




## Evaluation Policy

December 2011

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Date: 30 /12/2011

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## II. Introduction

1. This document presents the policy of UNCTAD for evaluation. The purpose of the policy is to better establish a common understanding of the evaluation function in UNCTAD. The evaluation policy seeks to increase transparency, coherence and efficiency, and aims to use evaluative knowledge for organizational learning and effective management for results. The policy applies only to evaluations that are conducted and/or managed by UNCTAD.
2. The present policy note establishes the guiding principles and norms; explains key evaluation concepts; outlines the main organizational roles and responsibilities; defines the types of evaluation covered; and outlines the requirements for learning and knowledge management.

## III. Definition of Evaluation

3. Evaluation is an assessment, as systematic and impartial as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area, institutional performance etc. It focuses on expected and achieved accomplishments, examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality, in order to understand achievements or the lack thereof. It aims at determining the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the interventions and contributions of the organizations of the UN system. An evaluation should provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful, enabling the timely incorporation of findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of the organizations of the UN system and its members<sup>1</sup>.
4. Evaluation should not be confused with auditing, investigation, or staff performance assessment. Though, these different activities, along with evaluation, are all part of management's quality assurance mechanism, their scopes and objectives of assessment remain different.<sup>2</sup> Evaluation is a tool that serves both management and programme/project staff by enabling independent and accurate analysis of policies and activities in achieving their expected results, in a perspective of organizational learning and improvement rather than sanctioning as it can be sometimes perceived.

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<sup>1</sup> Definition from UNEG "Norms for Evaluation in the UN system"

<sup>2</sup> Key Terminology can be found in the "Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management" (DAC, OECD)

#### IV. Purpose of evaluation

5. The objective of evaluation in the United Nations is defined in the relevant regulations and rules of the United Nations<sup>3</sup> as follows:
  - To determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the organization's activities in relation to their objectives;
  - To enable the secretariat and Member States to engage in systematic reflection, with a view to increasing the effectiveness of the main programmes of the organization by altering their content and, if necessary, reviewing their objectives.
  - To promote a sustained and expanding organizational culture of accountability, transparency, learning and performance improvement.
6. In order to achieve these objectives, by undertaking evaluations, UNCTAD aims to discharge its substantive accountability towards its stakeholders and to strive for constant improvement of its operations.

#### V. Policy framework

7. The regulations and rules that govern evaluations in the United Nations were promulgated on 19 April 2000 in:
  - Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/2000/8, 19 April 2000)<sup>4</sup>

The regulations and rules contained therein were adopted by a series of General Assembly resolutions<sup>5</sup>.

8. UNCTAD is a party to the policies set out collectively by the agencies of the United Nations System through its interagency mechanisms. In particular, the following policy documents apply to evaluations in UNCTAD:
  - Norms of Evaluation in the UN System; and
  - Standards of Evaluations in the UN System (United Nations Evaluation Group, April 2005)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/2000/8), 19 April 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Commonly referred to as PPBME Regulations and Rules.

<sup>5</sup> For instance: GA resolution 58/269

## VI. Principles of evaluation

9. Evaluation in UNCTAD follows the guiding principles set out in the UNEG Norms. In particular, the following principles must be observed and applied to UNCTAD evaluations in the manner described.

### *Impartiality*

10. The legitimacy and credibility of each evaluation rests upon its impartiality. Impartiality should be respected in all the stages of the evaluation process. This implies the absence of a bias towards any particular interest in the definition of the mandate and scope, the methodology applied, the planning of activities, the selection of evaluators, and the conduct and the conclusions of an evaluation.
11. In order to ensure maximum impartiality, the terms-of-reference of evaluation, including its scope and definition, the plan and the methodology in conducting the evaluation, the selection of evaluators, and the final evaluation report must be cleared by the head of the evaluation unit<sup>7</sup>.

### *Independence*

12. Evaluation must be conducted independently from managerial and political influences. Within the authority delegated by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, the head of the evaluation unit bears the responsibility to ensure that evaluations at UNCTAD are conducted according to the principles and policies set herein, and must be granted with the authority to clear: the terms of reference, the methodology, the selection of evaluators and the receipt of the evaluation reports, following due consultations with concerned persons within UNCTAD, as appropriate. Its organizational location must be decided so as not to influence its decisions on evaluation matters, and must be independent from the management line of programmes that could be the subject of evaluations.
13. The head of the evaluation unit must be able to report on evaluation matters directly to those who commissioned the evaluation and to the governing bodies without any influence or clearance from the line management of the programmes evaluated.
14. Evaluators must have no vested interest. External evaluators must not have engaged in any work related to the programme evaluated. UNCTAD will strive, within the practical limitations that may exist, to avoid that external

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<sup>6</sup> Commonly referred to as UNEG Norms and Standards.

