
REVIEW OF UNICEF QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS FOR EVALUATION
AT THE DECENTRALIZED LEVELS

REPORT

Submitted by
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December 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to George Laryea-Adjei, Director of UNICEF Evaluation Office, for having commissioned me to undertake this Review.

Special thanks go to Fabio Sabatini, Senior Adviser – Research & Evaluation of the Evaluation Office, who acted as Review Manager and Lovemore Mhuriyengwe, Knowledge Management Specialist, who was the Review Co-manager.

With appreciation, I wish to acknowledge the contribution of two other members of the Reference Group. They are Lori Bell, Regional Chief, Europe and Central Asia and Riccardo Polastro, Regional Chief, East Asia and Pacific.

I wish to express my gratitude for the collaboration and contributions that I have received from all informants.

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ACRONYMS

| | |
|----------|---|
| AIMS | Associates for International Management Services |
| CO | Country Office |
| EAPR | East Asia and Pacific Region |
| ECAR | Europe and Central Asia Region |
| EISI | Evidence Information System Integration |
| EMR | Evaluation Management Response |
| EO | Evaluation Office |
| EQA | External Quality Assessment |
| ERG | Evaluation Reference Group |
| ESAR | East and Southern Africa Region |
| EvMT | Evaluation Management Team |
| GEEW | Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women |
| GEROS | Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System |
| HQ | Headquarters |
| IE | Influential Evaluations |
| LACR | Latin America and Caribbean Region |
| LTA | Long Term Agreement |
| MENA | Middle East and North America |
| QA | Quality Assurance |
| OECD/DAC | Organization for Economic Cooperation/ Development Assistance Committee |
| QCPR | Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review |
| RO | Regional Office |
| ROSA | Regional Office for South Asia |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| UN- SWAP | UN System-wide Action Plan |
| UNEG | United Nations Evaluation Group |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| UNODC | United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime |
| VOPE | Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation |
| WCAR | West and Central Africa Region |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the period of 2011 – 2018 UNICEF has commissioned 720 evaluations¹. In 2019, the Evaluation Office did three reviews pertaining to Quality Assurance (QA) in UNICEF. The first is the External Review of UNICEF’s Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS). The second is the Review of Quality Assurance at Central Level and the third is the Review of Quality Assurance at the Decentralized Levels of UNICEF.

This is the first review of the Quality Assurance System at the Decentralized Levels of UNICEF. It examines how the Regional and Country Offices ensure quality assurance of the evaluations that they commission. The purpose of the review is to guide the enhancement of the use of the QA system. The final versions of all evaluation reports are included in the Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS) and their quality is rated. The ratings are sent to the evaluation managers and are included in an annual meta-evaluation. The results are made available to the UNICEF Board as part of the annual report on UNICEF evaluation function.

The objectives of the review include:

- a. Mapping and describing the strengths and weaknesses of Quality Assurance within the seven regions of UNICEF
- b. Review the extent to which the various Quality Assurance mechanisms have been used by offices in each region have contributed to the improvement of the quality of evaluation products and capacity enhancement in the country and regional offices of each region
- c. Review the current capacity of Country Offices and the Regional Offices and to assess whether the Quality Assurance is enhancing this capacity in the Quality Assurance process, and what the final outcomes are in terms of quality and use of evaluations for all types, from programme to country-led evaluations.
- d. Overall, review the role of the Evaluation Office, Regional Evaluation Advisors and Multi Country Evaluation Specialists in providing required quality assurance services, in accordance with the provisions of the UNICEF evaluation policy.
- e. Based on an analysis of UNICEF’s regions and good practices from comparator decentralized evaluation functions, propose options for improved quality assurance processes.

To assess the extent to which the stated objectives were achieved, based on specific evaluation questions, the reviewer used a mixed-method approach including document review and analysis, interviews with stakeholders and a questionnaire sent to country offices.

¹ Source: ImpactReady, (2018) *An Independent Review of UNICEF Evaluation Report Quality and Selected Trends from 2016-2018*.

The main finding of the Review is that Regional Offices have different conceptual approaches to quality assurance. Most see quality assurance as being intrinsic to evaluation management. Others equate quality assurance as having a high rating from GEROS. Therefore, a tendency exists to GEROSify evaluation reports, complying with the templates of the System.

The Review also found that regional cultures impact significantly on ability of Regional Offices to use efficiently quality assurance. The more the lack of evaluation culture and competence, the more challenging it is to impact significantly on evaluation quality improvement. There is recognition that quality assurance is not solely the rating of the evaluation report. It encompasses the scoping, the engagement of stakeholders, the creation of the reference group, the Terms of reference, the selection of competent evaluators, the Inception report, the Evaluation report and the Use of evaluation findings and recommendations.

Measures taken by the Evaluation Office to strengthen quality assurance at the decentralized levels will result in a quantum leap forward. In particular, the strengthening of the Regional Evaluation Adviser positions and the creation of Multi-Country Evaluation Specialists with increased responsibilities for evaluation assurance.

Based on the conclusions, the Review makes five recommendations for the improvement of quality assurance. They are:

1. The Director of the Evaluation Office should issue a Directive on Quality Assurance. The Directive would make clear the rationale and expected outcomes of quality assurance, the accountabilities, roles and responsibilities, the elements of the evaluation process that will be the object of quality assessment and UNICEF quality assurance system management.
2. The Evaluation Office should look at the alignment of resources dedicated to evaluation by Regional Offices and Country Offices, considering the 1% indicator contained in the Evaluation Policy and ensure that enough resources are dedicated to quality assurance.
3. The Evaluation Office in collaboration with Regional Offices should develop a Guide on Quality Assurance, grouping together the various existing guides, harmonizing them to strengthen UNICEF's evaluation standards applicable to the different types of evaluation.
4. The availability of basic training on evaluation management and quality assurance should be increased across the organisation. Recognition should be made to those who have completed the training programme.

5. The Evaluation Office together with Regional Offices should create a pool of qualified evaluators who could assist evaluation managers in ensuring evaluation quality. To avoid conflict of interest, long term agreements should be put in place to facilitate access to professional competence dedicated solely to quality assurance.

UNICEF QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS IN UNICEF

UNICEF Framework for Quality Assurance

In UNICEF revised evaluation policy² it is indicated that every evaluation has a designated evaluation manager (e.g., evaluation specialist or staff member in a country office whose functions include evaluation; a regional evaluation adviser; or an evaluation specialist in the Evaluation Office). The designated evaluation manager supervises the selection of the evaluation team, manages the consultants and has the authority to hold them to a high standard of performance. The evaluation manager is ultimately responsible³ for the quality of the evaluation. In addition, any staff member who has a role in managing evaluations should receive training.

The Evaluation Policy also says that quality assurance should be undertaken for terms of reference, inception reports and evaluation reports and carried out by an external expert or staff member with no role in managing the evaluation. Regional offices provide quality assurance for evaluations managed by the country offices. The Policy states that the Evaluation Office provides such services for evaluations managed by the regional offices but this is not routinized in practice. The evaluation manager ensures that the appropriate entities carry out adequate quality assurance without incurring delays. Those entities providing quality assurance (i.e., regional offices and the Evaluation Office) are responsible for ensuring that recommendations for quality improvement are acted upon. The head of the office managing the evaluation signs off upon completion and presents it to the Evaluation Office for quality assessment by an independent contractor.

The quality of all evaluation reports may be assessed by a specialist external to UNICEF. The Evaluation Office is responsible for ensuring that a credible quality assessment process is established and that its results are shared with the commissioning offices and made available to UNICEF management and the Executive Board. Periodically, the Office undertakes reviews of the quality-assessment system for all levels of the organization.

The use of evaluation is dependent upon the credibility of the evaluation, which in turn is dependent upon rigour, impartiality and professionalism. The value of evaluations is limited unless timely steps are taken to implement their recommendations and incorporate lessons into decision-making systems. UNICEF offices must prepare a formal management response to evaluation recommendations and make arrangements to maximize the use of evaluation results. Managers within UNICEF should also create opportunities to feed evaluation recommendations into key decisions taken in UNICEF

² Revised evaluation policy of UNICEF, 2018, Executive Board Document E/ICEF/2018/14

³ The intent of the evaluation policy is to say that evaluation managers have a lead role in the quality management of the evaluations that they manage. That said, it is understood that evaluation managers share that responsibility with the other parties involved in the evaluation process.

offices. The Evaluation Office maintains a system for Management to record and report on the status of implementation of management response actions.

Annexe II proposes a broader logic model of requisites to evaluation quality assurance. In the logic model, the factor at play are the demand for and offer of evaluations of quality, an enhancing environment for evaluation, a quality-driven institutional framework and competent evaluation professionals. Quality assurance needs to include all the steps of conducting an evaluation. The steps are the scoping and evaluability, the involvement of stakeholders, the terms of reference, the selection of evaluator, the inception report, oversight of the data collection, the evaluation report and the use of the evaluation.

Quality Assurance Models used at the Decentralized Levels

At the decentralized levels of the organisation there are different models being used for quality assurance in UNICEF. They are the following:

At the Regional level

Considering the different evaluation culture and evaluation professional levels existing in the seven regions, Regional Offices are using three models of quality assurance.

The first regional model is the "In-house approach" to Quality Assurance. The Regional Evaluation Adviser, the Regional and Multi-country Evaluation Specialists themselves scope, undertake evaluability assessments and quality assure the evaluation products received from Country Offices. With regards to regional evaluations, the Evaluation Managers rely on Reference Groups and may ask the Evaluation Office for support, which is done rarely.

The second regional model is the "External reviewer approach". Regional Offices use the services of a firm specialized in evaluation and quality assurance. There is a Long-Term Agreement (LTA) signed with the firm of external reviewers. The Regional Evaluation Advisers manage the flow of evaluation products to be assessed, submitted by Country Offices and ensure oversight of the services provided by the external reviewers. Evaluations conducted at the regional level, also benefit from the services of the external reviewers.

The third model used at the regional level is the "Help-Desk approach". It consists of using the LTA for external reviewers for mentoring to seek real-time feedback during the evaluation process. Advice may be sought for scoping, terms of reference, inception report, data collection and analysis, and the evaluation report.

At the Country level

Country Offices are of different sizes with varied financial endowment and great disparity in evaluation competence. The Evaluation Manager designated by the Country Representative can be an evaluation specialist, a Monitoring & Evaluation officer, thematic or sectoral specialist, depending on human resources available in the Country Office. External evaluation expertise is hired for the conduct of evaluations. Evaluation Managers may seek advice from the Regional Evaluation Adviser and the Multi-Country Evaluation Specialist. Through the Regional Evaluation Adviser, access to external reviewers is available. The Country Office Evaluation Specialists support the design, implementation and use of country-led evaluations.

The Country Representative ensures the upholding of the norms and standards set out in the Evaluation Policy in the management and conduct of evaluations. The Representative also ensures the skills needed by staff to meet their evaluation accountabilities, including professional development and integration of evaluation into staff performance reviews.

Processes used for quality assurance in Country Offices

The processes used for evaluation quality assurance are quite extensive and follow the guidelines set out in the Revised Evaluation Policy (2018) as well as the Regional Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). Many Country Offices have put in place their own standard operating procedures for evaluation quality assurance.

The practices so far are presented as follows.

- Proposed evaluations are reviewed and approved by the CO Management Committee, before work on the TOR can commence.
- TOR, inception reports and final reports are reviewed by the Evaluation Specialist, who does an initial round (often multiple) of feedback with the programme team and the evaluation team.
- Regional Evaluation Adviser is responsible for reviewing evaluation TOR, inception reports and draft/final reports.
- Evaluation TOR, inception and draft/final reports are reviewed in some Regions by an external Quality Assurance agency which has an LTA with UNICEF.
- Evaluations have an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG), which includes a mix of UNICEF staff and external stakeholders, who review the inception and draft/final reports.
- Finally, the CO Management Committee is responsible for the final approval of TOR and final evaluation reports.

The first level of quality assurance is the Evaluation Specialist, who together with the programme colleagues develop the TOR and perform the selection of evaluation team,

review the inception report, coordinate the evaluation process and provide regular feedback during the preparation of the report. In small CO with limited capacity the internal process relies usually on very few colleagues.

The second level is the involvement of the advisors from the RO – not only those dealing with evaluations, but also those with thematic experience (usually consulted at the TOR preparation stage).

The third level is the external quality review done by the outside companies with which the Regional Office has an LTA. The CO also makes a separate contract with one or more reviewers depending on the needs. They do a review of TOR, Inception report, Draft report(s) and Final report, based on a template that was developed.

Country offices, before sending TOR, inception report and final report to the Regional Office, use Geros quality assurance tools and check UNEG standards.

The Quality Assurance process entails the following.

1. Evaluation Conceptualization

Quality assurance for selecting the appropriate evaluation to be conducted is ensured by the Unit responsible for Evaluation and the Representative. The programme team jointly with M&E team discuss and consider the need, timelines, and evaluability of the evaluations. Based on the country programme documents (CPDs) approved by the UNICEF Executive Board and the Costed Evaluation Plan, evaluative activities are planned as part of the annual workplan (Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan) and entered into the Evidence Information Systems Integration system (EISI). The Evaluation Specialist also ensures proper coding (PIDB) for evaluation is reflected in Vision.

Evaluation Concept Notes are prepared, reviewed and approved by the CMT and endorsed by the Representative. Based on submitted Concept Notes, the Regional Office provides feedback and guidance on planned evaluation activities. Evaluability assessments are done to ensure that there is enough information to conduct an evaluation and discuss what evaluation questions are to be answered.

In larger CO there may exist an Evaluation Management Team (EvMT) chaired by the Representative. The functions of the EvMT is to act as a forum to update all IMEP activities in terms of progress, present bottlenecks encountered where EvMT guidance is needed, and discuss key topics of interest, which may be the development of the costed evaluation plan, a strategy for dissemination and use of evidence, changed guidelines and policies on evaluation, among others.

2. Evaluation Design

The evaluation quality assurance process starts with the Terms of reference (TOR):

- a. TOR are elaborated by the M&E Specialist based on the inputs given by the relevant section. M&E specialist will identify the best methodology for a robust evaluation and finalize the evaluation questions, deliverables, and timelines.
- b. When formulated, the staff members of the relevant sections review and provide feedback.
- c. If necessary, the TOR are examined by professional specialized in the subject matter being evaluated.
- d. An evaluability exercise is conducted.
- e. The feedback is integrated into the TOR, and given to the Deputy Representative/Representative for her/his approval.
- f. The internal approved version is sent to Evaluation Unit at Regional Office for a quality review.
- g. The recommendations / suggestions are integrated into the last version of the TOR.
- h. TOR are uploaded in the Evidence Information Systems Integration system (EISI).

In some Country Offices, a Steering Committee (EMT) is set up to oversee the evaluation process. This increases transparency and buy-in. The Steering Committee may include members from the Government, Partners and other stakeholders. This facilitates consultation on the focus, expectation, process and use of the evaluations.

In other Country Offices Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) are formed. The Evaluation Reference Group will act as an independent group comprised of technical experts, specialists from UN and other international organizations, and specialists from government and civil society who are assembled specifically for the evaluation of interest. The role of the ERG will be to provide quality assurance and advice regarding terms of reference, the inception report, and draft reports. While ERGs have varied level of engagement, the strategic intent of the ERG is to serve as an advisory body which oversees the evaluation and to enhance the credibility and independence of specific evaluations.

When an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) is constituted, the deliverables are disseminated, expecting feedback. If the ERG is established, some key representatives from the government are included formally. If the ERG is not formalized, some governmental counterparts are engaged in the review of the deliverables.

3. Selection of the evaluator

The consulting firm/individual consultant recruited to perform the evaluation is selected after a competitive bidding process based on the required skills and experience. There is an independent rating of the prospective consultants made by a minimum of 3 staffs in the country office.

Some Country Offices have a Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC). The TEC is comprised of section specialists to score the proposals. Proposals undergo a competitive bidding process by the TEC to ensure alignment with strategic priorities, capacity to undertake the project, technical quality, ethical issues and any other relevant operational or technical issues. The contract for the evaluation work is issued to the winning bidder.

Sharing the firms' performance in the implementation of evaluation helps to identify which are the best performing and reliable firms. This helps in avoiding the provision of evaluation contracts to weak firms.

4. Implementation

Launching the evaluation

The Evaluation Specialist together with the stakeholders will hold discussions to prepare the launch of the evaluation, ascertaining that documentation is available and that parties involved are informed.

Inception Report

An inception report of an evaluation is prepared by the evaluator after an initial review of relevant documentation. It sets out the conceptual framework that will be used during the evaluation, the key evaluation questions and methodology, including information on data sources and collection, sampling and key indicator. The inception report also includes a timeline for the evaluation and drafts of data collection instruments.

When the inception report is received from the evaluator, it is submitted for comments by CO staff, the Evaluation Reference Group and the Regional Office.

In some Regions the consulting firm/consultant may not begin work prior to the clearance received from the Regional Office.

Data Collection

M&E officers ensures Ethical approval is sought before proceeding with evaluation

M&E Specialist ensures that all logistics, interviews and other issues are addressed in order to have independent and quality evaluation process. The M&E ensures stakeholders are adequately consulted, The M&E provides quality assurance oversight during data collection phase. Field missions covering part of the data collection phases may be conducted to verify that agreed methodology and tools are being followed and that evaluator are considering ethical considerations in accordance with the agreed approach.

To maintain the independence of the evaluator, the unit commissioning the evaluation does not engage in the field data collection. When requested by the section and endorsed by the evaluator, the evaluation focal point join the field as an observer in ensuring the coverage and the quality of the work at the field data collection.

Draft Report

Draft evaluation reports are reviewed by the M&E Specialists, relevant Program Specialists, the Evaluation Reference Group and Deputy Representative/Representative. These are further reviewed by the Regional Evaluation Specialist and finally by External Reviewers. GEROS and UNEG checklists are used to verify if the evaluation meets quality standards. The proposed report structure follows the standards and criteria of UNICEF evaluation reports.

A Validation workshop with stakeholders is held to review the draft report and main findings and preliminary recommendations aiming to improve UNICEF's performance.

The M&E Specialist compiles the received feedback into one document, provides general and specific technical comments mainly on:

- a) level of alignment of the evaluation report to the TOR,
- b) use of methodology,
- c) to what extent the evaluation criteria and questions were covered and answered,
- d) quality of the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

After sending to the consultancy firm / consultant the compiled feedback, a technical meeting is held to discuss extensively and comprehensively clarify the content. Based on the nature of that meeting, some specific action points are identified.

Draft evaluation report may undergo an external QA review – if report quality is low, the evaluation team reviews the report and re-submits it again.

Final Report

In the case of the final version of the evaluation report, the same review cycle is done. The final draft reports will also be shared with the Regional Office. Quality assurance of the draft final evaluation report is submitted to an external review, which gives feedback that helps ensure alignment with GEROS rating and criteria.

Final report is submitted to the Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS) for final rating.

5. Management Response

The Evaluation Management Response is discussed in-house to ensure coherence with the content of the findings and recommendations and its feasibility. EMR is signed off by the Representative and tracking actions are recorded in the Evidence Information Systems Integration system (EISI).

6. Dissemination and Use of the Evaluation

The final report is published and distributed according to the planned distribution list. Dissemination workshops are organised with main potential users and Brown-bag presentation are made internally for UNICEF programme staff.

Other activities are:

- ✓ There is a distribution of a reader friendly version/summary report and a child friendly version of the main findings and recommendations.
- ✓ The report is posted on UNICEF CO web-site and uploaded in EISI and a Press release is made and a UNICEF Facebook announcement.
- ✓ As well, policy briefs are prepared where applicable for decision makers.
- ✓ Sharing is made on Knowledge hubs, including social media.
- ✓ Evaluation findings may be used for Peer reviewed journals.

