



EVALUATION MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Guidance for UNICEF Staff

unicef 
Evaluation Office

Evaluation Management Response Guidance

Version 2.1

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May 2020

Evaluation Management Response
Guidance

- UNICEF offices must prepare a formal management response to evaluations.
- This document sets out guidance on how to do it.
 - The Evaluation Management Response (EMR) is required by UNICEF Evaluation Policy and Executive Board decisions.
 - It is the main formal way of ensuring that evaluation evidence is used to improve UNICEF programmes and policies.
 - Better policies and programmes contribute to achieving the UNICEF mission and mandate
- This guidance applies to offices at all levels: HQ, EO, Regional Offices (ROs), and Country offices (COs)

Contents



Click on the hyperlink
to access each section.

- [Background to the Evaluation Management Response \(EMR\)](#)
- [The process of an evaluation management response](#)
- [Identifying what to respond to, and how to respond](#)
- [6 Stages of the Evaluation Management Response](#)
 - [STAGE 1 Terms of Reference](#)
 - [STAGE 2 Evaluation Recommendations](#)
 - [STAGE 3 Developing the Response](#)
 - [STAGE 4 Registering in the Global Tracking System](#)
 - [STAGE 5 Implementation and Monitoring](#)
 - [STAGE 6 Global Tracking and Verification](#)
- [UNICEF Evaluation Management Response Template](#)
- [Contacts](#)

May 2020

BACKGROUND TO THE EVALUATION MANAGEMENT RESPONSE (EMR)

The Evaluation Management Response in UNICEF

Strategic Plan 2018-2021

corporate commitments and performance indicators include:

E1.a.4. Percentage of agreed actions responding to evaluation recommendations which are completed after 12 months

- The Evaluation Management Response (EMR) is the main process in UNICEF for tracking the use of evaluations.
- The full evaluation management response explains the concrete commitments of decision-makers in UNICEF to act on the recommendations, findings and lessons of evaluations.
- Finalised Evaluation Management Responses should be treated as public documents.
- In 2016 the UNICEF Evaluation Office undertook a detailed assessment of knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding the evaluation management response.
- It recommended building on the existing system to: (1) increase its usability, (2) strengthen organisational accountability, and (3) introduce support to learning and knowledge management.
- This guidance is part of the response to those recommendations.

- Main changes from the previous version of the guidance include: (1) introduction of a 2 year time limit for the EMR, (2) a revised template introducing 'action steps' to disaggregate the response to each recommendation, (3) clarifying roles and responsibilities, including for verification of completed actions by EO and Regional Evaluation Advisors.

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The value of a good quality Evaluation Management Response



- The purpose of evaluation in UNICEF is to serve the mission of the organisation by informing decision-making, engaging stakeholders, ensuring accountability, and supporting learning.
- The mission of UNICEF is mandated by the UN General Assembly: to advocate for the protection of children’s rights, to help meet their basic needs, and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential.
- Evaluation results are of maximum value to the mission of UNICEF when stakeholders act upon them.
- The logic of the Evaluation Management Response (EMR) is to strengthen the use of evaluation by UNICEF management and, to the extent possible, its partners, thus fostering greater ownership over the process of change and ultimately ensuring accountability for results.
- A clear, consensual, realistic, and concrete EMR makes it easier and more likely that management commitments can, and will, be implemented and tracked.

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Elements and outcomes of the EMR

Management commitment to learning, accountability and improvement from evaluation is required to elevate the Evaluation Management Response above a 'symbolic exercise'.



Process

- Increase stakeholder and management engagement and buy-in
- Facilitate in-depth dialogue about evaluation results
- Support culture of follow-up to evaluation

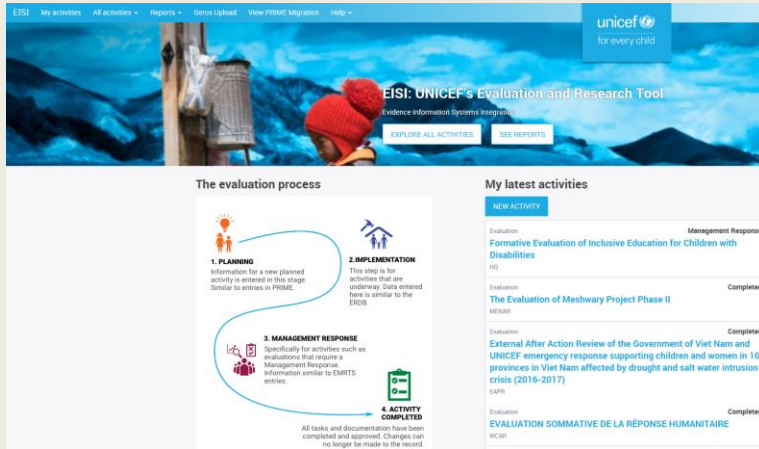


Product

- Provide a public declaration of management commitments
- Provide a roadmap for evaluation use
- Enable tracking and reporting of evaluation use for accountability

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Links to GEROS



The Evidence Information System Integration (EISI) includes links to connect each evaluation report with the GEROS Evaluation Quality Assessment (EQA) and the Evaluation Management Response (MR).