<sup>7</sup> The functions of the head of the evaluation unit are defined in the UNEG Norms and Standards. In UNCTAD, the evaluation unit refers, as of September 2011, to the Evaluation and Monitoring Unit of the Office of the Secretary-General.

evaluators subsequently engage in any paid work for the programme or offered by officers who have a vested interest in the programme, including the line managers of the programme concerned. Under exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary to engage an evaluator who has a past connection with the object of the evaluation, for example where there is very small pool of competent experts. In such a case, measures to safeguard the integrity of the evaluation shall be adopted and such measures shall be disclosed in the evaluation report.

15. Evaluators must have the full freedom to conduct impartial evaluations. Evaluations must not have any potential negative influence on the career development of internal evaluators, or have any future implications for the employment of external evaluators outside the context explained above. Those who are involved in the evaluation must not restrict the evaluator's access to information, and must not prejudge the usefulness of such information.

### *Quality*

16. An evaluation report is receivable only when it satisfies quality standards. This implies that the evaluation report must be void of any conjecture that is not supported by facts or observations, or analyses thereof. It must have a logical construct, where background information and evidence supports findings, from which conclusions and recommendations can be drawn. It must address issues and questions posed in its terms-of-reference, and provide a clear explanation if certain questions were not answerable or could not be investigated in sufficient depth. It must also be written in a clear manner that would enable readers to understand the findings and conclusions without ambiguity.

### *Ethical conduct*

17. Evaluators must have personal and professional integrity. Evaluators must respect the confidentiality of sensitive information provided or views expressed, and ensure the anonymity of their source. Evaluators must not intentionally misrepresent views expressed. Evaluators must be sensitive to beliefs, gender roles, manners and customs of the people with whom they interact during the course of evaluation.
18. When encountered with some evidence of suspected wrong doing, evaluators must promptly report them in writing to the appropriate authority, bearing in mind that the related investigation is not under their authority.

### *Competence*

19. Staff of the evaluation unit who could perform as evaluators must have the competencies as defined by the United Nations Evaluation Group. External evaluators must have research, analytical and interpersonal skills necessary for conducting evaluations, a good understanding of evaluation methodologies and sufficient knowledge on the issues dealt by the programme to be evaluated.

Evaluators should be selected on the basis of competence, and by means of a transparent process

### ***Transparency***

20. The transparency of the process and the outcomes is critical in ensuring the impartiality and the effectiveness of the evaluation. For the evaluation to be a tool for accountability and learning, its outcomes must be easily accessible to all stakeholders. Therefore, all reports of external evaluations — except in cases when the reports contain material of a confidential nature — should be public documents, and their dissemination should be facilitated by placing them on the internet in an easily accessible and a readable manner.

### ***Managing for Results on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality***

21. Evaluation supports UNCTAD's ability to manage for results by assessing progress towards and achievement of women's empowerment and gender equality, to enable informed and evidence-based management and decision-making for strategic planning and programming.
22. Evaluators should make use of mixed evaluation methods to ensure triangulation of data, which enhances the reliability and validity of findings, as well as being useful for exploring whether/why different stakeholder groups benefited differently<sup>8</sup>.
23. Evaluations should also systematically assess the impact of the programmes/policies from a gender perspective, using gender analysis and gender-disaggregated data, as appropriate, in accordance with UNCTAD's commitment and mandates.
24. The UN Evaluation Group guidelines on integrating gender equality dimensions in evaluations will underpin UNCTAD's practices in this regard, as appropriate.

## **VII. Types of evaluation**

UNCTAD undertakes the following types of evaluations:

### ***External evaluations commissioned by the Trade and Development Board***

25. The Working Party on Programme Review of the Trade and Development Board commissions an in-depth evaluation of an area of UNCTAD's work

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<sup>8</sup> Handbook on "*Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations*", UNEG Guidance document (UNEG/G(2011)2), 21 September 2011.



programme each year for its review, based on its agreed conclusion reached at the twenty-fourth session<sup>9</sup> and successive evaluation plans it establishes every four years. This evaluation is undertaken by an external evaluator or an evaluation team, and managed and assisted by the evaluation unit. The evaluation report is submitted to the Working Party for its review. The implementation of its recommendations is subject to the follow ups by the Working Party in subsequent years.

