

Professional Peer Review
of the
Evaluation Function of UN Women

Peer Review Panel

Final Report

September 2014

Preface

As Sanjay Purohit¹ well put it: “A jury of our peers is the toughest judge, because they're the ones who scrutinize our accomplishments the most and are quickest to tell us when they think we've stumbled or haven't met their high standards. It's no wonder that Hollywood celebrities say that awards that come from their fellow screen actors mean the most to them. It's why sports teams face their toughest critics in their hometown newspapers. It's why for a thousand years of practice in common law, a person is judged by a jury of peers for the verdict to carry legitimacy.”

As Chair of the Panel that conducted this professional peer review of the evaluation function of UN Women, I had the honour of working with a group of professionals that rank among the most knowledgeable and experienced evaluators in our field and that constituted a tough yet fair and constructive jury of peers.

This brief report distils hundreds of collective hours of intense study, exchanges and thoughtful deliberations, to provide our colleagues in UN Women, and beyond, with an accurate and meaningful stock taking to help their evaluation function navigate successfully its future.

On behalf of the Panel I wish to say that it was the interactions with our colleagues in UN Women, and with their external stakeholders, that gave us most pleasure, insight and substantive food for thought. For their generous contributions we are truly and humbly thankful.

Of course there are, and there will continue to be challenges, as our craft is demanding, the problems complex and those for whom we work the most disenfranchised.

Yet, the enthusiasm, professional commitment and deep sense of social justice we encountered has left us with renewed optimism and great hope for our collective evaluation undertaking.

Indran Naidoo, Chair
August 31, 2014

¹ Senior Vice President and Global Head, Products, Platforms and Solutions, Infosys.

Executive summary

This professional peer review (PR) of the independent evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women - UNW) was carried out over the period from March to June 2014, following a formal request made by the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of UN Women to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Task Force on Peer Reviews.

The peer review Panel was made up of high level internationally recognised professionals² in evaluation with deep knowledge and experience of the UN system, the UNEG PR approach, evaluation in international development settings, evaluation responsive to gender and human rights, the governance, organisation and management of the evaluation function in public organisations, in particular multi-lateral institutions, and current theory and professional practice of evaluation.

This PR report presents the Panel's observations and conclusions as well as its recommendations to the IEO, the Management and the Executive Board of UNW with a view to strengthening the evaluation function of UNW. It focuses on communicating in succinct fashion what the Panel considers to be the key overall results of its deliberations, as well its advice for further improving evaluation in UNW.

Overall opinion

Based, inter alia, on the data and information it collected and analysed, UNW's specific context and with reference to the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System, the Panel is of the opinion that **the evaluation function of UNW is sound overall.**

Strengths

The Panel found consistently **a strong level of support for the evaluation function** in UNW, for the vision of developing a culture of evaluation throughout the organisation for learning, decision making and accountability, at all levels from the Executive Board, Executive Director and Senior Management through to professional staff at headquarters, and in regional and country offices.

The Panel finds positive IEO's practice of **active engagement and consultation with senior management and internal stakeholders** with a view to strengthening the relevance to UNW policy and decision-making of evaluation as well as its quality. The Panel also finds that the IEO is actively engaged within the UN system and beyond through, among other activities, its meaningful participation and leadership in UNEG and EvalPartners.

² Please see in annex the bios of the PR Panel

The Panel was able to appreciate positively **the usefulness of UNW's evolving suite of web-based information and exchange platforms** such as UNW's Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation (GATE) System, Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS) as well the production and use of monitoring and follow up status reports such as those of UNW's Global Evaluation Oversight System.

The Panel finds positive **the existence and role of the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee** composed of evaluation professionals from globally diverse range of sectors such as government, multilateral banks, academia, private foundations, voluntary organisations for professional evaluation, other UN agencies and including from UNW the Executive Director, regional and headquarter senior management as well as the Director of the IEO.

Points for attention

The Panel encourages strongly the IEO to **maintain a priority focus on improving and consolidating the profile and quality of its core business**, i.e. conducting and supporting evaluation in UNW that contributes positively, usefully, visibly, reliably, meaningfully and in a timely manner to the achievement of UNW mission.

The Panel finds that the level of independence in the corporate evaluation system is adequate when considered against the UNEG Norms and Standards for evaluation, however **draws attention to the benefits for UNW and its evaluation function of having it report to the Executive Board**, i.e. the governance rather than the management level of the organisation.

With respect to the decentralised evaluation system the Panel finds that **there is a systemic level risk to the credibility of the overall evaluation function in UNW** due to the facts that decentralised evaluations account for approximately 90% of total evaluations in UNW and that management is directly involved in the conduct of evaluations. While IEO has established quality control mechanisms at decentralised level to improve credibility, quality and use of evaluations, it should work to further mitigate risks by, for example, considering external quality assurance.

The Panel invites the IEO to **give appropriate priority to focussing on, and responding to, the management needs and policy making requirements of UNW as well as to being relevant to Executive Board oversight responsibilities**

Gender responsive evaluation in the UN system – assess its performance in supporting gender responsive evaluation in the UN system and **place priority on the UN system** (while remaining attentive to countries, civil society and other networks)

National evaluation capacity building – Most, if not all, of IEO efforts appear channelled through EvalPartners, and hence towards CSOs. While this might offer good potential for increased capacity generally, **there is a case for greater focus on national government institutions**, i.e. on public institutional arena where arguably gender responsive evaluation is key.

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1. Introduction

This professional peer review of the independent evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women-UNW) was carried out following a formal request made by the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of UNW to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Task Force on Peer Reviews. This peer review (PR) was carried out within the overall provisions contained in the UNEG Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Function of UN organizations³.

This PR report is presented to the Director of the IEO of UNW for further sharing with UNW Management and the Executive Board of UNW. The PR report will also be presented to UNEG members, and the DAC Evaluation Network, to inform them on the quality of evaluation in UNW. A note on the peer review process will be shared with the UNEG task force to contribute further to strengthening the peer review instrument.

This PR report presents the Panel's observations and conclusions as well as its recommendations to the IEO, the Management and the Executive Board of UNW with a view to strengthening the evaluation function of UNW.

It focuses on communicating in succinct fashion what the Panel considers to be the key overall results of its deliberations, as well its advice for further improving evaluation in UNW.

These are summarised in Chapter 5 of the report while the Panel's observations and conclusions specific to the evaluation attributes of independence, credibility and utility, as well as to the IEO's areas of promoting UN coordination on gender responsive evaluation and of strengthening of national capacities for gender responsive monitoring and evaluation systems, are addressed in Chapter 6. These two chapters constitute the core content of the report.

Chapters 2 and 3 summarise respectively the mandate and evaluation policy of UNW, and the purpose of this peer review. Chapter 4 outlines briefly the Panel's review activities, i.e. its methodology, and additional information on it is provided in annex to this report.

³ UNEG, 2011. UNEG Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Function of UN organizations. http://www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=945

2. UNW Mandate and Evaluation Policy⁴

UNW was created by the UN General Assembly by its resolution 64/289 “to provide, through its normative support functions and operational activities, guidance and technical support to all Member States, across all levels of development and in all regions, at their request, on gender equality, the empowerment and rights of women and gender mainstreaming”. The role of UNW is also one of leading, coordinating and promoting accountability with respect to gender equality and women’s empowerment in the UN system with a view to more effective coordination, coherence and gender mainstreaming.

The UNW strategic plan, 2011-2013, approved by the Executive Board, commits it to the development of an evaluation policy that will govern its evaluation function. By doing so, the strategic plan complies with the General Assembly resolutions on the triennial comprehensive policy reviews of 2004 and 2007, which call for the development and the implementation, respectively, of the norms and standards of the UNEG regarding evaluation in the UN system.

The policy is also aligned with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation and with the proposed revision to financial regulations and rules for UNW.

