



Evaluation Policy

revised, October 2022

This document has been approved by UNEP's Senior Management Team and comes into effect from the date of signature.

Signed by UNEP Executive Director:

Inger Andersen

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Inger Andersen", positioned above a horizontal line.

Date:

24 Oct. 2022.

Evaluation Policy

Evaluation Office
United Nations Environment Programme

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1. Introduction

1. This document presents UNEP's revised evaluation policy superseding all previous evaluation policies. The policy reaffirms UNEP's commitment to the value of evaluation in its performance management, accountability and learning systems, complying with United Nations evaluation principles, norms and standards¹ and international good practices in evaluation. The revised policy informs UNEP staff and stakeholders of the evaluation function's purpose; its conceptual and normative framework; and the roles, accountabilities and standards for evaluation across UNEP, including coverage, use and human and financial resource requirements. It supports UNEP's mandate and strategic priorities, in alignment with the principles and aims of the United Nations.
2. The Evaluation Policy will be accompanied by an Evaluation Operational Strategy and an Evaluation Manual. Together with the policy, the Evaluation Operational Strategy and the Evaluation Manual will specify detailed provisions and requirements pertaining to the implementation of the evaluation policy.
3. The mandate for conducting evaluations in UNEP derives from UNEP Governing Council decisions,² the UN Secretariat's Administrative Instruction on Evaluation ST/AI/2021/3 and several UN General Assembly Resolutions, summarized in the regulations and "Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation" (ST/SGB/2018/3). The rules and regulations require all UN programme activities to be evaluated and that evaluation findings are communicated to Member States through intergovernmental bodies.³ UNEP Governing Council decisions authorize the evaluation of UNEP activities and require the development and continuous refinement of methodologies in collaboration with other UN entities along with the reporting of evaluation activities to the governance function of the organization. The mandate for evaluations in UNEP covers all programmes and projects of the Environment Fund, related trust funds, earmarked contributions and projects implemented by UNEP under the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and under partnership agreements.
4. UNEP is the UN system's designated entity for addressing environmental issues at the global and regional levels. Its mandate is to coordinate the development of environmental policy consensus by keeping the global environment under review and bringing emerging issues to the attention of governments and the international community for action. Environmental considerations are central to all UNEP's evaluations.

¹ United Nations Evaluation Group (2016). Norms and Standards for Evaluation. New York: UNEG.

² UNEP Governing Council (GC) decisions (75(iv), 83, 6.13/1, 12/15 13/1 14/1, 23/3 – 11 and 27/13

³ ST/AI/2018/3 regulation 7.2 & 7.3, rules 107.2, 107.3, 107.4, & 107.1c

2. Rationale for Revised Policy

5. Since the endorsement of UNEP's 2016 evaluation policy, the context in which UNEP operates has changed significantly. The Secretary-General has overseen an extensive UN reform effort and in his report A/72/492 on "Shifting the management paradigm in the United Nations: ensuring a better future for all", indicated his intention to strengthen the evaluation⁴ capacity within the UN Secretariat to better inform programme planning and reporting on programme performance. He stressed that results of evaluations will be used by programme managers to better plan and adjust their activities. As such, evaluation is integral to learning and supports improved results-based management and increased transparency on programme delivery to Member States. This evaluation policy supports enhanced accountability and encourages a strong culture of evaluation as a part of UNEP's oversight.
6. Additionally, UNEP has pursued its own internal reform agenda which entered the implementation phase in the 2022-2025 Medium-Term Strategy from January 2022 which has environmental sustainability at its core⁵. UNEP's evaluation policy must be appropriately tailored to the prevailing strategic and operational contexts and will be periodically amended.
7. This policy introduces a revised strategy for the selection of UNEP projects to be evaluated; extends the scope for management-led Terminal Reviews, which are a form of self-evaluation validated by the Evaluation Office and addresses the issue of effectively resourcing the evaluation function.

3. Definition and Purpose of Evaluations

Definition

8. UNEP ascribes to the definition of evaluations set out by the United Nations Evaluation Group.

"an evaluation is an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings,

⁴ The Secretary-General's report (A/72/492) and related resolutions and reports refer to both "evaluation" undertaken by oversight bodies and by entities (i.e. independently from management) and to "self-evaluation" as referenced and defined in Chapter VII of ST/SGB/2018/3. The term "evaluation" as used in this policy refers to independent evaluation while "self-evaluation" is termed "management-led review" in UNEP.

