasible in the short- and medium-term for the units to report on progress. Other recommendations need more funding, more personnel. Then it is the Units call for the recommendations to be more practical and take into consideration constraints of the evaluations. They would need more monitoring from the Evaluation unit to ensure that the recommendations are implemented and that these are taken as seriously as Audit”.*

121. PPME rated itself lower (2) on this criterion stating that “*the Unit tracks the follow up on recommendations. In a few instances, results from the evaluations have shown evidence of enhancing programme effectiveness*”. This was also verified by the Peer Review Panel.

#### **4.4.3 Knowledge Management and Sharing Lessons Learned**

122. The Peer Review Panel found that the evaluation function takes a serious role in knowledge management in UNITAR since it contributes to organizational learning and present good practice examples. Regular brown bag lunches were organized and lessons learned shared.

123. Independent evaluation reports are published on UNITAR’s website, information is shared with relevant project stakeholders and reports are also uploaded on the UNEG repository. The M&E Policy includes a clause on dissemination and disclosure.

124. In the self-assessment, PPME rated itself high (4), since “*reports are systematically uploaded onto the public website when finalized*”. This was validated by the Peer Review Panel.

125. Internally, evaluation reports are also shared through UNITAR’s social media platform, Yammer, and lessons learned are shared on the UNITAR intranet (Annex 6).

126. The Peer Review Panel also gathered that learning based on evaluations seems to take place within respective divisions, but sharing lessons learned between divisions and learning from each other could be further improved. For example, it seems when independent evaluation findings are presented not all divisions participate. They therefore miss out on opportunities to exchange and learn from each other. Past annual learning events have proven to be a good opportunity to learn from each other. Cluster evaluations also appear useful because several divisions participate and learn with and from each other.

127. There is another great potential for creating a “space” for divisional cross-cutting learning, potentially overcoming their “*competitive mode*” in regard to donors. Such a “space” could actually support the development of new and innovative projects and ideas, as well as reducing divisional “*silo thinking*”.

128. One division has identified one person dedicated to M&E which the Peer Review Panel believes could become a “role model” for the organization.

129. The Peer Review Panel identified sharing of information as a weakness in the organization and the overall “*learning management system was perceived as not very effective*”. The positive role of PPME needs to be emphasized since divisions only seem to become aware of other evaluations once PPME asks for follow-up and shares overview tables. Evaluation reports are shared with respective divisions, donors and selected external partners.

130. Knowledge management is key in every organization. Whilst there was previously a person dedicated to knowledge management in UNITAR, the Peer Review Panel was informed this is no longer the case. Even though PPME plays an important role in the entire knowledge management system, it currently cannot get engaged in additional tasks with the number of staff they have.

131. PPME rated itself lower (2) on the criteria “*sharing of evaluation results internally and externally*”, which was verified by the Peer Review Panel.

132. To additionally learn and be part of international evaluation debates, PPME became a member of UNEG in 2016. It currently participates in learning initiatives, several UNEG working groups<sup>38</sup> and also shares evaluation reports in the UNEG repository.

133. PPME rated itself high (4) on the criteria “*member of UNEG and active in driving the work of UNEG. Active use and promotion of UNEG products*” and the Peer Review Panel concurred.

134. UNITAR evaluation staff also engage with other professional networks, such as the EVALSDGs network<sup>39</sup> but due to time constraints and the nature of their portfolio evaluation findings were not yet systematically discussed in these international networks and fora. There is a great potential to further use them in future.

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<sup>38</sup> PPME staff are currently actively involved in the UNEG Partnerships, Peer Review, Professionalization and National Evaluation Capacity Development Working Groups, as well as the Interest Group on Evaluating Capacity Development.

<sup>39</sup> The EVALSDG network was established under EvalPartners in response to the need engaging in effective monitoring, evaluation and learning in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

135. Building national evaluation capacities (NEC) at country level is recognized in the UNEG Norms and Standards. NEC is referred to in UNITAR’s M&E Policy and is adhered to in the criteria in the self-assessment, it is rated high (3). The rating is also verified by the Peer Review Panel. Due to financial and human resource constraints and the nature of UNITAR’s work PPME can currently not engage strongly in these efforts.

136. Nevertheless, two initiatives were organized to strengthen NEC: in 2018 “The Executive Leadership Programme in Evaluation and the Sustainable Development Goals” jointly with the Claremont Graduate University; and in 2019 “Evaluation and the 2030 Agenda e-learning”.

#### **4.4.3 Kirkpatrick Evaluation Training Model and Impact**

137. UNITAR applies the Kirkpatrick Four-Level Evaluation Model<sup>40</sup> to systematically monitor trainings at the project level. This model, described in the table below, aims to assess the extent of outputs and impacts achieved at four different levels in projects.

**Table 4: Kirkpatrick Evaluation Training Model in UNITAR<sup>41</sup>**

<b>Kirkpatrick Levels 1 to 4</b>	<b>Definition<sup>42</sup></b>	<b>Application<sup>43</sup></b>	<b>Link to Monitoring and/ or Evaluation</b>
Level 1: Reaction	Gathering data on participant reactions at the end of a training programme.	Reactions are evaluated for all project training events of two days or more and also to all learning-events delivered on a fee-paying basis.	Monitoring at output level
Level 2: Learning	Assessing whether the training learning objectives for the training programme were met.	Learning outcomes are evaluated for all project training events of two days or more and also to all learning-events delivered on a fee-paying basis.	Monitoring at output level
Level 4: Behaviour	Assessing whether job performance changes as a result of training	Evaluation of institutional capacity outcomes (e.g., increased individual performance and/or organizational capacities resulting from the application of knowledge, skills, awareness) for all projects budgeted at \$300,000 or more	Monitoring (only partially) and evaluation at outcome level

<sup>40</sup> Donald L. Kirkpatrick and James D. Kirkpatrick, *Evaluating Training Programs*, 2006.

<sup>41</sup> UNITAR also acknowledges other training evaluation models, e.g., “Return of investment ROI”. Phillips, P.P., & Phillips J.J. *The value of learning: How organizations capture value and ROI and translate them into support, improvement, and funds*. San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer, 2007.

<sup>42</sup> Cluster Evaluation of UNITAR Training of Trainers Programming, July 2020, p. 92.

<sup>43</sup> UNITAR Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Framework, April 2017, p. 11.