In 2012, the Executive Board of UNW approved the evaluation policy which outlines the principles and standards that guide its practice pertaining to the evaluation function of the organization. It covers both the corporate and decentralized evaluation of the operational, normative support and coordination work undertaken by UNW and the coordination role of UNW with respect to UN system-wide evaluations concerning gender equality. It presents the evaluation criteria to be applied in UNW evaluations and the process and parameters for selecting evaluations to ensure adequate evaluation coverage. The policy also directs the management and use of evaluation, the establishment of a quality assurance system, and evaluation capacity development.

Finally, the policy outlines the roles and responsibilities with respect to evaluation at all levels of UNW and the process of the external evaluation of the evaluation function and of the entity at the organizational level.

The evaluation policy specifies that a PR of its evaluation function would be carried out in 2014. This PR is intended, inter alia, to inform the review of the evaluation policy scheduled for 2015.

⁴ This section was drawn from the UN Women Evaluation Policy. See UN Women, 2012. Evaluation policy of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Second regular session of 2012, UNW/2012/12.

The UNW Evaluation Policy is the foundational document of its evaluation function; orientation and priorities are given in the 2014-2017 Evaluation Strategic Plan which translates operationally into the 2014-2017 Corporate Evaluation Plan.

The evaluation function of UNW is composed of a corporate evaluation system and a decentralised evaluation system. Most of the evaluations in UNW are managed and conducted within the decentralised system⁵. According to the UNW GATE (Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use) database 62 evaluation reports were produced for the period from 2012 to early 2014, of which 59 are within the decentralised evaluation system⁶.

The evaluation function focuses on four areas: Corporate Evaluation Systems, Decentralised Evaluation Systems, Promotion of UN coordination on gender responsive evaluation, Strengthening of National Capacities for gender responsive Monitoring and Evaluation systems.

IEO is responsible for and takes the lead on all areas except the decentralised evaluation system which it supports and influences through policy, strategic orientation, technical support and consultation, monitoring, assessment and systems of accountability reporting, knowledge sharing and management of regional level thematic evaluations.

IEO reaches out to the decentralised evaluation system in regional, multi-country and country offices, through, inter alia, but significantly, the presence and activities of its Regional Evaluation Specialists.

3. Purpose

In UNW, this PR is placed within on going processes of improvement of its evaluation function and it seeks to contribute to them through its assessment of the independence, credibility and utility of UNW's evaluation function. The PR provides an assessment of the evaluation function of the UNW based on UNEG norms and standards with a focus on independence, credibility and utility.

The purpose of the PR summarized below includes the expectations of the UNW IEO:

- Enhance knowledge, confidence and use of evaluation systems by senior management of UNW and the independence of the IEO. This includes better understanding of the current quality and needed improvements in evaluation as well as better integration of the

⁵ "90 per cent of UN Women supported evaluations are managed by field offices, reflecting the decentralized nature of the organization" (2014-2017 Evaluation Strategic Plan, IEO, February 2014)

⁶ IEO (2 TE), Policy Division (3 PE), Programme Division (1 CLE, 1 PE), 5 Regional offices (2 TE, 3 PE), 5 Multi-Country offices (8 PE, 1 TE, 1 regional evaluation), 22 Country offices (4 CLE, 34 country program evaluations, 2 cluster evaluations)

evaluation function and evaluation findings into performance management.

- Improve UNW evaluation policy and practice for stronger management, planning and resourcing of evaluation. This includes strengthening evaluation function at the regional and national levels.
- Enhance the role of UNW IEO in strengthening UN coherence in gender-responsive evaluation.

4. Approach

A peer review is a systematic and structured assessment that draws on the individual and collective wisdom, knowledge and insights, of a group of professionals who are recognised by their peers as having achieved the highest levels of competence and of credibility in their practice and to advance their profession.

Their observations and recommendations are based foremost on their expertise and the value of their opinions rather than on questions of methodology and evidence as is generally the case for example with evaluation and audit.

For this PR the Panel was made up of high level internationally recognised professionals⁷ in evaluation with deep knowledge and experience of the UN system, the UNEG PR approach, evaluation in international development settings, evaluation responsive to gender and human rights, the governance, organisation and management of the evaluation function in public organisations, in particular multi-lateral institutions, and current theory and professional practice of evaluation.

As such, the Panel drew not only on the objective data it collected and the rich and comprehensive information it was provided with, but as well on the depth and breadth of its collective knowledge and practical experience to formulate recommendations that it considers actionable taking into account the specifics of the context within which the evaluation function of UNW, and its IEO, are evolving.

In addition, the Panel was supported and accompanied in its work by a professional consultant and Credentialed Evaluator (CE)⁸ with extensive knowledge and experience in organisational governance, management and accountability in the public sector internationally.

⁷ Please see in annex the bios of the PR Panel

⁸ The professional designation conferred by the Canadian Evaluation Society
<http://www.evaluationcanada.ca/site.cgi?s=50&ss=1&lang=EN>

To structure its approach to obtaining data and information the Panel used a set of core questions, derived from the UNEG Norms and Standards, that address independence, credibility and utility of the evaluation function. The questions were organised into a normative framework for the PR of the evaluation function of UNW, which was used by the PR Panel and is presented in annex 1.

The Panel also examined the role of UNW in promoting and sharing knowledge on gender responsive evaluation within the UN system as well as in strengthening national capacities for gender responsive monitoring and evaluation.

The PR was carried out over the period from March to June 2014. The Panel gathered comprehensive information on all significant dimensions of UNW's evaluation function by, inter alia, reviewing key documentation and UNW's web based systems relevant to the evaluation function, examining and assessing a selection of evaluation reports using the UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports⁹, and conducting 34 in depth interviews with UNW management and professional staff at headquarters and in the field as well as external evaluation consultants¹⁰.

The Panel also administered a web-based survey of UNW Country Office representatives which was designed based on a survey questionnaire previously used in the PR of UNICEF's evaluation function, and which was adapted accordingly. The survey link was sent out by email to all UNW Country Office representatives, i.e. 45 people in total, based on a list provided by the UNW Evaluation Office. The response rate was strong at 58% and responses provided the Panel with valuable insights into some of the realities faced by UNW country offices in implementing the evaluation function and conducting evaluations.¹¹

In particular the Panel spent a week at the head office of UNW during which it met, and conducted interviews, with IEO evaluation staff, including the Regional Evaluation Specialists (RES) through teleconferencing, the senior management of UNW at head office and at regional and country offices through teleconferencing, the Executive Director and members of the Executive Board of UNW. In addition, interviews were conducted with the former Chief of Evaluation for UNW, with the UNEG Chair and Vice-chairs.

⁹ <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/607>

¹⁰ Please see in annex - List of interview respondents

¹¹ The questionnaire included 16 multiple choice questions and three open ended questions, which were designed to gather information on the demand and use of evaluations by UNW Country Offices. The estimated time required to complete the survey was 10-15 minutes. It was open for responses between April 19 and May 17 and three reminders were sent out during that time. From the responses, however, it is clear that some Country Representatives have forwarded the survey to their colleagues as there are three countries from which two responses have been received. The total number of persons having received the survey link is therefore higher than 45.

Toward the end of its working week at UNW headquarters the Panel presented its preliminary observations and thoughts to the Director of IEO and to the senior management of UNW. As well, the Panel participated with the full contingent of IEO professional staff in a peer exchange session which proved to be highly enriching for members of the Panel and confirmed the high degree of professionalism and interest of all involved in the PR.

5. Opinion and points for attention

Based, *inter alia*, on the data and information it collected and analysed, UNW's specific context and with reference to the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System, the Panel is of the opinion that the evaluation function of UNW is sound overall.

Over the course of its review the Panel was able to identify significant strengths in the evaluation systems of UNW, both corporate and decentralised, which it considers should be built on to support the entity's goal of developing fully an evaluation culture of learning and accountability in the organisation.

The Panel also identified areas in which it considers that improvements could be made to further strengthen the evaluation function in UNW, as well as risks, internal and systemic, to which the Panel draws attention with a view to their improved management and mitigation.

Finally the Panel wishes to stress that, in all of its dealings and examinations in conducting this review, it found no evidence or indication of events or practices that breach UNEG Norms and Standards and the UNEG Ethical Guidelines. or the values and principles that underlie UNW's Evaluation Policy, i.e. no "red flags".

