**Independent Review of the UNDP Evaluation Policy**

**Terms of Reference (revised 29 November 2013)**

**Background**

The first UNDP evaluation policy was approved by the UNDP Executive Board during its annual session in 2006. The policy aims to establish a common institutional basis for the UNDP[[1]](#footnote-1) evaluation function and seeks to increase transparency, coherence and efficiency in generating and using evaluative knowledge for organizational learning and managing for results, and to support accountability. At the request of the Executive Board, the Evaluation Office of UNDP commissioned an independent review of the first evaluation policy, which was presented to the Executive Board in 2010 and led to a consequent updating of the evaluation policy approved by the Executive Board in its first session in 2011. The Executive Board further requested the Evaluation Office to commission another review of the evaluation policy to be reported to the Executive Board in 2014.

In UNDP there are two categories of evaluations: (i) independent evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office; and (ii) decentralised evaluations commissioned by programme units.

The Evaluation Office is an independent evaluation unit headed by a Director who reports directly to the UNDP Executive Board. The Director has a two-fold responsibility: (i) to provide the Executive Board with valid and credible information from evaluations for corporate accountability, decision making and improvement; and (ii) to enhance the independence, credibility and utility of the evaluation function as well as its coherence, harmonization and alignment in support of UN reform and national ownership.

UNDP programme units (UNDP country offices, regional bureaux, policy and practice units[[2]](#footnote-2)) carry out certain types of decentralised evaluations as outlined in their respective evaluation plans, and ensure that these evaluations provide adequate information about the overall performance of UNDP support in a given context. In UNCDF and UNV the evaluation units report directly to the Executive Secretary and Executive Coordinator, respectively, and also conduct evaluations of their respective operations.

This review will assess the performance of the evaluation function since the approval of the evaluation policy in January/February 2011 and the extent to which the organisation has responded to the requirements of the policy. The review will also help to align the evaluation function with the new 2014-2017 Strategic Plan of UNDP[[3]](#footnote-3) (UNCDF and UNV will both produce strategic frameworks, under the UNDP Strategic Plan, to elaborate their results during 2014-17).

**Purpose, Scope and Objectives**

The evaluation policy requires a periodic review of the evaluation function in order to identify lessons andlearn from them. This ToR is for the second such review. The findings and recommendations will be presented to the UNDP Executive Board and UNDP management at an informal meeting in September 2014 with the final report presented during the first regular session of the Executive Board in January 2015. The review report will: inform key stakeholders about the status of the implementation of the policy; identify strengths and weaknesses, including good practices and systemic constraints; and identify areas that may require policy change or management decision to improve the evaluation function.

The review will cover the period from January 2011 to mid-2013, taking into account contextual and organisational changes since the approval of the first evaluation policy in 2006. It will cover all UNDP managed programmatic interventions, irrespective of funding source. The review will assess the progress made so far in implementing the evaluation policy. The organisation will benefit from forward-looking recommendations on measures and adaptations required.

The review will cover both independent evaluations and decentralised evaluations, including the oversight for these evaluations. There will be a specific focus on the decentralized evaluation function given the knowledge gathered in successive Annual Reports on Evaluation, which points to perennial weaknesses in the coverage and quality of decentralised evaluations. The peer review of UNDP’s Evaluation Office on methodology and knowledge sharing conducted by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) in 2012 also highlighted this need for deeper consideration of decentralized evaluation in the policy review process. For UNCDF and UNV, the review will seek to benchmark current systems and processes for evaluation with other UN agencies of similar size and scope.

**Review Questions**

In alignment with the normative framework of the evaluation policy, the review will focus on the following three elements of the evaluation policy:

* The overall UNDP evaluation function
* Independent evaluations
* Decentralized evaluations

Within each, the review will ask the following questions:

1. Evaluation Function

*Relevance of the policy*: Is the policy clearly understood by key constituents of the organisation? Has it effectively influenced the systems and practices of the organisation in improving the performance of UNDP, as well as UNV and UNCDF? Does the policy meet professionally, recognized international standards for an evaluation policy for multilateral agencies similar to UNDP?