7. Policies, Guides and Tools used for Quality Assurance

The reference documents that Country Offices referred to are:

Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
UNICEF Programme Policy and Procedure Manual
Revised UNICEF evaluation policy (2018)

UNICEF Procedure on the Implementation of the 2018 UNICEF Evaluation Policy
 Corporate Implementation Framework for the 2018 UNICEF Evaluation Policy
 Regional Evaluation Strategy (2019)
 Regional Evaluation Framework and Action Plan (2019)
 Standard Operations Procedures (SOP) (Regional & Country Office)
 Costed Evaluation Plan
 UNICEF Guidance for Management response to evaluations (2012)
 UNICEF Geros Handbook (Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System) (2017)
 UNICEF Taxonomy for Defining and Classifying UNICEF Research, Evaluation &
 Studies (2014)
 UNICEF Policy on Research (2015)
 UNICEF Procedure on Quality Assurance in Research (2015)
 UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection
 and Analysis (2015)
 UNICEF Adapted UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Terms of Reference,
 (2017)
 UNICEF Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards, (2017)
 UNICEF Ethical Research Involving Children (2013), Innocenti Centre
 UNICEF Guides/Templates pour le ERB (Ethic Review Board)
 UNICEF Guidance on Gender Integration in Evaluation
 Gender Toolkit: Integrating Gender in Programming for Every Child in South Asia
 How to Design and Manage Equity-Focused Evaluations
 UNICEF Evaluation Brief Special issue #2, October 2015
 UNICEF Results Based Management Manual

United Nations Evaluation Group –UNEG Evaluation Norms and Standards (2016)
 UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Terms of Reference and Inception Reports
 (2010)
 UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports (2010)
 UNEG Improved Quality of Evaluation Recommendations Checklist
 UNEG Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation (2014)
 UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN system (2008)
 UNEG Ethical Guidelines for UN Evaluation (2008);
 UNEG Resource Pack on Joint Evaluations (2013)
 UNDG Results Based Management Handbook (2013)

Geros Rating Grids for evaluation reports
 UNIVERSALIA Rating Grid for Terms of Reference (TOR)
 UNIVERSALIA Rating Grid for reports
 UNICEF AGORA e-course Introduction to the Decentralized Evaluation Function in
 UNICEF

PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

The aim of the review is to strengthen the actual Quality Assurance/Quality Control System of the Evaluation Office, as per the UNEG standards and UNICEF Evaluation Policy procedures. Therefore, the key objectives of the assignment are:

The purpose of this review is to provide UNICEF with information about how well its quality assurance processes for evaluation at decentralized levels are working in order to improve these processes. It is hoped the review will foster cross-regional exchange about lessons learned and assist the Evaluation Office to institute necessary guidance and capacity support.

The objectives of the review include:

- f. Mapping and describing the strengths and weaknesses of Quality Assurance within the seven regions of UNICEF
- g. Review the extent to which the various Quality Assurance mechanisms have been used by offices in each region have contributed to the improvement of the quality of evaluation products and capacity enhancement in the country and regional offices of each region
- h. Review the current capacity of Country Offices and the Regional Offices and to assess whether the Quality Assurance is enhancing this capacity in the Quality Assurance process, and what the final outcomes are in terms of quality and use of evaluations for all types, from programme to country-led evaluations.
- i. Overall, review the role of the Evaluation Office, Regional Evaluation Advisors and Multi Country Evaluation Specialists in providing required quality assurance services, in accordance with the provisions of the UNICEF evaluation policy.
- j. Based on an analysis of UNICEF's regions and good practices from comparator decentralized evaluation functions, propose options for improved quality assurance processes.

This review does not include the evaluation quality assessment system (GEROS) which is subject of a separate review. This review rather aims at quality assurance, from the planning for an evaluation through the final evaluation report and its use. The review covers all regions. It does not include the quality assurance system for corporate evaluations which is the subject of another review.

METHODOLOGY

The review examines the current Quality Assurance systems existing in the seven Regions, the various Quality Assurance mechanisms being used by Country Offices and how they have contributed to the improvement of the quality of evaluation products, and what the final outcomes are in terms of quality of evaluations. The review also examines the roles of the actors providing required quality assurance services, in accordance with the provisions of the UNICEF evaluation policy.

Within UNICEF, in addition to the Executive Board, as stakeholders there are:

- The Evaluation Office;
- Headquarters Programme Managers, both whose programmes are evaluated or who are expected to use evaluation results to improve existing programmes or design new ones;
- Regional Office staff who are commissioning or using the results of evaluations;
- Country offices that have commissioned or undertaken evaluations.

Also the review is of interest to the Audit Advisory Committee, the Evaluation Advisory Panel and the Global Evaluation Committee.

In order to address the evaluation questions, a mixed method approach was taken. The key evaluation questions and the data collection matrix may be found in Annex III. The review relied heavily on the reporting produced by the Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS), the official documentation of UNICEF and other documentation from organisations of the United Nations System. By means of interviews and a questionnaire, the views were sought from UNICEF evaluation officers involved in the quality assurance processes.

Document review

The document review examined the annual meta-evaluations covering the years 2016-2018, the annual evaluation reports to the Executive Committee, the decisions of the Executive Committee, the Revised UNICEF Evaluation Policy, the UNICEF Procedure on the Implementation of the 2018 UNICEF Evaluation Policy, various UNICEF evaluation guides and standard operational procedures. The documents listed in Annex VIII were reviewed.

Interviews

All Regional Evaluation Advisors were interviewed, as well as evaluation officers of the Evaluation Office. The interviews were scheduled ahead of time. Skype (or phone call) was used and lasted approximately 60 minutes each. As can be seen from the semi structured interview protocol in Annex VI, interviews covered a broad range of topics from role and use to satisfaction with and recommendations for improving quality assurance processes.

Questionnaire

In order to obtain the country level perspective a questionnaire was sent to Country Offices via the kind assistance from the Regional Evaluation Advisers. The overall response rate was 56%. 77 out of 137 Country Offices completed the questionnaire. The following table provides the list of Country Offices that responded.

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>East Asia & Pacific (Response rate 12/15)</p> <p>Cambodia China Indonesia Korea Lao People’s Democratic Rep. Malaysia Myanmar Pacific Area: Cook Islands, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu Philippines Thailand Timor-Leste Viet Nam</p> | <p>Europe & Central Asia (Response rate 11/20)</p> <p>Azerbaijan Bulgaria Croatia Kyrgyzstan Moldova Montenegro North Macedonia Romania Serbia Turkmenistan Ukraine</p> | <p>Latin America & Caribbean (Response rate 17/26)</p> <p>Argentina Barbados Belize Brazil Costa Rica Cuba Dominican Republic East Caribbean Area: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands. Ecuador El Salvador Guyana Haiti Mexico Nicaragua Panama Paraguay Uruguay</p> |
| <p>Eastern-South Africa (Response rate 14/20)</p> <p>Angola Botswana Burundi Comoros Ethiopia Lesotho Madagascar Malawi Namibia Rwanda Somalia Swaziland Uganda Zambia</p> | <p>Middle East & North Africa (Response rate 4/21)</p> <p>Algeria Jordan Lebanon Morocco</p> <p>West & Central Africa (Response rate 12/27)</p> <p>Benin Burkina Faso Cameroon Congo (Rep. Dem.) Ghana Guinea Bissau Ivory Coast Liberia Mali Central African Republic Senegal Togo</p> | <p>South Asia (Response rate 7/8)</p> <p>Afghanistan Bangladesh Bhutan India Nepal Pakistan Sri Lanka</p> |

The list of the UNICEF officers who answered the questionnaire may be found in Annex V. The questionnaire sent to Country Offices is in Annex VII.

Ethical Considerations

The review followed the ethical standards and code of conduct set out in the UNEG ethical guidelines for evaluator. This included ensuring the confidentiality of all information obtained during the data collection process. Triangulation of data ensured conclusions are not influenced by any one party.

Limitations of the review

There were no major limitations to the review. The key elements, mapping the current Quality Assurance systems and obtaining data on their use, were possible. There was a short fall in having access to detailed information on financial resources invested in Quality Assurance.

FINDINGS

RELEVANCE

The Review of Quality Assurance Systems at the Decentralized Levels found that Regional Offices have different conceptual approaches to quality assurance. Most see quality assurance as being intrinsic to evaluation management. Others equate quality assurance as having a high rating from GEROS. Therefore, a tendency exists to GEROSify evaluation reports, complying with the templates of the System.

The Review also found that regional cultures impact significantly on ability of Regional Offices to use efficiently quality assurance. The more the lack of evaluation culture and competence, the more challenging it is to impact significantly on evaluation quality improvement. There is recognition that quality assurance is not solely the rating of the evaluation report. It encompasses the scoping, the Terms of reference, the selection of competent evaluator, the Inception report, the Evaluation report and the Use of evaluation findings and recommendations.

Measures taken by the Evaluation Office to strengthen quality assurance at the decentralized levels will result in a quantum leap forward. In particular, the strengthening of the Regional Evaluation Adviser positions and the creation of Multi-Country Evaluation Specialists with increased responsibilities for evaluation assurance.

All Regional Evaluation Advisors affirm that Quality Assurance improves the evaluation deliverables. They gave as evidence the improved scoring awarded by GEROS. Hence, there is recognition that Quality Assurance is a sound investment, either done directly with staff time or indirectly through external consultants.

The extent to which Quality Assurance contributes to evaluation capacity building is not known. Nevertheless, there is a lot of learning by doing. Evaluation focal points with low evaluation skills benefit the most from Quality Assurance. Quality Assurance creates increased evaluation awareness within Country Offices. If Quality Assurance is used well within the context of Reference Groups, there is development of the membership in better understanding evaluation and using criteria for quality improvement.

Challenges exist for Quality Assurance as a tool for evaluation capacity development. It is constrained by the various socio-political contexts, cultures, organisational evaluation culture, skills of those involved, interest in improvement and understanding of the return on investment.

There are missed opportunities to use GEROS as a learning tool. The rating done, all move away to do other assignments.

At the Country Office level the relevance of the Quality Assurance System is perceived positive because QA is useful for evaluation capacity enhancement. Here are comments received from respondents to the questionnaire.

About the purpose of Quality Assurance

The purpose of Quality Assurance is not only to ensure that report will pass Geros standards, but it is also to build the Quality Assurance capacity of evaluation team and Evaluation Reference Group.

Yes, Quality Assurance affords a learning opportunity for both the CO and Government counterparts. The more evaluation stakeholders are involved in the Quality Assurance process, the more they are required to use the Quality Assurance tools. This creates time and space to critically think about what makes up a good evaluation. Partnering institutions also seize the opportunity of Quality Assurance evaluation management to learn about evaluation.

About Learning by doing

In the case of counterparts (governmental and non-governmental), due their usual staff turnover, their involvement in a quality assurance process represents a learning opportunity on how to identify the added value and implications of interventions, a situation that is not common in the day-to-day of their functions.

The detailed feedback that the evaluation team receives from the reviewers improves their capacity which is reflected in the next phase of the evaluation. Some teams with responsive and learning attitude have shown tremendous improvement. However, it is not possible to hire to the same team again for next evaluation. Therefore, the capacity built is not necessarily beneficial for UNICEF. For any 4-5 evaluations in a year, the CO's evaluation staff may be working for all new teams. The capacity building of evaluation teams through QA reviews etc., thus, is quite challenging and frustrating.

Evidence that Quality Assurance contributes to capacity enhancement

Colleagues who have undergone through the quality assurance process have improved and integrated what they experienced/learned. This is an indication of capacity transfer.

Quality Assurance has been useful for evaluation capacity enhancement, in the sense that each TOR produced is better than the previous one, building on the lessons learnt in the process.

When quality assurance is done properly, the process is functional in terms of internal and external evaluation capacity development. Programme staff is not always aware about how to contribute within an evaluation process. Their participation in the quality assurance process offers them the opportunity to exercise an analytical review of the programme they are delivering and the results they are achieving. In some cases Programme Officers with no extensive evaluation experience are able to provide meaningful feedback to consultants as members of evaluation reference groups. They have been able to do this using some of the QA tools and guidance documents.

Both the evaluator and the team coordinating the evaluation improve their capacities. The use of quality assurance tools especially checklists allow the evaluation stakeholders to focus attention on the most important aspects in each phase of the evaluation and obtain relevant means for the review of compliance with the norms and standards of evaluation.

Quality assurance activities are a source for evaluation capacity enhancement. For example, when assessing deliverables, the assessor must always refer back to the tools and guidelines, thoroughly familiarizing themselves with the material in the process. Also, the local partners in evaluation demonstrate continuous learning through the QA evaluation processes, by having to apply UNICEF and UNEG standards and guidelines. Both SM and consultants learn what are the important components for high quality evaluations, which definitely strengthens the capacity.

Country Offices took part in 3 key capacity building initiatives on evaluation/quality assurance in 2019 at regional and global level. At the conclusion of an evaluation, some Country Offices hold a roundtable to share with all stakeholders the learning from the evaluation process.

About the usefulness of QA for ERGs

The creation of Evaluation Reference Group involving external stakeholders contributes to national evaluation capacity building. Quality Assurance enhanced both, internal and external capacities, including those of evaluation community in the country and implementing partners. Comments provided by external reviewers and the RO over the years significantly supported COs evaluation management capacities and quality standards.

The capacity of the members of the Evaluation Reference Group is enhanced and the information shared is utilized in other evaluations. The Evaluation Reference Group for every evaluation may change based on the partnering organisations. The discussions at group meetings are used to strengthen the capacity of members.

Quality assurance has been useful for evaluation capacity enhancement in certain situations. Our experience is that it really depends on the openness and willingness to learn/adapt by the programme team and the contracted evaluation team. Again, the most useful quality assurance mechanisms for capacity enhancement are the feedback and support of the R&E Specialist and the Regional Evaluation Advisor, likely because of their understanding of the programming context and their ability to explain the rationale and reasoning behind feedback. The feedback from the external QA agency may sometimes be contextually irrelevant, but it does help in ensuring that the TOR and evaluation outputs include (or at least consider including) the necessary components. With the recent strengthening of the quality assurance that the Evaluation Committee undertakes (and even the Representative as the person ultimately responsible for evaluations), there is increasing awareness internally of the importance of evaluations

and specifically the usefulness of the findings. We are not sure how useful the ERG is in terms of evaluation capacity enhancement – this seems limited.

QA improves the competence of National consultants

Quality Assurance has been useful for CO Officers' evaluation capacity enhancement, but probably not enough useful for eternal capacity building purposes. It has also been helpful for evaluator themselves as sharing our guidance has indeed enhanced their evaluation capacity. Indeed capacity enhancement has profited consultants engaged in the evaluation team, especially when working with national consultants.

About the need for training

Yes, but the capacity building has been limited. It could be significantly enhanced if the Evaluation Managers are trained to undertake a review in a classroom setting. In addition to the compiled feedback, the reviewers or regional office should hold verbal sessions with Country Office on areas of strengthening or existing best practices that should be scaled up.

To some extent, capacity enhancement should form an integral part of the quality assurance process. M&E staff need more capacity building because evaluations are managed in complex contexts where often there is no evaluation culture.

Indeed Quality Assurance does contribution to evaluation capacity strengthening. However the issue is that in the absence of a mature market for evaluations and in the absence of an evaluation culture those capacities are not lasting. The Quality Assurance feedback has been useful to some extent for evaluation capacity. Yet, more capacity is required to improve the quality.

Quality Assurance is very useful when reviewing reports, but the process of quality assurance should be regularly explained to staff. Refreshers are very useful and important to CO staff.

"Definitely, it's a steep learning curve to get used to the quality assurance process. However, there are a lot of documents and procedures to adhere to. Getting familiarized with the standards takes time."

In summary, it is difficult to make an informed assessment, but on the whole the answer here is probably that QA contribution to evaluation capacity strengthening is ad hoc. However it can be improved, if time, effort and money is dedicate to capacity building activities.

EFFECTIVENESS⁴

To demonstrate evidence of the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance Systems the following brief summaries provide an overview of the quality of the evaluation reports submitted to UNICEF's Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS) by Regions. For 2018, Regional performances compared to global trends are:

EAPR – East Asia and Pacific Region

A trend analysis from 2011 until today indicates that EAPR initially struggled to produce satisfactory evaluation reports, with the regional average for satisfactory reports dipping to well below the global average in 2012 but then increasing sharply to surpass the global average in 2014. Since then, the regional average dropped in 2015 in line with a global decrease in quality but then continued to improve until 2018. Increased evaluation quality is a core objective of the regional evaluation strategy calling for at least 75% of the evaluations being satisfactory or above. In 2018, a total of 92 percent of the 12 EAPR evaluation reports were rated as satisfactory (7) or highly satisfactory (5), which was 5 percent above the global average.

ECAR - Europe and Central Asia Region

The trend analysis from 2011 until today indicates that ECAR has consistently remained above the global average in terms of the production of satisfactory evaluation reports, hitting a peak in 2016 at 100 percent of its evaluation reports being rated as satisfactory or higher. The trend throughout the years has been upwards with two exceptions, i.e. one major drop to 64 percent in 2015 and a second drop to 81 percent in 2017. However, the region went on to improve its performance again to 92 percent in 2018, where the region remains 5 percent above the global average.

ESAR – Eastern and Southern Africa Region

The trend analysis from 2011 until today indicates that ESAR evaluation performance regularly fluctuated above and below the global average. The percentage of evaluations rated as satisfactory or higher increased substantially (by 37 percent) from 50 percent in 2012 to an all-time high of 87 percent in 2013. The quality of evaluation reports then fluctuated across 2014, 2015 and 2016, reaching a low of 54 percent in 2016 due to several reports with low overall ratings (unsatisfactory or lower fair). Since then, evaluation report quality has been increasing to a point where 80 percent of the ESAR evaluation reports were rated as satisfactory or highly satisfactory in 2018, which was 7 percent below the global average for that year.

⁴ The first part of this section relies heavily on the GEROS Meta-Analysis 2018 Profile for each Region.

LACR – Latin America and Caribbean Region

The trend analysis from 2011 until today indicates that while the overall quality of evaluations in LACR has increased, the rate of improvement has been volatile over the years. LACR initially struggled to produce satisfactory evaluation reports with the regional average for satisfactory reports well below the global average in 2012. However, a sharp increase led the LACR to surpass the global average in 2014 and then again in 2016, with a sharp decrease in 2015 - reflecting a global decrease in quality. The regional average dropped considerably again in 2017 (due to a general decrease in quality across most assessment criteria and an increase in number of reports rated “upper fair”) but then continued to improve until 2018. A total of 82 percent of the LACR evaluation reports were rated as satisfactory or highly satisfactory in 2018, which represents an improvement of 20 percent from the previous year but was still 5 percent below the global average.

MENA - Middle East and North Africa Region

The trend analysis from 2011 until today indicates that MENA performance has experienced a sustained improvement in the overall quality of its evaluations over the last four years. Initially, MENA produced satisfactory evaluation reports at a slightly lower rate than the global average, but then the percentage of MENA reports rated satisfactory or higher plunged by 41 percent below the global average to 33 percent 2014. It is, however, worth noting that in 2014 the region produced only one report. Since then, the region has increased the number of evaluations commissioned and the average report quality has increased steadily until today. A total of 88 percent of the MENA evaluation reports were rated as satisfactory or highly satisfactory in 2018, which was 1 percent above the global average for that year.