The Panel found all respondents it interacted with to be open, forthcoming and thoughtful with the information they provided, whether it was of a descriptive, positive or critical nature. From its extensive collective knowledge and experience of organisations, the Panel recognises this fact as a potent and constructive indication of a healthy learning organisation.

The sections that follow present in succinct fashion what the Panel identifies as the priority aspects that it invites the IEO and UNW to consider and on which basis it looks forward to a fulsome peer exchange.

5.1 Strengths

Support

The Panel found consistently a strong level of support for the evaluation function in UNW, for the vision of developing a culture of evaluation throughout the organisation for learning, decision making and accountability, at all levels from the Executive Board, Executive Director and Senior Management through to professional staff at headquarters, and in regional and country offices. This support was expressed directly to the Panel in interviews and in the survey, and made objective by the full allocation to the IEO of the budget it requested for 2014. This support carries through to stakeholders the Panel consulted. The Panel did not examine the allocation of resources for evaluation in the decentralised system however it considers important that adequate levels of resources be maintained and that these be monitored regularly and systematically by UNW.

Policy and planning framework

The Panel finds that UNW's established policy, planning and procedural architecture is robust, coherent and consistent generally with principles of effective organisational management, particularly as these apply to the evaluation function in multilateral contexts, as well as with UNEG Norms and Standards for evaluation. The evaluation policy, strategic plan and corporate plan, among others, appear as key documents to provide both foundational guidance and management direction to staff and stakeholders of UNW's evaluation function.

Although the Panel reviewed the Part 5 – Evaluation chapter of UNW's Programme and Operations Manual (POM) in its final draft version only, it also finds this document important to providing guidance and clarity to UNW on its evaluation function including the different processes, roles and responsibilities within it. The Panel further considers positive that these key documents are systematically revised in consultative fashion and updated to meet the requirements of the organisation and to reflect up-to-date developments in the UN system and in evaluation theory and practice.

Engagement and consultation

The Panel finds positive IEO's practice of active engagement and consultation with senior management and internal stakeholders with a view to strengthening the relevance to UNW policy and decision-making of evaluation as well as its quality. The Panel also finds that the IEO is actively engaged within the UN system and beyond through, among other activities, its meaningful participation and leadership in UNEG and EvalPartners.

Monitoring

The Panel was able to appreciate positively the usefulness of UNW's evolving suite of web-based information and exchange platforms such as UNW's Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation (GATE) System, Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS) as well the production and use of monitoring and follow up status reports such as those of UNW's Global Evaluation Oversight System.

Global Evaluation Advisory Committee

The Panel finds positive the existence and role of this high level committee composed of evaluation professionals from globally diverse range of sectors such as government, multilateral banks, academia, private foundations, voluntary organisations for professional evaluation, other UN agencies and including from UNW the Executive Director, regional and headquarter senior management as well as the Director of the IEO.

5.2 Points for attention

Focus on core business

The Panel encourages strongly the IEO to maintain a priority focus on improving and consolidating the profile and quality of its core business, i.e. conducting and supporting evaluation in UNW that contributes positively, usefully, visibly, reliably, meaningfully and in a timely manner to the achievement of UNW mission.

Throughout its interviews and the survey the Panel found universal consensus among respondents that the bedrock of IEO's core business is the quality of evaluations and it is this foundation that the PR has first and foremost probed.

Although to date, and in view of the relative recency of UNW and of the formative phase of its evaluation function, there is a capital of goodwill among senior management, the executive and the Board, and hence of support to IEO initiatives and evaluation across UNW, there is also a strong expectation that it will deliver. As such, that aspect of evaluation quality which is usefulness and responsiveness to governance, policy and management processes and decisions appears of paramount importance.

Furthermore, without attempting to diminish the value of the IEO's efforts and initiatives to reach out and influence beyond UNW and the UN system, it should remain focussed on its key mandate, remain attentive to the relative allocation of its efforts between its various pursuits and manage the risk of real or perceived "mandate drift" that high profile involvement in activities beyond UNW and the UN, together with the ever present risk of criticism from those quarters that consider evaluation a threat, inevitably bring.

Independence of the evaluation function

In assessing the level of independence of the evaluation function in UNW the Panel distinguished between the structural and organisational characteristics of the corporate and of the decentralised evaluation systems.

In the former the Panel finds that the level of independence is adequate when considered against the UNEG Norms and Standards for evaluation, however draws attention to the benefits for UNW and its evaluation function of having it report to the Executive Board, i.e. the governance rather than the management level of the organisation.

Credibility of the evaluation function

With respect to the decentralised evaluation system the Panel finds that there is a systemic level risk to the credibility of the overall evaluation function in UNW due to the facts that decentralised evaluations account for approximately 90% of total evaluations in UNW and that management is directly involved in the conduct of evaluations.

The Panel notes that, based on the Programme and Operations Manual draft chapter 5 on Evaluation and consistent with the information it collected through its document review and interviews, management plays a determining role in two key aspects of evaluation: the approval of the external consultant (s) selected to conduct the evaluation, of the final evaluation report and of the management response. This applies accordingly to representatives in country offices, multi country offices and regional offices.

The Panel encourages IEO in its support to the development of, and capacity for, an independent and credible evaluation function at the decentralised level through, inter alia, policy guidance, technical assistance, regional evaluation strategies, regional field presence as well as processes and mechanisms for quality control and assurance.

The Panel recognises that IEO has established quality control mechanisms at decentralised level to improve credibility, quality and use of evaluations and provides support to decentralised evaluations through the RES

This said, the Panel invites the IEO to maintain a focus on mitigating the risks, real to independence, or perceived to credibility, of management involvement in evaluation at the decentralised level by, for example, considering external quality assurance approval at key stages of the evaluation process including final report sign off.¹²

¹² Please see for example the DFID Evaluation Policy 2013 which reflects mandatory requirements to which DFID staff must adhere including that all evaluations must be independently quality assured during the design and draft final report stages. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfid-evaluation-policy-2013>

As well, and as clearly expressed by a number of respondents, the Panel encourages the establishment of rosters of vetted qualified professional evaluation consultants¹³, as an additional factor to increase the likelihood of quality evaluation.

Utility of evaluations

The Panel invites the IEO to give appropriate priority to focussing on, and responding to, the management needs and policy making requirements of UNW as well as to being relevant to Executive Board oversight responsibilities

Gender responsive evaluation in the UN system – assess the performance of the IEO in supporting gender responsive evaluation in the UN system and place priority on the UN system (while remaining attentive to countries, civil society and other networks)

National evaluation capacity building – Most, if not all, of IEO efforts appear channelled through EvalPartners, and hence towards CSOs. While this might be good, there is a case for greater focus on national government institutions, i.e. on public institutional arena where arguably gender responsive evaluation is key.

6. Observations

This chapter provides the Panel’s observations and conclusions specific to key areas of the UNEG normative framework that it used for its review, i.e. independence, credibility and utility, as well as those that constitute key aspects of the IEO’s mandate and activities, i.e. gender responsive evaluation and national evaluation capacity.

6.1 Independence

Independence of evaluations and evaluation systems

Consistent with UNEG Norms and Standards the Panel considers that evaluation processes should be impartial and independent in their function from the processes concerned with policy making and programme management. A requisite measure of independence of the evaluation function is a pre-condition for its credibility, validity and usefulness. The Panel recognizes that the appropriate guarantees of the necessary independence of the evaluation function differ according to the nature of its work, its governance and decision-making arrangements, and other factors.

¹³ According to the IEO UN Women has established a gender and evaluation roster: <https://evaluationroster.unwomen.org/> in which it says there are currently over 600 candidates (individuals and firms) in the roster, and the vetting of candidates is in process.

Moreover, most organizations aim to encourage the active application and use of evaluations at all levels of management, meaning that systemic measures for ensuring the necessary objectivity and impartiality of this work should receive due attention.¹⁴

Observations

Structural independence

Corporate evaluation system

At present, the Director of the IEO reports to the Executive Director (ED) of UNW who has the responsibility for safeguarding the independence of the evaluation function.