Did the parts of UNDP listed below fulfil their key functions as outlined in the evaluation policy:

* The Executive Board of UNDP as custodian of the evaluation policy (paragraph 18)
* The Evaluation Office of UNDP as custodian of the evaluation as defined in the evaluation policy (paragraph 19)
* The Administrator of UNDP, being accountable for UNDP results
* The senior management of practice and policy bureaux, UNV, UNCDF, regional bureaux and country offices that manage global, regional, country and thematic programmes

What are the areas of strength and weakness? The review should also examine the relationship between the evaluation functions of UNDP and its associated fund and programme.

*Capacity and resources:* Are the relevant units—Evaluation Office, practice and policy bureaux, UNV, UNCDF, regional bureaux and country offices—equipped with required specialized and technical expertise to fulfil their evaluation mandates? Are the evaluation-related programmes of work of these units adequately financed to allow the conduct and commissioning of credible and quality evaluations in a timely manner? Are the budget and evaluation plans linked so that it is clear that adequate resources are allocated?

1. Independent Evaluations by the Evaluation Office

*Independence:* Did the Executive Board and the Administrator safeguard the independence of the evaluation function and foster an enabling environment for evaluation? Is the Evaluation Office located independently from the other management functions so that it is free from undue influence? Do the Executive Board and Administrator ensure that evaluations are conducted in an impartial and independentmanner ? Do they ensure that evaluators have the freedom to conduct their work without repercussions for career development? Do evaluators hired by Evaluation Office operate in an independent manner?

*Credibility:* Do the Evaluation Office evaluations meet the quality criteria as stipulated in the UNEG Norms and Standards? Do Evaluation Office evaluations have meaningful and transparent consultation with stakeholders? Are Evaluation Office evaluations conducted with ethical considerations as expressed in the policy?

*Utility:* Are Evaluation Office products (programmatic and thematic evaluations) optimal for promoting accountability and learning in the organisation? Are the evaluations designed and completed in a timely manner to enhance utility? Are Evaluation Office evaluations found to be useful for learning, accountability and improvements? Have management responses been prepared in a systematic manner to independent evaluations? Has there been follow up to independent evaluations in a timely and comprehensive manner?

Did the Executive Board use evaluation and reports on compliance with evaluation policy for accountability, and draw on the findings and recommendations of evaluation for oversight and approval of corporate policy, strategy and programmes?

Have the Evaluation Office evaluations followed requirements for effective dissemination and use of evaluations, as required in the evaluation policy (e.g. translation of summaries into the three languages)?

*Partnership in evaluation:* Has the Evaluation Office effectively engaged in partnership in evaluation by building a network of practitioners, promoting joint and country-led evaluations and engaging in the work of UNEG? Has the Evaluation Office been engaged in partnership to nurture a collaborative relationship with national evaluation institution and associations?

1. Decentralised Evaluations

*Roles and Responsibilities:* Did managers of the programme units/UNV/UNCDF fulfil their roles and responsibilities, as outlined in the policy, namely to (i) ensure the evaluability of the programmes; (ii) ensure effective monitoring, (iii); identify priority areas for evaluation; (iv) establish an appropriate institutional arrangement to manage evaluation; (v) ensure adequate resources for evaluation; (vi) safeguard the independence of the evaluation process and product; (vii) ensure the conduct of mandatory evaluations were in line with established quality standards; (viii) promote joint evaluation work with the UN system and other partners; (ix) prepare management responses to all evaluations; (x) draw on evaluation findings to improve the quality of programmes, guide strategic decision making on future programming and positioning, and share knowledge on development experience? What are limitations and challenges? Is there effective oversight for decentralised evaluations?