⁵ As highlighted in Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2019/7

recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders.”⁶

Purposes of the UNEP Evaluation Function

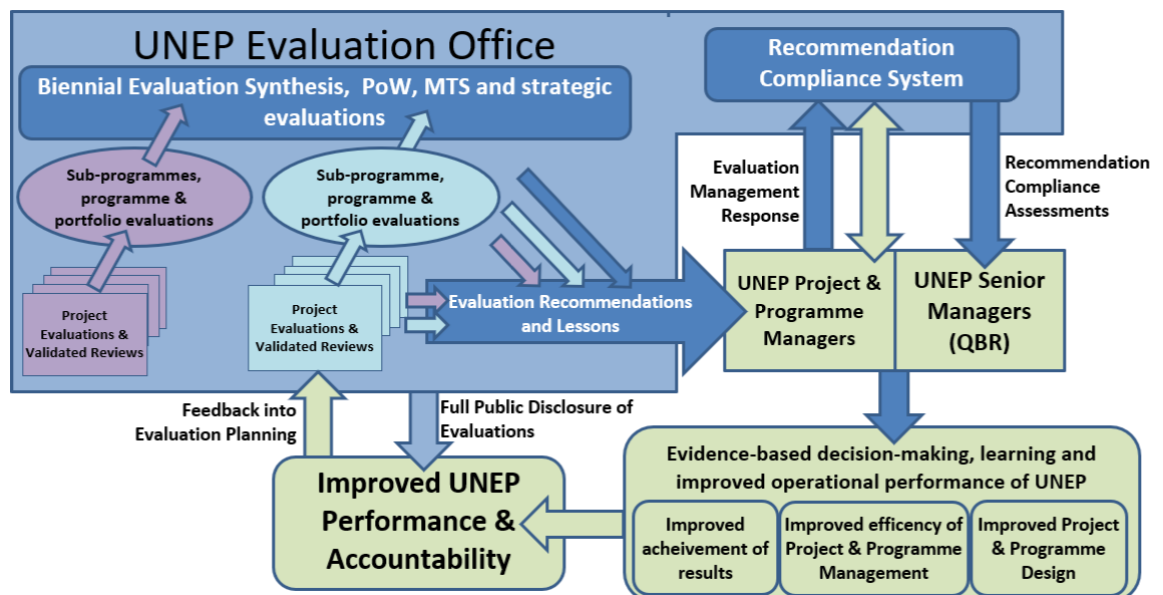
9. Evaluation serves three main purposes.

Evidence-based decision-making: Evaluation supports better decision-making. It should inform planning, programming, budgeting, implementation and reporting and contribute to evidence-based policymaking and organizational effectiveness.⁷ Evaluation and feedback are critical to effective results-based management.⁸

Learning: A strong culture of evaluation is a prerequisite for a learning organization. Evaluation helps UNEP to learn from experience and better understand why – and to what extent – intended and unintended results were achieved and to analyse the implications of the results. This learning can be the driver for innovation and continuous improvement.

Accountability: Evaluation is an integral part of the accountability framework and constitutes an important source of evidence for understanding organizational performance. The transparent reporting of evaluation results enhances Member States’ confidence in UNEP’s ability to deliver on the mandates entrusted to it.

Figure 1. UNEP’s Evaluation Function



⁶ United Nations Evaluation Group (2016). Norms and Standards for Evaluation. New York: UNEG.

⁷ <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914> UNEG Norms and Standards page 10.

⁸ A/67/714 paragraph 91.

4. Evaluation Principles, Norms and Standards

10. Evaluations in UNEP will be guided by principles and practices at the core of international good evaluation practice for high-quality evaluation as set out in the UNEG Norms and Standards (2016), UNEG ethical guidelines and the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation (2008). UNEP will endeavour to conform to these norms, standards, codes and guidance in the design, management and conduct of evaluations, and throughout the structures and operations of the evaluation function. The UNEG norms for evaluation, to which UNEP will adhere, are as follows:

Internationally agreed principles, goals and targets: Evaluation managers and evaluators should uphold and promote the principles and values to which the United Nations is committed. They should respect, promote and contribute to the goals and targets set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Utility: Evaluations should be commissioned and conducted with the clear intention to use the resulting analysis, conclusions or recommendations to inform decisions and actions. Useful evaluations make relevant and timely contributions to organizational learning, informed decision-making processes and accountability for results. Evaluations can contribute to knowledge generation and empowering stakeholders.