Based on its discussions with the Executive Board, the ED, senior management, the Director of IEO, and taking into account the still formative stage of development of the evaluation function in UNW, the Panel considers that the location of the IEO in the organisational structure and its direct reporting line to the ED, constitute at this point in time an adequate level of structural independence.

The Panel found that, generally, governance, executive and senior management, as well as operational management levels of UNW expressed strong support for the corporate evaluation function of UNW which they consider to be independent.

It found that, on balance, the corporate evaluation function was sufficiently distinct from UNW's policy making and management processes and did not find evidence of significant risks at present to the IEO's independence.

However, as UNW and its evaluation function develop, consistent with the fundamental principle of evaluation independence from management, reporting and accountability of the IEO should shift from the executive management to the governance level of the organisation, i.e. the Executive Board of UNW. To ensure continued relevance of evaluation to management information needs, active and close consultation with management should be maintained.

The Executive Board could undertake to review periodically the organisation, systems and evaluation policy with a view to considering questions such as the term of the Director of IEO, human resources for evaluation, reporting lines and budget allocations to the evaluation function of UNW.

¹⁴ Indicators of independence are broadly covered by UNEG Norms N6.1 – N6.5 and amplified in the relevant standards.

Decentralised evaluation system

The Panel did not find evidence of poor evaluation practices in UNW's decentralised evaluation system however, in the course of its work the Panel identified some systemic risks to the impartiality and independence of decentralised evaluation from planning to conduct to follow up. Specific risks were identified in the selection of evaluations, of consultants as well as in the quality assurance approach to evaluation outputs and processes.

Overall the Panel finds that, for decentralised evaluation, safeguards could be strengthened for evaluations to be conducted transparently, impartially and independently.

Institutional independence

Evaluation policy

The Panel finds that, overall, the policy and procedures framework for evaluation is aligned with UNEG Norms and Standards.

The Panel considers that the 2012 Evaluation Policy is adequate with respect to independence of evaluation taking into account the stage of development of UNW and of its evaluation function. However, consistent with its observations in the preceding section, the Panel is of the view that, in time, the evaluation policy should be reviewed in a manner that anchors the independence of the evaluation function in reporting and accountability to the Executive Board.

Decentralised evaluation

The Panel also finds that, although the responsibility for decentralised evaluation lies with the executive management of the country office and regional directors as the case may be, the presence and role of the Regional Evaluation Specialists, as well as their direct reporting line to the Director of IEO, are positive factors to strengthen independence of decentralised evaluation and are appropriate to the current formative context of UNW.

This said, the Panel finds that there is at present a non-negligible risk that decentralised evaluation may be influenced by management considerations in a manner that may compromise its independence and impartiality.

It further observes that having recourse to "independent external evaluators" does not constitute an institutional attribute of independence as external consultants are, inter alia, dependent on the agreement of management for their selection and remuneration, have little incentive to risk disagreement and its consequences on their livelihood and are unlikely to be professionally certified¹⁵.

¹⁵ For a discussion of evaluation independence in organisations please see the article by Bob Picciotto: http://journals.sfu.ca/jmde/index.php/jmde_1/article/view/373

A robust external quality assurance mechanism can mitigate significantly this risk and the Panel considers that IEO's quality management processes could be strengthened by, among other things, distinguishing more clearly between consultation, quality control and independent quality assurance.

Allocation of resources

The Panel was told by the ED and the Director of the IEO that its full annual budget submission for 2014 was approved, to support the effective and independent functioning of the IEO.

While this level of allocation constitutes a strong and positive signal about the pivotal importance of the evaluation function¹⁶ to advance internal reflection and learning as well as accountability, it should be understood in context, i.e. UNW is relatively recent and there is little precedent for how to go about its mandate.

However, as UNW and its evaluation function mature, the IEO will be required increasingly to demonstrate its value to the organisation, the UN system and its stakeholders, and it should expect that its resources be allocated on the basis of its objective performance more than on the individual support of the ED.

Consistent with this trajectory, and the expectation that the IEO demonstrate and account for the effectiveness of its performance, the institutional independence of the evaluation function should evolve towards reporting and accountability beyond executive management, and through the IEO for decentralised evaluation, to the governance level of the organisation, i.e. the Executive Board of UNW.

Behavioural independence

The Panel is generally satisfied that appropriate safeguards are in place to protect and support the behavioural independence of evaluation staff at the IEO. With respect to UNW staff managing decentralised evaluations the Panel finds that safeguards could be strengthened as staff directly involved in projects or programmes are at times responsible for the management of their evaluation.

The Panel considers that, for dedicated evaluation staff of IEO, renewable annual employment contracting does not offer sufficient support to behavioural independence and that longer term stability should be provided, consistent with the principle of tenure for the Director of IEO.

¹⁶ The Panel did not examine the allocation of resources for evaluation in the decentralised system however it considers important that adequate levels of resources be maintained and that these be monitored regularly and systematically by UNW.

Conclusion

The Panel concludes that, based on the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation, the corporate evaluation system managed by the IEO has an adequate level of independence at present.

The Panel further concludes that the structural independence of the corporate evaluation system, i.e. where the IEO is located in UNW's organisational structure and its reporting line, could be strengthened in due course by shifting the accountability of IEO to the Executive Board. To ensure continued relevance of evaluation to management needs, active consultation and interaction with management on information and learning needs should be continued.

From a policy perspective, independence could be reinforced by improving the transparency and predictability of allocation of resources to the evaluation function, including security of tenure to the head of the IEO and longer term security of employment for professional evaluation positions.

The Panel concludes that the decentralised evaluation system should put in place additional measures to safeguard its independence from the operations it assesses as currently its processes are subject directly to management orientations and decisions.

6.2 Credibility

Credibility of evaluation

The Panel considers that the credibility of evaluation depends on the expertise and impartiality of the evaluators as well as the degree of independence and transparency of the evaluation process. Credibility requires that evaluations report both successes as well as failures. Greater participation of the programme countries in evaluation is important to promote credibility. Whether and how the organization's approach to evaluation fosters partnership and helps build ownership and capacity in developing countries merits attention as a major theme.¹⁷

Observations

The Panel notes and commends the positive contribution to the credibility of the evaluation function in UNW of the appointment at the Director level of the head of evaluation. Through its meetings and interviews the Panel found that generally senior management and stakeholders perceive highly the IEO and the commitment of its staff.

¹⁷ Indicators of credibility are outlined in UNEG Norms N5.1 – N5.3, N8.1, N9.1 – N9.3 and N11.1 – N 11.5 and amplified in the relevant standards.

Work Programme

The Panel considers positive the IEO's approach to development of the UNW evaluation plan based on active consultation and participation of senior management and other stakeholders. It also considers positive the clear requirements for corporate and decentralised evaluation planning, including guidelines for funding of evaluation, listed in the Evaluation Policy.

Quality of evaluation

The Panel examined a selection of NINE evaluation reports¹⁸, corporate and decentralised, and assessed them using the UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports¹⁹. It also reviewed accompanying documents such as the terms of reference and management responses, obtained feedback on quality of evaluations through interviews and conducted interviews with some of the external consultants who were team leaders of the evaluations.

The Panel found that the quality of the evaluation reports it reviewed was variable and notes the risk to the credibility of the evaluation function of the lesser quality of some evaluation reports. This appears as an important risk to address as, among other considerations, responses to the web-based survey underline that quality of evaluations is a key factor affecting internal and external use of UNW evaluations²⁰.

Although the Panel did not assess directly existing capacity in field offices, it found that some of the factors that affect the quality of evaluation are the relative strength or weakness of contract management capacity, for example the extent of evaluation management experience of the evaluation focal point or the presence or not of a dedicated monitoring and evaluation officer, as evaluations are carried out mostly if not entirely by external consultants.

As well other factors are evaluability and the state of management monitoring processes and the availability and reliability of the data they produce. This said, the Panel realises that this capacity needs to be built over time and considers that current efforts are in the right direction.