These roles and responsibilities are further elaborated in sub-questions as shown below:

*Compliance/Accountability:* Have requirements for evaluation compliance (e.g. conduct of outcome evaluations and mandatory project evaluations) been met by programme units? What are existing challenges in meeting compliance? Are there limitations with the current requirements for compliance? Have programme audits consistently looked at evaluation compliance issues?

*Capacity and resources*: Is there adequate institutional capacity to meet the evaluation policy requirements in the organisation as a whole, specifically at the country and regional level? Are evaluations adequately and realistically financed in the evaluation plans of the programme units? Are evaluations carried out in a cost-effective manner?

*Independence/Impartiality:* Are decentralised evaluations carried out in a transparent manner, free from bias and potential conflict of interest? Do programme units ensure that evaluators have the freedom to conduct their work without due pressure? Do evaluators hired by the programme units operate in an independent manner?

*Credibility:* Do decentralised evaluations meet the quality criteria as stipulated in the UNEG Norms and Standards? Do decentralised evaluations have meaningful and transparent consultation with stakeholders? Are decentralised evaluations conducted with ethical considerations, as expressed in the policy?

*Utility:* Are decentralised evaluations used by the programme units for learning and improvements? Have management responses been prepared in a systematic manner to all evaluations? Has there been follow up to evaluations in a timely and comprehensive manner?

*Partnership in evaluation:* Have the programme units been engaged in partnership to nurture a collaborative relationship with national evaluation institutions and associations?

The review will identify factors inhibiting the effective implementation of the policy and make recommendations. It will analyse factors related to organisational and staff capacity, incentives for conducting, commissioning and using evaluations at the country office and headquarters levels, the oversight function of central bureaus in ensuring critical evaluation coverage, and issues of evaluation and results culture in the organisation.

**Approach and Methodology**

The review will utilise the UNEG norms and standards for evaluation in the UN system. The following provides a suggested framework for approach and methodology. Independent reviewers will be requested to further elaborate the approach and methodology as outlined below:

* Formulate theories-of-change that govern the evaluation function as currently practised in UNDP
* Desk Review (documents to be consulted can be found on the UNDP evaluation website.[[4]](#footnote-4))
* Individual and group interviews (individuals and groups can be identified from the UNDP organizational chart.[[5]](#footnote-5))
* Survey of UNDP management in headquarters (including UNV and UNCDF), regional service centres and country offices, as well as the Executive Board members and external stakeholders.
* A limited number (6-9) of country offices and regional centres selected on the basis of selection criteria (regional balance, country typology) will be covered in greater depth through case study and field visits.
* The review will involve a limited number of trips to New York and one in Bonn for (i) briefing and debriefing meetings with the Evaluation Office management, UNV, UNCDF and key stakeholders, (ii) interviews with stakeholders and (iii) presentations to the Executive Board in September 2014 and January 2015.

**Expected Products**

* Inception report (no more than eight pages excluding annexes), detailing the approach and methods to be applied, including the county offices and regional centres to be selected for field visits and case studies, and time frame for the exercise.
* Draft and final reports (no more than 30 pages) with annexes. The main report will cover the methodology, main findings, conclusions and actionable recommendations for the Executive Board.
* A summary paper of less than 8,500 words prepared according to Executive Board format.
* One informal consultation with the Executive Board on emerging findings and conclusions.
* Oral presentation to the Executive Board during an informal meeting in September 2014 and the first session in January 2015.

**Team Composition and Qualifications**

The request for proposals seeks a competent consulting firm, institute or coordinated team of individual consultants to conduct the Evaluation Policy Review.

The review Team Leader will be responsible for leading the review, ensuring that the review will meet required standards and fulfil its information needs. Detailed roles and responsibilities and division of work will be discussed and agreed upon during initial briefing in New York.