ROSA – South Asia Region

The trend analysis from 2011 until today indicates that the ROSA initially produced a larger percentage of satisfactory reports than the global average, with a peak in 2014 at 85 percent of its evaluations rated as satisfactory or highly satisfactory. The region also managed to keep its average evaluation report quality high in 2015 when the global average decreased to 53 percent. However, in 2016, the percentage of evaluations rated as satisfactory or higher dropped to 69 percent (as assessment scores dropped across most report sections) and the region has remained below the global average since then. In 2018, ROSA struggled to keep pace with improvements in the average global quality of evaluations, with 78 percent of its evaluations rated satisfactory or higher, which was 9 percent lower than the global average.

WCAR - West and Central Africa Region

A trend analysis from 2011 until today indicates that WCAR was in line with the global average trend of steady improvement in evaluation report quality, with 69 percent of its evaluations rated as satisfactory or higher in 2013 before dropping substantially to 33 percent in 2014 (41 percent below the global 2014 average). The percentage of reports rated as satisfactory or highly satisfactory then steadily increased reaching 74 percent in 2016 before falling to 59 percent in 2017. In 2018, the region dramatically increased its percentage of satisfactory or highly satisfactory evaluations, ultimately exceeding the global average for the first time (by 8 percent) to hit an all-time high of 95 percent. This is indeed a very high level of quality and will require dedicated attention and investment to sustain these gains moving forward.

Overall

In 2018, the average evaluation report score in each region was above the satisfactory threshold of 2.5. The East Asia and Pacific Region (EAPR) produced the highest quality evaluation reports in 2018 with an average score of 3.36 out of 4, followed by the Europe and Central Asia Region (ECAR) with an average score of 3.13. The Eastern and Southern Africa Region (ESAR) and the Regional Office of South Asia (ROSA) were the regions with the lowest 2018 scores with a score of 2.76 and 2.73 respectively.

A three-year cross annual trend analysis confirms that the quality of evaluation reports has been increasing overall between 2016 and 2018 for all regions except for ROSA. ESAR experienced the most significant overall improvement with an increase in score of 9.3 percent followed by EAPR with an increase in score of 8.3 percent.

Perceptions of the Country Office on the extent that Quality Assurance processes improve evaluation deliverables

There is a unanimous response that Quality Assurance does improve the deliverables. Quality Assurance always led to improvements. Without quality assurance processes, the evaluations would most of the time fall short of the desired quality. To a large extent, the first deliverable is seldom of high quality and needs much improvement; both in terms of how the report is written and also in terms of how the analysis is performed.

Based on the experience over the recent years, it can be affirmed that there was gradual improvement of the evaluation deliverables due to quality assurance being applied. It means that if the quality assurance was done properly when receiving the inception report, the draft version of the evaluation report will offer better results (according to UNICEF standards). The same with respect to the next step: the final version of the

evaluation report has increased quality thanks to a thorough quality assurance applied to the draft version.

Quality assurance processes ensure that the deliverables represent the highest quality of the following aspects:

- ✓ Consistency in the quality of deliverables.
- ✓ Timely and relevant evaluation topics
- ✓ Through consultation with concerned sections and careful planning process (i.e., costed evaluation plan), the topics are ensured to address new and emerging national, regional and international development challenges.
- ✓ One of the key components of quality assurance is to ensure that findings and recommendations are relevant and actionable, which improves the usefulness of the evaluations.
- ✓ Language revision and clarity
- ✓ As deliverables undergo multiple rounds of revision, the language is refined for clarity and cohesion, so the final deliverables exemplify the highest quality outputs.
- ✓ Rigorous and appropriate methodology
- ✓ Consultation with experts and specialists ensures that the best and most appropriate methodology is used for the concerned evaluation.
- ✓ To a large extent, the QA process help improve the report structure, quality, evidence and participation.

Quality Assurance processes improve the evaluation deliverables as evidence by:

- The technical quality of report being reviewed by Reference Group and CMT.
- The involvement of stakeholders led to ownership of the evaluation findings.
- Ethical clearance ensures the protection of participants and their interested in the evaluation.
- Deliverables are better aligned with norms and standards.
- Monitoring of data collection upgrades data quality.
- Stakeholders' views are well reflected.
- Findings are articulated taking into account the local context.
- SMART actions addressing recommendations
- Dissemination ensures utilization of evaluation findings.
- The limitations of the evaluation are better understood.

Quality Assurance has improved the comprehensiveness of the evaluation deliverables, enhanced the connection between the evaluation questions and theory of change and ensured that the recommendations are actionable and timely. Evaluation deliverables are thoroughly assessed before acceptance. It is normal that several adjustments to the products are required; therefore, quality assurance is an integral part of the evaluation processes. The improvements can be seen in terms of quality of the findings, rigorous application of evaluation standards and correctness of the reports. The engagement of

governmental and non-governmental staff into the quality assurance mechanism was an opportunity to review from other perspectives the results of the evaluation reports.

Quality Assurance provides a framework for technical dialogue between all parties engaged in the evaluation process. This enables the identification of coverage and quality gaps throughout the evaluation process. Triangulation in Quality Assurance (M&E Specialist, Programme section, external QA facility) and consultations with the RO and CO management significantly improves evaluation deliverables

Quality Assurance maintains a certain level of quality to the extent that the firm doing the evaluation has the capacity to improve the quality of evaluation deliverables. Thus, it is important to consider quality of evaluation deliverables not only depend on the process within UNICEF but to a larger extent on the capacity of the firm undertaking the evaluation. In some cases, UNICEF makes a lot of efforts (more than required) to improve the quality of evaluations deliverables but if the capacity of the firm is limited, the effort does not bring the expected result. Hence, the selection of evaluator is very crucial for ensuring the quality of report.

The quality assurance processes improve the evaluation deliverables to a considerable extent. However, it varies according to teams of evaluator. Some teams are more responsive than others. Some evaluation teams can be difficult to handle. Specifically, if the teams do not have experience in UNEG style evaluations, it becomes very difficult to help them improve.

Those involved in the quality assurance processes do improve the evaluation deliverables. Especially the initial review by the M&E Specialist and feedback from the Regional Evaluation Advisor are valuable from a design and methodological perspective. In addition, the feedback from the ERG is generally useful in improving the quality of evaluation deliverables, although this tends to depend on the people in the ERG and how engaged they are in the evaluation. The value addition of the ERG is not consistent across evaluations, and sometimes it takes a lot of the M&E Specialist's time to interpret feedback into a useful format. The quality assurance provided by the external QA agency is less useful, as often the review is not very engaged or detailed – it follows a prescribed check-list which is not always useful. The main use of this has been to check (and further push) the gender, equity and child rights dimensions of the evaluation.

The assurance process is helpful in terms of improving the compliance to UN evaluation (e.g. using OECD/DAC criteria, having required components and organized in required structure). However, it is only marginal in terms of improving the content. Quality of the content largely relies on the qualification and dedication of the selected evaluation team. There is a need to consider the tradeoffs between quality and speed of production/timeliness of product at some point, specifically when quality assurance guidance is understood as quality assurance instruction, e.g. checklists become templates. Quality Assurance does significantly improve the quality, but also lengthens

the overall timeframe for completing an evaluation because of limited understanding of the local context, which can result in much back-and-forth discussions. The point-based external quality review and performance measurement/ monitoring focus in the evaluation function, lead at times to measurement fixation and formalism in quality assurance that is not conducive to the mission of evaluation. Sometimes there is an over-emphasis of formal details without seeing the substance.

Quality assurance processes provide guidance and information to staff and consultants on how to meet good quality evaluation which improves the evaluation deliverables. SOPs and reference documents have tremendously helped to improve evaluation deliverables. However, there is a need to build capacity (training) for new staff to get them to familiarized with the standards quickly. This also applicable to some consulting firms. This should be enhanced with more face to face or online trainings or webinars on evaluation quality assurance processes.

The QA process significantly improves the evaluation deliverables, especially establishing clear linkages between findings, conclusions and recommendations – and ensuring recommendations are SMART. To a large extend, as the QA process help improve the report structure, quality, evidence and participation enabling the expression of diverse views.

GEROS is used as the standard criteria and evaluation deliverables are produced to fit the GEROS format and content. While one-size-fits all approach might not be appropriate in each case. Nevertheless, GEROS provides for standardization and consistency in the evaluation products.

In conclusion there is sufficient evidence that QA contributes to the improvement of the evaluation deliverables. However, it is difficult to assess specifically the “extent” to which Quality Assurance contributes to improvement, Nevertheless it is easier to pinpoint where it adds most value – in the interpretation of data, articulation of findings and conclusions, and in fine-tuning the recommendations.

EFFICIENCY

A major consideration that enables the efficiency of Quality Assurance is the extent to which UNICEF's Quality Assurance System is known, understood and applied by evaluation stakeholders, especially at Country Office level. As described below much has to be done to increase CO staff awareness.

The allocation of resources to Quality Assurance is quite uneven among the Regions. The human resources dedicated to evaluation varies greatly across the organisation. Some offices are well endowed, other have a low percentage of a person year allocated to evaluation. Quality assurance is only a small percentage of the staff time dedicated to evaluation.

In the context of increased evaluation coverage, it will be a challenge to cope with the increase of demand for Quality Assurance. At present Regional Office staff are over stretched and the feasibility of increased coverage needs to be looked at carefully. With additional resources forthcoming from the Evaluation Office there is hope. The critical factor to monitor is UNICEF's ability to strengthen its human resources in evaluation quality assurance.

Country Office knowledge of UNICEF Quality Assurance policies, guidelines and tools

Country Offices unanimously responded that UNICEF Quality Assurance policies, guidelines and tools are known and being used. However in light of the list of reference that each CO provided, it is not obvious that CO know and use the material available to them. Comments that CO provided are listed below.

All are known and used

- Yes, very much. All the time.
- Yes, all of UNICEF quality assurance policies, guidelines and tools have been incorporated into the CO quality assurance process.
- Yes, UNICEF quality assurance guidelines and tools are used and regularly referenced in the country office.
- Yes, QA guidelines in the evaluation policy and strategy, plus guidelines developed at regional level, are known and utilized at the CO. CO also has QA guidelines stipulated in its SOP.
- The Country Office has been referring to the UNICEF Evaluation Policy, the UNEG checklist and the in-country Evaluation procedures- which is part of the broader IMEP SOP. Structures such as the Evaluation Reference Group also ensure quality of the evaluations
- Yes, they are systematically shared by email by the Evaluation Office and the Regional Office.

Known but not by all

- ✓ QA guides and tools are known mostly by management and M&E
- ✓ Known mainly by M&E colleagues, a bit less by colleagues of other sections.
- ✓ The staff members in PME are more aware of the quality assurance policies, guidelines and tools and use them. Other Programme staff are not aware of these.
- ✓ Most CO staff would have heard of them but few would know more about them or use them. Most often M&E teams know and apply these.
- ✓ Yes they are known, but only to staff members who are responsible for the evaluation function
- ✓ The guidance is extensive and very specialized, which means that most staff are not aware of it nor use it. PME staff know where to look for guidance and tools. However, there might be tools that we do not know about.

Not sufficiently known and used

- The reference documents are used to some extent but they are not mastered due to lack of time.
- No, not all know about the policies, guides and tools provided by UNICEF. Often Section Chiefs do not know about them.
- Policies are known about by CO staff but are not sufficiently used. Managers and supervisors need to better know and use them.
- UNICEF guides and tools are generally known. However they are not always used systematically.
- Yes to a certain extent and more effort is required for their appropriation internally within by the CO staff and externally by the members of the Evaluation Reference Group.
- Most staff members in programmes are aware of various UNICEF quality assurance policies, guidelines and tools. CO office has oriented staff members on UNICEF Evaluation policy.
- The SOP on research, evaluation, and studies is disseminated to staff at the beginning of the year. However, staff may not have referred to it. But definitely the PME section refers to it when doing quality assurance check.
- Yes but the extent of uptake and application varies across the Programme Team.
- They are known and used by the M&E specialist. Other colleagues usually refer to the M&E specialist to check, confirm or inform themselves about policies and guidance.
- Not sufficiently - but at the same time the evaluation caseload in the Country Office has been limited.

How to make them known

- We have put in place an organizational guidance in terms of quality assurance.
- Yes, they are systematically shared by email by the Evaluation Office and the Regional Office.
- Yes they are known but it would be useful to have a reminder email go out with links to the latest documents.
- They were presented during the visit of the Regional Evaluation Specialist and then sent to all CO staff. They were posted on the CO SharePoint.
- At the beginning of each year, they are presented to CO staff to refresh memory.
- Key documents are also translated in UN Official Languages for sharing with counterparts and evaluation teams.
- More opportunity for Programme Officer should be given to capacity development in this area. In the event the M&E Specialist is inaccessible, POs will be knowledgeable of the policies, guidelines and tools.
- UNICEF quality assurance policies, guidelines and tools are known and used in the country office but it needs to be enhanced: annual technical guidance to go through the whole process or webinars, guidance notes, trainings. This technical guidance should be mandatory to onboarding staff.

Consistency and quality of the feedback for Quality Assurance

Some Country Offices were very satisfied with the Quality Assurance services provided by the Regional staff and external reviewers. They said:

- ✓ We consider that the quality and consistency of the feedback provided by the regional office is of the highest quality. Every time we required their assistance we received a timely answer and a through response.
- ✓ The Regional evaluation team is very proactive and very helpful in providing guidance and feedback to ensure good quality evaluation.
- ✓ The feedback from the regional office on quality assurance has been excellent and consistent.
- ✓ There is systematic provision of good quality feedback, with fast turnaround, by the Regional Office.
- ✓ Very pertinent because of the external vision from the Regional Office and external reviewers have detected incoherence and errors that escaped the CO. Also the sharing of lessons learned and good practices was useful.
- ✓ Based on the experience of the last three years, the Evaluation Unit at Regional Office consistently participated in and supported the quality assurance processes managed by the CO. Most of the time, we have received critical feedback, including specific courses of actions, when the evaluation TOR and final evaluation reports were sent. The support received from Universalialia (through the RO Evaluation) was functional and essential too.

- ✓ The regional office, especially the Regional Evaluation Adviser, is very involved and helpful in providing feedback on evaluation plans (TOR) and deliverables. The turnaround time is usually no more than 5 days. The feedback is very good in that it doesn't just "tick boxes", but also provides innovative input on different valuation approaches and methods highlights which criteria should be a priority and which are not relevant for a particular evaluation, etc. The external QA agency provides detailed feedback in a standard template usually in no more than 5 days. Its feedback is less creative, and systematically follows criteria set out in an assessment template, which is the same for all evaluations across all offices.
- ✓ Regional Office does provide consistent support for evaluation. Also, CO receive very good support from the Hub in Johannesburg, with sincere appreciation.
- ✓ Very consistent. Very good, very thorough and structured.
- ✓ Both are good, and the feedback is extremely useful.

Other Country Offices were satisfied with the Quality Assurance services provided by the Regional staff and external reviewers said:

- RO has been key in supporting the country office and assuring quality evaluation through the whole programme cycle. HQ has also been helpful in coordinating GEROS for all completed reports.
- RO support the quality of evaluations and strengthens CO staff capacity as well as the consultants.
- RO feedback come at crucial moments of the evaluation process and provide clear guidance to evaluators and evaluation managers, enabling to identify possible bottlenecks, sharing good practices in order to apply quality standards throughout the evaluation process.
- UNICEF regional advisor and his team are a key component of the QA process. They provide consistent and high quality feedback on CO evaluation reports.
- RO ensure QA and mobilizes RO subject matter experts to ensure quality and usability of evaluation results.
- Good coherence and quality of feedback received from the Regional Office and external reviewers. Comments are precise, timely and useful.
- RO Evaluation office is very supportive and consistently providing support and sharing information relating to quality assurance on evaluations.
- Feedback is provided from a more experienced perspective.
- RO comments are good. They are flexible aiming at improving quickly and adequately the evaluation products.
- In general the comments of RO on TOR are valued and pertinent, giving a complementary perspective that improves the evaluation design. As well, the review by RO of the reports is important for triangulation of views.
- Comments are different and complementary. It is a good association of ideas enabling the production of a professional and useful report.

- QA feedback provided by RO and external reviewers contributes to a consensus on the required level of quality required at each step before proceeding to the next step of the evaluation process.
- RO has had a consistent approach to quality assurance of evaluations conducted, and the quality was very good. Feedback was relevant and contributed to improvements.
- Quality of feedback from RO staff has been consistent and timely. External mechanisms utilized for quality assurance have mostly been stakeholders that are selected as evaluation reference group members. External feedback from the external members has also been consistent and timely.
- The RO's feedback manifests better knowledge/understanding of CO's and organization's context relevant for implementing evaluations.

- RO feedback is usually within 2 weeks. Evaluation (TOR, Inception report, and final report) are reviewed by an external evaluation service provider. Feedback is given within 2 weeks. RO staff also provides an opportunity for CO and evaluation consultant(s) to review guidelines for the report writing before the evaluator starting drafting the report.
- UNICEF Regional Staff inputs are coordinated through the Regional Evaluation Advisor (REA) as part of the ERG. We allow 2 weeks for the ERG to comment. The REA always comments, Regional Programme Advisors mostly comment.

- Feedback from RO evaluation staff on the compliance of evaluation is often helpful, and from RO programme staff on contents is on spot. We don't expect individual expert provide comprehensive comments, but believe mostly useful to have comments from other perspectives in respective areas.
- The feedback provided by Regional office and external mechanisms is always consistent. The country office has always the space to discuss comments that were shared and decide to consider or not (when it comes to specific programmatic comments).

- UNICEF Regional staff is addressing evaluation related issues through the annual network meetings, regular skype calls etc. All the quality control is ensured through the LTAs and feedback was very clear with no other clarifications required from UNICEF Regional staff. At the same time Regional office staff is very responsive on consulting the evaluation process, timing, facilitating receiving the funds etc.
- QA from regional staff is more focused on the technical content as the external mechanism is on process and structure.
- RO provide significant support to the CO, in terms of guidelines, capacity building of CO staff, financial support (if needed), overall advice, support missions to CO (if requesting), knowledge management, monitoring and promoting good reports. CO has received high professional advice and feedback from RO staff and Universalialia.

- The availability of RO is important at this moment because CO has a portfolio of 5 evaluations and has new recruits to manage them. In addition the availability of French material is much appreciated.
- There is a limited sample to make a full judgement, the feedback has been generally helpful and of consistent quality.

Country Offices not using consistently the Quality Assurance services provided by the Regional staff and external reviewers said:

- External mechanisms we use have been consistent therefore we do not find a need to ask the RO for the quality assurance, expect for the cases when we need technical expertise from the Regional Office.
- External quality assurance was not used. Support from regional office is sought at each and every milestone of evaluation process including capacity building.
- Country Office as not yet engaged external players for quality assurance purpose. The role of Regional Office is critical for the quality of the evaluation report. Feedbacks provided helps strengthening the quality of evaluation report.
- Quality of feedback from RO is great and served as check and balance to the whole process. For external mechanism, we have only sought feedback from the Evaluation Reference Group, which includes external reviewers.

Some Country Offices think that the Quality Assurance services provided by the Regional staff and external reviewers can be improved and said:

- Quality of feedback is good, but COs need more support from the Regional Office along the evaluation process.
- On occasion, comments may be less objective or are decontextualized from existing situation in which the evaluation occurs.
- The quality assurance feedback by UNICEF Regional Staff and external mechanisms are consistent. Yet there is some confusion in term of feedback on gender, equality and human rights, especially from GEROS reviewers.
- The contribution of the Regional Office would be enhanced if technical staff participated in the evaluation process. The external reviewers limit themselves to evaluation guidelines. Hence there is little value-added with regards to the subject matter of the evaluation.
- Though consistency with feedback, though the quality of the feedback is good, it should go beyond the standard UNEG checklist, the feedback should be responsive to the evolving environment. In addition, adherence to timeliness of the feedback is critical.
- Feedback from Regional Office staff and external mechanism has been consistent and helpful. Though it takes a while for GEROS rating to be communicated after uploading the final report. Need to establish Service Level Agreement on time frame for quality assurance activities at RO, HQ and External system.