¹⁸ Contribution of UN Women to Prevent Violence Against Women and Expand Access to Services; Contribution to Increasing Women's Leadership and Participation in Peace and security and Humanitarian Response; Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) India; Mid Term Evaluation One UN Joint Programme on Gender Equality, Uganda; Evaluation of the UN/Government of Liberia Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment; UNW Anti Human Trafficking Programme; Establishment, Rehabilitation and Activation of Eight Women's Centres in the Gaza Strip and West Bank; The Gender and Governance Program- KENYA; The Gender and Governance Program- AFGHANISTAN.

¹⁹ <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/607>

²⁰ The most important factor determining the internal and external use of evaluations is clearly quality (mean of 4.71 for internal use and 4.95 for external use on a scale from 1 to 5) – Please see Annex 7: UNW country office survey on the demand and use of evaluation

The Panel notes that more direct involvement of IEO staff in evaluations has started and considers this increased participation a positive step toward strengthening the quality of evaluations that it encourages. However the IEO should do a skills profile to see the extent to which it has the capacity to do so.

Finally the Panel noted that, for the evaluations it familiarised itself with, and based on discussions with some respondents, evaluation capacity at present is to a large extent for development evaluation which, given the mandate of UNW, appears insufficient to address fulsomely the range of dimensions, themes, questions and issues of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Panel encourages the IEO to identify and disseminate best practises in conducting gender responsive evaluations within the evaluation system of UNW.

Conclusion

The Panel concludes that, while the IEO and evaluation function are generally perceived to be credible by UNW senior management, staff and stakeholders, its objective and systematic assessment against UNEG norms and standards for credibility, highlights some risks to the evaluation function due to the variable quality of evaluations in UNW.

The Panel further concludes that the risk to the credibility of the evaluation function in the decentralised evaluation system in which the great majority of UNW evaluations are carried out, could be mitigated by a strengthened quality control and assurance system.

Finally the Panel concludes that an important factor for the credibility of the evaluation function is its capacity to evaluate using different evaluation approaches in order to respond comprehensively and meaningfully to the mandate of UNW.

6.3 Utility

Utility of evaluation

To have an impact on policy making and management decision, evaluations should be perceived as relevant and useful and their results presented in clear and concise fashion. They should reflect fully the different perspectives of the parties involved in the programs and projects. Importantly, the Panel bore in mind that the utility of evaluations is only partly under the control of the evaluator. It is also critically a function of the interest of regional, country, program and project managers, member countries and their stakeholders through their participation on governing bodies, in commissioning, receiving and using evaluations.²¹

Observations

From its review of evaluations listed in the GATE system the Panel found that, to date and as presented, most evaluations are of programmes and projects with few thematic and no strategy/policy or organisational performance evaluations. Country level evaluations deal with programmes however there does not appear to be any holistic country programme evaluation, i.e. where the complete country portfolio of activities is evaluated.

From its interactions with respondents over the course of the PR, the Panel found a clearly expressed demand for high level evaluation, e.g. policy, organisational and strategic level evaluations. From interviews with senior managers however the Panel found that knowledge of which evaluations had been realised is variable. Very few interviewees could site examples of how they have used evaluation results.

According to the survey, respondents considered Country-level evaluations and Programme evaluations the most required at the country office level for the next 3 to 5 years; followed by strategy/policy evaluations and thematic evaluations.

This said, the Panel notes and finds positive that the IEO has started to develop annual synthesis reports on evaluations and evaluation briefs to increase utility. According to the IEO, while the first full fledged meta-analysis of evaluation reports was published in 2014 as a single report, it has been producing annual synthesis report on evaluations since 2011 as a section of the Annual Report on Evaluation.

²¹ Indicators of utility are outlined in UNEG Norms N2.6, N1.3, N 8.2, N10.1, N 10.2 and N.12.1 - N12.3 and amplified in the relevant standards. Observations related to the promotion of gender-responsive evaluation within the UN are dealt with in Section 6.4

The Panel notes that selection criteria are used systematically for evaluation planning however it also found an expressed desire for greater engagement and consultation with management on learning requirements. The Panel finds that there is an opportunity to address the apparent gap between content and focus of corporate evaluations reports and expressed management expectations and information requirements²².

The Panel finds positive the evaluation planning system framed by 8 clearly expressed criteria however found that, to date, it is not yet really utilised at country level.

In its review of a selection of evaluations, and drawing on its discussions with evaluation staff at corporate and at decentralised levels, the Panel found that there is systematic effort to engage fully stakeholders in the evaluation process. The Panel also finds however that there exist opportunities to clarify the roles of reference groups, steering committees and the like, as well as validation processes so that the independence of the evaluation is reasonably safeguarded while allowing for meaningful participation of stakeholders.

The GATE is found useful by PR respondents and the Panel appreciated being able to use it for its work. It considers positive that evaluation reports are publicly accessible as well as associated documentation such as evaluation plans and management responses although these are missing in some cases.

The Panel notes that, with the support of the GATE system, there is systematic follow up of recommendations by the IEO. It also notes and considers positive the implementation of the UNW Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS) which has as objectives, among others, to improve the quality and utility of evaluation reports, and to promote learning and knowledge management.

The Panel further notes and considers positive the establishment of the UNW Evaluation Advisory Committee with a view to further strengthen the quality of the evaluation function.

²² According to the IEO, while there is an opportunity to enhance alignment of content and focus of corporate evaluations with management expectations, this statement should also be put into context. The development of a planning mechanism for IEO corporate evaluation planning is in place since 2011 where evaluations are planned in consultation with management and approved by the Executive Director.

Conclusion

The Panel concludes that the evaluation function needs increasingly to feed into the Executive Board, policy, management and resource allocation which is particularly important for UNW as it establishes the ways it will fulfil its mandate. This orientation is especially crucial for prioritisation in an organisation operating under resource constraints.

The Panel is of the view that, for example, country programme evaluations or evaluations of strategy, would be consistent with such an orientation.

The evaluation function is good at communication however an increased focus on content relevant to policy and on management needs as well as Executive board requirements is encouraged by the Panel. As well, utility is affected by the normative, coordination and promotional role of the IEO in relation to its special mandate to promote gender responsive evaluation.

6.4 Promotion and knowledge sharing for gender responsive evaluation

Gender responsive evaluation

The comprehensive independent review of the UN system-wide evaluation mechanism²³ noted in 2012 the absence of a framework for integrating gender equality into system-wide evaluations. The expectation is that UN-Women will actively promote this. Accordingly, UN-Women aims to promote UN system coherence, coordination and accountability in terms of gender equality and the empowerment of women through system-wide evaluation and joint evaluation by:

- Actively contributing to UNEG and to regional and country evaluation groups
- Promoting joint evaluation initiatives regarding gender equality and system-wide accountability at the global, regional and country levels
- Supporting gender-responsive evaluation capacity within the United Nations system
- Building evidence-based knowledge concerning gender equality.

The Panel framed its work in relation to these aspects with these questions: How does the UNW evaluation function contribute to system-wide coherence and coordination on gender responsive evaluation in the UN system? How does UNW contribute to advancing evaluation and its professionalisation in the UN system and beyond?

²³ http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/pdf/iswe_final_report_march_2012.pdf

Observations

The Panel found that seven joint evaluations had been conducted in the period 2012-2013 based on its consultation of the GATE system for the year 2012 and on information provided to it by the IEO for the year 2013²⁴. Although there is coordination and networking with evaluation societies, opportunities exist for strengthening gender responsiveness through joint evaluations with UN organisations and these may be capitalised on by identifying systematically entry points for collaboration with sister agencies.

The Panel found that the IEO framework for gender responsive evaluation could be more effective by adopting approaches specific to institutions and their particular requirements. The Panel also considers that the UNW evaluation function should identify and work with the "right people", i.e. not limit itself to, and go beyond, the gender focal point.

Conclusion

The Panel concludes that, overall and taking into account its formative context, the UNW evaluation function is doing well at coordinating and sharing knowledge within the UN and with national networks and civil society.²⁵

The Panel confirms that, while remaining attentive to partner countries, civil society and other networks, UNW's evaluation function should maintain a focus on the priority which is the UN system and avoid the risk that the coordination and promotion work takes precedence over core evaluation tasks.