Credibility: Evaluations must be credible. Key elements of credibility include transparent evaluation processes, inclusive approaches involving relevant stakeholders and robust quality assurance systems. Evaluation results and recommendations are derived from use of the best available, objective, reliable and valid data and by accurate quantitative and qualitative analysis of evidence. Credibility requires that evaluations are ethically conducted and managed by evaluators that exhibit professional and cultural competencies.

Independence: Independence of evaluation is necessary for credibility, influences the ways in which an evaluation is used and allows evaluators to be impartial and free from undue pressure throughout the evaluation process. Evaluators must have the ability to evaluate without undue influence by any party, and to conduct their evaluative work impartially, without the risk of negative effects on their career development and must be able to freely express their assessment. Independence also demands that UNEP's Evaluation Office is independent from management functions, carries the responsibility of setting the evaluation agenda and is provided with adequate resources to conduct its work. The Evaluation Office should have full discretion to directly submit evaluation reports to the appropriate level of decision-making.

Impartiality: Impartiality is demonstrated through objectivity, professional integrity and absence of bias and is necessary at all stages of the evaluation process, including planning an evaluation, formulating the focus and scope, selecting the evaluation team, providing access to stakeholders, conducting the evaluation and formulating findings and recommendations.

Ethics: Evaluation must be conducted with the highest standards of integrity and respect for the beliefs, manners and customs of the social and cultural environment; for human rights and gender equality; and for the 'do no harm' principle. Evaluators must respect the rights of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence, must ensure that sensitive data is protected and that it cannot be traced to its source and must validate evidence. Evaluators should obtain informed consent for the use of private information from those who provide it. When evidence of wrongdoing is uncovered, it must be reported discretely to a competent body (e.g. OIOS).

Transparency: Transparency is an essential element of evaluation that establishes trust and builds confidence, enhances stakeholder ownership and increases public accountability. Evaluation products should be publicly accessible.

Human rights and gender equality: The universally recognized values and principles of human rights and gender equality need to be integrated into all stages of an evaluation. It is the responsibility of evaluators and evaluation managers to ensure that these values are respected, addressed and promoted, underpinning the commitment to the principle of 'no-one left behind'. The United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy⁹ and the UN's universally recognized right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment are also relevant in this context¹⁰.

National evaluation capacities¹¹: The effective use of evaluation can make valuable contributions to accountability and learning and thereby justify actions to strengthen national evaluation capacities. In line with General Assembly resolution A/RES/69/237 on building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level UNEP will, where appropriate, support enhancement of national evaluation capacities through collaborative evaluation efforts where an evaluand of mutual interest is identified.

Professionalism: Evaluations should be conducted with professionalism and integrity, which contribute to the credibility of evaluators, evaluation managers and evaluation heads, as well as the evaluation function. Key aspects include access to knowledge; education and training; adherence to ethics and to these norms and standards; utilization of the UNEG evaluation competencies framework; and recognition of knowledge, skills and experience. This should be supported by an enabling environment, institutional structures and adequate resources.

⁹ <https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/>

¹⁰ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3982508?ln=en>

¹¹ The text of this UNEG norm has been adapted to reflect a strategic choice of the UNEP Evaluation Office in this context.

5. Organization and Management of Evaluation Function

11. The Evaluation Function comprises the normative framework and the sum of roles and accountabilities across the organisation required to fulfil the policy purposes. Responsibilities for evaluation (see Section VI) are therefore shared across UNEP. The main elements of the normative framework for evaluation in UNEP are described below.

Evaluation Planning

12. The Evaluation Office shall be free to select evaluation subjects, taking into account inputs from UNEP's Senior Management Team (SMT), and to conduct evaluations and prepare clear, accurate, objective, uncompromising and uncensored reports without interference from any part of the organization.
13. The Evaluation Office develops its annual evaluation work programme that includes a list of evaluations by setting priorities for conducting evaluations consistent with the established norms and available resources. The aim of evaluation priority-setting is to maximise the 'return' to UNEP from evaluative work in terms of contributions to accountability, learning and informed decision making¹². To ensure impartiality, the annual list of evaluations is elaborated independently by the Director of Evaluation, following consultation with UNEP senior management and other main stakeholders. The list will be endorsed by the Executive Director and presented to UNEP's Committee of Permanent Representatives. The list of evaluations is implemented by the Evaluation Office.
14. It is UNEP policy that all work carried out under the Programme of Work is subject to independent evaluation or management-led review, irrespective of the source of funding. All projects and programmes must include a budgetary provision to support the costs of independent evaluations/ management-led reviews¹³.