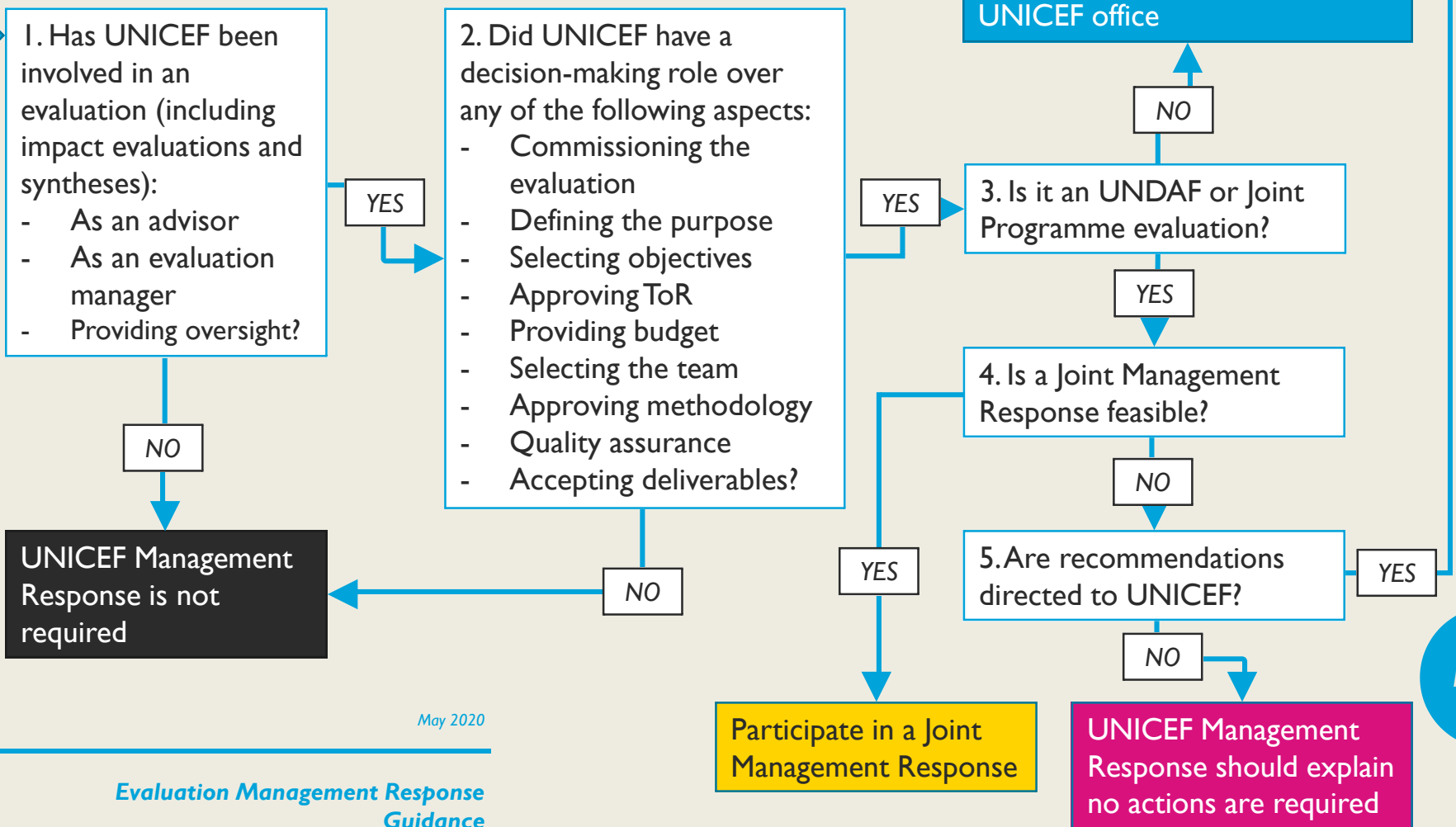
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- All completed evaluations are independently quality rated by a firm external to UNICEF, once the evaluation is uploaded to the Evidence Information System Integration (EISI)
- Offices that upload their completed evaluation onto Evidence Information System Integration (EISI) within 15 days of receiving the completed report, should receive the results of the evaluation quality assessment with 3 weeks remaining to complete the EMR.
- The GEROS Evaluation quality assessment (EQA) can help the office to be confident in the quality of different aspects of the evaluation report, such as methods, findings, and recommendations.
- The production of an EMR within the required timeframe does not depend on GEROS being available. Where a GEROS review is not available, the Office (and partners) should establish their own view of the evaluation quality based on UNICEF standards for the process and report.