- RO Evaluation: Consistency is high. Focus prioritizes ticking checklist boxes or presentation of information and to a lesser extent concerns methodological questions and content issues. Feedback from thematic RO advisors partially addresses this, is however variable per case. Structuring and guiding that part of the quality assurance process could be one remaining area to regulate for best results. External mechanisms: Only the ex-post quality evaluation after publication of the evaluation reports has been applied. Feedback was valuable.

- There is agreement that the external mechanisms are used rather than RO staff (except for country programme evaluations, multi-country evaluations). The quality of external mechanisms is generally acceptable, although sometimes formalistic.
- We do not receive QA feedback from the Regional Office staff. The RO forward our queries to the third party and forward the response to us. The comments are subjective in general. For that reason it is necessary to filter them in order that they may be pertinent to the specific evaluation
- The feedback by the Regional staff is very consistent, and the quality of feedback is of high standards. The external quality assurance was consistent but not of high quality.
- Feedback from the regional office and external reviewers is still very useful for the quality assurance of evaluations. However, due to lack of interaction with external reviewers, sometimes we encounter inconsistent comments / remarks with the context of the country and the project / program being evaluated.
- Feedback is much stronger from UNICEF regional staff on content. From external mechanisms, it's more on the "form" and going through the checklist. Mostly well consistent, but not applicable to all feedback received.
- Feedback received from RO and external reviewers was coherent, even if at times comments went astray from the TOR. Otherwise feedback was of good quality and contributed to improve the report.
- Feedback is useful although usefulness of comments based on a narrow checklist may be reduced. Often, quality demands an analysis using a broad spectrum.
- Often the comments are tied to the obligation of complying with a format and are less concerned about the substantive content. They should focus on the impact of the evaluation, its relevancy and usefulness

- The regional office has been understaffed lately, resulting in delayed feedback. Quality of feedback is usually of a high level and useful in improving products.
- As of now our experience is that RO interventions were minimal with regards to comments on the quality of the report.

Amount of time dedicated to Quality Assurance

The amount of time dedicated to Quality Assurance by the professional staff of the Regional Offices varies significantly. The percentages of time reported during the interviews are as follows:

Regional staff time dedicated to Quality Assurance:

| | Sr/Ev | Ev/Staff |
|---------------|-------|----------|
| Interviewee 1 | 35% | |
| Interviewee 2 | 15% | 50% |
| Interviewee 3 | 30% | 80% |
| Interviewee 4 | 70% | 80% |
| Interviewee 5 | 30% | |
| Interviewee 6 | 40% | |
| Interviewee 7 | 40% | 60% |

One must take into account that the situation of evaluation varies significantly from region to another. Nevertheless this points to the fact that there is no common perception of the roles and responsibilities concerning quality assurance.

At the Regional level of UNICEF, the strengths that were identified for internal quality assurance are:

- ✓ There is recognition that evaluations cannot be “*produced like donuts but need to be created as fine dishes*”. There must be space for creativity and innovation. This is an important contribution of Quality Assurance.
- ✓ The regional evaluation strategy is an opportunity to highlight quality assurance.
- ✓ The personalised bond that exist between the Regional Evaluation Advisor and the CO M&E officers creates trust and mutual respect.
- ✓ Quality assurance done internally also contributed to organizational learning and knowledge management.

The weaknesses identified are:

- UNICEF EO Guidance on Quality Assurance is segmented. There is no wrap-up guidance. Existing guidance cover all the whole organisation however they are understood and interpreted differently in different Regions and Countries.
- There is a need to involve more sectoral and thematic specialists in Quality Assurance.
- Doing Quality Assurance in the context of humanitarian real-time evaluation is a challenge because of the short timelines of the undertakings.
- More guidance on Quality Assurance of Country Programme Evaluation is required.

- There is a need for enhanced Quality Assessment guidance for Gender Equality in evaluation Quality Assurance.
- *GEROSisation* of evaluation products. Evaluation reports are written to meet GEROS criteria. This limits innovation. If the product gears away from standards, it receives a lower rating. There is a lack of full confidence in the rating attributed by external reviewers and GEROS.
- There is no firewall between a firm that conducts evaluations and the one who does reviews.
- Outsourcing has a negative impact. Reliance on external reviewers deprives UNICEF from knowledge and building in-house capacity to do Quality Assurance. Also, this creates a dependency and encourages a lack of professional accountability by evaluators and evaluation managers.
- There is a long way to go with regards to the procurement of competent evaluators.

Responses from Country Offices on the staff time required for Quality Assurance and the cost of external reviewers

The responses received were very diverse. They show that there is no clear framework facilitating the quantification of resources dedicated to Quality Assurance. It is not possible to compare the amounts of resources allocated by Country Offices to Quality Assurance nor is it possible to find patterns of allocations of resources. This is due to the fact that the Country Offices are very different in their composition and contexts in which they operate.

According to a Country Office, it is quite complex to calculate this – depending on the deliverable, the content, the length, the initial quality... Approximately two working days for a 70 or 80 page document. This would be the initial iteration. There may be a couple of more iteration to see if comments were addressed.

For Country Offices it is not easy for them to estimate the time dedicated to Quality Assurance. The required UNICEF staff time for quality assurance depends on variables such as:

- a) previous staff engagement in Quality Assurance processes,
- b) academic and professional background of the reviewer,
- c) complexity and depth of what is evaluated (evaluand),
- d) level of responsibility within the Country Office,
- e) type of function in charge (monitoring, evaluation, research)
- f) level of engagement with the evaluand (management, technical & sectoral advice, independent evaluator),
- g) the quality of the deliverables/draft that evaluation team provide; it is especially time consuming if there are rounds of review and when the documents are not well structured and written,
- h) the competence of the evaluator.

In its response to the Questionnaire, one Country Office said that it allocates one week to the Evaluation Committee members for reviewing each of evaluation deliverables including TOR. However, M&E staff is also involved in other types of activities as well. Estimated time that the Country Office provided for one evaluation is:

Drafting TOR= 15 working days;
Peer Review of TOR (internal and external) = One month;
Following up approval of the TOR = One week (has time implications);
Review of bid proposals including selecting reviewers= 1-2 weeks;
Following up firms to ensure deliverables are on track = continues follow up - various depending on the capacity of the firm;
Review of inception report and follow up = two weeks;
Field work supervision = two weeks at different time periods;
Meetings (face to face or skype calls) for clarifications and discussions with the consulting firm = some a week or others a month;
Organizing reference group for the evaluation = two weeks;
Organizing reference group meetings = four weeks;
Peer review of Inception report, draft report and final reports = two months;
Presentation of the findings to different stakeholders (at different meetings = one month;
Developing management response = two weeks.

One week is given to staff to review the quality of the evaluation report. It can be extended to 10 days when many programme staff are involved in the evaluation.

The estimates provided by the Country Offices of staff time dedicated to Quality Assurance are based on intuitive assessment because there is no system in place to track time allocated by staff to Quality Assessment. Quality Assessment is not a budget item in Country Offices. Nevertheless, here are some estimates that Country Offices provided in their responses:

- Each evaluation phase requires significant amount of staff's time. Some evaluation reports (inception, draft and final) require a week or more for reviewing and providing specific and useful feedback. In most cases, CO needs to organize dedicated meetings on QA topics with the evaluation team.
- It depends on a scale of an evaluation object, when it comes to the staff time required. An evaluation staff member should ideally dedicate all his/her time to quality assurance of evaluations.
- It is difficult to quantify the time required for Quality Assurance. Evaluations are not a continuous activity of the Country Office. When there is a need for Quality Assurance, we allocate the necessary time.

- There is no specific quantity of time allocated to Quality Assessment. The time required for evaluation QA systems is the same as the time dedicated to the responsibilities of the M&E officer.

More than 50% of the time

- The QA Specialist allocates 30% of her time to Quality Assurance and the Evaluation Specialist dedicates 100%
- For an evaluation project, one assigns from 20% during the preparation phase to 70% for the implementation phases of the evaluation.
- M&E Staff spend a majority (roughly 70%) of their time supporting IMEP activities with most of that supporting directly evaluations.
- The staff requires a great amount of time (60% or more) for quality assurance throughout the evaluation process from scoping to submission of the final report.
- During the evaluation conduct time, almost 50% of the time of evaluation officer is dedicated to quality assurance.
- The staff time required for quality assurance varies widely across evaluations. However, in general, the M&E Specialist and programme staff spend a considerable amount of time on quality assurance of TOR, inception reports and final reports. The general estimate is that the M&E Specialist spends approximately 40-50% of their time on quality assurance for evaluations.
- For M&E staff time dedicated to Quality Assurance could be 40% to 60% during the first phases (design, evaluability, recruitment); after for the review of the reports allocation lowers to 30% to 40% and finally for the follow up of the recommendations it would be from 10% to 15%.

Less than 50% but more than 25% of the time

- While this depends on the evaluation scope, design etc., the average QA time for a given evaluation is 30% of the time allocated to the evaluation.
- One third of staff time is spent on evaluation quality assurance.
- As the one responsible for PME, 30% of my time is dedicated to evaluation. Of this, 40% goes to TOR, 40% to Quality Assurance and 20% to activities once the final report received.

Less than 25% of the time

- Using an “in house approach” for ensuring the quality of the evaluation: Depending on the involvement, PM&E specialist spends the most of his/her time on to ensure, planning and implementation of the evaluation. It approximately accounts for 15-20% of the time. Section specialists spend approximately 5-10% (at the stage of the development of the TOR, inception and review of findings).
- About 15% of time per month spent on reviewing for quality and coordinating the review with regional office.

- Based on the experience of the previous three years, the time average is a total of 20 working hours distributed along the evaluation process.
- Performing quality assurance takes roughly 20 working days for an evaluation. This includes methodology validation and final report quality enhancement
- To review draft report using the UNICEF-UNEG-adapted checklist for evaluation reports will take 2 days per cycle. Usually, there are 2 to 3 feedback cycles in the implementation stage of the evaluation, plus several back and forth with evaluators to clarify for comments. Total just for quality assurance to check for evaluation report would be approximately 10 days per evaluation.
- At least one and a half to 2 days per report per staff, if done thoroughly. In addition are Skype calls, and clarification emails.
- Significant staff time from RO and CO level is sent on QA, from the evaluation manager, to the ERG members, to the regional advisor and his team. Difficult to estimate total time, but it could easily be an average of 2-3 days per person.

In summary there is no pattern that can be drawn. It depends on the size and configuration of each Country Office. Staff time varies from evaluation to evaluation. A small office may not be able to afford the time required to produce quality. QA becomes a burden creating significant delays for the evaluation process. Hence there is a need for the Regional Offices to allocate time to support them.

Once the Country Offices will have their Standard Operating Procedure for evaluation, which will include Quality Assurance processes, they will be in a better position to quantify the resources needed for Quality Assurance.

Cost of external reviewers

It is the view of Regional Evaluation Advisers that LTA external reviewers are not costly compared to the opportunity cost of using internal human resources. The rates charged by UNIVERSALIA for assessments were as follows:

- US\$ 275 for assessing Terms of reference
- US\$ 575 for examining an Inception Report
- US\$ 675 for looking at a draft Evaluation Report

The rates charged by individual external reviewers were:

- US\$ 500 per Terms of reference
- US\$ 800 per Inception Report
- US\$ 1000 per Evaluation Report

When calculating the basic salary plus benefits and overhead for UNICEF senior evaluation professional staff, one concludes that rates charged by LTA external reviewers are quite reasonable and cost effective.

Country Offices views about External QA Reviewers

Country Offices have different approaches to the hiring of external QA reviewers. Many Country Offices have said that they do not use external reviewers. Others hire specialized local reviewers who understand the local context. Many Country Offices have recourse to reviewers available via the Regional Office, hired under a long term agreement managed by the RO.

A Country Office said that using an external company is really easy - apart from the regular communication there is rarely a need for clarification. The feedback is in a table and checking the comments is not time consuming. Depending on the quality of the feedback, it can be shared directly with the evaluation team.

Concerning the costs of external reviewers, Country Offices said:

- Cost of external reviewers is not available because as such cost is covered by the Regional Office and Headquarters.
- There is no cost for external reviewers because the Regional Office is doing the quality assurance.
- External reviewers retained through regional LTAs are paid a lump sum at the end of each year for the aggregate cost of services rendered to the country office throughout the year. This is timesaving in terms of administrative processes.
- We have a single impact evaluation expert retained by the responsible section at the CO who's paid based on deliverables.

- The cost of external reviewers is about US\$ 2500 (2018).
- The cost of external review of TOR, Inception Report and Final Report is around 1,500 USD.
- While we do not use external reviewers we hire a report editor to provide improvements for the evaluator to consider.
- We recently had one evaluation report reviewed by an external firm, and it costed us about USD 1,000.
- External reviewers are often invited on pro-bono basis. If payment is made, would use standard rate which is maximum US\$ 220 per person per day for national experts.

- We did not contract any external reviewer in the last three years to carry out quality assurance. That's why we cannot offer any reference regarding its cost.

SUSTAINABILITY, CROSS-CUTTING AND EMERGING ISSUES

Measures identified in the Corporate Implementation Framework for the Revised UNICEF Evaluation Policy will go a long way to enhance quality assurance. The Evaluation Office undertook a review of quality assurance standards and systems. It will issue specific guidance on conducting effective evaluations. It has established pooled fund for evaluation activities. It has instituted awards for the most successful and influential evaluations. All these measures will improve the framework enabling quality assurance.

At the end, a most critical element must be addressed. It is the requirement of having competent staff to manage and lead evaluations. Hence there is a need to increase competence in evaluation. The capacity assessment of all members of the evaluation function identified individual skill gaps. Consequently, the Evaluation Office is delivering an evaluation capacity development course for UNICEF Staff. Also, the Evaluation Office has introduced an onboarding programme for new evaluation staff as well as a mentoring initiative. Nevertheless there is a need for increased efforts and resources to be dedicated to evaluation capacity strengthening.

Regional Interviewees identified the following as skills and competencies required for performing Quality Assurance:

- ✓ Basic knowledge of social sciences and competence in evaluation
- ✓ Multi-year of evaluation practice and multi-organisation exposure to QA
- ✓ Knowledge of country contexts
- ✓ Knowledge of the norms and standards for Evaluation
- ✓ Knowledge of GEROS checklists.
- ✓ Be aware of situation of conflict of interest

The Country Offices respondents provided useful comments on the competencies and skills required for Quality Assurance. They said:

Different QA stakeholders require different competencies and skills. The PRIME SC is a governance body, which looks at the prioritization of evaluation topics and utilization of findings. Members necessitate an understanding of Office priorities, the operationalization of programmes and advocacy strategies to ensure the findings are utilized effectively. The R&E Specialist requires technical skills around OECD-DAC criteria, evaluation designs, methods and ethics. The programme officer/specialist needs to understand the programme that is being evaluated and be clear about the key evaluation questions. The ERG needs to represent a mixture of thematic and methodological skills. The external QA agency also needs to have thematic expertise, although their main input is around them methodology and evaluation norms and standards to ensure the evaluation covers all the standard requirements prescribed by UNEG.

Country Offices respondents also indicated that competences and skills required for quality assurance are the following.

Personal competence

- Formal training in evaluation
 - Formal education in evaluation or relevant experience.
 - Have a diploma or certificate of recognized training in evaluation e.g. IPDET is highly desirable
- Understanding of ethics and integrity,
- Personal qualities such as professionalism, accountability, results oriented, leadership, abilities to supervise and work with people, good in networking.
- Conceptual ability to think strategically
- Being evidence based, logical, relevant and practical is a must.
- Strong analytical skills and critical review skills
- Believe in evaluation and have a passion for it

Programmatic skills

- Knowledge of Human Rights and Gender Equality within the United Nations context and their application into the programming spectrum
- Knowledge of the tools, guidelines and policies of UNICEF
- Understanding UNICEF mission, Strategic Plan and the CPD
- Solid understanding of UNICEF programming approaches.
- Skills to assess the evaluability of programmes

Technical skills

- *Knowledge and experience in research*
 - Good research skills
 - Mastery of research and evaluation approaches, designs and methods
 - Understand static, dynamic and behavioral modelling
 - Experience in quantitative and qualitative data collection methods
 - Skills in quantitative and qualitative data analysis (broad range of technical knowledge is required as methods for evaluating programmes vary.
 - Understanding of sampling methods, data analysis tools, statistics, triangulation, rigor etc.
 - Technical skills are needed especially for methods design, data collection, data processing and analysis and report writing.
- *Knowledge and experience in evaluation*
 - Knowledge on the key principles of evaluations (Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Sustainability, Impact)
 - Knowledge of the different types of Evaluations and their applications

- Being up-to-date about evaluation function: norms and standards, Knowledge of the evaluation standards and the latest evaluation developments in the region and globally
 - Comprehensive knowledge of evaluation theories, norms and standards as well as best practices
 - Experience in conducting evaluation under the UNEG standards
 - Knowledge of the context and programme to be able to assess the evaluation
 - Experience in managing evaluations
- *Knowledge and experience in Quality Assurance*
 - Knowledge of UNEG and UNICEF Evaluation Policy and quality standards,
 - Familiarity with GEROS standards, familiarity with UNICEF's UNEG-adapted TOR and report formats, and familiarity with the evaluation material
 - Knowledge of best practices of evaluations that received a satisfactory and above rating by GEROS quality assurance tool
 - Experience in quality assurance processes; evaluation procedures, norms, and standards; ethical considerations and reviews
 - Understanding of quality standards
 - Acquisition of thematic and operational knowledge of the country programme
 - Need to have very good understanding of evaluation techniques and research methods in order to put in place a good TOR and ensure quality assurance.
 - Familiarity with the context to better interpret the data

Managerial skills

- Leadership
- Solid experience in conducting or managing evaluations
- Planning, analytical and organizational skills
- Multi-tasking
- Ability to regularly follow up
- Experience in consensus building
- Ability to determine an evaluation scope, develop a realistic work plan and create mechanisms to implement the evaluation
- Ability to coordinate and supervise an evaluation processes, time keeping and ensuring all loose ends are tied properly;
- Persuasion skills to ensure use of evaluation.
- Dissemination skills: explanation, summarization, packaging evaluation findings into interesting products

Interpersonal skills

- Ability to work with people
- Good interpersonal skills and drive for results
- Attention to detail
- Ability to work under pressure
- Respect, participation and inclusion; gender sensitivity; patience; negotiation skills

Communication skills

- Good interpersonal communication skills
- Good understanding of the needs and expectations of the stakeholders
- Ability to resolve conflicting views and create a positive work environment
- Skilled in advocacy, experience in promoting use of evaluation products
- Knowledge of, and an ability to network
- Experience in group work and influencing networks
- Experience in report writing
- Strong writing skills in English or other required UN languages, relevant to a context of a duty station

Innovation and Change

- Solid understanding of UNICEF programming approaches.
- Curiosity and on-going learning of best practices in evaluation
- Understanding evaluation approaches and reporting findings, and conclusions and recommendations.
- Understanding RBM, Theory of Change
- Creative in finding solutions to improve and facilitate change
- Experience in national evaluation capacity development

Overall, a balance needs to be found between “hardline” evaluation expertise, a background in methodology design and evaluation conduct, and broader managerial and partnership development skills. Often, specific technical knowledge can be separately sourced, while abilities at conducting participatory evaluation processes and in-built capacity development are success factors for the ultimate quality and impact of evaluations.