Evaluation Types

15. Types of evaluation take four main forms: i) strategic and cross-cutting thematic evaluations including sub-programme evaluations, ii) impact evaluations / studies, ii) programme evaluations, portfolio evaluations, and project evaluations / validations, and iv), joint evaluations with donors, partners and other United Nations agencies.

¹² The Evaluation Operational Strategy and Evaluation Manual describe priority setting criteria and processes for developing the annual list of evaluations. The methodological underpinning is elaborated here: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0149718914000640>

¹³ Detailed budgetary provision requirements for direct evaluation costs and evaluation management costs are specified in the Evaluation Manual

Strategic and Thematic Evaluations

Evaluations of the Programme of Work and Medium-Term Strategy Design and Implementation

16. The Medium-Term Strategy can be evaluated at three stages during its four-year cycle: formative stage, mid-term and end of cycle. A formative evaluation may be used to inform planning processes and to enhance the quality of MTS-related planning documents, a mid-term evaluation may provide operational feedback during Medium-Term Strategy implementation whilst a final evaluation can provide an assessment of results against the expected achievements. These evaluations will be undertaken periodically taking into account the demand for them from senior management and member states.

Biennial Evaluation Synthesis Report (meta-evaluation)

17. At the end of each biennium the Evaluation Office will prepare a Biennial Evaluation Synthesis Report. This report will summarise the performance of the organization through trends and patterns observed during the biennium from completed evaluations at all levels. The patterns and trends will be used to identify recommendations and lessons to be brought to the attention of, and discussed with, UNEP SMT. The report constitutes a document for the UNEA and is disseminated to CPR members, national governments and UNEP staff.

Sub-Programme Evaluations

18. The Evaluation Office will aim to achieve evaluation coverage across all sub-programmes over a six-year period as required by ST/AI/2021/3. Sub-programme evaluations will examine the relevance, achievement of results, effectiveness, sustainability and efficiency of the delivery of the sub-programme. These evaluations will make use of relevant strategic, portfolio, programme and project-level evaluations and validated management-led reviews to help assess the overall performance and results of the sub-programme and will be scheduled to maximize the utility of evaluation findings; time is needed for recommendations from sub-programme evaluations to inform the design of new projects and for those interventions to be evident in practice. As UNEP's sub-programmes cut across organisational management structures, the coordination and cooperation among and between UNEP divisions and regional offices will be examined. This will include an assessment of the 'complementarity' of extra-budgetary (XB) projects¹⁴ that make contributions to sub-programme results. The evaluations will also assess the efficiency and utility of collaborative and partnership arrangements with UN bodies, intergovernmental organizations, international, regional and national non-governmental organizations, scientific and environmental centres, private sector organizations and networks and groups.

¹⁴ Especially of GEF and GCF funded projects.

Thematic Evaluations

19. Thematic evaluations will be carried out on cross-cutting issues to support the strategic development of the organization as a whole and to enhance synergies across divisions and offices; strengthen UNEP's comparative advantage and to ensure that UNEP remains at the forefront of environmental and development issues. The Evaluation Office will also undertake other strategic evaluations and independent reviews¹⁵ at corporate level on cross-cutting themes in response to stakeholder demand.

Project, Programmatic and Portfolio Evaluations

Project-Level Evaluations¹⁶

20. **Terminal Evaluations** of projects will be undertaken at their completion¹⁷ by external evaluators that are contracted by the Evaluation Office. Project-level evaluations aim to assess project relevance and performance and determine the outcomes / results stemming from the project / activity cluster. They provide judgments on actual and potential results, their sustainability and the operational efficiency of implementation and factors that affected performance. To achieve this, evaluations specifically focus on the 'theory of change' or 'impact pathways' used by the project and review evidence of actual or potential achievements. Project-level evaluations also identify lessons of operational relevance for future project design and implementation. The Evaluation Office will apply quality control processes that assess performance ratings based on the evidence presented in the evaluation reports and make judgments on the quality of such reports in relation to international best practice. Project-level evaluations will feed into the higher-level evaluation of sub-programmes.
21. **Mid-Term Evaluations** are undertaken approximately half-way through project implementation¹⁸. These evaluations analyse whether a project is on track, what problems and challenges the project is encountering and which corrective actions are required. Mid-term project evaluations may be conducted by the Evaluation Office if it elects to do so. For projects where a mid-term performance assessment is required according to internal UNEP or external donor requirements, and the project has not been selected for mid-term evaluation by the Evaluation Office, a management-led mid-term review will be conducted. The responsibility for mid-term reviews rests with project/programme managers.