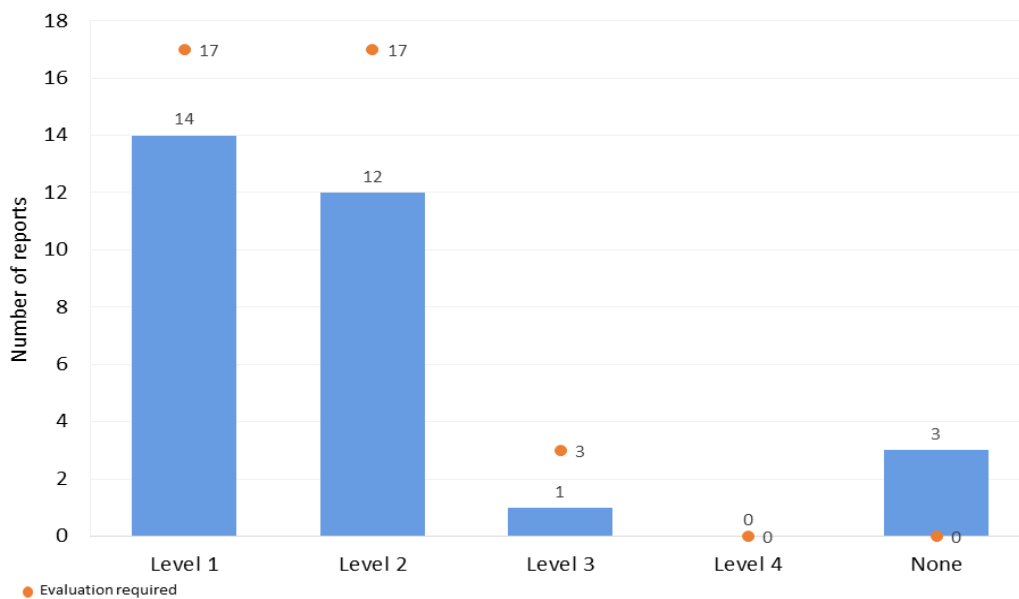
Kirkpatrick Levels 1 to 4	Definition <sup>42</sup>	Application <sup>43</sup>	Link to Monitoring and/ or Evaluation
Level 4: Results	Assessing costs against benefits of training programme, i.e., organizational impact in terms of reduced cost, improved quality of work, increased quantity of work.	No reference in the UNITAR Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Framework	Evaluation at impact level

138. Since 2018, impact stories from training participants have also been collected to address levels 3 and 4. These are published on UNITAR’s website and, since 2021, in each external newsletter.

139. The Peer Review Panel found that, according to interviewees, information and data for level 1 were referred to as “always” collected, level 2 “sometimes” or “often”, and level 3 is generally referred to as “partially” or “not applied”. According to the M&E Policy Framework, level 3 is not always requested.

140. These interview findings are also supported by PPME’s “Meta-Analysis Report of UNITAR’S Self-Evaluation Reports” where 17 self-evaluation reports were analyzed (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Evaluation Level Reached by Self-Evaluations between 2019-2020**



141. Overall, feedback from interviewees suggests a rather heterogenous approach and knowledge about the Kirkpatrick Evaluation Training Model in the organization. Different divisions and various projects seem to have a different approach to applying the training evaluation model. It was also stated

that compliance has fallen in the last few years, but there are also positive instances where programmes surpass evaluation requirements<sup>44</sup>.

142. References and information about the Kirkpatrick Evaluation Training Model can be found in several documents including:

- Specific Self-Evaluation Guidelines/Guidance documents;
- The M&E Policy (refers to the model in footnotes);
- The KPI document (refers in purple to level 1 in Evaluation); and
- The “Fit for Purpose” document (refers to levels 3 and 4).

143. On UNITAR’s website no separate reference to the Kirkpatrick Evaluation Training Model can be found.

144. The Peer Review Panel sees great potential for using the Kirkpatrick Evaluation Training Model more clearly in all evaluation efforts, further defining the “lines” between self-evaluations and independent evaluation. The Kirkpatrick Evaluation Model can also be further used as a strategic communication and fundraising tool for donors.

145. The Panel also noted that self-assessments related to the Evaluation Training Model were sometimes referred to as “monitoring” and sometimes as “evaluation”. Whereas this interchangeable use of terms may not be an issue within the organization, it could potentially lead to misunderstandings when communicating on UNITAR’s approach to external partners and donors.

146. Overall, the Peer Review Panel recognizes the potential to further use and analyze the available data from existing self-evaluations, and link it better to organizational management objectives. This also reiterates the findings of the *Mid-Term Evaluation of the Strategic Framework*:

*“The assessment of impact is challenging because in general, there is little tracking of impact in UNITAR apart from follow-up evaluations to assess the extent to which training has been applied or has given rise to higher level outcomes. Given the limited project level and corporate resources available for evaluations, the level of impact data is sparse. Staff, stakeholders and participants all expressed interest in greater follow-up to check on and build on results to attain greater impact. Nonetheless, the feedback directly from participants during this evaluation indicates that the impact of UNITAR’s support may already be more far-reaching than expected or presently reported”<sup>45</sup>.*

147. Levels 3 and 4 of the Kirkpatrick Model strongly link to impact, an issue raised by most interviewees. Impact evaluations or assessments are perceived as key and essential for UNITAR as an organization and some donors are interested too. It was proposed to further tap into the pool of “training alumni”. A special alumni study could be envisaged and the continuation of collection of impact stories seems a good way forward.

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<sup>44</sup> PPME Unit, UNITAR Self-Evaluations Meta-Analysis Report, August 2021, p. 7. UNITAR Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Framework, April 2017, p. 11.

<sup>45</sup> Mid-Term Evaluation of the Implementation of the Strategic Framework 2018-2021, p. 9-10.

148. For some large programmes it was also felt that data is available which could be used for impact assessments.

149. There appears to be strong demand from some donors to evaluate trainings and capacity development activities in general. Some interviewees suggested that, if donors saw more impact of UNITAR's work, it would increase the likelihood of additional funding and could further strengthen trust in UNITAR's work.

150. Challenges regarding impact are manifold. For example, training and learning events are completed after one year or even sooner and impact cannot be assessed immediately. Another challenge is that when projects are closed funds are no longer available to track past participants. ,

151. PPME has contributed to impact discussions, organising for example, an internal workshop in 2018, and developing documents on rapid impact assessments. During a retreat in 2021 a session was dedicated to impact and a document called "Good Practice. Measuring Results and Impacts" was developed and shared afterwards.

152. The Peer Review Panel proposes some ideas and options relating to the Kirkpatrick Training Evaluation Levels 3 and 4 proceeding with impact issues:

- a) Considering UNITAR's strategic interests and the portfolio itself, where would it make most sense to anticipate impact assessments?
- b) For these themes, programmes, projects conduct evaluability assessments in order to identify available information, data and possible data gaps.
- c) Negotiate with donors which are particularly interested in impact and invite them to fund an impact assessment of particular projects supported by them previously or others.
- d) For future projects, depending on the type, size, and duration, negotiate with donors to fund projects that consists of two sub-projects, one is the training event itself and b) the impact assessment after a defined time.

Outcomes and impacts would need to be very clearly defined at the design stage of projects and certain indicators would need to go beyond the training implementation. Chain of results and underlying assumptions and the utility of these trainings would also need to be stated clearly.

Besides relevant data a thorough Theory of Change would be a prerequisite for such impact assessments. At the end of the training, participants would need to identify how they plan to apply their new knowledge, skills, etc. and this information would also need to be captured.

- e) Consider trainings or training events implemented jointly with other UN agencies (UNDP, UNEP, others), and explore, if they would be interested in funding a "joint impact assessment".

153. Using impact assessments from an organizational perspective may also be useful to identify projects strongly linked to the 2030 Agenda which are of great strategic importance to UNITAR.

154. Overall, the Peer Review Panel found that there is a great interest in impact in the organization but also the realization that measuring impact is challenging. In this respect some further guidance and trainings would be useful. Some comments regarding impact:

*"We train scavengers, can they change their behaviour? They do hazardous work do they know how to protect themselves? We could make studies to find out?"*

*“We also have to show impact. I cannot say how people have changed their behaviour because of our trainings and therefore, the removal of mercury has changed. There are many players involved. Also, regarding poverty reduction or Education for All, how can we measure small entities? Can we develop a matrix for lower-level targets? What has changed because of our trainings?”*

155. Overall, UNITAR acknowledges a great potential for evaluation in the future: *“New technologies and the Fourth Industrial Revolution will also have a huge impact on the ability of UNITAR to monitor and evaluate our trainings, ensuring constant improvement and the most efficient use of resources. At the recent European Evaluation Society conference, there was a focus on the use of big data, machine learning and mobile technologies as the future of evaluation”*<sup>46</sup>.