When and who should conduct and report on an EMR

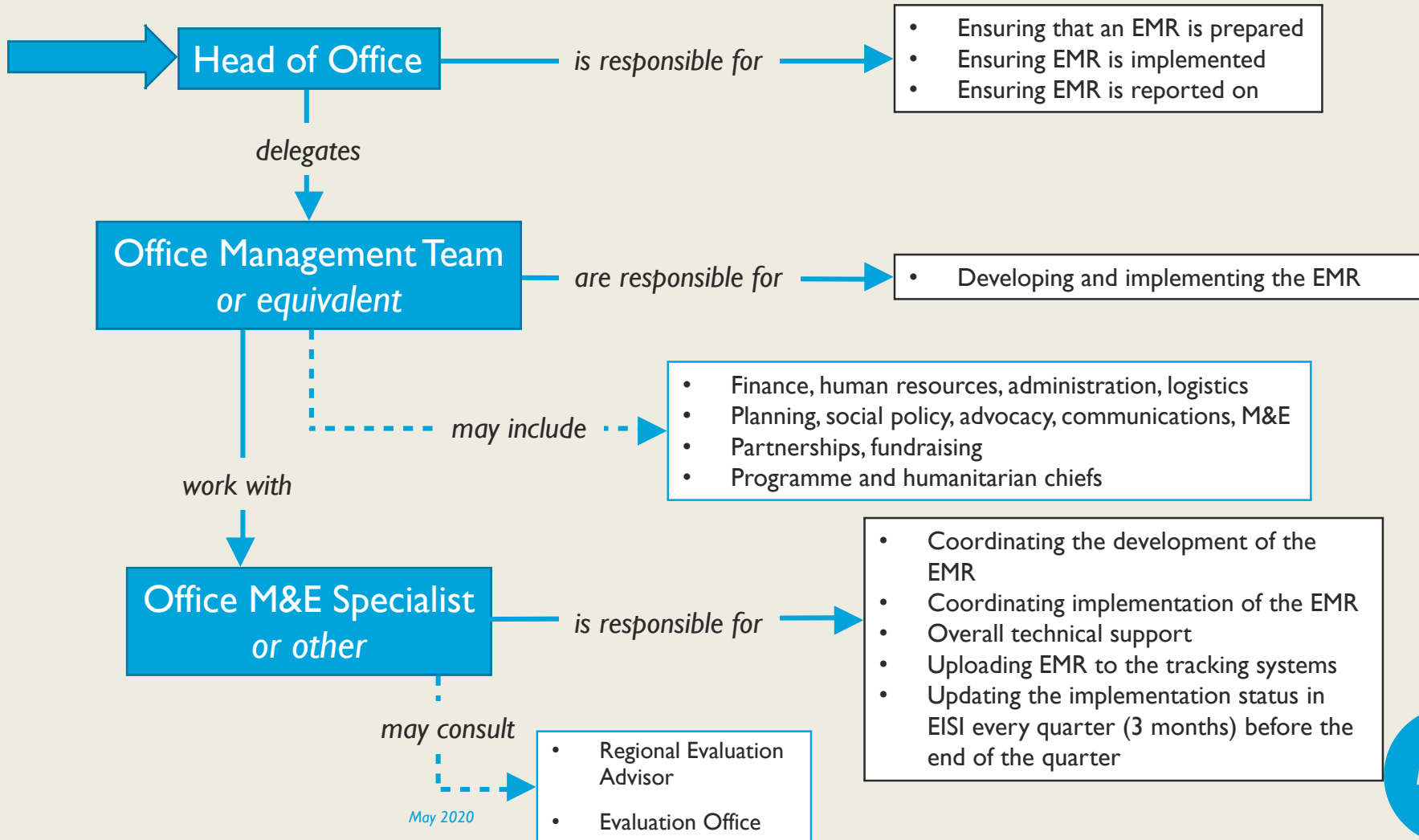
THE PROCESS OF AN EVALUATION MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

When is an Evaluation Management Response required?



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Roles and responsibilities



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Characteristics of a good EMR process