Portfolio and Programmatic Evaluations

22. When a cluster of thematically related projects require evaluation the Evaluation Office may, in the interests of cost efficiency, conduct a portfolio / programme evaluation where the performance of the cluster of projects is evaluated in a single exercise. Portfolio /

¹⁵ Independent Reviews may be conducted where a formal evaluation against a results framework is not possible or where standard evaluation criteria cannot readily be assessed. Independent Reviews will require a formal management response and have a recommendation compliance process.

¹⁶ Grant agreements will be considered for evaluation in the context of the approved projects to which they contribute and not as stand-alone evaluations.

¹⁷ Terminal Evaluations must not be launched earlier than 3 months before their operational completion.

¹⁸ A mid-term assessment (evaluation/review) is a requirement for all projects under implementation for four years or more.

programme evaluations may offer additional learning opportunities from the differing operational contexts or intervention strategies that often occur across projects and provide insights into the replicability / scalability of initiatives. In addition to assessing and rating performance of the individual projects in the portfolio / programme, the evaluation will also assess whether opportunities for collaboration, complementarity and synergy have been fully exploited and duplication has been avoided between the projects.

Impact Evaluations / Studies

23. Impact evaluations / studies attempt to determine the entire range of effects of the programme / project activity on the environment and human living conditions, including unforeseen and longer-term effects¹⁹ as well as effects beyond the immediate target group / area. They attempt to establish the amount of such change that is attributable to the intervention. The focus is on evaluating progress towards high-level goals and providing estimates of development impact. They are particularly useful in assessing the overall performance of a project / programme in achieving long-term improvement in the quality of the environment and human living conditions and for assessing the sustainability of the impact against stated objectives. Impact evaluations / studies are often expensive and will usually require special provisions and dedicated resources to be included in project / programme designs and for the monitoring of implementation. These evaluations / studies will be conducted on a selective basis with the objective of learning lessons or demonstrating significant benefits in line with UNEP's strategic objectives.

Joint Evaluations with Donors, Partners and other UN Agencies

24. Where UNEP is involved in the joint implementation of a project or programme, a joint evaluation may be undertaken in collaboration with the evaluation function of the agency, donor or partner. When UNEP does not play a lead role in a joint evaluation, the Evaluation Office will make every feasible effort to ensure UNEP's minimum evaluation requirements and quality standards are met.

Evaluation Coverage: Selection and Prioritisation

25. The evaluation policy sets norms for ensuring appropriate evaluation coverage across UNEP's strategies, policies, programmes and projects. The selection of evaluations will be driven by the need to evaluate the performance of the Programme of Work and represent its key features in terms of: themes, sub-programmes, operational divisions / offices, geographic distribution of efforts and funding sources.

¹⁹ There are often significant time lags for long term effects to become evident. Therefore, impact evaluations / studies often analyse interventions with causal effects that occur beyond the duration of a Programme of Work.

Table 1. Minimum Evaluation Coverage Norms

Evaluation type	Coverage Norm
Strategic and Thematic Evaluations	Strategic evaluations will provide balanced coverage of UNEP's policies, strategies and core planning instruments.
Sub-programme Evaluations	All UNEP sub-programme will be evaluated across a six-year period.
Biennial Evaluation Synthesis	This will be undertaken every two years at the end of a Programme of Work implementation period.
Programme and Portfolio evaluations	Programme and portfolio evaluations will be undertaken in situations where such a level of aggregation offers learning and accountability opportunities in a more efficient manner than through individual project-level assessments.
Project Evaluations	The Evaluation Office will purposefully select a sample of approximately 20-30% ²⁰ of projects reaching operational completion for independent evaluation. The factors ²¹ that inform purposeful selection are set out in the Evaluation Operational Strategy and Manual. Projects that are not selected for independent evaluation and exceed the financial threshold specified in the Evaluation Manual will require a management-led Terminal Review prepared in a manner consistent with Evaluation Office guidance, formats and requirements.
Impact Evaluations / Studies	Impact evaluations /studies will be selectively undertaken as time and resources allow.
Joint Evaluations	Joint evaluations will be undertaken for shared evaluands – no coverage norms apply.