26. When appropriate, this evaluation is conducted by a team whose members possess a mix of evaluation skills and technical or sectoral/thematic knowledge relevant to the particular evaluation. When possible, the composition of evaluation teams should be gender balanced. For evaluations mandated by the Board, the team is usually composed of an external evaluator and two representatives from member States who participate in a personal capacity as experts, and bring in the perspectives of donor and beneficiary countries respectively. Where possible, member State representatives should be released from the service of their governments for the period of the evaluation.
27. The lead evaluator or team leader should ensure the overall integrity of the team's performance. He or she should possess core evaluation competencies — that is, the qualifications, skills, experience, and attributes generally expected of evaluation professionals — and the ability to manage potential conflicts of interests that arise when the technical/sector experts on the team have had prior involvement with the programme.

***External evaluations commissioned by donor agencies and other external bodies***

28. Donor agencies of trust-fund based activities may request that UNCTAD undertakes evaluations of their projects, either in the context of project agreement or in a separate request at a later stage. Similarly, other external bodies, such as partner agencies or the management board of joint programmes may request external evaluations. These evaluations are undertaken by an external evaluator or an external evaluation team.
29. Based on the agreement with the party that commissioned the evaluation, management of such an evaluation could be entrusted with the evaluation unit or with the manager of the programme concerned at UNCTAD. In the case of the latter, the manager of the evaluation must inform the Director of their respective Divisions, and the Evaluation Unit of the request, obtain their clearance on the key elements of evaluation (the terms-of-reference, the methodology, the selection of external evaluators, and the receipt of the final report) in order to satisfy the aforementioned principles of evaluations.

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<sup>9</sup> TD/B/41(2)/11

### ***Joint external evaluations***

30. Not excluding the above, an external evaluation may take the form of joint evaluations with partner organizations. In this case, one of the partner organizations normally takes a lead role in managing the evaluation, while ensuring proper consultations and consensus on key elements of evaluation among the partner organizations. These evaluations are typically undertaken by an external evaluator or an evaluation team selected on the criteria agreed by partner organizations.

### ***External evaluations commissioned by the programme managers***

31. Programme managers may commission external evaluations to assess and seek ways to improve their programmes. Programme managers must inform the Director of their respective Divisions, and the Evaluation Unit of the evaluation. The programme managers could expect technical advice and assistance from the evaluation unit in managing such evaluations.

### ***Internal evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Unit or in the context of joint evaluations***

32. The evaluation unit may conduct evaluations at the request of management or external entities. The evaluation unit may also join evaluations conducted together with other organizations, such as in the UN system-wide evaluations. While these evaluations are conducted internally, it may be assisted by external experts.

### ***Self evaluations by programme managers***

33. The Secretariat uses results-based management (RBM) to ensure that its processes, outputs and services contribute to the achievement of clearly stated expected accomplishments and objectives. RBM promotes a focused approach to achieving results and improving performance, integrating lessons learned<sup>10</sup> into management decisions, monitoring and reporting on performance. To this end, self-evaluations involve periodic progress reviews of projects or programmes carried out by those responsible for implementation, and are a mechanism for steering corrective action by management, to ensure the accomplishment of planned objectives.
34. Programme managers and project officers are encouraged to undertake self-evaluations of their activities. These self-evaluations are based typically on: readership surveys of publications; questionnaires for participants of meetings or training activities; and observations on the changes made at the country or international level following a programme's intervention.

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<sup>10</sup> *Lessons learned* can be defined as “generalization derived from evaluation experiences with programmes, projects or policies that is applicable to a generic situation rather than to a specific circumstance and has the potential to improve future actions.” (UN Office of Internal Oversight Services).

35. Programme managers could expect technical advice and support from the Evaluation Unit in the design and implementation of their self-evaluation activities, and in the promotion within UNCTAD of lessons learned from these reviews.

## VIII. Roles and responsibilities

### *Governing bodies*

36. The General Assembly and the Trade and Development Board have the ultimate authority and responsibility to ensure that evaluation is conducted in accordance with its guiding principles so that UNCTAD discharges its responsibility on public accountability.
37. In this regard, the Trade and Development Board in particular, usually through its Working Party on Programme Review, monitors, provides guidance and takes actions if necessary on evaluation activities and the institutional support. On the matters that fall within the competence of the General Assembly, such as the budgetary allocation and the policies governing evaluations, the Board may decide to advise the competent bodies of the General Assembly as appropriate. It will also assume the full ownership of the annual evaluations conducted under its auspices.