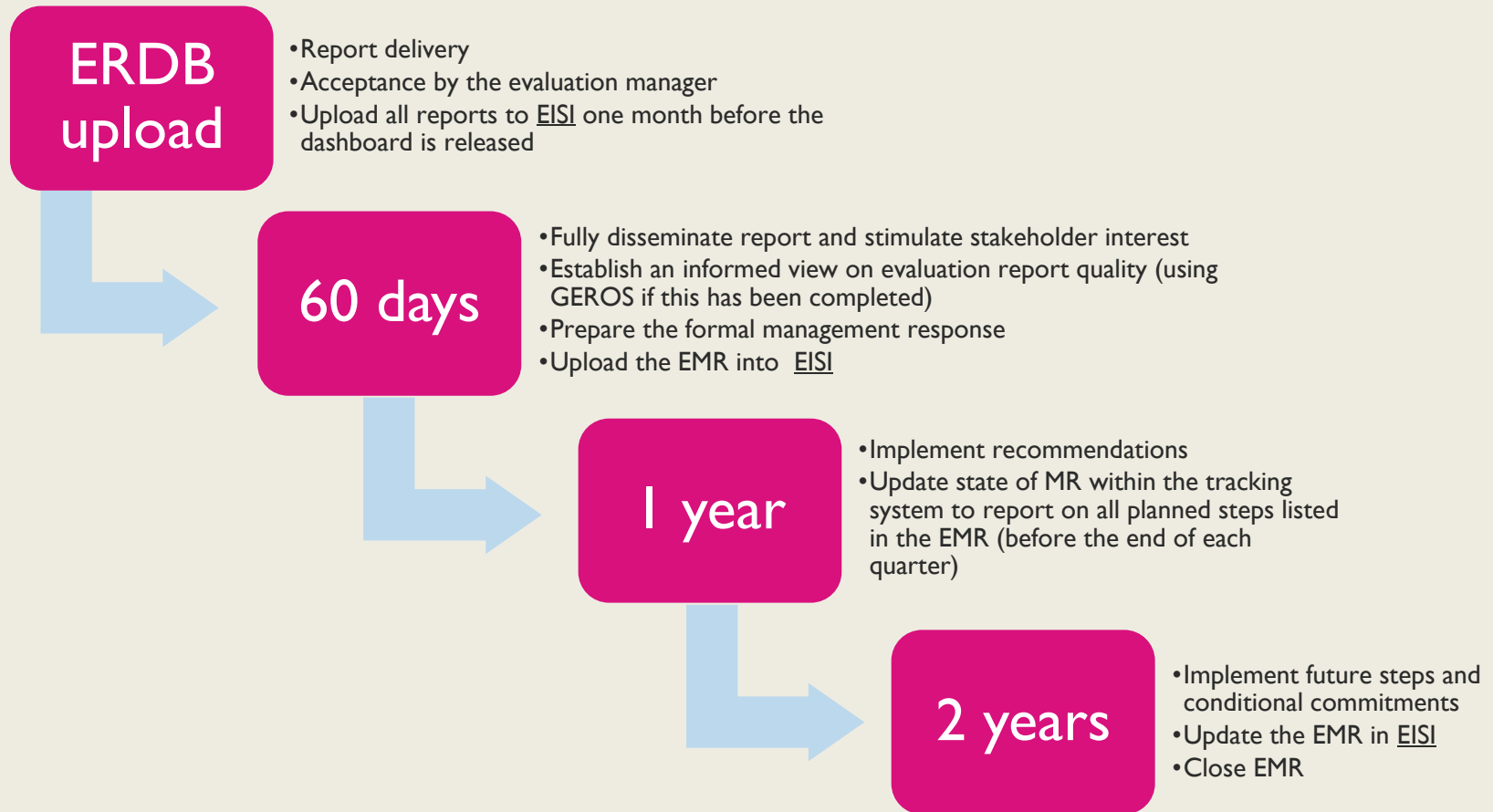


- *The timeline for agreeing and uploading the formal Evaluation Management Response (EMR) is 60 days after the report has been submitted.*

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- It is important that the process of developing the Evaluation Management Response includes key stakeholders meeting together to:
 - Consider all the main findings and conclusions of the evaluation
 - Indicate the extent to which management agrees with the recommendations in the evaluation report that relate to the stakeholders making the EMR
 - Develop a written action-plan of steps, responsibilities and resources to implement accepted recommendations
 - Implement and monitor the planned actions
- In some cases, it might be possible to include developing and monitoring the EMR in existing national or multi-agency processes.
 - This can support national ownership
 - In such cases, flexibility on the timeline for the EMR is possible to account for the timing of existing processes.
 - However, immediate concrete actions and future commitments by UNICEF should still be included within the 60-day window; the EMR can then be updated once the wider consultation has been completed

EMR timeline



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Verification of actions taken

EMR data is reported to the Board, the Global Evaluation Committee and the Regional Management Teams.

EO generally determines the completion rates by monitoring the self-declarations made by the offices. This can be augmented by targeted requests to prove the actions (verification).

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- EO and Regional Evaluation Advisors (coordinating with sector advisors) can undertake a periodic random sampling of actions taken to see if the completion rates agree with the self-declaration.
- UNICEF offices must be able to provide evidence that reported actions have indeed been undertaken, or are having the effect claimed.
- In addition to providing support, the Evaluation Office and the Regional Evaluation Advisors are responsible for verifying that actions have been taken as reported.
- To assist in this role, the Evaluation Office and Regional Evaluation Advisors can
 - require the development of an EMR
 - request a tracking update;
 - verify the reported actions.
- There is space in the EMR format for evidence to be included that supports the verification process. This should be entered by the UNICEF office responsible for the EMR.
 - Additional evidence can be requested on specific actions by the EO or the Regional Evaluation Advisor.
 - If adequate evidence is not available, then an action step can be restated as ‘underway’ rather than ‘complete’; until the requested evidence is provided.