Evaluation Processes

26. It is UNEP policy that evaluation processes will be conducted independently of management and will be impartial, transparent, participatory and consultative. Evaluation processes will be guided by standard procedures set out in the Evaluation Manual. In summary:

- Members of external evaluation teams should not have been part of the team that designed and/or managed the implementation of the assessed policy, plan, project or programme.

²⁰ The number of evaluations to be launched each year will be determined as a factor of the Evaluation Office staffing capacity and secured resources.

²¹ Factors include consideration of different tiers of risk as assessed by the Project Review Committee.

- The designated evaluation manager should supervise the selection, management and performance assessment of the evaluation team and manage the evaluation throughout the process.
- The evaluation team should be selected through an open and transparent process, with balance in terms of geographical and gender diversity, and should include professionals from the region or country concerned in the evaluation, as appropriate and where feasible.
- Key stakeholders, including vulnerable and marginalized groups are, as appropriate, involved throughout the evaluation process, starting with the design phase.
- Terms of reference should clearly state the purpose of the evaluation process and conform to all UNEG standards, make provision for the eventual use of the evaluation and be shared with stakeholders to promote transparency and engagement.
- The evaluation design and methods should be robust and clearly presented. Evaluation criteria used in UNEP²² are aligned with those of OECD-DAC²³.
- Draft evaluation reports will be subject to an open and transparent stakeholder commenting process to ensure all factual errors are corrected²⁴.
- The final evaluation report must meet the reporting and quality standards of UNEP and, in the interest of accountability, be made publicly available.
- The issuance of an evaluation report is followed by a management response and follow-up process (see section g below).

Quality Assurance

27. The Evaluation Office is responsible for the quality of all UNEP evaluation reports, their findings and recommendations. The Evaluation Office will implement rigorous quality assurance processes²⁵ to ensure; i) the quality of, and adherence to, the terms of reference, ii) that evaluation processes (see section d above) are in-line with UNEG Norms and Standards and follow UNEP guidance, and iii) that the quality of evaluation reports meets UN system, and internationally agreed, evaluation standards.
28. The Evaluation Office will continue to refine methods for evaluations, set standards and guidelines for evaluations, and to ensure that these are followed within the organization. In addition, UNEP evaluation reports will, periodically, be subject to external independent expert assessments of report quality.

²² Evaluation criteria in UNEP include: Strategic Relevance, Quality of Project Design, Nature of External Context, Effectiveness (Including Availability of outputs, Achievement of project outcomes, Likelihood of impact), Financial Management, Efficiency, Monitoring and Reporting, Sustainability. In addition, there are several criteria to capture Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues

²³ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

²⁴ Stakeholder comments on a draft report should focus on key substantive issues. Where the comments provided are deemed to be excessively lengthy, the Evaluation Office reserves the right to set limits either on the number of issues raised, or the number of pages of comments that will be considered.

²⁵ Evaluation quality assurance includes an internal peer review process among evaluation professionals within the Evaluation Office, and, for larger more complex or strategic evaluations, may also utilise an Evaluation Reference Group of internal and external stakeholders/experts as an added quality assurance measure.

29. All management-led Terminal Reviews for projects that exceed the financial threshold specified in the Evaluation Manual will be independently validated by the Evaluation Office. Terminal Review validations undertaken by the Evaluation Office will examine the evidence presented within a review report and assess whether it is consistent with the standards of evidence for performance ratings presented in its own published guidance. The Evaluation Office will assess whether the review report complies with Evaluation Office guidance, formats and requirements and arrive at its own judgment regarding the quality of the review report.

Dissemination

30. It is UNEP's policy to disseminate all evaluation reports, knowledge products, findings and results to internal audiences, implementing partners, Member States and other interested stakeholders.

Use of Evaluations, Recommendations Compliance / Follow Up

31. It is UNEP policy that management is required to prepare a response to each evaluation,²⁶ that evaluation reports are fully considered and that agreed recommendations are acted upon. In UNEP, the management response to each evaluation takes the form of a recommendation implementation plan. Management responses to recommendations shall be discussed with managers at the appropriate level and include specific, time-bound actions. Where management decides to adopt recommendations made pursuant to an evaluation, it shall do so by clearly assigning responsibilities to units that will implement the recommendations. Evaluation recommendation compliance is monitored, and information is collated by the Evaluation Office and reported to senior management at regular intervals. All evaluation reports and management responses, in the form of recommendation implementation plans, will be publicly disclosed.
32. Under the guidance of the Executive Director and the Deputy Executive Director, members of UNEP's SMT have the overall responsibility for ensuring that evaluation recommendations are implemented, and the lessons identified through evaluations are used to improve programme and project budgeting, design and delivery.