6.5 National evaluation capacity building

National evaluation capacity

The strengthening of national capacities for gender responsive monitoring and evaluation is one of the four core areas of the evaluation function of UNW. As such UNW aims to promote partnerships for evaluation capacity development initiatives in order to support the capacity of Governments, national and regional evaluation associations and networks with respect to gender-responsive evaluation.

²⁴ According the IEO **joint Evaluations completed in 2013 were as follows:**

- Joint evaluation of joint programmes on gender equality in the United Nations system (corporate)
- Evaluation of the joint programme on gender equality and women's empowerment Country office for Ethiopia
- Evaluation of joint programme on gender equality, Uganda
- Evaluation of joint programme on gender equality and women's economic empowerment, Liberia CO
- Final Evaluation of Rwandan Government and ONE UN ISANGE One Stop Centre

²⁵ A Gender Evaluation website was developed with the aim of promoting the exchange of information on gender responsive evaluation: <http://www.genderevaluation.unwomen.org>

The Panel framed its work by asking: How does the evaluation function of UNW contribute to national evaluation capacity building?

Observations

The Panel found that the bulk of the IEO's effort in this area is expended through its collaboration with, and support of, the EvalPartners²⁶ initiative²⁷. While this initiative is important, and UNW's participation in, and support of, is highly visible and acknowledged, it would be helpful to make more explicit the relationship between the specific remit of its evaluation function to develop national evaluation capacity in respect to gender responsive evaluation and the IEO's role in EvalPartners.

This is not to say that the Panel calls into question in absolute terms this involvement, however the IEO should be in a position to show how, and the extent to which, the investment relates to, and meets more specifically, the national evaluation capacity objective.

In particular the Panel was attentive to the known critical importance of national institutional capacity for evaluation, and in particular the development of gender responsive evaluation capacity in government, and considers important that that network be interacted with.

And while recognising the links between the work of EvalPartners and national governments, the Panel considers that opportunities should be pursued to intervene directly with national governments for example through close involvement of national institutions in setting the evaluation agenda, collaborative evaluations including evaluation management with national institutions, country-led evaluations, joint evaluations, etc.

Conclusion

The Panel concludes that, while the involvement in EvalPartners appears valid at this point in time, evaluation capacity building for gender responsive evaluation should also focus at the level of national institutions and governments.

²⁶ <http://www.mymande.org/evalpartners>

²⁷ According to the IEO, "given the limited resources and capacity available to reach out various potential stakeholders, active leadership and engagement with EvalPartners has provided the IEO with a good deal of opportunity to leverage resources to promote and build capacity of CSOs, VOPEs and national government institutions on Evaluation with particular focus on gender responsive evaluation. A good proportion of the participants of the MyM&E development evaluation e-learning platform are from government institutions while guidance and tool kits developed through this global partnership helped to cater the information needs and capacity of national governments beyond VOPEs and CSOs."

7. Annex – Peer Review Panel Members

Indran A. Naidoo, Chair

Indran A. Naidoo is the Director, of the Independent Evaluation Office, of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Office is responsible for the independent evaluation function of the UNDP, and produces global, thematic and country level evaluations across the UNDP, reporting to the Executive Board, management at all levels, and stakeholders at the country and global level. Prior to joining the UNDP, Indran worked as the Deputy Director-General: Monitoring and Evaluation at the Public Service Commission (PSC) of South Africa, as well as Deputy Director-General: Leadership and Management Practices and Chief Director at the same institution. He was part of a leadership team that helped develop the oversight systems for this independent constitutional body, which was reconfigured during the post-apartheid and democratic era. Whilst at the PSC he helped advance the discipline and served on elected Board positions on the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS) and the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA). He was the PSC conference leader for the Third PSC/African Evaluation Association (AFREA) Conference held in 2004 and a founding member of the SAMEA, which led to three SAMEA Biennial Conferences under his leadership (2007, 2009 and 2011). He has been a visiting faculty at the International Programme for Development Evaluation (IPDET) on evaluating governance since 2008. Prior to joining the PSC he was the Director: Monitoring and Evaluation, Department of Land Affairs, where he set up the country's first M&E system between 1995 and 2000. He holds graduate and post-graduate qualifications in English and Geography respectively from the University of KwaZulu Natal, post-graduate in Education from the University of South Africa, a Master's degree in Geography from West Virginia University USA, and a Doctorate in Evaluation from the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa. His doctoral thesis examined the role of M&E in promoting good governance in South Africa. He also holds executive management certificates from Oxford University and Harvard (USA) and Wits University Business Schools. He has presented several papers on development and evaluation, has written on the subject, and is the recipient of several awards.

Margareta de Goys

Margareta de Goys is the Director of UNIDO's Evaluation Group. She was the Vice-Chair of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) in 2011/12. Previously she was a partner and senior consultant of SPM Consultants, Stockholm, Sweden. She has been involved in a large number of bilateral and multilateral evaluations, both in the capacity of evaluation manager and evaluator. She was the Co-Chair of the NONIE 2012 meeting.

Riitta Oksanen

Riitta Oksanen is a senior advisor on development evaluation in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland. Riitta's tasks include evaluation capacity development in the Ministry and capacity development support to partner countries. Since the Ministry's strategy is to support evaluation capacity development through partnerships, Riitta represents the Ministry in international initiatives aiming at stronger national evaluation systems in the partner countries, including the EvalPartners. She recently chaired for two years the OECD/DAC evaluation network's task team that focuses on evaluation capacity development. Riitta is the Vice-President of the European Evaluation Society (EES) and a member of the Finnish Evaluation Society (FES) board.

Riitta's background is in development policy and management of development cooperation. She has previously worked in the Ministry as director for development policy and as an advisor on management and effectiveness of development cooperation. She worked in Finland's permanent EU delegation as counsellor responsible for EU development policy and cooperation, and chaired the Council's working group on development cooperation during the Finnish EU Presidency in 2006. Before joining the Ministry in 1999 she worked as a consultant specialising in planning, management and evaluation of development cooperation. Riitta's basic education is from the University of Helsinki specialising in marketing, business administration and economics applied to forestry sector. Riitta is also a qualified adult educator.

Ian C Davies, CE.

Ian Davies is former President, Vice President and Treasurer of the European Evaluation Society, former President of the BC Chapter of the Canadian Evaluation Society, member of the Canadian, French and American evaluation associations, member of the Financial Management Institute of Canada and International Fellow of the Centre for Development and Research in Evaluation. He is a Credentialed Evaluator (CE), the professional designation accorded by the Canadian Evaluation Society. Over a distinguished 30 year career in government in Canada and in Europe he has been: Advisor to the President of the Treasury Board of Canada on reporting to Parliament, Director of Performance Audit and Evaluation for the Auditor General of British Columbia, Advisor to the European Commission on Evaluation and Reform, Advisor to the European Court of Auditors on sound financial management, Coordinator of Programs for the Ministry of Health and Social Services, and Director of the Social Sciences department of Sherbrooke College. Mr. Davies works with the highest levels of governments and organisations. He has successfully coached and advised parliamentarians, ministers, commissioners, boards and directors of national and multinational institutions on governance, leadership, reform, policy formulation and implementation, and accountability. He is a frequent speaker at professional conferences, university lecturer, researcher and writer. Mr. Davies holds a post-graduate degree in public administration specialising in performance focused management, accountability and evaluation in the public sector.