Involving stakeholders and responding to recommendations

15

IDENTIFYING WHAT TO RESPOND TO, AND HOW TO RESPOND

Identifying what to respond to



RECOMMENDATIONS

- The UNICEF Evaluation Policy requires offices to respond to recommendations placed in the evaluation report.
- In cases of a very large number of recommendations, the EMR can limit the definition of action steps to the 10 most significant recommendations.
- In these cases, the overall response (EMR form) must explain that action steps have not been included for all recommendations; and provide a detailed justification for why this was done and how the recommendations were selected.

KEY FINDINGS AND LESSONS

- Where explicit recommendations do not cover findings and/or lessons that the office determines to be of significant ‘importance, additional responses can be included by the management.
- In effect, the office is adding its own recommendations. In such cases, only the planned actions/steps need to be stated in the EMR.

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Dealing with different types of evaluations

| | Examples | Adapting the EMR |
|-------------------|--|--|
| Different scopes | Project or programme evaluation with a planned follow-on phase | The EMR planned action steps should focus on integrating evaluation recommendations into the design of the next phase |
| | Project or programme that is closing | The EMR planned action steps should focus on using lessons to inform the design of upcoming unrelated projects, including lessons in UNICEF knowledge management systems, and addressing structural or operational issues identified in the evaluation recommendations |
| | Strategic, operational or policy evaluation | The EMR planned actions steps should include a focus on integrating evaluation recommendations into wider reviews of the strategy, policy, or operational system |
| Different designs | Impact evaluation | The EMR planned action steps should focus on integrating evaluation recommendations into the UNICEF knowledge management system, advocacy, and strategy |
| | Real Time Evaluation | The evaluation process itself can be used to kick-start immediate operational and programming actions based on recommendations, with these captured in the EMR |
| | Meta-evaluation/analysis | The EMR planned action steps should focus on integrating evaluation recommendations into the UNICEF knowledge management system |
| Different modes | Joint evaluation | Where possible, UNICEF should participate in a joint management response, and then include the recommendations relating to UNICEF in the global tracking system; else a separate management response is required where a joint response is not possible |
| | Country-led evaluation | A UNICEF EMR is not required, but UNICEF may support the national partner to prepare an EMR |
| | Country-case study for a larger evaluation | A country-case study published as a standalone evaluation report requires an EMR that should focus on integrating recommendations into ongoing programming; a country case that is annexed in a corporate or regional evaluation as a 'note' does not require an EMR. |

Options for responding to recommendations

| Classification of response | Description | Implication for the EMR |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Fully agree | The Office accepts this recommendation in full; or the full recommendation but with non-material amendments to correct errors in facts, adaptations to context, available resources, or targeting. | The EMR states what steps will be taken to implement the recommendation, by whom, by when, and how these actions are to be resourced. All parts of a recommendation have to be acted on if it is agreed to. |
| Partially agree | The Office accepts some of the recommendation; but disagrees with part of the recommendation for a justifiable reason. This may include a recommendation based on erroneous or unreliable findings, or an inappropriate response to valid findings. | The EMR states what part of the recommendation the office does not agree with and justifies why; and develops appropriate actions to address the parts of the recommendation that have been accepted. It identifies steps that will be taken to implement, by whom, by when, and how these actions are to be resourced. |
| Disagree | The Office wholly rejects the recommendation for a justifiable reason. This may include a recommendation based on erroneous or unreliable findings, or an inappropriate response to valid findings. | The EMR states the justification for rejecting the evaluation report recommendation; and describes any alternative actions to address findings that the Office deems to be fit-for-purpose. |

Options for responding to findings and lessons



Example

An evaluation case study finds that birth certificates issued under a project are not available in most households because they have been eaten by termites. Although there is no specific recommendation on this in the evaluation, the UNICEF office identifies it as essential to ensuring the rights of the child, and commits to ensuring that all future birth certificates are laminated.