## 5. Conclusions

### 5.1 Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

156. Based on the findings and assessment of the UNITAR evaluation function by the Peer Review Panel, the following summary of “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats” (SWOT) is presented in the table below.

**Table 5: SWOT Summary**

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strong professional capacity and commitment in the evaluation unit.</li> <li>2. Strong and clear policy framework, guidance documents, and tools for evaluation.</li> <li>3. Well-aligned to UNEG N&amp;S.</li> <li>4. The quality of evaluations is well recognised.</li> <li>5. Good functional independence for evaluation (behavioural).</li> <li>6. Evaluation Advisory Board strengthens the evaluation governance structure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Under-staffed for the current demand of project evaluations, and to expand coverage of strategic evaluations.</li> <li>2. Coverage of project evaluations limited by threshold of USD1.5 million and does not have a representative coverage of the UNITAR portfolio.</li> <li>3. Room for improvement on gender and other cross- cutting issues in evaluation reports.</li> <li>4. Room for improvement in the follow-up of recommendations and use of evaluations.</li> <li>5. Room for more awareness on the evaluation function and its work in the organization.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increasing demand and attention to evaluation by donors and partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increasing demands with remaining resources</li> </ul>

<sup>46</sup> UNITAR Fit -for - Purpose: UNITAR Programming and Frontier Issues, 2018, p. 8.

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| <p>2. Support the Kirkpatrick/Phillips Training Evaluation Model and use findings for donors in particular and for communication in general.</p> <p>3. Use the Kirkpatrick/Phillips Training Evaluation Model to strengthen impact.</p> |  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|

## 5.2 Conclusions

157. Overall, the Peer Review Panel concludes that the current evaluation “governance structure” is appropriate given the size of UNITAR and the newly appointed EAB, which will support the Executive Director and the Director of DSPP in the future.

158. Even though the evaluation work of the organization was appreciated by interviewees and the evaluation reports are critical and used, there is room to improve the evaluation culture in particular vis-a-vis the critical role and learning aspect of evaluations. Accountability is an important factor for donors but there is still a great potential to use evaluations for more learning in the organization (“walk the talk”).

159. The M&E Policy Framework is in line with the UNEG Evaluation Norms and Standards. The revision planned for 2021 will take into consideration the findings of this Peer Review and the internal review already conducted by PPME.

160. The evaluation function operates within its boundaries. The roles and functions of the unit are sufficiently defined in the M&E Framework, but it will be useful to further describe the role of programme staff for independent and self-evaluations.

161. DSPP/PPME resources (staff, budget and time) are clearly already overstretched. Yet, despite these constraints, the evaluation function is actually doing a lot as a result of the outstanding commitment of the evaluation staff.

## 5.3 Independence

162. The evaluation function’s organizational independence is comprehensible by the Peer Review Panel, since it is separate from programme divisions. The Head of Division reports to the Executive Director, and the evaluation function can commission and publish evaluation reports at its discretion.

163. Financial independence is “partially” demonstrated because the budget for independent project evaluations comes from programme divisions and is therefore dependent on projects being financed, project planning processes and project budgets per se.

164. Behavioural independence is also evident as evaluators are able to conduct their work without undue influence by any party.

## 5.4 Credibility

165. The Peer Review Panel concludes that the evaluation function is credible and professional. PPME staff are highly appreciated; perceived to be knowledgeable about the entire organization; are

engaged in several management processes; and support other institutional entities. The unit is independent but not isolated, and the engagement of the evaluation function within the organization is clearly identified.

166. The requirements for impartiality exist at all stages of the evaluation process from evaluation planning to formulating the scope, selecting the evaluators, accessing stakeholders, and managing the evaluations including ensuring a robust quality assurance system.

167. All independent evaluation reports analyzed are considered of high quality and adhere to the UNEG N&S. Only gender and human rights issues fell short and were not sufficiently considered in the majority of the reports analyzed by the Peer Review Panel. Further attention to cross-cutting issues will be required.

168. The independent evaluation reports are published on both the UNITAR and UNEG website. It was also indicated that evaluation reports could be more reader-friendly, concise and visual.

## 5.5 Utility

169. Despite consensus by interviewees that independent evaluations are useful, the Peer Review Panel noted that not all UNITAR staff are fully aware of their utility. It was stressed that the evaluation culture and information sharing between divisions needs to be further strengthened.

170. Even though a management response system has been established, follow-up to evaluation recommendations could be further improved. It was suggested that an electronic tool with automated reminders, for example, would be beneficial.

171. There is also great potential to further specify the Kirkpatrick Training Evaluation Model considering impact and use it as communication tool for partners and donors.

## 6. Recommendations

172. **Recommendation 1: Evaluation culture.** The Peer Review Panel recommends that UNITAR Senior Management (Executive Director and Heads of Divisions) continue to strengthen the evaluation culture in UNITAR (“walk the talk”), while ensuring that learning and accountability dimensions are well balanced through the evaluation products:

- Strengthen the “tone from the top” to foster use of evaluations as part of the broader RBM culture.
- Develop and strengthen learning opportunities between divisions as part of existing senior level meetings and other organizational exchange opportunities to which all staff are invited.
- Use evaluations more strategically with partners and donors, and strengthen communications using new evaluation products (see below).
- Establish a UNITAR evaluation focal point system identifying one person in each division dedicated to evaluation led by PPME.

- Based on the experiences so far (workshop, good practice document, etc.) further discuss and decide how UNITAR plans to address “impact”.

173. **Recommendation 2: Evaluation Advisory Board.** The Peer Review Panel recommends that DSPP/PPME engage with the EAB to discuss organizational data and information needs; review available data and findings from self-evaluations and independent evaluations exploring potential synergy effects; and analyze themes, topics and projects which were not yet evaluated or sufficiently evaluated and link them to the current Strategic Framework to identify future priorities.

174. **Recommendation 3: Evaluation Policy.** The Peer Review Panel recommends that DSPP/PPME develop a standalone Evaluation Policy, separate from the important and complementary monitoring dimension. Using the analysis already undertaken by the evaluation function and the finding of this Peer Review it should:

- Develop separate monitoring and evaluation policies referencing each other.
- Identify some criteria on the selection of evaluation themes and topics.
- Include new and / or additional criteria for the selection of project evaluations apart from the financial threshold of programmes and projects of USD1.5million.
- Clarify terms such as “self-evaluations” and “decentralized evaluation”.
- Elaborate how self-evaluations and independent evaluations could complement each other.
- Emphasize the utility of evaluations for UNITAR divisions and donors.
- State the potential of evaluations for organizational learning in general.
- Further specify roles and responsibilities of all organizational entities.
- Further strengthen gender equity and human rights issues in evaluations.
- Update the discussion of the OECD-DAC criteria in line with the updated document.
- Provide details for the management response process.
- Consider and explain the use and applicability of the Kirkpatrick Training Evaluation Model.
- Consider how UNITAR plans to address “impact” in the future; and
- Consider joint evaluations with other UN partners for impact assessments.

175. **Recommendation 4: Kirkpatrick Training Evaluation Model.** The Peer Review Panel recommends that DSPP/PPME keep using the Kirkpatrick Training Evaluation Model as a strategic communication and fundraising tool with donors and potential new donors; develop new guidelines or revise existing guidelines ensuring visual coherence or include the training evaluation model (level 1-4) into the new Evaluation Policy and increase visibility of respective document(s) on website.

