UNEG
United Nations Evaluation Group

Behavioural Science in Evaluation

Proposal to establish a UNEG Interest Group

UNEG AGM 2025: Work Planning Session

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It is being submitted for **discussion and approval** during the Work Planning session Friday 14th February (14:00-15:30 Tokyo time).

Advancing Behavioral Science in Evaluation: A Call to Action

Human behaviour is complex, shaped by emotions, beliefs, norms, biases, and mental shortcuts. Since the early 2000s, behavioural science has helped researchers and practitioners navigate these nuances, diagnose barriers and enablers of change, and design more impactful interventions.

Recognizing this potential, the United Nations (UN) has begun integrating behavioural science into programmes and administrative systems to modernize and enhance its effectiveness. While the UN Innovation Network's Behavioural Science Group1 has made strides, there is no dedicated space focused on applying behavioural science specifically in evaluation. This is a missed opportunity to advance the UN commitment to develop behaviourally informed monitoring and evaluation tools, indicators, and indexes.[2]

Behavioural science has immense potential to challenge assumptions, uncover hidden dynamics, and enhance inclusiveness in evaluations. It can enhance evaluation management and use, particularly in improving decision-making processes and shaping communication to boost participation, engagement and ownership of evaluation results. Without a dedicated effort, UN evaluation functions risk underutilizing these valuable insights.

A Proposal for Collaboration

Since 2021, UN evaluation units like WIPO and UNDP have begun exploring behavioural science in evaluation, producing guidance and piloting tools.[3] OIOS and others have expressed interest in further experimentation. These early steps signal a growing recognition of behavioural science as a catalyst for innovation in evaluation.

To build on this momentum, we propose creating **an Interest Group on Behavioural Science in Evaluation, aligned with UNEG's Strategic Objective 3: to influence policy-making and operational work through evaluations**.[4]

The group would:

- Provide a platform for sharing knowledge, experiences, and lessons learned in applying behavioural science to evaluations.

- Promote experimentation and pilot tools to determine what works, under what conditions, and why.

- Foster innovation by amplifying the relevance, reach, and impact of evaluations.

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[1] UN Innovation Network | Behavioural Science Group.

[2] United Nations (2023). Our Common Agenda, UN 2.0 Forward-thinking culture and cutting-edge skills for better United Nations system impact. Policy Brief 11; United Nations (2023). Secretary-General's Guidance on Behavioural Science.

[3] WIPO (2021). Evaluation of the Use and Impact of IOD Evaluation Section Recommendations; UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (2024). Engagement and Communications strategy.

[4] United Nations Evaluation Group (2020). UNEG Strategy 2020-2024.