Resources

33. As stated in ST/AI/2021/3, the Executive Director shall ensure adequate capacity and resources to manage and conduct evaluations and provide effective quality assurance.

²⁶ A management response is a written reaction to the findings, recommendations and lessons of the evaluation. It indicates whether the recommendations are accepted or not, what actions will be taken to implement accepted recommendations and provides full justifications for the rejection/partial acceptance of any recommendations.

²⁷ The evaluation recommendation compliance process is fully described in the Evaluation Manual.

Resource allocations should be commensurate with ranges articulated by the UN Joint Inspection Unit²⁸

Human Resources

34. The Executive Director ensures that adequate and qualified staff are recruited for the effective functioning of the Evaluation Office. All professional staff of the UNEP Evaluation Office are required to demonstrate that they have relevant and substantive technical evaluation-related experience²⁹ in addition to the required UN staff competencies and considerations of regional and gender balance.

Financial Resources

35. The Executive Director ensures that adequate financial resources are allocated for the effective functioning of the Evaluation Office. The allocation will ensure that all sources of funding for UNEP projects and programmes, adequately contribute to the costs of evaluation management (design, planning, process management and quality assurance) of the evaluation phase of the work they support as well as the monitoring of recommendations' compliance³⁰. All approved projects and programmes, and associated grants, under the Programme of Work will include a budget to cover the direct costs of preparing evaluation products³¹.

Risks

36. Several factors can affect the functioning of an effective evaluation system at the organisational level. These include:

Risk	Mitigation Measures
1. Unpredictable external demand for evaluation (high likelihood)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outreach and communication to increase stakeholders' use of, and support for, UNEP's evaluations
2. Internal demand for evaluation exceeds installed capacity for supply (high likelihood)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt and maintain resource allocation provisions to support evaluation management work from XB resources

²⁸ ST/AI/2021/3 Para 6.2 "Secretariat entities shall take into consideration the general view of the Joint Inspection Unit that funding for evaluation activities should fall within the range of 0.5 to 3 per cent of entity expenditure, depending on the mandate of the entity, its size, types of evaluation undertaken and the role of evaluation in the entity (JIU/REP/2014/6, para. 77).

²⁹ Typically, professional positions in the UNEP Evaluation Office require in-depth knowledge of all aspects of project and programme evaluation, proven conceptual and analytical skills and excellent knowledge in the field of results-based management. Position descriptions are benchmarked to the UNEG Evaluation Competency Framework.

³⁰ In addition to UN Regular Budget and Environment Fund resources allocated to the Evaluation Office the practice of applying a cost recovery of 0.6% of annual extra-budgetary project-related expenditure to support the oversight and quality assurance of evaluation-related work relating to projects and programmes funded from extra-budgetary sources is also approved as part of the policy.

³¹ Detailed budgetary provision requirements for direct evaluation costs and evaluation management costs are specified in the Evaluation Operational Strategy and Manual.

Risk	Mitigation Measures
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase proportion of performance assessments conducted through management-led review
3. Insufficient ownership and support for evaluation across all levels of management (medium likelihood)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior management's fostering of a corporate culture of accountability and learning embeds evaluation into: decision-making, standard management practices, and corporate dashboards
4. Sub-optimal use of evaluation (medium likelihood)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management ensures the systematic consideration of evaluation findings in new policies, strategies and programme / project design • Management response and recommendation compliance performance monitored by SMT • Synthesis and communication of evaluation findings and lessons by the Evaluation Office
5. Inadequate human resources – skills and staff (high likelihood)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reform of evaluation financing practices to support an appropriate cadre of full-time staff • Evaluation Office offers training and tools to support Terminal Reviews to enhance the capacity of project/programme management for management-led review
6. Unpredictable and inadequate financial resources (high likelihood)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate commitment to assigning 0.6 percent of XB expenditure income
7. Monitoring data of limited quality (high likelihood)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management's commitment to improving the monitoring system and capacities at project and programme level • Partial compensation through primary data collection and triangulation of information by evaluation teams • Increased management attention to the design and implementation of project and programme monitoring

37. Should these risks not be properly mitigated it is possible that the function will be unable to achieve its intended purpose, affecting the achievement of corporate strategic objectives and management results related to processes, systems, accountability and funding. The risks identified are mainly programmatic – hampering UNEP's improvement of effectiveness through evidence-based information – and institutional, related to reputational loss.