176. **Recommendation 5: Evaluation Plan.** The Peer Review Panel recommends that DSPP/PPME prepare and publish a two-year tentative “Evaluation Plan” on UNITAR’s website for scheduled independent evaluations and a separate “Overview List” of those already conducted.

177. **Recommendation 6: Evaluation Guidelines/Manual.** The Peer Review Panel recommends that, based on the “Entry Conference Notes for Independent Evaluations of Projects” and other existing guidelines, DSPP/PPME prepare and publish an operational “Evaluation Guidelines/Manual”, for independent evaluations, which includes guidance for self-evaluations.

178. **Recommendation 7: Evaluation Reports.** The Peer Review Panel recommends that DSPP/PPME further strengthens gender, human rights and other cross-cutting issues in the evaluation reports. Also, adapt evaluation guidelines and templates and continue strengthening quality assurance with consultants on these matters.

179. **Recommendation 8: Management Response.** The Peer Review Panel recommends that DSPP/PPME strengthen the management response process in the new Evaluation Policy; follow-up more frequently on evaluation recommendations, invite respective divisions to report on the implementation status of evaluation recommendations in relevant management meetings periodically and inform the EAB on the status of implementation; ensure that all management responses fully adhere to the format; and establish an electronic tool with automated reminders.



# Annex 1 Terms of Reference

UNEG Validation Exercise of the Evaluation Function of the

United Nations Institute for Training and Research

*Draft – 7 May 2021*

## 1. Introduction and Objectives

United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)/OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Peer Reviews seek to answer a central question: Are the UN agency’s evaluation policy, evaluation function and its evaluation products independent, credible and useful for learning and accountability purposes, as assessed by a panel of professional evaluation peers against the UNEG Norms and Standards and the evidence base provided?

As described in the 2011 UNEG Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Function of UN Organisations<sup>1</sup>, peer reviews are an established modality for capacity building within the field of international development cooperation. Relying on mutual trust among the organizations and professionals involved, peer reviews attempt to stimulate organizations to change, achieve goals and meet standards through dialogue, interactive investigation and shared experience.

First developed in 2005 and updated in 2016<sup>2</sup>, UNEG and OECD/DAC evaluation norms and standards provide a clear normative framework for UNEG/DAC peer reviews through a series of ten general Norms that should be upheld in the conduct of any evaluation; four institutional norms that should be reflected in the management and governance of evaluation functions and a set of associated standards which support the implementation of these normative principles.

In 2021, UNEG introduced two new modalities: the UNEG Peer-Validated Self-Assessment and the UNEG-Expert Validated Self-Assessment.

### **UNEG Peer-Validated Self-Assessment (without EvalNet)**

The Peer-Validated Self-Assessment is a self-assessment prepared by the agency against the UNEG normative framework. The self-assessed ‘maturity’ of the function with respect to each criterion is supported by references to sources of evidence. The collated evidence is assessed, verified and triangulated by a small team including a senior UNEG member. The team makes a 3 or 4 day visit to the function, engages with evaluation staff and key stakeholders and prepares a short report that makes a series of observations on the self-assessment aimed at enhancing the evaluation function. The use of an independent consultant to support the process is optional.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/945>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>

## UNEG–Expert Validated Self-Assessment

A self-assessment against the UNEG normative framework is prepared by the evaluation function. The self-assessed ‘maturity’ of the function with respect to each criterion of the normative framework is supported by references to sources of evidence. The collated evidence is assessed, verified and triangulated by an independent consultant selected and recruited by the UNEG Peer Review Working Group (PRWG). The consultant makes a 5-7 day visit to the function, engages with evaluation and other staff / stakeholders and prepares a report that also makes a series of observations aimed at enhancing the evaluation function. In view of the lighter level of direct engagement by UNEG Peers it is perhaps a modality best reserved for functions that have previously undergone more in-depth assessments. The PRWG may organise a virtual ‘Peer Exchange’ to share experiences relevant to the assessment exercise and its findings.

## 2. Background

The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) is an autonomous entity and one of the United Nations’ research and training institutes. UNITAR develops the individual, institutional and organizational capacities of countries through high-quality learning solutions and related services to enhance decision making and to support country-level action for overcoming global challenges. UNITAR’s work is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as with the outcomes of the other major 2015 international conferences.

The 2018-2021 strategic framework structures the Institute’s objectives, programming and activities under the Peace, People, Planet and Prosperity pillars of the 2030 Agenda, in addition to crosscutting programme pillars on accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, multilateral diplomacy and optimizing the use of technologies for evidence-based decision-making. Since 2019, the Institute also hosts The Defeat-NCD Partnership through an operations agreement. The Institute’s programming is thematically diverse, with learning-related outcomes featuring prominently in much of the work.

In 2009, UNITAR established a corporate Monitoring and Evaluation function to take the lead in the development and implementation of a Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Framework, which was promulgated in 2012. The Institute’s evaluation function is located in the Planning, Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (PPME), which is multifunctional and independent from programming divisions, covering strategic planning, performance monitoring and evaluation. The Unit’s head reports directly to the Executive Director. For the most part, PPME’s evaluation portfolio entails managing independent evaluations of projects developed and implemented by UNITAR’s programming divisions, although the Unit may also undertake other evaluations or evaluation-related undertakings at its discretion within budget allocations.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Framework was revised in 2017 to reflect inter alia the revised UNEG Norms and Standards and set the requirement for independent project evaluations to be undertaken for all projects budgeted at \$1.5 million and above. Since the revision, the Unit has undertaken over 15 evaluations, and several evaluations are presently under implementation. The policy framework was scheduled for review and revision in 2019. While the need for some changes to the framework have been identified by the Unit, the present review/revision has not yet been finalized. The objective is to undertake a Validation Exercise in order to help inform other changes that could be introduced with a view to further strengthening the evaluation function. No independent reviews have yet been conducted of the evaluation function.

The PPME budget is approved by the Executive Director and then considered and adopted by the Board of Trustees as part of the UNITAR programme budget. While the costs of the Unit's staff are covered by the Institute's General Fund, consultant and other costs to undertake independent project evaluations are covered through project budgets. The Unit also has a small activity budget to undertake independent evaluations at its discretion.

The Unit comprises one full time and one part-time staff and support from a trainee. With only few personnel located in the Unit, evaluations are conducted by independent consultants with support from the Unit.

UNITAR is in the process of establishing an Evaluation Advisory Board (EAB) to serve as a forum to advise the Executive Director and the Unit on the conduct and use of and follow-up on evaluation as an important tool to support the governance and oversight functions of the Institute. It is expected that the EAB will be activated during the second quarter of 2021.

UNITAR is a member of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) since in 2016. This membership allows UNITAR to closely follow developments related to evaluation inside and outside the UN and adapt its work to the evolving role of evaluation. UNITAR uses UNEG guidance documents as its main institutional references for evaluation, such as the UNEG Norms Standards, Ethical Guidelines, Guidance on Evaluating Institutional Gender Mainstreaming, the UNEG Competency Framework, etc. Active participation in UNEG working and interest groups is also very useful for continuous learning and quality improvement.

### 3. Purpose, Subject, Scope, Modality and Limitations of the Validation Exercise

The main purpose of the Validation Exercise is to strengthen the UNITAR evaluation function so that it can effectively contribute to organizational decision-making, learning and accountability for results and programme effectiveness.