8. Annex – Normative Framework

	Independence	Credibility	Utility
<p>Question 1: What is evaluated?</p> <p>UNEG Norms</p>	<p>Is the evaluation work programme affected by the level of independence of the evaluation function:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - who decides/approves; - what is included/excluded; - how representative and strategic is the evaluation work programme - What is budgeted for? <p>N2.3: the governing bodies/heads of organizations are responsible for ensuring that adequate resources are allocated to enable the evaluation function to operate effectively and with due independence</p>	<p>Is the credibility of the evaluation function affected by what is included/excluded in the evaluation work programme?</p> <p>Does the credibility of evaluation affect what can be included in the evaluation work programme?</p> <p>Where is the function located/ to whom does the Director report?</p>	<p>Does the evaluation work programme focus on/include subjects that are critical/most useful to stakeholders (demand side), including at decentralized levels and externally?</p> <p>Are organizational policies and strategies evaluated?</p> <p>Do evaluation ToRs include pertinent issues or questions?</p> <p>Do evaluation contribute to UN Women's accountability and learning needs?</p> <p>N1.3: evaluation feeds into management and decision-making processes and makes an essential contribution to managing for results</p> <p>N2.6: a system for explicit planning of evaluation and systematic consideration of findings</p> <p>N4.1 and N4.2: intent to use, selection of evaluation work is carefully done, the evaluation plan can be the result of a cyclical or purposive selection</p>
<p>Question 2: How are evaluations conducted?</p> <p>UNEG Norms</p>	<p>Are evaluations conducted transparently, independently and impartially?</p> <p>Do evaluations safeguard against conflict of interest?</p> <p>N.5.1: impartiality is the absence of bias in due process, methodological rigor, consideration and presentation of achievements and challenges. The requirement for impartiality exists at all points in the process: planning, conduct, reporting</p> <p>N6.2: the head of evaluation must have the independence to supervise and report on evaluations</p> <p>N6.3: to avoid conflict of interest, evaluators must not have been responsible for the subject of the evaluation</p> <p>N6.4: evaluators must not have any vested interest and have the full freedom to undertake the evaluation impartially</p>	<p>Are evaluations/evaluators (perceived to be) transparent, impartial, of high quality/competent. Technically sound, and are using evaluation resources efficiently?</p> <p>N4.2: the purpose, nature and scope of evaluation must be clear to evaluators and stakeholders, evaluation must ensure due process timely completion and cost-effective way to obtain and analyse information</p> <p>N5.2: Impartiality increases the credibility of evaluation and reduces the bias in data gathering, etc.</p> <p>N8.1: each evaluation should employ design, planning and implementation processes that are inherently quality oriented</p> <p>N9: the head of the evaluation function, evaluation staff and evaluators should have proven competencies to manage and/or conduct evaluations</p> <p>N10.1: transparency improves credibility and quality</p> <p>N11: evaluators must have personal and professional</p>	<p>Does the evaluation process engage stakeholders in ways that make evaluations useful, while maintaining independence and credibility?</p> <p>Do evaluations fulfil UN Women/stakeholder learning needs</p> <p>N4.1 and N4.2: evaluations must be undertaken in a timely manner so that they can and do inform decision-making with relevant and timely information</p> <p>N10.1: transparency and consultation in the evaluation process can facilitate consensus building and ownership of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation</p>

	Independence	Credibility	Utility
		integrity, respect people and their rights, and be sensitive to beliefs etc.	
<p>Question 3: How are evaluation findings communicated?</p> <p>UNEG Norms</p> <p>Question 4: Is there an adequate system in place to follow-up on evaluation recommendations?</p>	<p>Is there interference in the communication of evaluation findings? Does the evaluation function communicate directly with key stakeholders? Are evaluations publicly available?</p> <p>N6.1: the head of evaluation should have full discretion in submitting directly its reports for consideration at the appropriate level of decision-making</p>	<p>Are evaluation findings communicated in an impartial way with adequate levels of technical and political credibility? Are evaluation reports of high quality?</p> <p>N8.2: evaluation reports must present in a complete and balanced way the evidence, findings, conclusions and recommendations. N10.2; documentation on evaluations in easily consultable and readable form should also contribute to both transparency and legitimacy</p>	<p>Are evaluation findings communicated in a useful, constructive and timely manner? Are there good knowledge management systems in place? Does UN Women's evaluation functions/evaluations contribute to benchmarking establishing best practices for the promotion of gender-responsive evaluation within the UN and contribute to related knowledge sharing</p> <p>N2.7: governing bodies and/or heads of organizations and of the evaluation function are responsible for ensuring that there is a repository of evaluation and a mechanism for stilling and disseminating lessons to improve organizational learning and systemic improvement</p> <p>N13: evaluation contributes to knowledge building, findings and lessons should be accessible to target audiences and user-friendly</p> <p>N12: evaluation requires an explicit response by governing bodies and management to address recommendations. There should be systematic follow-up on the implementation of evaluation recommendations and a periodic status report, which should be presented to governing bodies</p>

9. Annex – List of interview respondents

NAME, First name	Organization/Division/Unit/Office	Title or Function
AL-TUWAIJRI Sameera	UNW / Regional Office for Arab States	Director
BARDILL Nozipho	UNW	Acting chief of staff
BECK Helen	UNW	Executive Member of the Board (Solomon Islands)
BELEV Boyan	UNW	Executive Member of the Board (Bulgaria)
BORIES Jean-Luc	UNW / Executive Board Secretariat	Member, Secretary
BRAUTIGAM Christine	UNW/ OIC / Intergovernmental Support	Policy Adviser
EVANGELISTA Sabrina	UNW	Evaluation specialist
FARRELL Fiona	UNW / Human Resources	Director
GISLADOTTIR Ingibjorg	UNW / Regional Office in Istanbul	Representative for Europe and Central Asia
GONZALES Laura	UNW / Regional Office in Panama	Regional Evaluation Specialist for Latin America and the Caribbean
GREEN Scott	OCHA / Evaluation Unit	Chief - UNEG Vice Chair
HADDAD Amy	UNW	Executive Member of the Board (Australia)
HENDRA John	UNW / ASG	Deputy Executive Director for Policy and Programme
HETLE Kristin	UNW / Strategic Partnerships Division	Director
HOUINATO Maxime	UNW / Regional Office in Dakar	Deputy Regional Director West and Central Africa
KANEMITSU Yumiko	UNW / Regional Office in Bangkok	Regional Evaluation Specialist for Asia and Pacific
MADI, Amer	Evaluation on 8 women's centres in West Bank and Gaza	Team leader
Mc Lean HILKER Lindsay	Evaluation of Liberia Joint Programme on Gender Equality	Team leader
MENON Saraswathi	UNW / Policy Division	Director
MEHROTRA Aparna	UN System Coordination	Advisor
MERKLE Caspar	UNW / Regional Office in Nairobi	Regional Evaluation Specialist for Est and Southern Africa
MLAMBO MGCUKA Phumzile	UNW	Under Secretary General and Executive Director
PURI Lakshmi	UNW / Strategic Partnerships and Intergovernmental Support	Deputy Executive Director
REDDY Shravanti	UNW	Evaluation specialist
RUGG Deborah	OIOS	Director of Inspection and Evaluation - UNEG Chair
SANZ Belen	UNW	Former Evaluation Head
SELIM Mona	UNW	Regional Evaluation Specialist for Arab States
SEGONE Marco	UNW / Evaluation Office	Director
SHEILS Shane	UNW / Planning, Programme and Guidance Unit Division	Chief
SEYMOUR Daniel	UNDP / Programme Division	Deputy Director of Programmes
SNIUKAITE Inga	UNW	Deputy Director
TATEOSSIAN Florencia	UNW	Regional Evaluation Specialist for Arab States
TASSEW Messay	UNW	Evaluation specialist
WOLOSIUK Daria	UNW	Executive Member of the Board (Poland)