GOOD PRACTICES IN QUALITY ASSURANCE IN OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Overall there was a weak knowledge of Quality Assurance practices performed by other organisations. Regional Interviewees referred ILO, MDBs, UNDP, UNFPA and WFP but could not speak to the specifics. Here are comments made.

ILO has a project-based QA system. It has good resources on quality assurance and does meta evaluations.

Multilateral Development Banks have QAG – Quality Assurance Groups. The Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank is presently reviewing its quality assurance approach to make it simpler and less heavy on the formal steps required.

UNFPA's EQAA system covers both programme-level evaluations as well as evaluations conducted by the Evaluation Office. In setting up the evaluation quality assurance and assessment system, three overall and internationally evaluation principles are used: Independence and impartiality, Credibility and Utility. The UNFPA Evaluation Quality Assurance and Assessment (EQAA) system has two basic elements to ensure quality of evaluations at UNFPA – quality assurance and quality assessment. With the purpose of promoting quality throughout the evaluation process, quality assurance takes place during the evaluation, beginning with the evaluation terms of reference and ending with the draft final evaluation report. Quality assessment takes place after an evaluation is completed (ex post), whereby the final evaluation report is quality assessed by an external independent assessor.

UNDP QA system works on a rolling basis, as evaluation reports need to be assessed within two weeks of their submission. The Quality Assessment process is managed by the Independent Evaluation Office who sends the evaluation report to a contracted quality assessment reviewer. Strengthening performance measurement systems enhances the quality of evaluations. The quality and utility of evaluations are greatly enhanced by project and programme results frameworks, which establish the logical sequence of planned results and include a 'theory of change' articulating how activities and outputs are expected to lead to desired outcomes and results.

UN-Women has a Quality Assurance system similar to UNICEF's. It is called the Global Evaluation Report Assessment and Analysis System (GERAAS). It provides written justifications for scores that are given. This reduces subjectivity in a Quality Assurance system that uses qualitative judgements to determine scores. UN-Women also has a quality assurance tool for training for gender equality.

In addition to a real-time quality assurance system, **WFP** has an internal quality assessment mechanism as well as an independent quality assessment of all completed evaluations. The results of the meta evaluations are reported in the annual evaluation reports. WFP's CEQAS Centralized Evaluation Quality Assurance System has excellent guidance materials for Country Portfolio Evaluations, for Policy and Strategic Evaluations and for Operations Evaluations.

All organisations seem to be facing similar challenges concerning Quality Assurance. **UNEG** Quality Assurance Working Group is an excellent venue for inter-agency sharing of good practices.

The majority of the Country Office respondents said that they are not familiar with Quality Assurance systems existing in other UN organizations. Nevertheless they provided useful comments which are the following.

All under the UNEG umbrella

- UNEG Guidelines are used for all evaluations commissioned by the UN.
- All other UN agencies in our country have centralized evaluation functions.
- A peer support mechanism is put in place for evaluations done by other UN agencies in the country. Staffs designated by other agencies support the quality control of evaluation from the TOR finalization through the submission of the approved version of the report.
- As I understand, this question is about whether we use quality toolkits of other UN agencies. I think most UN Agencies follow UNEG guidelines. When I see something useful from other UN Agencies, I definitely review them and compare with our practices.
- Contacts have not been made with colleagues in other UN agencies having an evaluation function at country level. UNICEF intends strengthening collaboration in evaluation. This could be done under the umbrella of the UNDAF Inter-sectoral M&E Group.

UNICEF contributions in the context of UNDAF

- Not aware. However, the evaluation of the current UNDAF benefited from the quality assurance system of UNICEF, which was appreciated by the Resident Coordinator Office.
- The UNCT conducted an evaluation of the UNDAF in 2017 in preparation for the current UNDAF. The UNDAF QA process had many challenges, largely to do with the short timelines given to ERG members to comment (sometime only 2 or 3 days). UNICEF CO heavily supported the UNDAF evaluation both in QA and evaluation management.

Knowledge about other UN agencies QA systems

- WFP seems to have better regional support mechanism for decentralized evaluations at country level. WFP uses the Evaluation Quality Assurance System (EQAS) as one of its building blocks for implementation of WFP's Evaluation Policy. As such, it is WFP's Office of Evaluation's primary means of safeguarding the international evaluation principles. EQAS is a comprehensive system covering all types of evaluations: strategic, policy, country portfolio, impact, operations and synthesis evaluations. It guides all evaluations undertaken by WFP's Office of Evaluation.
- We do not have sufficient knowledge of the SOPs of other UN agencies and can only comment more broadly on what is known about other agencies' evaluation culture. For example, WHO is known for its rigorous research practices, including established review and IRB processes. Similarly, UNDP has a long history of producing world standard reports, such as the Human Development Report, which have significant peer review processes attached to them. UNICEF is catching up to some of these more established evidence players. The recently established evidence governance framework, not only for evaluations, but also for research and data has led to a more streamlined and rigorous approach to evidence generation. However, a change in our internal "evidence culture", including better evaluation skills of staff members, is coming along more slowly.
- Not sure. Other UN agencies like UNDP and UNFPA have central functions for evaluations. Local staff only in charge of planning and monitoring. Not evaluation.
- Having had the experience of working at the UN Resident Coordinator Office (UNDP procedures) and UNFPA before joining UNICEF, I had experience managing evaluations with the 3 agencies. My assessment of the quality of assurance systems is in favor for UNICEF which provides timely and consistent support via the Regional Office throughout the evaluation process. However, it's important to note that UNFPA has a detailed "Evaluation Handbook" on the evaluation and management of the evaluation process and in 2019 UNDP has published its "Evaluation Guidance" as a practical guide on 154-pages.
- Not sure what the practice is but UNDP has a GEROS equivalent and other Agencies have rating systems.
- I don't know about all the other UN agencies, but I can comment on the UNDP process in my country. They have less in-country evaluation capacity than UNICEF CO and we support them with suggestions of the processes that have worked for us. They tend to hire individuals to conduct their evaluations whereas we tend to hire institutions. The quality of their final evaluation product (and QA process) therefore tends to be dependent on the external individual they hire.

- The other UN agencies do not focus as much on evaluation quality assurance at country level. QA in great part is done at the Regional and HQ levels, as it the case with UNFPA and UNWOMEN.

Not much aware of other UN organisations' QA systems

- We are not aware of any QA mechanism used by comparator UN organizations. We have offered our QA process for the review of UNDAF evaluation process.
- We are not aware of “large decentralized evaluation functions” in other UN organizations. It seems that they tend to follow a more centralized approach in terms of evaluation.
- Not known. That would be interesting information, if UNICEF were to map that or suggest a joint comparative exercise to UNEG peers.
- This is not applicable in our country where UNICEF is the only major development agency active.

UNICEF primus inter pares

- UNICEF is generally ahead in QA in comparison to other agencies.
- Based on our experience and exchange with other UN agencies, UNICEF systems are more comprehensive and established, with more frequent updates and improvements based on lessons learnt. This recently include the rolling out of EISI to plan, implement and report on IMEP activities; establishment of a new shared Evaluation Specialist position in Suva office to be co-shared with Country Office to support Evaluation and related quality assurance function relating to evaluations; revision of the regional evaluation policies, with SOPs and Action Plans and so forth.
- UNODC, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA have global and regional level policies and guidelines that define roles and accountabilities related to the evaluation function. UNODC does not have rating system for its evaluation reports. Only evaluation of projects funded by other donors includes ratings due to donor requirements. Due to availability of dedicated staff with Evaluation Function in UNICEF Regions with external quality assurance mechanisms, unlike other agencies, UNICEF is in better position in ensuring independence and quality of conducted evaluations.
 - I’m not that familiar with other UN organizations’ evaluation function. At least to compare with UNHCR where I used to work for 3 years, UNICEF’s SOP and policies on evaluation are far better.
 - UNICEF is the top ranked UN agency for its M&E work among all UN agencies per the discussions in PMT group. However, we don’t have detailed information about others to answer this question adequately.
 - We don’t have this information. However, we feel UNICEF in-house quality assurance systems are pretty organized and thorough.

- UNICEF's procedure and emphasis on evaluation is much more strong and transparent compared to other UN agencies in the country.
- In 2019 as one of the leading agency in this area, UNICEF CO provided advisory support on evaluation to UN agencies and the Government.

Points of view

- With the understanding that other UN organizations, including UNDP, UNFPA, etc. have developed standards, procedures criteria and methodological guidance for evaluations based on global UN guidance, we know that very similar issues arise. Because of different institutional setup for evaluation, it is not clear the agencies can work together to ensure better independence in practice. Also, we know that the evaluators (consultants) contracted to carry out the evaluations do not always have all the desired qualifications or expertise and in addition tend to produce products more in line with the expectation of the contracting office than might otherwise be indicated. Furthermore, there is relative lack of funding for evaluations in any United Nations agencies as well as the need for more dedicated staff specifically for evaluation.
- I know that UNDP has started an external QA review (I saw the LTA advertised). Otherwise, within UNICEF there is huge variation in QA processes between regions and countries so would be good to standardize and improve in-house before worrying much about how other agencies approach it.
- From my experience, last time when the Evaluation of a joint UN project was done (UNICEF was a part of the joint project) UNICEF's practices were used.

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

Country Office respondents proposed useful measures that could be put in place to strengthen quality assurance processes at the Country level. The list of their proposals is the followings.

Make Quality Assurance better known

- ✓ Sensitization of senior management (Reps, DepReps, Programme Heads) on QA process within UNICEF
- ✓ The Evaluation Office has to provide more technical guidance to the country office (M&E focal points AND program focal points) in order to clarify the assurance processes and enhance the quality of evaluations.
- ✓ Additional layer of quality assurance is now being built in by forming Evaluation Reference Group for each evaluation, mainly to promote buy-in and use of evaluation management responses.
- ✓ Engagement of the Country Representative is key in evaluations and there is a risk if delegating the evaluation function to the Deputy Representative for Programmes where there may be conflict when programs are evaluated.
- ✓ The involvement of CO Management is necessary for their appreciation of the importance of Quality Assurance and support for willingness to allocate time and money for Quality Assurance.

Structure of the management of Quality Assurance

- In addition to the Evaluation Policy, develop Quality Assurance SOPs to guide country offices on assessing the quality of the evaluation processes, output and uptake.
- Enhance country and regional level standard operating procedures
- Have Country Offices establish a Quality Assurance standard operating procedure at country office level
- Streamline the retention of individual subject matter experts signed on via LTAs at global/regional level, for example, methodology, design, and sampling experts for impact evaluations, plus easy access to thematic area experts within UNICEF.
- Outsourcing of QA to firms on LTA should seriously be considered. UNICEF staff is generally managers with many things on their plate, and can't always dedicate sufficient time to evaluation QA.
- Apply experience of having Regional level SOPs as a good instrument which is being used.
- Current guidance for global evaluation service providers is very helpful however it would be good if we could receive some support to strengthen national evaluation capacity.
- All tools and guidance are in place, the main gap is enough time allocated for evaluation quality assurance as a share of evaluation-related staff positions and

- more dedicated evaluation staff positions. Especially if the extremely ambitious production/coverage targets will be maintained. Scaling up the multi-country evaluation specialist model is a good step.
- It would be very useful to follow the model of UNFPA and UNDP and produce a guide of UNICEF gathering all the guidance, procedures and tools available covering all phases of the evaluation from the preparation phase to the management response and its updates.
 - Evaluations are labour intensive, especially for the Chief PME which therefore limits the number of evaluations that can be carried out of sufficient quality. In our CO we are trying to address this through strategic selection of evaluations in the Costed Evaluation Plan and managing PCO's commitment to evaluations through workplan and IMEP QA.
 - The number of staff is small in small country offices, and the evaluation officers handles many functions other than the evaluations functions? So evaluation managers of small country offices have comparatively less time to concentrate on evaluations that leads to poor quality evaluations. More importantly when the size of staff is small, how does it affect the independency of the evaluations? Therefore the staffing strategy should take into account the time that is available for the staff members to conduct a quality evaluation.
 - UNICEF should look at options to simplify the processes –they are heavy. All CO do not have the resources necessary to manage them.

Improve Quality Assurance systems

- The UNICEF-UNEG evaluation guideline is quite comprehensive and broad which is good in allowing the improvising of the real evaluation practice in different country context.
- Representatives and Dep Reps to re-enforce the use of systems (such as EISI) by programme staff.
- Tools used for evaluations to be standardized across all COs: TOR templates, reports structure, checklists, etc.
- Improve the quality of evaluation design in order to foster evaluability.
- The external QA review mechanism is working well, but it is not enough. The LTAs should be extended to also provide TA (technical assistance), in addition to QA. The R&E specialist cannot be expected to provide insightful guidance on all methods and topics, but a TA mechanism, where thematic and methodological experts are called on to help to shape a TOR or a report, would get around this gap.
- Currently the QA mechanism is quite punitive. It rates your efforts without giving advice on how to improve the weaknesses.
- We would also suggest that GEROS could be provided to Country Office at draft report stage so that feedback/comments could be reflected in the revisions and improvements made when finalize the report.
- Checklists for conducting/managing successful evaluations.

- Provide CO with a template for TORs that integrates systematically a checklist for Quality Assurance.
- Translating the guidelines/checklists into pre-filled templates (one template for an individual consultant, one template for consultant firms), with standard text or options inserted in and guidance on how to fill it in.
- If small country offices do not embed the evaluation design at the initial stage of the project proposals, by the time of actual evaluations, data are missing, thus refraining to conduct an impact evaluation. So it is important to think of the evaluation design at the inception of the project.
- Improved and practicable guidelines and tools on quality assurance for each step of evaluation.
- Time required for QA for each evaluation should be well built into each evaluation timeline and should be made part of the evaluation standards.
- Reference groups can be helpful if only they give good attention. Possibility to pay honorarium to one or two members of reference group members who could be provided some honorarium for review can greatly help the ERG's contribution to QA.
- Give a quick feedback when a document is classified as evaluation in EISI to ascertain that indeed it is an evaluation.
- Partnership could be created with national evaluation associations (VOPE) to contribute to Quality Assurance.
- Develop partnerships with universities and regional centers of excellence in evaluation.

Share experience

- At the moment, there is no active inter-country level coordination mechanism to share information on planned, on-going or recently completed evaluations, or to share best practices and the lessons learned from evaluations. This would be useful.
- Platform for exchange of ideas around quality assurance with other COs/ROs and HQ
- Share best practices and tools on an easy accessible website.
- Introducing peer reviewing process among Cos
- Peer review across offices
- Provide opportunities for M&E Specialists to exchange on good QA practices for evaluations.
- It would be good to know more about other UN organisations QAS and harmonized all of them to have one UN approach.
- Sharing of staff among COs, focusing on evaluation of national policies, desirably linked to SDG integration and implementation.
- Set up a mentoring network
- Create a roster of seasoned evaluators who master UNICEF evaluation QA norms and guidelines.

- Facilitate the involvement of UN and governmental organisations in Quality Assurance, thus facilitate the exchange of best practices at the national level.
- Within EISI allow access to all evaluation norms, standards and guidelines.

Capacity strengthening

- Capacity building for evaluation managers on QA role.
- More orientation on the evaluation landscape as the field is evolving.
- Continue strengthening capacity of staff with evaluation functions and senior management
- Continuous training and engagement of CO staff
- Ensure continuing trainings for staff involved in the management and quality assurance of evaluations.
- Continue strengthening of knowledge of UNICEF programme staff on various tools, guidelines and policies as regards to evaluation function in UNICEF.
- Further strengthening capacities (trainings) of programme staff on evaluation standards and procedures and the evaluation function.
- More training aimed at the local staff. Since most of the evaluation quality assurance activities are carried out by local staff, trainings should focus on them instead of their supervisors.
- Dedicated M&E staff, who are regularly provided with training opportunities (beyond Agora).
- Capacity building opportunity for CO staff, Implementing Partners and adolescents.
- Develop capacity for all CO staff involved in evaluations, on the quality assurance processes.
- Capacity building for M&E staff, more support from Regional Office and evaluation experts.
- RO to provide regular training at least once per year.
- Training or sessions organized by regional office to programme staff
- Training of partners on evaluation including sessions on quality assurance
- Periodic webinars on quality assurance processes
- Build capacity of staff responsible for evaluations through webinars as well as though face-to-face learning opportunities.
- Online course on evaluation management and quality assurance processes to be a recommended training for all programme staff.
- Create an evaluation hotline to provide on spot support on technical areas, especially evaluation design.
- Strengthen platforms for practical learning and knowledge sharing and develop national
- Conduct capacity building clinics for CO Evaluation focal points capacities especially at MCO and FO levels.

Continue current support to QA

- Easy access to external reviewers which CO can use when required
- LTA with good evaluation firms which CO can use
- Have LTAs to support QA process.
- The (continued) use of LTAs can be helpful as it would be a little more likely that the evaluators will have slightly more independence than ones recruited more directly by the office.
- Regularly expand the pool of pre-qualified evaluation consultancy institutions on LTAs.
- It would be interesting to think about expanding the experiences of some regions such as WACRO and ESARO by setting rosters of accredited evaluators at the global and regional level, this could help COs to gain more time on the process of recruiting evaluators which takes at least 2 to 3 months.
- RO to continue with remote and onsite support to CO.
- To reduce back-and-forth comments on TORs, technical support by a remote team (Regional Office or external team) in the form of a Skype call with the country office to clarify any questions, followed by the remote team directly improving the TORs, and the country office doing the last adjustments where needed.
- An effort is made for translating documents from English to other languages yet more needs to be done

Increase resources for Quality Assurance

- Many offices do not have staff dedicated to the evaluation function, thus evaluation and evaluation quality assurance present a challenge, as they compete with other important office matters.
- Strengthen the evaluation function at Country level. For small CO, the evaluation function remains with M&E and the priority is monitoring in most instances.
- However in these offices it is important to strengthen Program Staff capacity for evaluations.
- An option is to provide more funding and more dedicated staff for evaluations in general and specifically for the quality assurance processes.
- Ensure resources to have an evaluation specialist, either one for the office or shared offices, but not one who also has to do planning and monitoring. PME usually leaves the “E” forgotten.
- Multi-Country Evaluation Specialists incl., with experience of constraints and challenges or running evaluations, ensuring quality and uptake in emergency contexts.
- Shared evaluation specialist post focusing on evaluation function should be helpful.
- Increase staffing in the evaluation function- can be for multi-country.
- Support to in house quality assurance system should be strengthened by providing more dedicated regional support through introduction of a multi

country Evaluation function, which is currently underway, however the number of countries this function oversees should be reduced and not exceed 2-3 to ensure in-depth and timely assistance.

- More dedicated evaluation specialists (whether multi-country or not). A key challenge is the time constraints that PM&E staff is under, given the heavy burden under the P&M functions already.
- CO budget for external reviews would also improve the processes.
- Dedicated resources for QA and resource mobilization for evaluation
- Regional Offices could strengthen their evaluation team in order to respond more quickly to increasing demand for CO support.