The Validation Exercise will determine if the evaluation function and its products are independent, credible and useful for learning and accountability purposes, as assessed against UN standards and in relation to what is fit-for-purpose for UNITAR.

The Validation Exercise should provide actionable recommendations to the UNITAR Executive Director, the EAB and the Unit aimed at improving the overall quality of the evaluation function. More specifically, the recommendations should inform, inter alia, decision-making about the positioning of the evaluation function in UNITAR; its governance; resourcing (including both human and financial capacity); and evaluation planning, use and quality assurance mechanisms.

The Validation Exercise should assess the UNITAR evaluation function, not only from a norms/standards perspective, but also from a fit-for-purpose/organization point of view. The exercise should take into consideration the small size and other characteristics of the Unit and of the Institute in terms of type and scope of work and budgetary resources and personnel. To do this, the panel should be comprised of experts bringing in a range of experience – and from different types of organizations from the UNEG membership.

The scope includes the evaluation function performed by the Unit and will look at progress made in strengthening the evaluation function in UNITAR since the revision of the 2017 evaluation policy, and

the extent to which it has been effectively implemented – with the view to informing the revision of the said policy framework by the end of Quarter 3/2021.

A potential constraint is that the Validation Exercise will likely be undertaken remotely due to the COVID-19 situation. With the remote character of the exercise, there is a risk that validation members will find it challenging to dedicate sufficient time to the exercise or sufficient engagement from UNITAR stakeholders. The Validation Exercise Chair will need to discuss this, and remote data gathering approaches, with the panel during the inception phase.

## 4. Approach and Methods

The findings from the Validation Exercise will be based on a mix of secondary and primary data, comprising both desk review and key informant interview and focus group techniques from in-person engagement with members of UNEG evaluation offices and key stakeholders of the agency's evaluation function.

They also rely on an assessment of how developed the evaluation function is assessed against the Maturity Matrix for UNEG evaluation functions which is operationalized against a set of 48 performance criteria organized according to the Norms and Standards including benchmark.

Taken together, these lines of evidence and assessment framework provide a standard normative framework to answer the core question of the validation exercise mentioned above.

The Validation Exercise would include the following stages:

**Preparation:** During this period, the focus will be on the finalization of the ToR for the Validation Exercise, the composition of the Panel, the recruitment of the consultant and the collection of key documents relevant to the validation exercise.

**Self-Assessment:** The agency being assessed undertakes a self-assessment of the evaluation function against the UNEG Norms and Standards, using the maturity matrix for UNEG peer reviews presented to the AGM in 2020. This self-assessment should be conducted by the evaluation entity being assessed involving the full range of evaluation officers subject to the assessment in the centralized office as appropriate. The UNITAR self-assessment was completed in February 2021.

**Initial Written Assessment:** The consultant supporting the panel should conduct an extensive document review and, potentially, together with the Chair of the Panel undertake a (virtual) mission to UNITAR to consult with the Unit to support the drafting of a preliminary assessment of the evaluation function and of the evaluations which will be discussed the Unit's staff.

As part of the initial written assessment, the expert consultant who supports the Panel reporting to the Panel Chair should conduct an assessment of a sample of evaluation reports against the UNEG template for evaluation reports.<sup>3</sup>

**(Virtual) mission of the panel to UNITAR:** Equipped with the preliminary assessment, the Panel should conduct an initial (virtual) visit to UNITAR. This should include a round of meetings, interviews

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/607>

and focus group discussions with staff, UNITAR senior management and members of the Board of Trustees and key external stakeholders.

**Reporting and dissemination:** The Panel produces a final draft report and PowerPoint for discussion with senior management. This will also be the opportunity for a peer exchange session with the Unit.

Once the report has been finalized, the agency produces a management response which are disseminated together both by the agency as well as by the UNEG Peer Review Working Group on the UNEG website.

The deadlines for the current exercise are as follows:

Item	Deadline
Preparation	April-May 2021
Self-Assessment	February 2021
Initial Written Assessment	11 May 2021
Deadline for completion of interviews	9 June 2021
Deadline for initial analysis (and triangulation) and validation	30 June 2021
Reporting	16 July 2021
Dissemination	13 August 2021

## 5. Core Assessment Criteria and Questions

The assessment framework for the Validation Exercise is made up of a number of distinct elements which combine to enable the Panel to answer the overall question posed common to all UNEG peer reviews:

*Are the agency's evaluation policy, functions and its products: independent; credible; and useful for learning and accountability purposes, as assessed by a panel of professional evaluation peers against the UN Norms and Standards and evidence base'?*

These elements include: a) the UNEG maturity matrix for Peer Reviews which operationalizes the Norms and Standards into an assessment rubric including pre-defined levels of maturity for each performance criterion; b) a set of general evaluation questions organized by central features of any UNEG Member evaluation function and c) a set of more specific questions that are particular to the agency being assessed and which help strengthen the potential of the peer review to the agency's management and evaluation Unit.

### 5.1 UNEG Maturity Matrix for Peer Reviews<sup>4</sup>

Drawing on the revised Norms and Standards, and also the objective for a peer review modality that could be accessed by all UN evaluation offices, UNEG updated in 2020 the operational framework for

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/download/3591>

peer reviews proposing a performance rubric organized explicitly around the ten general norms that evaluation functions should exhibit in the conduct of any evaluation as well as the four institutional norms that should be reflected in the management.

Operationalised into a set of 48 organisational and performance criteria for reviewers to assess, the assessment rubric is presented in the form of a maturity index, with four ‘levels’ or ‘benchmarks’ of maturity clearly defined for each of the performance criteria.

In proposing these benchmarks, the rubric is intended not only to produce a one-off assessment of the maturity of the evaluation function against the UNEG Norms and Standards but also a clear pathway for organizational strengthening which can support the professionalization activities of UNEG members going forward. This is in support of the commitment that UN Evaluation Offices make when becoming members of UNEG.

**Key validation questions** (organized around the core normative standards for evaluation in the UN system: independence, credibility and utility) and building on the UNEG Maturity Matrix<sup>5</sup> will look at the evaluation policy, governance and management of the function, evaluation planning and quality, evaluation follow up and use and external influence, partnerships and positioning.

A. The EVALUATION POLICY, in particular:

**A.1. The extent to which the evaluation policy conforms to UNEG Norms and Standards, internal and external contextual changes and requirements, such as delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and how the policy can be further strengthened taking into consideration the needs and requirements of the Institute;**

B. GOVERNANCE arrangements, including the following:

**B.1. The extent to which the arrangements for oversight of the evaluation function are in line with the UNEG Norms and Standards and how they work in practice;**

**B.2. The extent to which the roles and responsibilities, as defined in the Policy Framework are adequately operationalized;**

C. PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT of Evaluations, including the following:

**C.1. The extent to which topics selected for evaluation meet the strategic needs and demands of UNITAR’s key stakeholders, balancing accountability and learning at the centralized level**

**C.2. The balance of effort between: i) UNITAR’s project evaluation work; and ii) between undertaking cluster or other types evaluations in order to generate new evidence and synthesizing and disseminating existing evidence**

**C.3. The extent to which the approaches used to plan and manage evaluations and follow up, including arrangements to manage the quality and duration of the evaluation process are adequate**

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<sup>5</sup> See for example the DAC – UNEG document.