### *The Secretary-General of UNCTAD*

38. The Secretary-General of UNCTAD is entrusted with the authority to conduct evaluations on behalf of the governing bodies and the stakeholders. S/He must ensure that the principles of evaluation are abided by, and provide necessary institutional support for the proper conduct of evaluation, including the due independence of the evaluation function, the staffing of the evaluation unit with competent staff in accordance with the UN system-wide standard<sup>11</sup>, and appropriate budgetary support for its activities. S/He must also ensure that the decision of the governing bodies on the outcomes of the evaluation are followed and implemented as appropriate.

### *The Senior Management Team of UNCTAD*

39. The Senior Management Team (The Secretary-General of UNCTAD, the Deputy Secretary-General, Divisional Directors, the Chief, Resource Management Service and the Chief, Technical Cooperation Service) will play an important role in strengthening evaluation culture and capacity by championing evaluation within UNCTAD. They ensure that evaluation contributes to accountability, supports decision-making, and contributes to organizational learning and improvement.

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<sup>11</sup> UNEG has set up standard competencies for the head and the staff of an evaluation unit. These standards are in the process of being reviewed by individual organizations, including the UN Secretariat.

40. The Deputy Secretary-General (in addition to her/his role in the Senior Management Team) will be responsible for ensuring that management responses to evaluations are developed, disseminated, and followed-up in a timely manner.

### ***The Evaluation Unit of UNCTAD***

41. The Evaluation Unit is the custodian of the evaluation function. It reports directly to the Secretary-General of UNCTAD and will be independent and impartial in all its work. The main activities of the unit to cover this mandate include:

- Managing, conducting and supporting the evaluation activities of UNCTAD;
- Participating and contributing to inter-agency initiatives on evaluation, such as setting up evaluation standards or evaluation guidance materials;
- Providing guidance and assistance to programme managers in using results-based management methodologies, in particular providing input into the definition of results frameworks and in the preparation of programme performance reports;
- Participating in the review of new project proposals with a view to ensuring the evaluability of each project's logical framework, as a member of the Project Review Committee and through the clearance of project documents;
- Contributing to developing capacity for self-evaluations; and
- Acting as the focal point for UNCTAD on all evaluation matters, in particular, external evaluations conducted by OIOS.

42. Within the authority delegated by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, the head of the evaluation unit bears the responsibility to ensure that evaluations are conducted according to the principles and policies set herein, with the authority to clear the terms-of-reference, the methodology, the selection of external evaluators and the receipt of the final report, as well as to directly report, as appropriate, to the governing bodies or competent authorities such as the Office of Internal Oversight Services. The unit will also provide guidance to the staff at UNCTAD on all matters related to evaluation, and ensure dissemination of evaluation reports, as appropriate, to support organizational learning.

### ***Programme managers and project officers***

43. Programme managers and project officers are obliged to keep the Director of their respective Divisions, and the evaluation unit informed of all external evaluations that they undertake. For all such evaluations, the evaluation unit has to give final clearance on the evaluation design and methodology. In particular, in addition to consultations with concerned colleagues in his/her branch/section/division, programme managers and project officers should seek guidance and clearance from the unit on the terms-of-reference, the methodology, the selection of external evaluators and the receipt of the final

report. This ensures that evaluations conducted are consistent with the principles set out in this document.

44. Programme managers and project officers support evaluations by: designing programmes or projects that are evaluable<sup>12</sup> and in compliance with RBM principles; by ensuring that all necessary information is provided to the evaluator(s); and that all officers involved in the project or programme under evaluation cooperate fully in evaluations. Programme managers are responsible for ensuring that management responses to evaluations are prepared, and that recommendations and lessons learned are followed up in their respective areas of responsibility, to the extent possible. The Evaluation Unit monitors the management response to each evaluation, and promotes the effective dissemination of lessons learned.
45. Programme managers are obliged to undertake self assessments as required in the results-based framework of the United Nations, and project officers in the context of project agreements.

## IX. Budget and resources for evaluations

46. In principle, providing financial resources required for evaluation rests with the party which commissions the evaluation. Allocation of financial resources for evaluations must be adequate to conduct high quality evaluations that meet UNEG Norms and Standards.
47. This implies that the evaluations conducted under the auspices of the Trade and Development Board or the Secretary-General of UNCTAD should be financed centrally, either by the regular budget, a trust fund established for these purposes.
48. Evaluations commissioned or requested by donor agencies or other external entities must be financed by the party which commissioned or requested the evaluation. Project officers, in particular, are obliged to include an evaluation budget in their project proposals<sup>13</sup>, except in cases where the donor envisions their own conduct of an evaluation.