(This hypothetical example is based on a real project review from UNICEF Togo)

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FINDINGS

- Where important findings are not reflected in the recommendations included in the evaluation report, Offices can state their own actions to address these in the EMR.
- The Office can simply state a series of action steps to respond to the finding under a ‘blank recommendation’ within the EMR
- No additional justification is required

LESSONS

- Where important lessons have been identified in the evaluation, the Office can state how these will be shared through UNICEF’s knowledge management systems
- The EMR can include a series of action steps on packaging and sharing these lessons with other programmes, UNICEF offices, and partners
- No additional justification is required

Involvement and support of partners



- A UNICEF office may be requested to support the development of Evaluation Management Responses by partners as part of its technical assistance or capacity building role.
 - For example, a country office may be requested by the Ministry of Planning to support the management response for a country-led evaluation.
 - If the UNICEF office decides to offer assistance in these cases, the resulting EMR does not need to be uploaded into the tracking system in cases where a UNICEF EMR would not normally be required (see Page 8)
 - UNICEF technical assistance to developing EMRs is an important contribution to national evaluation capacities, especially for country-led evaluations
- Where possible, UNICEF management should involve partners in the review of evaluation reports, discussion about the recommendations, and development of the evaluation management response action steps.
 - This participation supports ownership and can help develop both technical evaluation capacity and a culture of evaluation use
 - The involvement of partners in the development of the EMR should be noted in the document

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Expectations of UNICEF implementing partners

- Joint evaluations that include UNICEF and its partners are recommended to have a joint management response.
- If a UNICEF evaluation that is not joint has recommendations addressed to external stakeholders, it is important to make the distinction between UNICEF partners bound through partnership agreements, and other stakeholders without any formal agreement with UNICEF.
 - In the case of a formal partnership, UNICEF should include the partner in the management response process, within the framework of the partnership agreement.
 - In the case of no formal relationship, UNICEF should request the partners' voluntary engagement in the management response process.
 - If partners choose not to commit to action steps that UNICEF believes are needed this can be noted in the EMR

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6 STAGES OF THE EVALUATION MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

STAGE I

Terms of Reference

The UNICEF ToR checklist states:

*“9.1 The ToR work plan describes the key stages of the evaluation process and the implementation time line. Consider for example meetings, consultations, workshops with different groups of stakeholders, key points of interaction with a steering committee, process for verification of findings with key stakeholders, presentation of preliminary findings and **recommendations**.”*

*“9.5 The ToR work plan describes the process, if any, for obtaining and incorporating evaluation comments on a draft evaluation report. It identifies the role of stakeholders in formulating **recommendations** (if any).”*

- Preparation for Management Response starts when an evaluation is planned.
- Include the Evaluation Management Response within the Terms of Reference during the evaluation planning phase.
- Evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR) should clearly state the intended use by the intended users (how the evaluation process and results will be used and by whom).
- ToRs should state that a management response will be completed in response to the evaluation.
- It should be recalled that the Terms of Reference are a management overview and contract for all the people that will participate.
- The ToRs can include accountabilities and deliverables beyond the consultants’ roles and responsibilities.
- It is good practice to state in the ToRs who will lead the Evaluation Management Response process, and it is possible to reference this guidance note in an annex to the ToR.

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STAGE 2

Evaluation Recommendations

UNICEF offices, as well as key stakeholders, should review the evaluation report and process in its entirety, and comment on it, with particular attention to the draft recommendations.

It is advised for offices to accept final recommendations: rejecting recommendations only when there is a strong reason to do so.

- During the report writing phase, the evaluation team should pay close attention to formulating good recommendations.
- The following are most likely to lead to good recommendations:
 - Key stakeholders are consulted during the development of recommendations, which heightens programmatic and technical relevance.
 - An appropriate sequencing in the implementation of recommendations is noted, especially when one part of the response is contingent upon a prior action being completed.
 - The recommendations clarify where change is needed to solve problems and also where positive aspects should be continued or enlarged.
 - Recommendations are time-bound.
 - Recommendations are referenced at the point where the finding evidence and analysis is made, to show the logical connection. The full recommendations can be fully presented in a concluding chapter, but referencing them within the document is helpful.
 - The specific organizations that the recommendation is directed to should be noted, so there is no mistake about who should respond. It is not necessary to specify who within the organization needs to respond.

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Characteristics of good quality evaluation recommendations

The requirements (right) for recommendations are included in the UNICEF-adapted UNEG Evaluation Report Standards, and reflected in the GEROS Evaluation Quality Assessment (EQA)

- **7.0 Recommendations are relevant to the object and purpose of the evaluation, are supported by evidence and conclusions, and were developed with involvement of relevant stakeholders**
- 7.1 Recommendations are **firmly based on evaluative evidence** and a process of validation including appropriate consultation with stakeholders
- Recommendations are **logically derived** from the findings and/or conclusions – and make reference back to sources of evidence
- A clear **description of the process** for developing recommendations, including a relevant explanation if the level of participation of stakeholders at this stage is not in proportion with the level of participation in the intervention and/or in the conduct of the evaluation
- 7.2 Recommendations are **relevant to the objectives and purpose of the evaluation**
- Recommendations are **useful to primary intended users** and uses (relevant to the intervention and provide realistic description of how they can be made operational in the context of the evaluation)
- Recommendations are **actionable** and reflect an understanding of the commissioning organization and potential constraints to follow up
- Recommendations explicitly address the implications of the conclusions and findings regarding **gender equality and human rights**
- 7.4 Recommendations are **clearly presented** to support use
- Recommendations clearly **identify the target group** for each recommendation (or clearly clustered group of recommendations)
- Recommendations are clearly stated with **priorities for action** and/or classification of recommendations made clear