D. EVALUATION QUALITY at each level of the organization, including attention to the following:

**D.1. The quality and credibility of the evaluations against relevant UNEG standards<sup>6</sup>, from the planning process through the conduct of the evaluations to the appropriateness of evaluation methods, and of evidence-based findings, conclusions and recommendations**

E. EVALUATION FOLLOW UP AND USE - important aspects include the following:

**E.1. The type and level of engagement of internal and external stakeholders from the evaluation planning process onwards to use of evaluation evidence to adjust or develop new projects, approaches, strategies, programmes, and support learning, enhancing accountability and organizational improvement at the relevant levels**

**E.2. Responsibilities for the follow-up of lessons and recommendations, including arrangements for preparation and implementation of a formal Management Response.**

F. FINANCIAL RESOURCES of the Evaluation Function, including the following:

**F.1. The extent to which the evaluation function is adequately financed and sustainable to allow for the commissioning of high-quality credible, useful and timely evaluations**

5.2 Specific questions that the agency would like the peer validators to address:

- Given not only the small size of the agency but also its reliability on earmarked voluntary contributions in the absence of core or non-earmarked funding, how can the evaluation function strike a balance between project and cluster or other types of evaluations?
- How well does the Unit preserve its independence in conducting independent evaluations given its co-location with other Institute functions (e.g. monitoring, performance reporting, strategic planning)?
- How can the function increase the value of independent project evaluations that are undertaken at or near the end of the project in terms of following through on recommendations that are project-specific?
- How appropriate is the approach to support the decentralized evaluation function (i.e. the function performed by programme management), and what more should be done given limited resources of the Unit and the need to preserve the function's independence?
- What good practices are in place that should be maintained and/or further institutionalized and shared? In particular, how can the evaluation function enhance its contribution to knowledge management and learning within the organization?

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, this UNEG template for evaluation reports: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/607>

- What lessons can be drawn to guide the development of the overall evaluation function in UNITAR in line with the UNITAR’s strategic framework in the next five years?

## 6. Panel composition

In view of the need for the Panel to reflect the mandate of UNITAR in the area of capacity development and training and the small size of the organization, the Panel should be comprised of two senior evaluation staff (one of whom will act as Chair) from UNEG member organizations that have a similar mandate and are similarly organized in terms of scope, scale and other particularities of UNITAR’s evaluation function.

## 7. Conducting the validation exercise

The key actors involved in a UNEG peer review include: i) the Agency requesting the Validation Exercise [UNITAR]; ii) the Validation Exercise Panel which is responsible – supported by an expert consultant - for conducting the Validation Exercise and producing the report; iii) the Peer Review Working Group which, representing UNEG, is the custodian of the validation exercise

The primary responsibility for the peer review rests with the Panel which is led by the Panel Chair and supported by expert evaluators from UN Evaluation offices. Panels can also be supported by thematic experts that bring specific knowledge of aspects of the evaluation function. The Panel Chair is responsible for overall report quality.

The Panel is supported by an expert consultant who should be a senior professional with knowledge and experience of how small UN evaluation functions work, strong drafting skills as well the ability to work with senior UN evaluators.

The Validation Exercise is overseen by the UNEG PRWG which in line with UNEG’s responsibility as the custodian of the peer review/Validation Exercise modality is responsible for ensuring that the exercise proceeds according to good practice in international evaluation. The PRWG provides guidance and support at all stages of the exercise and also provides feedback to the report at draft final stage through a quality assessment process.

### ***Key Documents to be consulted:***

- [UNITAR Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Framework \(2017\);](#)
- UNITAR 2018-2021 Strategic Framework;
- Board of Trustees Reports – annually 2017-2020;
- [UNITAR Evaluation Reports and Management Responses;](#)
- UNITAR’s Annual Evaluation Workplan, budget and expenditure 2019/20/21;
- JD’s of UNITAR’s evaluation staff;
- Evaluation Unit budget 2018-209 &2020-2021;
- UNITAR RBM materials;



- Information regarding evaluation portfolio in the past 4-5 years and a list of completed and on-going evaluations;
- Information on recommendation compliance / follow-up;
- Organigrammes for the evaluation function, and the organization;
- List of key stakeholders including Governing Body representatives;
- Relevant reports to Governing Bodies related to the evaluation function;
- A completed self-assessment using the UNEG normative framework; and
- Referenced sources of evidence to support judgements made in the self-assessed normative framework.

***Key persons to be met:***

- Evaluation Unit staff;
- Senior Management (Directors and Managers);
- Executive Director;
- Evaluation Advisory Board;
- Sample of evaluation consultants; and
- Sample of donors of projects that were independently evaluated.

***Timeline for the validation exercise***

Activity	April	May	June	July	August
Selection of Panel and finalisation of Terms of References					
Initial data collection, including desk review, stakeholder analysis					
Initial Written Assessment					
Data collection and analysis, including survey(s) and interviews					
Draft report shared with UNEG PRWG					
UNEG PRWG reviews draft report and shares comments and recommendations					
Report finalized					
Presentation and dissemination of the PR's findings					

## 8. Resources

UNITAR requested support (15,000 USD) from UNEG for the Validation Exercise. Panel members are thanked for their contribution to the Validation Exercise and will be recognized as individuals and on the part of their organizations in the report.

## 9. Consultant's profile

The consultant should have the following qualifications and experience:

- MA degree or equivalent in social sciences, development or a related discipline. Knowledge and experience in evaluating training, including in areas related to broader development cooperation undertakings.
- At least 7 years of professional experience conducting evaluation.
- Knowledge of the OECD DAC Criteria, the [United Nations Norms and Standards for Evaluation](#) and Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation.
- Knowledge of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and awareness of other outcomes of 2015 international conferences.
- Excellent research and analytical skills, including experience in a variety of evaluation methods and approaches.
- Excellent writing skills.
- Strong communication and presentation skills.
- Cross-cultural awareness and flexibility.
- Fluency in oral and written English.

## Annex 2: List of Persons Interviewed

Nikhil Seth, Executive Director

Sarah Cook, Evaluation Advisory Board Chair, former BOT member Patti Phillips, Evaluation Advisory Board

Brook Boyer, Director, Division for Strategic Planning and Performance Katinka Koke, Planning, Performance Monitoring, and Evaluation Unit

Einar Bjorgo, Director, Division for Satellite Analysis and Applied Research Evariste Karambizi, Director, Division for Peace

Ruediger Kuehr, Manager, Bonn Office, Planet Division

Mihoko Kumamoto, Director, Division for Prosperity

Angus Mackay, Director, Division for Planet

Patrick Breard, independent evaluator

Achim Engelhardt, independent evaluator

Elise Montano, Caribou Digital,

Patrick Sieber, donor, Swiss Development Agency

## Annex 3: Documents Reviewed

### UNEG

UNEG, Self-Assessment Maturity Matrix For UN Evaluation Functions, Draft, 23-24 June 2020. <http://www.uneval.org/document/download/3591>

UNEG, Modalities for Evaluating, reviewing or assessing an Evaluation Function, April 2018. <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/2122>

UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation, 2016. <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>

UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports, 2010. <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/607>

### UNITAR (dated)

UNITAR Self-Evaluations Meta-Analysis Report, August 2021

UNITAR Self-Assessment Maturity Matrix, draft Nov. 2020, updated April 2021

UNITAR's Annual Evaluation Workplan, Budget and Expenditure 2019-2021

UNITAR 2020 UN-SWAP 2.0

UNITAR's Job Descriptions of Evaluation Staff, 2021, 2020

UNITAR Key Performance Indicators 2020, <https://www.unitar.org/sites/default/files/media/file/KPI-2020.pdf>

UNITAR Board of Trustees. Sixty-First Session 5-6 November 2020

UNITAR Results-based Management at UNITAR. Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Performance Reporting, January 2019

UNITAR Fit -for - Purpose: UNITAR Programming and Frontier Issues. White Paper presented at the UNITAR Board of Trustees Fifty-Ninth Session from the 29 to 30 November 2018 in Abuja, Nigeria.