Other measures

- ❖ Ensure the independence of the evaluation function at country offices with central management of evaluations by a chief/staff reporting to the Representative. Discourage the practice of evaluation management by the programme sections who have conflict of interest and lack capacity to properly manage evaluations.
- ❖ Making the evaluation function independent from programmatic areas such as social policy. If possible, to create one evaluation unit within each country office. Attaching the evaluation function with other programmes only weakens its independence.
- ❖ Separating Evaluation functions from programme section – R&E Specialist will take over the evaluation functions to ensure independence, impartiality, objectivity and etc.
- ❖ Support establishment of quality assurance mechanisms within the country institutions.
- ❖ Support Country institutions and national evaluation associations to develop the technical skills. The enables to ensure availability of an optimal number of evaluation professionals who really master the Science of Evaluation and are committed to comply with all quality requirements based on norms in force.
- ❖ Capacity strengthening of Government, Academia, CSOs and UNICEF staff performing the evaluation function to ensure quality Evaluations at all levels – planning, implementation, sharing and use of the recommendations.
- ❖ UNICEF should not only focus on the process of the quality assurance but to take into account a comprehensive analysis of the determinants of delivering quality evaluation. Among other things, the capacity of the firm evaluating the programme, the budget allocated to the evaluation, the extent to which the programme is evaluable or not and the quality of strategies of the programmes, expectations different stakeholders of are all major determinants. Given all this, strengthening internal capacity and creating the required time and space for staffs responsible for quality assurance to do the quality assurance. Involving regional office for selected evaluations. Quick online quick feedback mechanism

- throughout the implementation of the evaluation by RO/HQ as an optional mechanism as way of advising managers of evaluation when they need support.
- ❖ In the long term, UNICEF needs to have a much more systematic approach to strengthen the quality of its evidence generation activities. This includes:
 - 1) hiring staff with strong evaluation and research backgrounds;
 - 2) establishing long term partnerships with research and evaluation institutes and shaping research and evaluation questions together as part of long-term initiatives (to avoid the current piecemeal approach of single activities that do not necessarily feed into a broader agenda);
 - 3) capacity building of existing staff to manage research and evaluation better;
 - 4) an integrated approach to its evidence activities (research, evaluation, studies/data) – both in terms of management and building agendas where these activities support and feed into each other;
 - 5) professional support to research evaluation publications, including a dedicated website, professional copy-editing and design, and promotion of the evidence (e.g. with infographics and videos).
 - ❖ In line with the 2018 evaluation peer-review report, career paths for UNICEF evaluation specialists need to be looked at since the nature of the work requires a critical view of other functions across the organization. Unfortunately, such a critical view may, at times, result in tense working relationships, although it is those very relationships upon which promotions and future career options will open up. This compromises the independence of the evaluation function since it forces the evaluation specialist to accommodate external demands in order to meet the need for career growth.
 - ❖ In line with this, the “political economy” of the evaluation function needs to be analyzed further. Due to stringent QA processes, some staff prefer to bypass the evaluation specialist and conduct “reviews” instead. Senior management needs to be aware of this and support the evaluation specialist in his/her role, since they sign off on the TORs and deliverables of other programme staff/sections.
 - ❖ Perhaps look at private sector’s quality assurance process, for example – Deloitte, PWC – just to name a few.
 - ❖ Stepping back from QA, a key issue is the selection of the appropriate institution to carry out an evaluation. The initial evaluation TOR needs to be clear and the technical criteria for selection also clear and well thought through. Institutions exist who can ‘game’ the bid process and produce high quality bids, they can then struggle to actually perform.
 - ❖ Encouraging CO to write honest Performance Evaluations Report (PER) of contractor’s performance and storing them on a Regional (or EO HQ) SharePoint site would be useful to ensure CO have the full picture of a contractor’s performance.

CONCLUSIONS

The extent to which Quality Assurance achieved its objective

Overall, the quality of evaluation reports has improved. This is mostly due to greater emphasis on quality in order to have credible evaluations. Ratings of evaluation reports show a positive trend over 2009-2018 in the improvement of the quality of evaluations commissioned by UNICEF. The following table shows the improvements.

| Rating category | 2009- 2011 | 2012- 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | TOTAL | Percent |
|---------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|---------------|
| Highly Satisfactory | 11 | 11 | 4 | 6 | 13 | 14 | 59 | 6.6% |
| Satisfactory | 96 | 155 | 44 | 69 | 50 | 76 | 490 | 55.0% |
| Fair | 104 | 68 | 39 | 25 | 25 | 14 | 275 | 30.9% |
| Unsatisfactory | 60 | 12 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 76 | 8.5% |
| TOTAL | 272 | 246 | 100 | 104 | 88 | 104 | 900 | 100.0% |

Source: AIMS – External Review of UNICEF’s Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS) – August 2019

As can be seen, the figures show that the proportion of evaluations considered unsatisfactory has declined dramatically to none in last two years and those considered satisfactory or highly satisfactory has improved from 40% in 2009-11 to 85% in 2018. Thus, data on Evaluation Quality Assurance ratings show that there has been a steady improvement in the quality of UNICEF evaluation reports.

Relevance and Conceptual Clarity

Across the organisation, there is no clear understanding of an explicit rationalization of Quality Assurance, a professional binding understanding of the responsibilities and accountabilities for Quality Assurance. It must be part of expanding the boundary of the evaluation culture. There is an uneven knowledge and understanding of quality assurance policies and guidelines. GEROS is better known because it is applied to all evaluation reports.

During the interview process there was a strong propensity to merge the concepts of responsibility and accountability. They are distinct.

Responsibility is the state of having the duty, to do whatever it takes to complete the task. Responsibility expects a person to be reliable and dependable to complete the tasks assigned to him/her. Responsibility is something assigned to you by someone in a higher authority. Responsibility can be shared with another. Responsibility can be before and/or after a task.

The condition, wherein a person is expected to take ownership of one's actions or decisions, is called accountability. Accountability requires a person to be liable and answerable for the things, he/she does. Accountability comes with the individual's own acceptance of their obligation. Accountability is answerability, blameworthiness, liability, and the expectation of account-giving. Accountability emphasizes the sole ownership of the actions and decisions. Accountability is something you hold a person to only after a task is done or not done.

In the context of UNICEF, an evaluation manager is responsible for the evaluation. The responsibility is shared with other stakeholders involved in the evaluation process. However, the accountability rests with the Office Manager who commissions and approves the final report.

Adequacy and utility of Quality Assurance Approaches, Tools, Mechanisms and Related Guidance

Overall the quality assurance systems in place across the organisation answer to current needs. The weakest element of the systems is the diversified levels of evaluation professional competence in evaluation, especially at Country Office level.

There is a debate concerning the models of quality assurance used at Regional levels. No doubt the best model is the "In-House approach" because it reflects an internalization of the capacity to conduct evaluations of quality. This model is suitable where the evaluation culture is mature and where competent evaluation expertise is available. In other regions there is a need for evaluation capacity strengthening.

In many countries there is *evalphobia*. Evaluation is misunderstood. National evaluation capacity is under-developed and the availability of professional expertise in evaluation in those regions is limited. Hence both the "External reviewer approach" and the "Help-Desk approach" make sense in these contexts. Due to limited evaluation resources in the Regional Office, the use of external reviewers allows a better coverage for the provision of quality assurance. The external " Help-desk approach" offers real-time advice to evaluation managers enabling them to improve evaluation quality. It is a type of mentoring facilitating on-job evaluation training.

Concerning guidance received from the Evaluation Office, interviewees said that Regional Offices receive little Quality Assurance support. The role of the Evaluation Office is mostly administrative mainly dealing with GEROS. Seldom does a Country Office benefit support from the Evaluation Office on evaluations that they conduct.

16% of the Questionnaire respondents from Country Offices said that they were very satisfied with the Quality Assurance services provided by Regional staff and external reviewers. 45% of the CO respondents were satisfied with the QA services provided by Regional staff and external reviewers. 7% of the CO respondents said that they were not using the external reviewers but were satisfied with the support provided by Regional

staff. 32% of the respondents think that Quality Assurance services provided by Regional staff and external reviewers can be improved.

Opportunities to strengthen Quality Assurance

It would be useful if the Evaluation Office would have an explicit roadmap with regards to Quality Assurance improvement and use its influence in UNICEF Global Management Committee to impress on Regional Director the importance of Quality Assurance and obtain their support.

The Regional Offices need great support from the Evaluation Office with regards to the challenge of setting up the infrastructure required to increase substantively the quality of evaluations.

The Regional standardized operational procedure is a step forward to provide clarity and cover the steps necessary for Quality Assurance and who are accountable for them.

Each Regional Office is in need to have a Regional Evaluation Framework/Strategy that addresses

- ✓ How to improve the quality of evaluations?
- ✓ How to enhance the independence of evaluation?
- ✓ How to achieve 1% programme expenditure on evaluation?
- ✓ How to strengthen the use of evaluation in advocacy and programming?
- ✓ How to integrate evaluation QA in Results-based Management?
- ✓ How to facilitate the conduct of useful quality-based CPEs?
- ✓ How to engage national stakeholders in Quality Assurance?
- ✓ How to support national evaluation capacity development in QA?

The Evaluation and Regional Offices fall short from the alignment of resources dedicated to evaluation considering the UNICEF Evaluation Policy 1% indicator, and do not ensure resources are dedicated to Quality Assurance.

The Evaluation Office together with the Regional Evaluation Advisors would benefit examining how to integrate human rights and gender equality more systematically in Quality Assurance.

In many countries UNICEF M&E officers have a good entry point with national officers. This is a vantage to promote Quality Assurance and evaluation capacity development.

The Evaluation Office together with the Regional Offices has put in place long term agreements with competent evaluator who could act as assessors of evaluation quality. This ensures the availability of professional competence and accelerates the hiring of experts and save staff time complying with recruitment procedures.

The Country Offices respondents had much to say about measures that can be taken to strengthen Quality Assurance. Here are some of their useful comments:

- Currently the QA mechanism is quite punitive. It rates your efforts without giving advice on how to improve the weaknesses.
- At the moment, there is no active inter-country level coordination mechanism to share information on planned, on-going or recently completed evaluations, or to share best practices and the lessons learned from evaluations. This would be useful.
- Partnership can be created with national evaluation associations (VOPE) to contribute to Quality Assurance.
- Additional layer of quality assurance is now being built in by forming Evaluation Reference Group for each evaluation, mainly to promote buy-in and use of evaluation management responses.
- Enhanced country and regional levels standard operation procedures for Quality Assurance would be a step forward.
- Time required for QA for each evaluation can be built in the evaluation timeline and be part of the evaluation SOP.
- It would be very useful to follow the model of UNFPA and UNDP and produce a guide of UNICEF gathering all the guidance, procedures and tools available covering all phases of the evaluation from the preparation phase to the management response and its updates.
- Continuous Quality Assurance capacity strengthening by means of training, coaching, mentoring. Build capacity of staff responsible for Quality Assurance through webinars as well as face-to-face learning opportunities.
- The (continued) use of LTAs can be helpful as it would be a little more likely that the evaluators will have slightly more independence than ones recruited more directly by the office.
- Encouraging CO to write honest Performance Evaluations Report (PER) of contractor's performance and storing them on a Regional (or EO HQ) SharePoint site would be useful to ensure CO have the full picture of a contractor's performance.
- An effort is made for translating documents from English to other languages yet more needs to be done.
- In line with this, the "political economy" of the evaluation function needs to be analyzed further. Due to stringent QA processes, some staff prefer to bypass the evaluation specialist and conduct "reviews" instead. Senior management needs to be aware of this and support the evaluation specialist in his/her role, since they sign off on the TORs and deliverables of other programme staff/sections.

Key Stakeholders' understanding and perceptions of Quality Assurance

The roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for Quality Assurance are not as clear as could be. Quality Assurance oversight is performed by the Regional Evaluation Advisor. The involvement of the REA varies depending on the extent there is evaluation competence available in the Regions and depending on the access to external reviewers. Quality Assurance is seen differently depending on the roles being played in an evaluation such as evaluation manager or external Quality Assurance expert.

Regional sector and thematic specialists are more concerned about the substantive content of the evaluation and do not play a significant role in the quality assurance dimensions of the evaluation approach.

Answering to the Questionnaire, Country Offices said that UNICEF Quality Assurance policies, guidelines and tools are known and used. Looking closer at their responses one sees that 27% affirmed quite positively that all were known and used. Another 27% of the respondents indicated that policies, guidelines and tools were known but not applied systematically. Finally 46% of the CO respondents said that they were not known nor used.

Good Practices and Lessons

Regarding Quality Assurance systems/processes used by comparator organisations and how they compare with UNICEF's practices, five interviewees said that they are not specifically familiar with QA systems in other organisations.

Some referred to UNDP, UNFPA, and WFP but could not describe the Quality Assurance systems existing in the organisations.

Perception is that in other organisations, evaluation staff is more involved in quality assurance.

All in all, quality assurance system of UNICEF compares well with the systems existing in other organisations. Some organisations borrowed from UNICEF to create their systems.

17% of Country Offices Questionnaire respondents said that all UN agencies operate under the UNEG umbrella. 7% said that UNICEF played a lead role in the context of the UNDAF and 28% said that UNICEF was *primus inter pares*. 24% of the respondents indicated some known of Quality Assurance systems in other UN organisations. However 14% of the respondent confirmed that they were not aware of the Quality Assurance systems existing in other organisations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Director of the Evaluation Office should issue a Directive on Quality Assurance. The Directive would make clear the rationale and expected outcomes of quality assurance, the accountabilities, roles and responsibilities, the elements of the evaluation process that will be the object of quality assessment and UNICEF quality assurance system management.
2. The Evaluation Office should look at the alignment of resources dedicated to evaluation by Regional Offices and Country Offices, considering the 1% indicator contained in the Evaluation Policy and ensure that enough resources are dedicated to quality assurance.
3. The Evaluation Office in collaboration with Regional Offices should develop a Guide on Quality Assurance, grouping together the various existing guides, harmonizing them to strengthen UNICEF's evaluation standards applicable to different types of evaluation.
4. The availability of basic training on evaluation management and quality assurance should be increased across the organisation. Recognition should be made to those who have completed the training programme.
5. The Evaluation Office together with Regional Offices should create a pool of qualified evaluator who could assist evaluation managers in ensuring evaluation quality. To avoid conflict of interest, long term agreements should be put in place to facilitate access to professional competence dedicated solely to quality assurance.

ANNEXES

| | |
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ANNEX I - TERMS OF REFERENCE

TERMS OF REFERENCE UNICEF EVALUATION OFFICE REVIEW OF QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS FOR EVALUATION AT THE DECENTRALIZED LEVEL EXTERNAL ADVISOR

1. INTRODUCTION

UNICEF's Evaluation Office is seeking to recruit an individual consultant to i) document the various quality assurance processes for evaluations at the decentralized (regional and country level), ii) to assess the relevance, cost effectiveness and usefulness of these processes, and iii) to provide recommendations for improving quality assurance processes of evaluations at the decentralized level in UNICEF. This assignment is intended to generate information for the UNICEF evaluation function to use to improve its quality assurance processes and, ultimately, the quality of evaluations as well as their timeliness. This document outlines the scope of the assignment for an individual consultant who will work under the guidance of the Senior Evaluation Specialist for Capacity Support (P5) within the Evaluation Office.

2. BACKGROUND

Enhancing quality of evaluations at the decentralized level is a key objective for the UNICEF Evaluation Office. The Revised UNICEF Evaluation Policy (2018) makes clear that a quality assurance process should be undertaken for terms of reference, inception reports and evaluation reports and carried out by an external expert or staff member with no role in managing the evaluation. Regional offices provide quality assurance for evaluations managed by the country offices, and the Evaluation Office provides such services for those managed by the regional offices.

A quality assessment process, the Global Evaluation Report Oversight System (GEROS), is in place for all final evaluation reports. The assessments are conducted by an external service provider. The Evaluation Office is responsible for ensuring that the results of these assessments are shared with the commissioning office and made available to UNICEF management and the Executive Board. As such, while they reinforce quality for the function as a whole, and provide an independent verification of evaluation quality GEROS is applied ex-post and thus does not serve the purpose of quality assurance even as the evaluation is being undertaken. .

Further accountabilities for quality assurance are outlined in the UNICEF Procedure on the Implementation of the 2018 UNICEF Evaluation Policy. These are:

- Evaluation Office will provide technical guidance for purposes of enhancing the quality of evaluations and related quality assurance processes at all levels of the organization.

- The Evaluation Office should actively support capacity development for staff at all levels of the organization – in technical skills as well as in professional conduct.
- Heads of Offices and Evaluation Specialists should ensure that the provisions of the Evaluation Policy for quality assurance are enforced. In accordance with technical guidance issued by the Evaluation Office, Regional Offices should strengthen quality assurance for evaluations managed by the Country Offices, and the Evaluation Office should do the same for those managed by the Regional Offices.
- The Evaluation Office should also continue to ensure that the system for providing feedback to Offices on the quality of evaluations (the Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System - GEROS) is periodically reviewed and remains credible.

The regional offices currently take various approaches to quality assurance of evaluations. In some regions the Regional Evaluation Adviser assumes full responsibility and works closely with country offices as they plan, design and manage evaluations. Other regions have engaged an external service provider which reviews and provides feedback on draft evaluation reports and, in some cases, the terms of reference and inception reports as well.

3. PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The purpose of this assignment is to provide UNICEF with information about how well its quality assurance processes for evaluation at decentralized levels are working in order to improve these processes. It is hoped the review will foster cross-regional exchange about lessons learned, and assist the Evaluation to institute necessary guidance and capacity support.

The objectives of the assignment include:

- a. Mapping and describing the strengths and weaknesses of QA within the seven regions of UNICEF
- b. Review the extent to which the various QA mechanisms been used by offices in each region have contributed to the improvement of the quality of evaluation products and capacity enhancement in the country and regional offices of each region
- c. Review the current capacity of COs and the RO and to assess whether the QA is actually enhancing this capacity in the QA process, and what the final outcomes are in terms of quality and use of evaluations for all types, from programme to country-led evaluations.
- d. Overall, review the role of the Evaluation Office, Regional Evaluation Advisors and Multi Country Evaluation Specialists in providing required quality assurance services, in accordance with the provisions of the UNICEF evaluation policy.
- e. Based on an analysis of UNICEF's regions and good practices from comparator decentralized evaluation functions, propose options for improved quality assurance processes (with consideration of resource requirements).

This review will not include the quality assessment system (GEROS) which is subject of a separate review. This review is rather aimed at quality assurance, from the planning for an evaluation through the final evaluation report. The review will cover all regions. It will also not include the quality assurance system for corporate evaluations which is the subject of another review.

4. KEY QUESTIONS AND METHODS

Specific questions for examination will be developed jointly between the Evaluation Office and the consultant, with guidance from the regional evaluation advisers. Overall, the main areas of inquiries include the following:

- What practices are most commonly employed for quality assurance at the regional and country level?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of existing QA practices? This will include reviewing the extent to which quality assurance processes change/improve the evaluation deliverables; cost of staff time/cost of external reviewers; feasibility of the various QA processes in the context of objectives of increased evaluation coverage and quality and use, and the roles and responsibilities of the key players in the QA processes. Examine consistency and quality of feedback from QA by UNICEF staff and processes and external mechanisms.
- What quality assurance systems or processes are used by comparator organizations with large decentralized evaluation functions? How do those systems compare to UNICEF's practices?
- What options should UNICEF consider in order to strengthen its quality assurance processes at the decentralized level?

The consultant will develop the approach and methods for this assignment. It will involve a review of the available documentation about QA in each region, key informant interviews and, if necessary, a survey involving all stakeholders within UNICEF as well as external QA service providers. Information is available about the quality of evaluations in the annual meta-analyses which summarize the results of GEROS assessments. It should be noted, however, that the regional contexts vary in the number and type of countries they support and the resources available (human and financial) for evaluation.