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Real example of a recommendation with headline and detail

Evaluation of Capacity Development Initiatives Implemented by UNICEF Malaysia

Malaysia 2016/034

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Evaluation Management Response Guidance

- “Elaborate a capacity development strategy, within the country programme, to be executed by MCO over the remaining period of CPAP and IIMP (2017-2020), articulating all types and levels of capacity development initiatives considered as building blocks to implement a bigger theory of change.
- It would consider the following steps:
 - i) introduction of new concepts and approaches;
 - ii) discussing strategy;
 - iii) roll out of strategy; and
 - iv) M&E and adjustment.
- This plan would include:
 - i) a country and partners analysis, positioning UNICEF capacity development in Malaysia’s context;
 - ii) objectives explicitly linked to the CPAP, including the TOC with critical assumptions;
 - iii) results framework (or PMF) with their corresponding performance indicators and targets;
 - iv) capacity development strategies and means across sectors;
 - v) a proposed set of capacity development initiatives with a tentative calendar;
 - vi) possible partners and indicative roles and responsibilities;
 - vi) risk analysis”

STAGE 3

Developing the Response

The EMR requires a series of action steps to address each recommendation.

The steps should form a logical and concrete pathway to successfully implement the recommendation.

Each step should have a responsible person and provision for an appropriate level of resources.

The steps can be ticked off in the global tracking system as they are completed.

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- Developing the Management Response through a formal process
 - Designating lead persons or units and placing the Management Response process firmly in the managerial calendar [e.g. CMT] is essential.
 - Announcing it to counterparts and advocating their engagement in the Evaluation Management Response by UNICEF leaders signals that it is important.
 - Developing a timetable and putting it into necessary event agendas creates the space for consideration.
 - Recording the results of the Evaluation Management Response discussions and, where possible, getting formal acceptance, creates an expectation of follow-up.
- The formality of the EMR process need not be overly rigid.
 - For example, documenting the Management Response discussions, agreements and getting stakeholder acceptance could be through full meeting minutes; but it could also be captured in a simple memo, photos of a flipchart, or only on the UNICEF EMR template.
 - In all cases, the UNICEF EMR template should be completed as a result of the process.

Characteristics of a good quality EMR

- *The EMR format requires the response to each recommendation to be 'broken-down' into a series of consecutive action steps.*
- *These steps should logically result in a resolution to the recommendation.*

An adapted version of the 'SMART' criteria used in RBM can help to guide good quality EMR action steps:

- **Specific:** is the step a discrete, clear and concrete action that is described in plain and easily understood language?
- **Measurable:** is it possible to easily measure when the step has been completed?
- **Action-orientated:** is the step active – does it involve completing a concrete task (not vague or non-committal, such as 'review', 'consider', or 'take-account-of')?
- **Resourced:** are the level and sources of human, financial and other resources clear stated and realistic?
- **Timely:** can the step be completed in the proposed stage of the programme cycle, and can all the priority steps be completed within a 2 year timeframe?

EMRs should seek to develop new and specific actions to respond to the evaluation; and not simply restate existing plans.

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Extracts from an overall response to a good quality evaluation report

Reducing stunting in children under five years of age: a comprehensive evaluation of UNICEF's strategies and programme performance Rwanda country case study

Rwanda 2017/002

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- **“Overall Response to the Evaluation”**
 - This evaluation was conducted in consultation with key stakeholders at the country level: the Government of Rwanda, UN partners (WHO, WFP, FAO), CVOs and key UNICEF staff. UNICEF staff, including senior management, were actively engaged in all phases of the evaluation. Feedback on evaluation findings and recommendations was taken into account when compiling this response. UNICEF senior management agree with all findings and recommendations (fully agree with evaluation recommendation 1, 2 and 4; partially agree with evaluation recommendation 3).
- **Use of the Evaluation**
 - Preliminary findings and recommendations were used to discuss the second phase of the stunting reduction programme with the Government, donors and development partners. These discussions resulted in the development of a new funding proposal, expanding the scope of the interventions and increasing programme convergence. These efforts resulted in a multi-year, multi-funded stunting reduction programme. The new programme includes expanded geographical coverage and further scale-up of nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions, which are necessary to reduce stunting.”

STAGE 4

Registering in the Global Tracking System

EMRs need to be registered and updated in EISI. Regional evaluation advisors can advise on this process.

- There is a single standardized global system for tracking management responses.
 - [A technical guide on how to use the Evidence Information System Integration \(EISI\) system](#) is available.
 - If a committed action step is considered no longer relevant or valid due to a changed context, it can be canceled or reformulated in the system.
 - When changes are made, the office is asked to prove a clear justification.