UNITAR Strategic Framework 2018-2021  
[https://www.unitar.org/sites/default/files/media/publication/doc/unitar\\_strategicframework\\_web-new.pdf](https://www.unitar.org/sites/default/files/media/publication/doc/unitar_strategicframework_web-new.pdf)

Mid-Term Evaluation of the Implementation of the Strategic Framework 2018-2021  
<https://unitar.org/results-evidence-learning/evaluation/mid-term-evaluation-implementation- strategic-framework-2018-2021>

UNITAR Board of Trustees. Fifty-Ninth Session 29-30 November 2018 UNITAR Administrative Circular. Managing for Results 22 March 2018

UNITAR Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Framework, 2017  
[https://www.unitar.org/sites/default/files/media/file/Monitoring-and-Evaluation\\_Revised%20April%202017.pdf](https://www.unitar.org/sites/default/files/media/file/Monitoring-and-Evaluation_Revised%20April%202017.pdf)

UNITAR Quality Assurance Framework, Revision April 2017, 26 July 2017.  
[https://www.unitar.org/sites/default/files/uploads/pprs/quality\\_assurance\\_framework\\_revised\\_april\\_2017\\_with\\_annexes.pdf](https://www.unitar.org/sites/default/files/uploads/pprs/quality_assurance_framework_revised_april_2017_with_annexes.pdf)

UNITAR Gender Mainstreaming, Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women Policy, November 2016  
<https://unitar.org/sites/default/files/media/publication/doc/unitar-gender-mainstreaming2016.pdf>

## **UNITAR (undated)**

UNITAR Draft Syllabus Foundation Course on Learning Development, undated

UNITAR Entry Conference Notes for Independent Evaluations of Projects, undated

UNITAR Evaluation Unit's Self-Review of M&E Policy Framework, undated

UNITAR Good Practice. Gender-Responsive Monitoring and Self-Evaluation, undated

UNITAR Good Practice. Measuring results and Impacts, undated

UNITAR Guidance Document on Indicators, undated

UNITAR Guidance on Integrating Gender Considerations into Monitoring and Evaluation of UNITAR Programming, undated

UNITAR Guidance on Evaluating Application of Knowledge, Skills, Awareness and Attitudes (Kirkpatrick Level 3 Evaluation), undated

UNITAR Guidelines for Obtaining Participant Reaction, Satisfaction and Planned Action (Level 1), undated

UNITAR Guidelines on Evaluating Learning, undated

UNITAR Terms of Reference. Evaluation Advisory Board, undated

## **Others**

Donald L. Kirkpatrick and James D. Kirkpatrick, Evaluating Training Programs, 2006

Phillips, P.P., & Phillips J.J. The value of learning: How organizations capture value and ROI and translate them into support, improvement, and funds. San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer, 2007.

## **List of UNITAR's 15 Independent Evaluation Reports Analyzed by Peer Review Panel**

Final Evaluation of the IOMC Toolbox for Decision Making in Chemicals Management. Phase II: Modification, Expansion and Promotion

Mid-term Evaluation of the UN CC:Learn 2014-2017 Implementation Phase - Final report

Independent Evaluation of the Afghanistan Fellowship Programme

Independent Evaluation of UNOSAT Rapid Mapping Service

Independent Evaluation of the Sustaining Peace in Mali and the Sahel Region through Strengthening Peacekeeping Training Capacities (Phase II)

Independent Evaluation of the "Global Network of International Training Centres for Authorities and Leaders (CIFAL)

Independent Evaluation of the One UN Climate Change Learning Partnership: 2017-2020 Implementation Phase

Independent Midline Evaluation of the CommonSensing project

Midterm evaluation on the implementation of the Strategic Framework 2018-2021

Independent Evaluation of the "Youth-led peace and reconciliation in Colombia: a transformational approach" project

Independent Evaluation of the World Heritage Nomination Training Series

Independent Baseline Evaluation of the CommonSensing Project

Strengthen National Decision Making Towards Ratification of the Minamata Convention and Build Capacity Towards Implementation of Future Provisions

Cluster Evaluation of UNITAR's Training of Trainers Programming

Independent Mid-term evaluation of the IOMC Toolbox for decision-making in chemicals management – Phase III

## Annex 4: Assessment Format for Evaluation Reports and Management Responses

Title of Evaluation:

Panel Member:

Based on UNEG quality checklist for evaluation reports (no. refer to UNEG checklist no.):

No.	Criteria	Assessment: Yes, No, To Some Extent & Comments
1.0	Report structure. The report is well structured, logical, clear and complete.	
2.0	Objective of evaluation / The report clearly presents the „object“ of evaluation also comprehensible for a non-UNITAR and non-project person.	
2.1	Logic model and/or the expected results chain (inputs, outputs and outcomes) of the object is clearly described.	
3.0	Evaluation purpose, objectives(s) and scope are fully explained.	
3.2 3.3	Evaluation questions and evaluation criteria are stated in the report.	
3.4	Evaluation objectives, scope and evaluation questions address issues of gender and human rights.	
4.0 4.1	Evaluation methodology. The report presents transparent description of the methodology and describes the data collection methods and rationale.	
4.3 4.6	The report describes the sample frame – area and population. The methods employed are appropriate for analysing gender and rights issues identified in the evaluation scope.	
5.6	Findings. Overall findings are presented with clarity, logic and coherence.	
6.4	Conclusions. Conclusions present strengths and weaknesses of the object being evaluated, based on evidence presented.	
7.4 7.5	Recommendations. Recommendations clearly identify target group for each recommendation. Recommendations are clearly stated with priorities for action made clear.	

8.4	Gender and Human Rights. Reported findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons provide adequate information on gender equality and human rights.	
	Other comments	

**Management Response**

<p>Comments regarding MR:</p> <p>Clear responses. Comprehensible for a non-UNITAR, non-project person.</p>	
Other comments	



# Annex 5: Screenshot Intranet

Home / Planning, Performance Monitoring & Evaluation

UNITARnet

Home Resources

Home / Planning, Performance Monitoring & Evaluation

**Latest documents**

- UNITAR Déclaration sur l'honneur
- Final Meta-Analysis of Self-Evaluations Report
- UNITAR Self-Evaluations Meta-Analysis Report
- Mandated independent evaluations of projects plan...
- Overview of PPME's Resources 2021

Search documents

Advanced search

**PPME on Yammer**

- Katinka KOKE- 1  
2 months ago
- Katinka KOKE- 5  
Hello there! I just learned that you can integrate surveymonkey surveys ea...  
2 months ago
- Katinka KOKE- 0  
3 months ago

Messages

**Good practices and organisational learning**

- Josiane ABONIYO- 3  
Happy Tuesday! One of the best things about life is that we never have to...  
2 years ago
- Calin BROWN- 2  
Good afternoon colleagues, I thought that I'd share good practice documen...  
2 years ago
- Calin BROWN- 6  
Hi everyone, Happy Thursday! The good practice document highlighted today...  
3 years ago

Messages

**Overview of PPME's Resources**

Overview of PPME's Resources

**Strategic Framework 2018-2021**

UNITAR Strategic Framework 2018 - 2021

**Results Reports**

Results Report 2020

Results Report 2019

Results Report 2018

Results Report 2017

Previous Results Reports

2020 Results Report Content Guidelines and Timeline

**Programme Budget**

Adopted Programme Budget 2020-2021

Programme Budget 2018-2019

Previous Budgets

**Enterprise Risk Management (ERM)**

UNSTAR'S ERM Policy

UNSTAR'S Risk Register

Division's Risk Assessment

**SDG Alignment**

SDG Alignment in UNITAR Project Documents 2019

Programme Budget 2020-2021 Alignment to the SDGs

**Who's who**

- Brook BOYER  
3/94
- Katinka KOKE
- Roxana GOMEZVALLE

**FAQ**

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

**Impact Stories**

Latest impact Stories

What is your Impact Story?