The Team Leader should have a demonstrated experience in leading evaluations and/or other evaluative exercises (such as peer reviews) to assess the implementation of an organisational policy in a government institution or a multilateral organisation such as UNDP. The team members should have sound knowledge of evaluation methods and their application in a complex evaluative exercise. Experience in working with UNDP or other UN agencies is an advantage. It is expected that the team will be diverse in terms of geographical and gender representation.

**Roles and Responsibilities of the Team Members**

The Team Leader will be responsible for the following key tasks (60 days):

* Develop the review design and methodology for conducting the review, based on the actual availability of data and discussions with the Evaluation Office, in line with the UNEG norms and standards
* Lead the stakeholder mapping expertise
* Lead the scoping and main missions to UNDP HQ, UNV HQ in Bonn and field visits
* Oversee the conduct of in-country work, as well as questionnaires and surveys (if relevant), as determined in the inception report
* Lead the drafting of the inception report
* Lead and participate fully in presentation(s) to stakeholders and Executive Board members as well as in selected data collection missions.
* Draft the final report, with support from the Team Specialists
* Lead the debriefing of Evaluation Office, UNDP senior management and Executive Board members, including the preparation of the presentations to Executive Board sessions in September 2014 (informal meeting) and January 2015 (first annual session).

Other team members (Team Specialists) will cover areas, such as organisational behaviour and incentives, institutional and individual capacity. The key tasks for which the Team Specialists will be responsible are as follows (specific functions and number of days to be determined in inception report):

* Support the Team Leader in designing the overall approach and methodology for conducting the review
* Organize and oversee the conduct of field visits and surveys or questionnaires as determined by the Team Leader
* Draft key sections of the report, as designated by the Team Leader, based on the evidence gathered through secondary source material, and from the in-country work, interviews in HQ, etc.
* Provide intellectual and strategic input, and participate fully in the missions to collect, analyse and validate data
* Specific duties within the scope of the evaluation as proposed by the Team Leader

**Implementation Arrangements**

The review will be an independent exercise with the Evaluation Office providing administrative and management support. As commissioning office, the Evaluation Office will manage the process for selecting the review team members and advisory panel; make contractual and travel arrangements; support the review team by facilitating interviews, field visits, background documentation; and arrange for the publication and dissemination of the report. An Evaluation Office Task Manager has been appointed to facilitate this process.

Unlike evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office, staff members of the Evaluation Office will not participate in this exercise as evaluators, in order to allow the team to assess the Evaluation Office performance in an independent manner. Consequently, the review team will be requested to make independent presentations of the review to the Executive Board at an informal meeting in September 2014 as well as to the first annual session in January 2015.

Two members of the Evaluation Office’s independent Evaluation Advisory Panel together with an evaluation director from UNEG will form a review-specific advisory panel that will assure the quality of the review by providing guidance to the policy review team on the process and approach/methodology applied.

There will also be an internal reference group consisting of management representatives from UNDP regional and policy bureaux, UNV and UNCDF. The reference group reviewed the ToR and will review the inception report and draft review report. It will ensure that the review team receive needed support for data collection (including field visits) and that factual comments on the final draft report are received from the various parts of UNDP in a timely manner.

**Proposed Timeframe**

The review will commence around January/February 2014 and the report will be completed in July 2014 for presentation to an informal meeting of the Executive Board in September 2014.

Tentatively, four visits to New York are foreseen for the Team Leader: (i) briefing around end-January/early February 2014 prior to completion of the inception report; (ii) interviews with HQ staff; (iii) oral presentation to an informal meeting of the Executive Board in September 2014; and (iv) oral presentation to the Executive Board in January 2015. A detailed timeline will be discussed and agreed upon during the briefing and the participation of the Team Specialists in the subsequent missions to New York will be established in the Inception Report.

1. It also covers the associated fund and programme, i.e. UNCDF and UNV. In this note, ‘organisation’ is understood include them. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Bureau for Development Policy, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/UNDP\_strategic-plan\_14-17\_v9\_web.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/operations/about_us/organisational_chart/> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)