6. MANAGEMENT AND CONDUCT

The review will be conducted by an external consultant to be recruited by UNICEF's Evaluation Office (EO). The consultant will operate under the direct supervision of a Senior Evaluation Officer at the EO, supported by an Evaluation Specialist. The Evaluation Office will be responsible for the day-to-day oversight and management of the review.

PROFILE

The review will be conducted by an individual consultant. That consultant is expected to have the following credentials:

- Strong team leadership and management track record and commitment to delivering timely and high-quality products;
- Extensive evaluation systems expertise (at least 10 years) in the management and oversight of decentralized evaluation units of large multi-lateral organizations;
- Extensive evaluation expertise (at least 10 years) of comprehensive scope with strong mixed-

- methods evaluation skills and flexibility in using non-traditional and innovative evaluation methods;
- Familiarity with UNICEF’s programming, policy and advocacy work and experience in evaluating multi-sectoral initiatives would be an asset;
 - Good interpersonal and communication skills; ability to interact with various stakeholders and to concisely express ideas and concepts in written and oral form;

DELIVERABLES

The consultant will be expected to submit:

- An implementation plan for the review inclusive of methods, tools and variables for comparison as well as a workplan and timeline;
- A draft review report inclusive of options for review and discussion within the evaluation function;
- A final review report which takes EO input into consideration.

BUDGET AND TIMING

The review should be carried out between June and September 2019. It is estimated that the consultant could complete the assignment within 35 working days.

ANNEX II - LOGIC MODEL OF REQUISITES TO EVALUATION OF QUALITY

An appropriate Context is necessary for evaluations of quality.

The context conducive to evaluation quality is determined by a culture of learning and accountability, meaning the degree to which information is sought about past performance, the extent to which there is a drive to continuously improve and to be responsible for actions taken, resources spent, and results achieved. Such culture is embedded in tacit norms and behaviour, the understanding of what can and should - or should not – be done. Through a set of values and attitudes supporting evaluative (critical) thinking within an organisation, individuals use information to act; to take higher risks but, also to develop a greater sense of personal accountability and responsibility; and to consult and support each other.

In a macro-framework fostering the quality of evaluation five key factors⁵ are at play. They are:

A Demand for quality evaluation: This is the capability of policy-makers and senior managers to request sound and trustworthy evidence with the aim of using it in strategic decision-making processes.

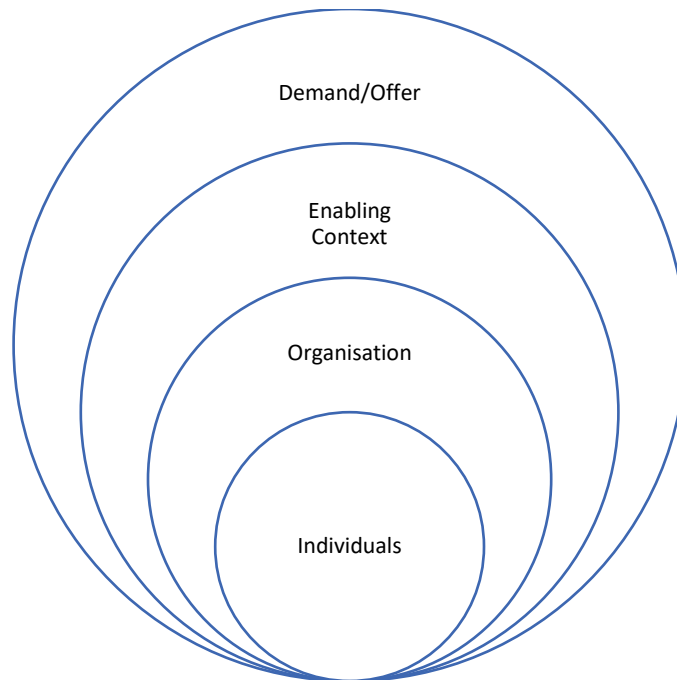
A Supply of quality evaluation: It is the capacity of professional evaluator to provide sound and trustworthy evaluative evidence.

An Enabling Environment that provides a context that fosters (or hinders) the performance and results of organisations and individuals.

A Quality driven Institutional Framework that provides a system and structures to perform and attain results individually as well as collectively as an organisation.

Competent individuals whose knowledge and skills are essential to perform and manage processes and relationships.

⁵ Source: UNICEF, Evalpartners, IOCE (2013) Evaluation and Civil Society Stakeholders' perspectives on National Evaluation Capacity Development



1.1 Capacity to demand and use information from evaluation⁶:

- Capacity within government institutions and civil society organisations to incorporate and use information from evaluation as part of the normal process of business (e.g. capacity to critically gauge evaluative evidence, to access timely evidence etc.).
- Governments and civil society stakeholders are clear about where and how evaluation information can and will be used within government (e.g. planning, policy or programme development, decision-making, budgeting). This can evolve over time.
- Policy-makers, government bodies, and CSOs have an appreciation of evaluation concepts and use of evaluation information.
- Adequate incentives within organizations and the system to ensure that evaluation information is used, and that evaluations report credible information in a timely fashion.
- Reinforces the need within organizations for formal or informal mechanisms and forums for reporting and sharing evaluation information.
- Laws governing access to information would increase transparency and the potential for evaluation information to be made available to the media, civil society among others and facilitate their participation in the national system.
- The technical capacity and infrastructure to undertake evaluation.

⁶ Source: Adapted from: UNEG Task Force on National Evaluation Capacity Development. (2012). National Evaluation Capacity Development: Practical tips on how to strengthen National Evaluation Systems.

1.2 Capacity to supply information from evaluation:

- Availability of skilled personnel to gather, analyze and report on the quality, value and importance of different levels and types of performance of government policies and programmes, including potential partners within the country, such as universities, research institutes, think tanks, among others.
- A national statistical agency to facilitate a national data development strategy and assist ministries and agencies in capturing and storing data.
- Existence of credible and relevant data (disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity, etc.) and information-gathering systems.
- Infrastructure to ensure a systematic, comprehensive and credible approach to evaluation. This would include policies and standards intended to: clarify roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for performance monitoring and evaluation; establish expectations across the system for evaluation, monitoring and timing, and a high level of performance reporting; and, set out quality standards for conducting evaluations.
- Organizational structures to conduct and/or manage evaluation exercises.
- A policy center to provide policy direction, oversight and assistance for the system-wide development of evaluation.

1.3 Enabling Environment⁷: the enabling environment provides a context that fosters (or hinders) the performance and results of individuals and organizations

- Strong evaluation culture:
 - evaluative (critical) thinking;
 - protective environment;
 - managers and other decision-makers value and use evaluation.
- Public administration committed to transparency and managing for results and accountability, through results-based public budgeting and evidence-based policymaking.
- Political will to institutionalize evaluation.
- Existence of adequate information and statistical systems.

⁷ Source: Adapted from EvalPartners, 2010, Moving from policies to results by developing national capacities for country led monitoring and evaluation systems.

- Legislation and/or policies to institutionalize monitoring and evaluation systems.
- Duty bearers, i.e. Governments and national authorities, have capacity and willingness to be accountable for results.
- Rights holders i.e. citizens and CSO, have capacity to demand that policy and programmes are monitored and evaluated.
- National VOPE exists, has the necessary capacities, is recognized and given a consultative role.
- National evaluation standards and norms developed and implemented

1.4 Institutional Level: the institutional framework in which individuals work needs to provide a system and structures to perform and attain results individually as well as collectively as an organization

- Evaluation policy exists and is implemented.
- An evaluation unit with a clearly defined role, responsibilities and an independent place in the institutional structure exists and is functional.
- Quality Assurance system exists and is functional.
- Independence of funding for evaluations.
- Adequate (number & expertise) staffing of the evaluation function.
- System to plan, undertake and report evaluation findings in an independent, credible and useful way exists.
- System to establish a formal management response to the recommendations of evaluations feeding back to policies and programmes, follow-up of implementation, exists.
- Open dissemination of evaluation results.
- Knowledge management systems in support of the evaluation function exist and are used.
- Technical competence for conducting evaluations exists.

1.5 Individual Level: the individual whose knowledge, skills and competences are essential to perform task and manage processes and relationships

- Senior management capacity to:
 - strategically plan evaluations;

- assure the development of relevant and appropriate Terms of Reference for evaluations;
 - manage evaluation for independence and credibility;
 - promote the use of evaluation findings;
 - follow up recommendations.
- At mid-management level, understanding of the role of evaluation as a tool for effectively achieving development results.
 - Identify and support leaders or natural champions.
 - Behavioral independence and professional competences of those who manage and/ or conduct evaluations.
 - Promote capacity development and involvement of a growing number of evaluator.

What is the difference between quality assurance and quality control?

The International Organization for Standardisation (ISO)⁸, an independent, non-governmental organization with a global network of national standards bodies with one member per country has issued ISO 9000 which defines quality assurance and quality control systems.

Quality Assurance is the process which guarantees that the preferred level of quality is fulfilled at each phase of the process. *Quality Control* ensures that the end-product quality is, as per the set standards.

Quality Assurance is proactive focussing on the process, preventing defects. Quality Control is reactive focussing on the end-product ensuring that it meets the standards. Quality Assurance is prevention- based system whereas Quality Control a detecting-based system. The "quality assurance" and "quality control" terms are often used interchangeably. Quality control, however, has its own specific function, and it pertains to the actual fulfillment of the expected quality requirements.

In UNICEF, Quality Assurance is performed by evaluation managers, supported by their hierarchical supervisors, by peers and by reference groups involving stakeholders. Quality Control of the evaluation reports is managed by the Evaluation Office who uses a corporate system, the Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS).

What are the elements of a quality assurance system?

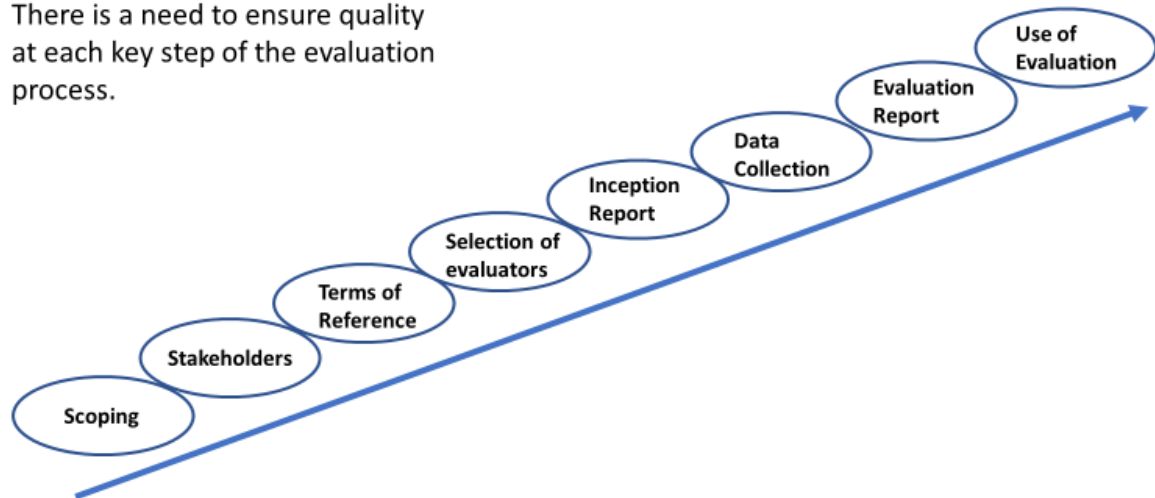
The purpose of a quality assurance system is the maintenance of a desired level of quality, especially by means of attention given to every stage of the process of production of an

⁸ <https://www.iso.org/home.html>

evaluation. In other words, Quality Assurance encompasses the processes and procedures that systematically monitor the different aspects of conducting an evaluation according to professional standards. Quality assurance focus on having a good process to produce evaluations with the quality already built-in, rather than going through an unmonitored production process and trying to “inspect quality” to an evaluation that’s already been finished.

Quality during the evaluation process

There is a need to ensure quality at each key step of the evaluation process.



To have an evaluation of quality, one must ask the right question at the outset.

To have evaluations of quality, one needs to scope well the evaluations so that they are truly used and useful for decision making. There are six lessons learned in this regard:

1. *Be open and keep it simple.* Evaluation must be made public and understandable, so that there is pressure to actually use them.
2. *Where’s the beef?* Do the evaluations contain information that can be used by decision makers? If final conclusions for impact and action cannot be made, can we still learn other lessons in the process?
3. *Timing is everything.* Evaluations should be done and completed at strategic times so that decision makers have the necessary data when they are making decisions. Incomplete but timely information may be more valuable for decision making than conclusive post-mortems.

4. *Make evaluations constructive.* Evaluations are more effective when they are a support to get interventions right rather than as an inquisitional judgment. People must believe in the power of evaluations, so they won't hide 'unfavorable' or 'negative' information during the evaluation process.
5. *Ask the right questions.* When creating evaluations, start by determining what is needed by decision makers. Identify the relevant research questions first, and then methodology and technology can follow.⁹

As well, an evaluability assessment may be the right thing to do.

Stakeholders Involvement

In order to make the evaluation relevant and useful, the involvement of stakeholders is necessary. Their involvement will allow the scoping to respond to their needs. It will open doors to access to information and will facilitate participation for information gathering. Transparency with stakeholders will give credibility and foster rigour of the evaluation process. It will ensure buy-in of the findings and of the improvement measures being proposed. Ultimately, it is the Stakeholders who will make use of the evaluation.

There are various degrees of stakeholder involvement, from discreet consultation with each stakeholder, to open interactive forum including all.

A convenient way of involving stakeholders is to include stakeholder representative in the reference group of the evaluation.

Terms of reference

A Terms of Reference (TOR) is a plan or blueprint outlining the key elements of the purpose, scope, process and products of an evaluation, including management and technical aspects as necessary. Developing a TOR is a critical early step in any evaluation. In the narrowest sense, it is the basis for contractual arrangements with external consultants, though it should first be developed as a means of clarifying expectations, roles and responsibilities among different stakeholders, providing the plan for overall activity, including follow-up. The time and effort spent in preparing a good TOR has big returns in terms of the quality relevance and usefulness of the product.

TOR are important:

For all stakeholders – as they explain the agreed expectations in terms of the parameters and process of the exercise, and are a guide to each stakeholder's specific role;

⁹ <http://blogs.worldbank.org/governance/value-evaluations-asking-right-questions> by Mario Marcel

For the evaluation team – as they ensure that expectations are clear and the objectives are met;

For external and internal teams – as external teams may require more detail on background context and on intended audiences and uses; internal teams may simply need to clarify the parameters of the assignment.

TOR are often developed in stages. Stakeholders will focus on the purpose and evaluation questions. A further developed version is used for recruiting external consultants. It requires more detail on existing information sources, team composition, procedures and products, and may describe methodology and a calendar of activities in broad terms. The TOR may then be further refined once an evaluation team is on board, with a careful review of the purpose and key questions and corresponding methodology.

A key reference to ensure the quality of Terms of reference is the guide *UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Terms of Reference (Updated June 2017)*

Selection of the evaluator

If you hire professionals, typically either a consulting firm or a group from a university, they'll have ways of doing research, prejudices about what an evaluation should cover, and interests, all of which may or may not coincide with what you need or want. Stakeholder and in-house evaluator also, depending upon the individuals involved and the groups they represent, will have their own prejudices, interests, and needs which will influence how they view the evaluation process and the evaluation itself. The same goes for volunteers who might donate their time to conduct or assist with an evaluation. It is important to select people whose agenda matches your own, or who will put their own agendas aside and respond directly to the needs and desires of the organization. Only then will you have an evaluation that best serves your purposes.

SOME CHARACTERISTICS TO LOOK FOR AN EVALUATOR

Willingness to leave one's own agenda

Often researchers, particularly those attached to universities, may have their own reasons for embarking on an evaluation. It may fit into a doctoral dissertation or a book that a professor is writing, or a piece of long-term research that will eventually be published. They may also have very strong prejudices about what kind of research they want to use, or what they expect to find, and a need to prove their prejudices correct. And they may have issues about power and about their standing in relation to that of members of a planning team or organizational staff. If the researchers' needs mesh perfectly with yours, then there's no problem. But if they don't quite fit, there can be a very serious problem. If you're paying for a service, you should get what you're paying for, and not simply what the researcher wants to give you. It's important to be clear about this on all sides at the beginning, and to make sure by writing it into a contract or through some other formal mechanism that the professionals are willing to do what meets your needs, not what meets theirs.

Ability to communicate with a broad range of people

Evaluator will have to deal with people from all walks of life, of all political, religious, and philosophical persuasions, and probably of many ethnic, language, and racial groups. If they are to gather accurate information, they will have to be perceived as trustworthy by all those groups and will have to be able to generate a certain level of comfort with everyone.

Cultural sensitivity

In multi-cultural contexts, mutual respect, understanding and acceptance of how others see the world is crucial to the functioning of evaluator. Do they understand, or are they willing to learn to understand, the cultures of others? Assess the candidates' prior experiences working with the sector and populations you serve and their understanding of the socioeconomic, demographic, historical, cultural and political factors that shape the conditions in which the strategy, initiative or program is operating. This means ensuring culturally competent evaluator - those who understand how various groups perceive an intervention, communicate their views and experiences. Culturally competent evaluators are particularly effective because they: a) Keep an open mind. B) Avoid making assumptions about a group of people. C) Understand how their own cultural background, biases and worldviews could affect their interactions with program participants and other stakeholders. d) Gather appropriate data to draw conclusions by using methods that are respectful of other cultures. v Look for candidates whose experience suggests the capability to devise and manage a variety of evaluation designs and tasks, and who can clearly articulate which design is most appropriate for your effort.

Ability to treat everyone with the same degree of respect

How evaluator approach people reflect on UNICEF. If they don't treat everyone respectfully, they're not going to get accurate--or any--information and they're going to complicate UNICEF relationship with Partners and stakeholders.

Absolute commitment to keeping all individuals' information confidential

Whether evaluators are paid professionals or not, for ethical, practical, and legal reasons, it is necessary to guarantee that any information gathered in the course of an evaluation will be kept confidential. This will help evaluators obtain more accurate data. It will protect the evaluators and the organization from lawsuits that could be brought by individuals injured in some way by the information they provided.

Commitment to the evaluation process

This means trying to do the best evaluation possible, with an eye toward its actual usefulness for the organization. Commitment means believing enough in the process to take the evaluation seriously and use it to improve the policy, strategy, program, and project.

Ability to understand the purpose of the evaluation

It's important to understand not only what the evaluation is supposed to assess, but also how its form and purpose are related.

Willingness to listen and learn

This covers a wide spectrum of people and behaviors. It also includes everyone's being aware that they have things to learn about the process, one another, and evaluation in general, and, by the same token, that they have valuable knowledge, skills, and information to contribute.

Ability to work in a group

This can be a concern regarding groups that encompass several cultures and classes.

Knowledge of different kinds of evaluation techniques

Evaluators must have the capability to devise and manage a variety of evaluation designs, and to clearly articulate which design is most appropriate. They use both quantitative (numbers and statistics) and qualitative (facts, stories, anecdotes, analysis of situations and events, etc.) research, and know when each is appropriate.

Ability to do Quality Assurance

External reviewer firms must have own internal Quality Assurance processes

Past performance

Have they done evaluation before? What kinds of techniques have they used? Do they have good references? Can you see examples of past evaluations they've done?

In summary

The individual or team you select to conduct the evaluation will do much to determine the usefulness of the evaluation itself. If you work with professionals, you need to consider their credentials, experience, and level of expertise. Whether you choose professional evaluators, volunteers, or some combination of the two, you need to think carefully about how their needs and interests fit in with those of UNICEF, about the range and quality of their communication skills, about their willingness to work as partners, and about their fit with one another. Once you've put together a good team, you are well on your way to carrying out an accurate and valuable evaluation.