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<sup>12</sup> Evaluability: Extent to which an activity or a program can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion. (OCDE, Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management). The Evaluation Unit will ensure that projects are evaluable by participating in the meetings of the Project Review Committee and in the clearance of project documents.

<sup>13</sup> As a guide, UNESCWA and UN Women for instance, recommend that 5-7 percent of the overall project budget be allocated towards monitoring and evaluation activities for each project. The appropriate level of resources allocated should bear in mind the size of the project, and the scale and scope of the evaluation to be undertaken.

49. Notwithstanding the above, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD may decide to allocate funding under his discretion to any evaluation if he deems it would be of benefit to the organization beyond the scope of particular evaluation.
50. The evaluation unit must be sufficiently staffed with competent staff to manage the evaluations mandated by the Trade and Development Board or the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, to respond to the need to oversee or manage evaluations requested by donor agencies and other external bodies, to provide guidance and assistance to programme managers and project officers for their evaluation activities, and to participate and contribute to UN-wide evaluation activities and initiatives. The Secretary-General of UNCTAD will ensure that an adequate level of resources is identified that safeguards the independence and functioning of the Evaluation Unit, in particular, the implementation of planned evaluations, and the corresponding core evaluation functions. The Evaluation Unit budget will be managed by the Head of the Evaluation Unit.
51. The self-evaluation activities by the programme managers and project officers are considered as a part of their regular duties. However, in case where the need arises for training on self-evaluation methodologies, external assistance or additional funding, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD may provide resources for these purposes from appropriate sources.

## X. Reporting and disseminating evaluation results and lessons learned

52. The evaluation report is the key product of the evaluation process. Its purpose is to provide a transparent basis for accountability of results, for decision-making on policies and programmes, and to strengthen organizational learning in order to improve the impact of activities. The report is concise, easy to understand and rigorous. The report explains the methodology followed, presents evidence-based findings as well as conclusions and recommendations.
53. In the case of external evaluations, the primary responsibility for preparing the evaluation report rests with the external evaluator, or the evaluation team. The evaluator/evaluation team is responsible for conclusions presented in the report, as well as the reliability and quality of the information contained in the report. Key stakeholders could be involved in reviewing the draft report to check if there are any relevant factual errors or omissions, and to highlight any interpretation of the findings that they consider as incorrect. The evaluators should accept changes related to factual errors, but in safeguarding the principle of independence, they should be free to draw their own conclusions from the findings.
54. To discharge the public accountability of the work of the organization, all reports of external evaluations undertaken by UNCTAD, as well as related materials such as terms of references or the follow-up reports on the implementation of evaluation recommendations, must be made publicly available, except in cases when the reports contain material of a confidential

nature. To ensure easy access to these reports by all stakeholders, they will be made available in a dedicated section of UNCTAD's website managed by the evaluation unit.

55. In order to maximize learning opportunities for the organization and to broadly disseminate relevant knowledge generated from evaluations, the evaluation unit will promote the generation and sharing of lessons learned.
56. Dissemination strategies will be developed for all independent external evaluations and will include diverse, effective, creative and barrier-free methods for widely sharing evaluation findings, recommendations and lessons learned through internal and external entry points to ensure uptake and use. They will be presented in a concise and user-friendly manner that responds to the needs of internal and external stakeholders, so that they can contribute to learning.

## XI. Following up on evaluation recommendations and findings

57. For each evaluation, based on consultations with concerned colleagues in his/her branch/section, and with his/her Director of the Division, the programme manager concerned should prepare a management response, containing their views on the conclusions and recommendations made in the evaluation report, as well as a plan of action for the implementation of the recommendations agreed or accepted, including the responsibilities and the timeframe of implementation. The management response will accompany the evaluation report, as an addendum or in a separate document, but its contents should not be incorporated into the body of the report.
58. Divisional Directors should ensure that management responses to evaluations are developed and followed-up in a timely manner. The implementation of the recommendations agreed or accepted is usually the responsibility of the programme manager concerned. The programme manager should keep his/her Section/Branch Chiefs and Director informed of progress made in the implementation of these recommendations. Those recommendations that require an institutional response beyond the authority of the programme manager or the Division's Director should be addressed by the Deputy Secretary-General. The evaluation unit is responsible, at the central level, for the monitoring of the implementation of recommendations, and the programme manager and other staff members directly responsible for the implementation must be able to report to the evaluation unit, as requested, on the progress made.
59. For the external evaluations commissioned by the Trade and Development Board. The evaluation unit coordinates their follow-up and ensures that the progress report to be submitted to the Working Party on Programme Review on the annual in-depth evaluations it commissioned is prepared and presented on a timely basis.