Impact Story Guidance Document

Permission Form (name, images and videos)

Methodology for impact story

**Impact Story Videos**

- Impact Story Introduction video
- UNOSAT Impact Story video
- Impact Story ELPE Video

**Evaluation**

- UNITAR Self-Evaluations Meta-Analysis Report
- Independent evaluation planning
- Monitoring & Evaluation Policy Guidelines
- Templates
- Independent Evaluations
- Self-Evaluations

**Performance Reporting Tools**

Indicator

Results-based Management at UNITAR

Circular on Managing Results

Half-Yearly Project Reporting Template

Key Performance Indicators

Guidelines

Templates

Programme Performance Reports

**Lessons Learned and Good Practices**

Lessons Learned

## Annex 6: Potential Areas for Further Reflections

Interviewees were also invited to express some possible priorities and areas for UNITAR's evaluation work in future. The following comments were stated:

- It will be important to communicate the impact of trainings and the impact which UNITAR has as an organization.
- Select particular courses / themes for impact assessments, e.g., civil servant trainings.
- Consider impact, as part of the training cycle.
- Further utilize and improve self-evaluations.
- Include “monitoring” as a fixed agenda item in the monthly management meetings.
- Develop a 2-year monitoring plan considering different organizational objectives and results.
- Analyze, if UNITAR addresses key challenges of our times, e.g., digital divide and how COVID-19 has further worsened it.
- Identify good practices on gender in relation to the UN SWAP. Get support from the Gender Task Team.
- Reflect upon lessons learnt in regard to increasing the reach of people and apply different training technologies (e.g., training via local radio stations).
- Ensure learning between Divisions.
- Consider joint project implementation at the local level with ILO, UNDP, UNEP, and others. Even though this is challenging from a logistical perspective, it is perceived as effective.
- Evaluate how we train and teach especially in times of COVID-19, considering the technological constraints.
- Organize internal M&E trainings and ensure that evaluation is a priority.
- Improve the way UNITAR personnel learn themselves.
- Strengthen internal M&E processes. The evaluation function could provide further guidance and help steer the organization's priorities and indicate overall strategic considerations.
- Prepare a consolidated document that includes key message for senior management drawn from different evaluations.
- Separate lessons learnt documents could be prepared and shared.

- Conduct an analysis based on available data to identify any opportunities and to build on them.

Issues and questions raised regarding UNITAR in general by interviewees: There are many other organizations doing similar work than UNITAR. What are UNITAR's strengths? Do we need to change anything? How do we do compared to other training institutions? Do we need to find our niches? Do we need to go to specific countries? What do these countries need to invest in to ensure that trainings continue to be relevant?

We need to develop partnerships in order to reach millions of people e.g., with LinkedIn. Develop micro-learning processes with downloading trainings course from the phone. Develop more but shorter courses and make them available in several languages. Consider strategic alignments in this regard of UNITAR activities and programmes.

## Annex 7: Peer Review Panel Members

**Claudia Iburguen**, Head of Evaluation at Internal Oversight Service, UNESCO

Claudia Iburguen is the Head of Evaluation at Internal Oversight Service (IOS) of UNESCO. With almost 20 years of experience in international development she has focused for the past fifteen years on evaluation.

She has worked as an independent evaluation consultant, as an evaluator and programme coordinator at the International Labour Organization (ILO), in the Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) of the United Nations Secretariat and as a Senior Evaluator at UNESCO, before taking on the role of the Head of the Unit.

Her professional interests in evaluation span issues of communication of evaluation findings, use of evaluation and innovative reporting. Claudia started her international career in Sri Lanka with the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) an independent think-tank promoting a better understanding of poverty-related development issues.

**Javier Guarnizo**, Director of the Office of Evaluation and Internal Oversight, UNIDO

30+ years of professional experience in the public and private sector, and with international organizations. He has a professional background in Engineering, and holds a Master's Degree in Engineering and a Master of Business Administration (MBA).

He worked for the Peruvian Government for more than 10 years in the area of scientific research and development, and later in the private sector as management consultant, providing professional services on strategic planning, project management, monitoring and evaluation to government agencies, the private sector and international organizations.

In 2000 he joined the United Nations System as Programme Management Officer at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In 2007 as Evaluation Officer for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Ban Testing Organization (CTBTO). In 2011, back to the IAEA as Section Head of the Quality Assurance Section. In 2013 he joined the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) as Senior Evaluation Officer and later as Chief of the Independent Evaluation Division. In 2018 he was appointed as Director of the UNIDO Office of Evaluation and Internal Oversight.

He has conducted and managed evaluations in more than 30 countries.

Strong believer of the value added by oversight functions to effectively contribute to a more transparent, accountable, and impactful organizations.

**Taipei Dlamini**, Associate Evaluation Specialist, UNESCO

Taipei Dlamini has been working as an Associate Evaluation Specialist at the UNESCO Internal Oversight Service for four years, having participated in a number of strategic corporate evaluations on a wide range of topics relevant to UNESCO. Her most recent projects include the evaluation of UNESCO's Strategy for Action on Climate Change, that of UNESCO's Operational Strategy for Priority Africa, the evaluation of UNESCO's action for the protection of culture in emergencies and the evaluation of UNESCO's work in the area of media and information literacy.

She holds a Master's degree in International Law and Administration from the Université Paris I Panthéon Sorbonne and a Double Degree in International Law and Languages from the University

Pierre-Mendès France (Grenoble, France). Prior to joining UNESCO, she worked with the Southern African Development Community Lawyer's Association, a South African-based NGO aimed at promoting the rule of law and the protection of human rights in the SADC region.

**Karin Kohlweg, Senior Consultant**

Karin Kohlweg is a monitoring and evaluation expert with more than fifteen years of experience in international development cooperation.

She was the Head of Evaluation of the Austrian Development Agency in Vienna (9 yrs) and the Vice-Chair of the OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation (3yrs). She also worked for UNICEF Nepal (2 yrs) in Kathmandu and UNICEF Bangladesh (5,5 yrs) in Dhaka in monitoring and evaluation.

Since 2018 she has been the Secretary General of the European Evaluation Society (EES), and is also the founder of pme Kohlweg Consulting, [www.pmekohlweg.com](http://www.pmekohlweg.com).

Karin Kohlweg has planned, managed, and implemented numerous evaluations, reviews, and meta-evaluations in various sectors. She also conducted a good number of trainings and workshops on evaluation, theory of change, logframes, monitoring, and results-orientation for different Government institutions, NGOs, and others.

She is also teaching evaluation at various universities, has been engaged in evaluation quality assurance work for several international development organizations and revised several evaluation guidelines and manuals in the last few years.

She holds one Master's degree in Social Anthropology and one in Social Development Planning and Management. She is also a certified ILO Participatory Gender Audit (PGA) Facilitator and an Adult Education Trainer.