10. Annex – Evaluation Report Quality Assessment Sheet

Evaluation Title:	
Commissioning Office/Organisation	
Type of evaluation (project, programme, final, thematic..)	
1. The Report Structure	
1.0 The report is well structured, logical, clear and complete.	
1.1 Report is logically structured with clarity and coherence (e.g. background and objectives are presented before findings, and findings are presented before conclusions and recommendations).	
1.2 The title page and/or opening pages provide key basic information 1. Name of the evaluation object 2. Timeframe of the evaluation and date of the report 3. Locations (country, region, etc.) of the evaluation object 4. Names and/or organizations of evaluators 5. Name of the organization commissioning the evaluation 6. Table of contents which also lists Tables, Graphs, Figures and Annexes 7. List of acronyms.	
1.3 The Executive Summary is a stand-alone section of 2-3 pages that includes: 1. Overview of the evaluation object 2. Evaluation objectives and intended audience 3. Evaluation methodology 4. Most important findings and conclusions 5. Main recommendations	
1.4 Annexes increase the credibility of the evaluation report. They may include: 1. TORs 2. List of persons interviewed and sites visited. 3. List of documents consulted 4. More details on the methodology, such as data collection instruments, including details of their reliability and validity 5. Evaluators biodata and/or justification of team composition 6. Evaluation matrix 7. Results framework	
2. Object of Evaluation	
2.0 The report presents a clear and full description of the 'object' of the evaluation:	
2.1 The logic model and/or the expected results chain (inputs, outputs and outcomes) of the object is clearly described	
2.2 The context of key social, political, economic, demographic, and institutional factors that have a direct bearing on the object is described. For example, the partner government's strategies and priorities, international, regional or country development goals, strategies and frameworks, the concerned agency's corporate goals and priorities, as appropriate	
2.3 The scale and complexity of the object of the evaluation are clearly described, for example: • The number of components, if more than one, and the size of the population each component is intended to serve, either directly and indirectly. • The geographic context and boundaries (such as the region, country, and/or landscape and challenges where relevant • The purpose and goal, and organization/management of the object • The total resources from all sources, including human resources and budget(s) (e.g. concerned agency, partner government and other donor contributions and actual expenditures • The duration	
2.4 The key stakeholders involved in the object implementation, including the	

implementing agency(s) and partners, other key stakeholders and their roles	
2.5 The report identifies the implementation status of the object, including its phase of implementation and any significant changes (e.g. plans, strategies, logical frameworks) that have occurred over time and explains the implications of those changes for the evaluation	
3. Evaluation Purpose, Objective(s) and Scope	
3.0 The evaluation's purpose, objectives and scope are fully explained	
3.1 The purpose of the evaluation is clearly defined, including why the evaluation was needed at that point in time, who needed the information, what information is needed, how the information will be used	
3.2 The report should provide a clear explanation of the evaluation objectives and scope including main evaluation questions and describes and justifies what the evaluation did and did not cover	
3.3 The report describes and provides an explanation of the chosen evaluation criteria, performance standards, or other criteria used by the evaluators	
3.4 As appropriate, evaluation objectives and scope include questions that address issues of gender and human rights	
4. Evaluation Methodology	
4.0 The report presents transparent description of the methodology applied to the evaluation that clearly explains how the evaluation was specifically designed to address the evaluation criteria, yield answers to the evaluation questions and achieve evaluation purposes	
4.1 The report describes the data collection methods and analysis, the rationale for selecting them, and their limitations. Reference indicators and benchmarks are included where relevant	
4.2 The report describes the data sources, the rationale for their selection, and their limitations. The report includes discussion of how the mix of data sources was used to obtain a diversity of perspectives, ensure data accuracy and overcome data limits	
4.3 The report describes the sampling frame – area and population to be represented, rationale for selection, mechanics of selection, numbers selected out of potential subjects, and limitations of the sample	
4.4 The evaluation report gives a complete description of stakeholder's consultation process in the evaluation, including the rationale for selecting the particular level and activities for consultation	
4.5 The methods employed are appropriate for the evaluation and to answer its questions	
4.6 The methods employed are appropriate for analysing gender and rights issues identified in the evaluation scope	
4.7 The report presents evidence that adequate measures were taken to ensure data quality, including evidence supporting the reliability and validity of data collection tools (e.g. interview protocols, observation tools, etc.)	
5. Findings	
5.0 Findings respond directly to the evaluation criteria and questions detailed in the scope and objectives section of the report and are based on evidence derived from data collection and analysis methods described in the methodology section of the report.	
5.1 Reported findings reflect systematic and appropriate analysis and interpretation of the data	
5.2 Reported findings address the evaluation criteria (such as efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, impact and relevance) and questions defined in the evaluation scope	
5.3 Findings are objectively reported based on the evidence	
5.4 Gaps and limitations in the data and/or unanticipated findings are reported and discussed	

5.5 Reasons for accomplishments and failures, especially continuing constraints, were identified as much as possible	
5.6 Overall findings are presented with clarity, logic, and coherence	
6. Conclusions	
6.0 Conclusions present reasonable judgments based on findings and substantiated by evidence, and provide insights pertinent to the object and purpose of the evaluation	
6.1 The conclusions reflect reasonable evaluative judgments relating to key evaluation questions	
6.2 Conclusions are well substantiated by the evidence presented and are logically connected to evaluation findings	
6.3 Stated conclusions provide insights into the identification and/or solutions of important problems or issues pertinent to the prospective decisions and actions of evaluation users	
6.4 Conclusions present strengths and weaknesses of the object (policy, programmes, project's or other intervention) being evaluated, based on the evidence presented and taking due account of the views of a diverse cross-section of stakeholders	
7. Recommendations	
7.0 Recommendations are relevant to the object and purposes of the evaluation, are supported by evidence and conclusions, and were developed with the involvement of relevant stakeholders	
7.1 The report describes the process followed in developing the recommendations including consultation with stakeholders	
7.2 Recommendations are firmly based on evidence and conclusions	
7.3 Recommendations are relevant to the object and purposes of the evaluation	
7.4 Recommendations clearly identify the target group for each recommendation	
7.5 Recommendations are clearly stated with priorities for action made clear	
7.6 Recommendations are actionable and reflect an understanding of the commissioning organization and potential constraints to follow-up	
8. Gender and Human Rights	
8.0 The report illustrates the extent to which the design and implementation of the object, the assessment of results and the evaluation process incorporate a gender equality perspective and human rights based approach	
8.1 The report uses gender sensitive and human rights-based language throughout, including data disaggregated by sex, age, disability, etc.	
8.2 The evaluation approach and data collection and analysis methods are gender equality and human rights responsive and appropriate for analyzing the gender equality and human rights issues identified in the scope.	
8.3 The report assesses if the design of the object was based on a sound gender analysis and human rights analysis and implementation for results was monitored through gender and human rights frameworks, as well as the actual results on gender equality and human rights	
8.4 Reported findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons provide adequate information on gender equality and human rights aspects	

11. Annex – UNW country office survey on the demand and use of evaluation

Summary of main results

Country offices are more often involved in decentralized evaluations (managed by their country office) than in corporate evaluations (managed by the central evaluation unit of UNW). Half of the respondents indicated that their country office had managed 1-2 evaluations in 2013, for 15% it was 3-5 evaluations and 35% indicated that their country office did not manage any evaluation in 2013. As for corporate evaluations, 58% responded that their country office had not been involved in any in 2013, while 38% indicated that their country office was involved in 1-2 corporate evaluations (1 respondent, i.e. 4%, did not know).

Demand of evaluations

Responses indicate a tendency for increasing demand of evaluations, both internally and externally. With respect to the internal (i.e. within UNW) demand, 15 respondents indicated that it had increased over the past three years while 6 said that it had remained unchanged. The result is less pronounced for external demand, which has increased according to 9 respondents, while 9 say it has stayed the same. None of the respondents felt that the demand for evaluations had decreased over the past three years.

Among proposed factors that may have contributed to increased demand for evaluations, leadership of representative was rated highest (mean 3.86 on a scale from 1 to 5), followed by mandatory requirements (mean 3.71), while government requests were rated lowest (mean 2.40). As for factors that may have contributed to decreasing demand for evaluations, financial resources for evaluation was rated most important (mean 3.63 on a scale from 1 to 5), while leadership of the evaluation office or regional office were rated lowest (mean 2.13 for each).

Use of evaluations

Accountability, information for decision-making and learning were rated almost equally important as purposes for carrying out evaluations (mean between 4.41 and 4.45 on a scale from 1 to 5). The most important factor determining the internal and external use of evaluations is clearly quality (mean of 4.71 for internal use and 4.95 for external use on a scale from 1 to 5), followed by the purpose of the evaluation for internal use (mean 4.67) and the independence of the evaluation for external use (mean 4.71). UNW evaluations are mostly used by UNW staff, followed by donors and other UN agencies. Most respondents (57%) indicated that their country office “sometimes” systematically disseminates evaluation findings externally, while 19% say that this is “always” the case.