Real example of a response with concrete action steps

Evaluation of Humanitarian Assistance

Yemen 2016/009

- **“Recommendation 8:** The F&A unit will be better able to deliver its role if an arrangement for continuous availability of liquidity from not only Banks but from money exchanges too is planned for in advance in the BCP, as the banking system may collapse following a crisis as it happened after Mar 26, 2015.
- **Response:** Agree
- 8.1 Develop LTAs with third party cash providers through a bidding process. [Underway]
- 8.2 Raise Contracts against the LTAs based on the programmatic needs [Not Started]”

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Real example of multiple sequential action steps

C4D Nutrition Evaluation: Guatemala
Case Study

Guatemala 2016/002

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- **“Recommendation 1:** Design and implement a reflection and learning workshop with the participation of FNS sector institutions to update the conceptual model and the educational communication for development change theory, especially for FNS.
 - **Response:** Agree
 - 1.1 Conduct a workshop to review, update and integrate the strategy into other strategies to create a comprehensive strategy (February 2016). [Completed]
 - 1.2 Design a new workshop for reviewing an updating the current strategy for 2017 that promotes experience sharing in light of the results of this evaluation and progress in implementation in Huehuetenango (which started in 2016). [Completed]
 - 1.3 Develop support materials and tools to extend the intervention to other departments. This will include the C4D conceptual approach and change theory. [Completed]
 - 1.4 Conduct a workshop to review and update the conceptual model and change theory. [Completed]”

STAGE 5 Implementation and Monitoring

The Global Tracking System also provides narrative space to summarize the overall effect of the evaluation so that readers can see the bigger picture.

The screenshot shows a web-based form with the following sections:

- Activity title:** A text box containing "evaluation of the CSO programme of the last CPO cycle and part of the current CPO".
- Management response contact person:** A dropdown menu with "Shahid Saadoun Ameen" selected and a "Section of the contact person" dropdown with "MGARD" selected.
- Management response additional editors:** A list of names with checkboxes: "Alabdou Diallo", "Shahid Saadoun Ameen", "Zameer Omar Jan", "Marlene Jermol", and "Yashubhar Sarav".
- Overall response to evaluation:** A text box containing "This report presents the findings, conclusion and recommendations of the independent formative evaluation of The Gambia Child Survival and Development (CSD) program, one of the two pillars of the UNICEF Country Programme implemented in the country (the second pillar is Protection and Inclusion of Children or PIC)."
- Planned use of evaluation:** A text box containing "Policy formulation, MTR, and development of next CPO".
- Evaluation use post task:** A text box containing "Acceleration of remaining years of current CPO; adjustment of team".

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- The designated units or organizations implement actions by the expected completion date.
- Progress on management response implementation is reviewed at Office Management Team meetings on a quarterly basis. Any necessary update and adjustment is discussed and decided.
- The office should register updates in the tracking system before the end of each quarter and should attach any documentary evidence on the progress of actions.
- There is no word limit applied to the response.
- The management response monitoring should continue until all the action steps are completed or cancelled; or the 2 year limit is reached.
- See also The EMR Timeline.

STAGE 6

Global Tracking and Verification

Verification of what is claimed in the tracking system can be initiated in three ways:

Through a request from the Regional Office, based on information in the dashboard or in a communication from HQ.

By a request from the HQ Evaluation Office. This will normally be linked to a desire to identify good practices.

Through the normal procedures of the Office of Internal Audit (OIA). OIA is allowed to verify the existence and implementation of the management response during scheduled office audits.

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- The Evaluation Office has a quarterly dashboard with key performance indicators for Evaluation. This includes indicators related to Management Response.
- The Key Performance Indicators shown in the dashboard are the following:
 - % and number of Evaluation reports submitted to the Global Evaluation Database with Management Response uploaded to the Global Management Response tracking system
 - % of action steps (for recommendations agreed by management) completed
 - % of action steps (for recommendations agreed by management) underway
 - % of actions (for recommendations agreed by management) not started
 - % of actions referring to evaluation reports of two previous years (for example, recommendations presented in 2017 reports to be implemented in 2019) still open. Cancelled actions will not be taken into consideration as “still open”
- This information is available to all offices in real time through the Performance Management tools i.e. Insight
- The Evaluation Office, in cooperation with Regional Offices, tracks Management Responses as a key corporate indicator.
- The results are shared with the Global Evaluation Committee (GEC), the Executive Board, and Regional Directors.

CONTACTS

For further help and support

1. *Recommended starting point: the UNICEF [Intranet page on Management Responses](#) and related pages on the *Dissemination and Use of evaluations**
2. *Your Regional Evaluation Advisor*
3. *The Evaluation Office via evalhelp@unicef.org*

Product Manager

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