Inception Report

An inception report of an evaluation is prepared by an evaluator after an initial review of relevant documentation. It sets out the conceptual framework to be used in an evaluation, the key evaluation questions and methodology, including information on data sources and collection, sampling and key indicators. The inception report also includes a timeline for the evaluation and drafts of data collection instruments.

The inception report describes the object of evaluation and states the purpose and scope of the evaluation. It will address the evaluation framework; discuss the overall approach and the risks and limitations. The evaluation methodology will be specified. The data collection and data analysis methods will be explained. The data sources will be presented including the sampling methods. An evaluation matrix will show how the evaluation questions will be

answered, using what sources of information. A work plan will be detailed, together with the matrix of responsibility. It will give a timeline and discuss logistics for the conduct of the evaluation. In appendices there will be the draft data collection instruments.

A reference for inception reports is the *Guidelines for Inception Reports* by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2008, March).

Data Collection

There are many ways to collect data, some more costly and time-consuming than others. Therefore, before starting collecting data, it is imperative to consider the following questions:

What are the evaluation questions? Which methods will help answer them and provide the most reliable and valid data? Who is providing the data? Who are the potential respondents? How many respondents are needed? How much time is budgeted for data collection and analysis? When is the right time to collect the data? What is the evaluation budget? How much of it is for data collection and analysis versus reporting and dissemination of findings?

Depending on the data required to answer the evaluation questions, quantitative methods such as surveys or assessments could be right. Or qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups might suit better the needs for information.

Evaluation Report

A key reference to ensure the quality of Evaluation Report is the guide UNICEF-Adapted UNEG Evaluation Reports Standards (Updated June 2017) It highlights the following questions:

- Is the report well structured, logical, clear and complete?
- Does the report present a clear and full description of the 'object' of the evaluation?
- Are the evaluation's purpose, objectives and scope fully explained?
- Does the report present a transparent description of the design and methods used in the evaluation that clearly explains how the evaluation addresses the evaluation criteria, yields answer to the evaluation questions, and achieves evaluation purposes?
- Do the findings respond directly to the evaluation criteria and questions detailed in the scope and objectives section of the report; and are they based on evidence derived from data collection and analysis methods described in the methodology section of the report?
- Do conclusions present reasonable judgements based on findings and substantiated by evidence and provide insights pertinent to the object and purpose of the evaluation?

- Are recommendations relevant to the object and purpose of the evaluation, are they supported by evidence and conclusions, and were they developed with involvement of relevant stakeholders?

Use of evaluation

Recommendations are usually linked to the concept of utility as they are used for improving projects, programmes, policy or strategy. Recommendations are intended for use as a basis for management decisions to improve performance, results or impact. Recommendations are made to suit the needs of the decision-makers that will be using them. As a result, recommendations in a mid-term evaluation can look quite different to those in an evaluation of an intervention that is close to its end.

The United Nations Evaluation Group's (UNEG) created a checklist of expectation and requirements to improve the quality and utility of evaluation recommendations. The guide entitled *Improved Quality of Evaluation Recommendations Checklist* was published in June 2018.

Four main areas affect a recommendation's development and ultimately its use. These are: a) the process of formulating recommendations; b) the structure of the recommendations; c) the content of the recommendations; and d) the implementation and follow-up of the recommendations.

ANNEX III – KEY QUESTIONS AND DATA COLLECTION MATRIX

| Key Questions | Sources of information | | | | Questionnaire |
|--|------------------------|------------------|-----------|------------|---------------|
| | Documentary review | UNICEF documents | GEROS | Interviews | |
| What practices are most commonly employed for quality assurance at the regional and country level? | | XX | | XX | XX |
| What are the strengths and weaknesses of existing QA practices? | | | | XX | |
| To what extent quality assurance processes change/improve the evaluation deliverables? | | | XX | XX | XX |
| What are the costs of staff time/costs of external reviewers? | | XX | | XX | XX |
| What is the feasibility of the various QA processes in the context of objectives of increased evaluation coverage and quality and use? | | | | XX | |
| What are the roles and responsibilities of the key players in the QA processes? | | XX | | XX | XX |
| What is the consistency and quality of feedback from QA by UNICEF staff and processes and external mechanisms? | | | | XX | XX |
| What quality assurance systems or processes are used by comparator organizations with large decentralized evaluation functions? | XX | | | | XX |
| How do comparator organizations' systems compare to UNICEF's practices? | XX | XX | | XX | XX |
| What options should UNICEF consider in order to strengthen its quality assurance processes at the decentralized level? | | | | XX | XX |

ANNEX IV - LIST OF INFORMANTS INTERVIEWED

From the Regional Offices

| | | |
|-------------------|-------|--|
| Lori BELL | ECARO | Europe and Central Asia Regional Office |
| Samuel BICKEL | ROSA | South Asia Regional Office |
| Mirella HERNANI | LACRO | Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office |
| Urs NAGEL | ESARO | Eastern and Southern African Regional Office |
| Riccardo POLASTRO | EAPRO | East Asia and Pacific Regional Office |
| Robert STRYK | MENA | Middle East and North Africa Regional Office |
| Michele TARSILLA | WCARO | West and Central Africa Regional Office |

From the Evaluation Office

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Denis JOBIN | Senior Evaluation Specialist |
| Mariel KISLIG | Evaluation Specialist |
| Kathleen LETSHABO | Evaluation Specialist |
| Lovemore MHURIYENGWE | Knowledge Management Specialist |
| Jane MWANGI | Evaluation Specialist |
| Ada OCAMPO | Senior Evaluation Specialist |
| Laura OLSEN | Evaluation Specialist |
| Beth Ann PLOWMAN | Senior Evaluation Specialist |
| Fabio SABATINI | Senior Adviser – Research & Evaluation |
| Adrian SHIKWE | Evaluation Specialist |
| Tina TORDJMAN-NEBE | Evaluation Specialist |

Other informants

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Josef VAESSEN | Adviser on evaluation methods – World Bank |
| Anne-Marie DAWSON | Evaluation Specialist – Rater - UNIVERSALIA |

Annex V - List of UNICEF officers who answered the questionnaire

| | | |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Afghanistan | Ivan Ssenkubuge | Evaluation & Research Specialist |
| Algeria | Karima Ghezali | Monitoring & Evaluation Officer |
| Angola | Carlos Javier Rodríguez Cuéllar | Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist |
| Argentina | SebastianWaisgrais Antonio Canaviri | Especialista en Inclusión Social y Monitoreo Oficial de Monitoreo y Evaluación |
| Azerbaijan | Tamerlan Rajabov | Child Rights Systems Monitoring Specialist |
| Bangladesh | Mekonnen Woldegorgis | Chief, Social Policy, Evaluation, Analytics and Research |
| Barbados | Alexandru Nartea | Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist |
| Belize | Paulette Wade | Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist |
| Benin | Armand Spéro Koudoukpo | Monitoring & Evaluation Officer |
| Bhutan | Dechen Zagmo | Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer |
| Botswana | Gape R. Machao | Monitoring & Evaluation Officer |
| Brazil | Boris Diechtiareff | Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist |
| Bulgaria | Elena Atanassova | Child Rights Monitoring Specialist |
| Burkina Faso | Chrystian R. Solofo-Dimby | Chief Social Policy, Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation |
| | Ademonkoun Rodolphe Missinhoun | Spécialiste Suivi-Evaluation |
| Burundi | Lucia Di Rosa | Planning & Monitoring Specialist |
| Cambodia | Juanita Vasquez-Escallon, PhD | Evaluation Specialist |
| Cameroon | Serge Zanga | Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist |
| China | Yan Fang | Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist |
| Central African Republic | Kobehe Guillaume TOUTOU | Chief, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation |
| Comoros | Ali Mohamed Ahamada | Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer |
| Congo (Rép. Dém.) | Gyslaine Nyota Buunda | Monitoring and Evaluation Officer |
| Costa Rica | Raquel Barrientos | Monitoring and Evaluation Officer |
| Côte d'Ivoire | Soukeynatou Fall | Chief, Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Croatia | Marijana Šalinović | Child Rights Monitoring Officer |
| Cuba | María Julia Moreno Castañeda | Oficial de Monitoreo y Evaluación |
| Dominican Republic | Felipe Díaz Soto | Oficial de Monitoreo y Evaluación |
| Eastern Caribbean Area: Barbados, Antigua & Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts & Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago; United Kingdom Overseas Territories: Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, Turks and Caicos Islands | Alexandru Nartea | Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist |
| Ecuador | Paúl Guerrero | Monitoring and Evaluation Officer |
| El Salvador | Marcela Pleites | Monitoring and Evaluation Officer |
| Ethiopia | Vincenzo Vinci PhD | Social Policy Specialist |
| Ghana | Mayeso Zenengeya | Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist |
| Guinea Bissau | Albert Ewodo Ekani | Chief, Social Policy and Monitoring & Evaluation |
| Guyana | Michael Gillis | Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist |
| Haiti | Roots Bondowe Muhindo Virihi | Monitoring & Evaluation Officer |
| India | Nikola Balvin, PsyD Maaïke Bijker | Research & Evaluation Specialist Research & Evaluation Specialist |
| Indonesia | Peter Leth | Chief, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation |
| Jordan | Yumi Matsuda | Chief, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation |
| Korea | Silas Rapold | Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist |
| Kyrgyzstan | Muktar Minbaev | Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer |
| | Tolgonai Berdikeyeva | National Programme Analyst on Population and Development |
| Lao People's Democratic Republic | Beate Dastel | Deputy Representative |
| Lebanon | Georges Haddad | Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist |
| Lesotho | Mohammed Shafiqul Islam | Chief, Social Policy, Monitoring & Evaluation |
| Liberia | Shailesh Kumar | Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist |
| Madagascar | Ndriakita Solonionjanirina (Nirina) | Research & Evaluation Specialist |
| Malawi | Emmanuel Saka | Research and Evaluation Specialist |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Malaysia | Fairuz Alia Jamaluddin | Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer |
| Mali | Christine Gaignebet | Chief, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation |
| Mexico | Eva Prado | Monitoring & Evaluation Officer |
| Moldova | Elena Laur | M&E / Child Rights Monitoring Specialist |
| Montenegro | Marija Novkovic | Social Policy Officer |
| Morocco | Rachid Amri | Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation Officer |
| Myanmar | Juanita Vasquez-Escallon, PhD | Evaluation Specialist |
| Namibia | Ernst Mbangula | Research and Evaluation Specialist |
| Nepal | Sevara Hamzaeva | Evaluation Specialist |
| Nicaragua | Fernando Jambrina | Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist |
| North Macedonia | Marija Mokrova | Child Rights Monitoring Specialist |
| Pacific: Cook Islands, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu | Abdulaziz Dada | Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist |
| Pakistan | Mussarrat Youssuf | Research and Evaluation Specialist |
| Panama | Anilena Mejia | Monitoring & Evaluation Officer |
| Paraguay | Andrés Osorio | Oficial de Políticas Sociales y M&E |
| Philippines | Martin Porter, | Chief, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation |
| Romania | Eduard Petrescu | Programme Specialist |
| Rwanda | Saptono Priyadi | Chief, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation |
| Senegal | Mouhamadou FALL | Social Policy Specialist |
| Serbia | Ana Prodanović | Child Rights Monitoring Specialist |
| Somalia | Jeremy Shusterman | Chief, Planning Monitoring and Evaluation |
| Sri Lanka | Sajidt De Mel | Planning & Monitoring Specialist |
| Swaziland | Nelisiwe Dlamini | Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist |
| Thailand | Kontee Nuchsuwan, Ph.D. Shohrat Orazov | Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist |

| | | |
|---------------------|--|---|
| Timor-Leste | Emmanuelle Collet | Chief, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation and Social Policy |
| Togo | Hanu Dometo Beatrice Vossah-Mooh | Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist |
| Turkmenistan | Siraj Mahmudlu | Deputy Representative |
| Uganda | Lotte van't End Jonathan Gamusi | Programme Officer Emergencies Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist |
| Ukraine | Natalia Sitnikova, Ph.D. | Child Rights Monitoring Specialist |
| Uruguay. | Dario Fuletti | Especialista en Evaluación y Monitoreo |
| Viet Nam | Ngo Thi Quynh Hoa | Chief, Planning Monitoring and Evaluation |
| Zambia | Zodwa Dlamini-Mthethwa | Chief, Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation |

ANNEX VI - INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

UNICEF Review of Quality Assurance Systems for Evaluation at the Decentralized Level Interview Guide

1. Purpose of the Review

The Review commissioned by UNICEF Evaluation Office will:

- i) document the various quality assurance processes for evaluations at the decentralized (regional and country level),
- ii) assess the relevance, cost effectiveness and usefulness of these processes, and
- iii) provide recommendations for improving quality assurance processes of evaluations at the decentralized level in UNICEF.

This Review intends to generate information for the UNICEF evaluation function to use to improve its quality assurance processes and, ultimately, the quality of evaluations as well as their timeliness. It aims at quality assurance, from the planning for an evaluation through the final evaluation report. It does not include the quality assessment system (GEROS) which was subject of a separate review nor does it include the quality assurance system for corporate evaluations, also subject of another review.

2. Objectives of the Review

The objectives of the Review include:

- a. Mapping and describing the strengths and weaknesses of QA within the seven regions of UNICEF
- b. Review the extent to which the various QA mechanisms being used by offices in each region have contributed to the improvement of the quality of evaluation products and capacity enhancement in the country and regional offices of each region
- c. Review the current capacity of COs and the RO and to assess whether the QA is actually enhancing this capacity in the QA process, and what the final outcomes are in terms of quality and use of evaluations for all types, from programme to country-led evaluations.
- d. Overall, review the role of the Evaluation Office, Regional Evaluation Advisors and Multi Country Evaluation Specialists in providing required quality assurance services, in accordance with the provisions of the UNICEF evaluation policy.
- e. Based on an analysis of UNICEF's regions and good practices from comparator decentralized evaluation functions, propose options for improved quality assurance processes, with consideration of resource requirements.

Main Questions

1. What practices are commonly employed for quality assurance at the regional and country levels?
2. What are the reference documents used for doing quality assurance?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of existing QA practices in the Region?
4. To what extent quality assurance processes change/improve the evaluation deliverables?
5. Has quality assurance been used and is useful for evaluation capacity enhancement?
6. What are the staff time required for quality assurance systems and the cost of external reviewers?
7. What is the feasibility of QA processes in the context of objectives of increased evaluation coverage and quality and use?
8. What are the roles and responsibilities of the key players in the QA processes?
 - a. Which staff should be in charge of the quality assurance function?
 - b. What competencies and skills are required for quality assurance?
9. What is the consistency and quality of feedback from QA by UNICEF staff and external mechanisms?
10. Are current UNICEF quality assurance policies, guidelines and tools known and being used in the Region?
11. What quality assurance systems or processes are used by comparator organizations with large decentralized evaluation functions? How do those systems compare to UNICEF's practices?
12. What options should UNICEF consider in order to strengthen its quality assurance processes at the decentralized level?

ANNEX VII – QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO COUNTRY OFFICES

UNICEF Review of Quality Assurance Systems for Evaluation at the Country Level

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Purpose of the Review

The Review commissioned by UNICEF Evaluation Office will:

- i) document the various quality assurance processes for evaluations at the central, regional and country levels,
- ii) assess the relevance, cost effectiveness and usefulness of the quality assurance processes, and
- iii) provide recommendations for improving quality assurance processes of evaluations in UNICEF.

This Review intends to generate information for the UNICEF evaluation function to use to improve its quality assurance processes and, ultimately, the quality of evaluations as well as their timeliness. It aims at quality assurance, from the planning for an evaluation up to the final evaluation report. It does not include the quality assessment system (GEROS) which was subject of a separate review.

2. Objectives of the Review

The objectives of the Review are to:

- a. Map and describe the strengths and weaknesses of Quality Assurance within UNICEF;
- b. Review the extent to which the various quality assurance mechanisms being used by Country offices contribute to the improvement of the quality of evaluation products and capacity enhancement in the Country Offices;
- c. Review the current capacity of Country Offices to assess whether quality assurance is enhancing the final evaluation outcomes in terms of quality and use;
- d. Review the role of the Evaluation Office, Regional Evaluation Advisors and Multi Country Evaluation Specialists in providing required quality assurance support services, in accordance with the provisions of the UNICEF evaluation policy;

- e. Based on an analysis of the situation in UNICEF Country Offices and good practices from comparator decentralized evaluation functions, propose options for improved quality assurance processes.

QUESTIONS

1. What processes are commonly used for evaluation quality assurance in your Country Office?
2. What are the reference documents used for doing quality assurance?
3. To what extent quality assurance processes improve the evaluation deliverables?
4. Has quality assurance been useful for evaluation capacity enhancement?
5. What is the staff time required for quality assurance systems? What is the cost of external reviewers?
6. What are the roles of the key contributor to evaluation quality assurance?
 - a. Which staff is in charge of the quality assurance function?
 - b. What competencies and skills are required for quality assurance?
7. What is the consistency and quality of feedback for quality assurance by UNICEF Regional staff and external mechanisms?
8. Are current UNICEF quality assurance policies, guidelines and tools known and being used in the Country Office?
9. What quality assurance systems or processes are used by comparator UN organizations with large decentralized evaluation functions? How do those systems compare to UNICEF's practices?
10. What options should UNICEF consider in order to strengthen its quality assurance processes at the Country level?

ANNEX VIII - LIST OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

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GEF (2009) *The ROTI Handbook - Towards Enhancing the Impacts of Environmental Projects*

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UNDP (2014) *Guidance for Conducting Mid-Term Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects*

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UNDP (2011) *A companion guide to the handbook on planning monitoring and evaluating for development results for programme units and evaluator*

UNDP (2009) *Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results*

UNEG (2018) *Improved Quality of Evaluation Recommendations Checklist*

UNEG (2016) *Norms and Standards for Evaluation*

UNEG (2016) UNEG Decentralized Evaluation Interest Group – *Presentation*

UNEG (2015) *Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations*

UNEG (2010) *UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports*

UN ESCAP (2007) *Monitoring and Evaluation Framework*

UNESCO (2008) *Guidelines for Inception Reports*

UNFPA (2019) *Evaluation Handbook -How to Design and Conduct a Country Programme Evaluation at UNFPA*

UNFPA (2016) *Evaluation Quality Assessment Grid Template*

UNFPA (2016) *Explanatory notes for UNFPA Evaluation Quality Assessment Grid*

UNFPA (2012) *Quality Assessment of UNFPA Decentralized Country Programme Evaluations*

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UNICEF (2019) *External Review of UNICEF’s Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS)* Associates for International Management Services (AIMS), UNICEF Evaluation Office, New York

UNICEF (2019) *GEROS Meta-Analysis 2016-2018: An Independent Review of UNICEF Evaluation Report Quality and Selected Trends from 2016-2018*

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UNICEF (2016) *UNICEF Geros Meta-Analysis 2015*, An independent review of UNICEF evaluation report quality and trends, 2009-2015 by ImpactReady

UNICEF (2015) *GEROS Global Meta-Evaluation 2014*

Other Reports concerning Geros

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GEROS – Assessments/ Evaluation Reports EAPR (2018)

GEROS – Assessments/ Evaluation Reports ECAR/CEE/CIS (2018)

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GEROS – Assessments/Evaluation Reports HQ (2018)

GEROS – Assessments/Evaluation Reports LACRO (2018)

GEROS – Assessments/Evaluation Reports MENA (2018)

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