6. Structure, Roles and Responsibilities for the Evaluation Function

Location

38. The Evaluation Office is an independent office performing executive functions, while the Director of the Evaluation Office reports to the Executive Director. This management arrangement provides structural independence from operational Divisions and Offices implementing the Programme of Work and promotes the behavioural independence needed for objective and unbiased evaluation and impartial reporting of evaluation findings. Conversely, the reporting line for UNEP projects and programmes flows, via Divisional or Regional Office Directors, to the Deputy Executive Director.

Roles and Responsibilities

39. All organizational units of UNEP have distinct roles and responsibilities in ensuring that evaluation supports accountability, evidence-based decision-making and learning. Working together with the governance function, the constituent parts contribute to a coherent and effective evaluation function. Roles and responsibilities are delineated below.
40. In accordance with GC 4/75 (1V) the **United Nations Environment Assembly / Committee of Permanent Representatives** (UNEA/CPR) shall receive regular briefings on evaluation, activities, findings, results and management responses to evaluation through recommendation compliance. The CPR will comment on evaluation matters through an agenda item on evaluation at the Annual Sub-Committee Meeting. The UNEA/CPR will review the Biennial Evaluation Synthesis Report encompassing the findings of all UNEP evaluations.
41. The **Executive Director** (ED) is the guardian of the evaluation function and is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented on behalf of the Secretary General and Member States. The ED is responsible for overseeing the work of the evaluation function, ensuring the function is adequately resourced, and endorses the evaluation plan for onward submission to UNEA / CPR as part of UNEP's Programme of Work. The ED will ensure that an annual segment is created within the UNEA/CPR Annual Sub-Committee Meeting.
42. The **Evaluation Office** of UNEP is an independent entity reporting directly to the ED and is responsible for implementing the evaluation plan by conducting and managing all independent evaluations at Medium-Term Strategy / Programme of Work, sub-programme, portfolio and project levels and of cross-cutting issues. It ensures quality in evaluations conducted, provides analysis of findings and lessons for management, prepares the Biennial Evaluation Synthesis Report and disseminates evaluation findings and results to UNEP, Member States and stakeholders. The Evaluation Office promotes the uptake of lessons and tracks compliance with evaluation recommendations. The Director of the

Evaluation Office will brief UNEA / CPR on all evaluation activities, findings and recommendation compliance.

43. The Evaluation Office has the freedom to:
- select evaluation subjects (evaluands) and develop its annual list of evaluations considering inputs from the SMT, Member States and other relevant stakeholders;
 - develop Terms of Reference for evaluations and select and recruit external evaluators without interference;
 - determine minimum resource requirements for evaluation of projects and programmes and independently manage the resources allocated for evaluations within the organization;
 - manage and conduct evaluations without interference from senior management and other staff;
 - enjoy full access to information pertaining to; the design, approval, funding, expenditure, management, implementation, monitoring and reporting of any project programme or policy implemented under UNEP's Programme of Work.
 - submit clear, accurate, objective, uncompromising and uncensored reports to the senior management, member states and relevant stakeholders without fear of recrimination or dismissal for such.
 - publicly disclose evaluation findings; and
 - follow-up and report on management responses to evaluations and the implementation of evaluation recommendations.
44. The **Deputy Executive Director** (DED) is responsible for overseeing the use of evaluation findings and recommendations in future programming, budget planning and management through the work of Divisional and Regional Directors.
45. The **Senior Management Team** (SMT) discusses and comments on strategic evaluations, approves management responses to such evaluations, ensures compliance with strategic recommendations and that findings are incorporated in the design and implementation of programme activities. The SMT also suggests areas for evaluation as inputs to evaluation planning.
46. **Division Directors, Regional Directors and Heads of Branches** are responsible for ensuring that their staff provide accurate information to the Evaluation Office regarding projects and programmes nearing operational completion, that their staff cooperate with requests for: information, participation in evaluation processes and evaluation management responses in a timely manner. They also ensure that accepted evaluation recommendations are implemented at the appropriate levels of management and that lessons and recommendations from evaluations are integrated into programme and project budgeting, design and implementation.
47. **Project Performance Assessment³² Focal Points** will be appointed by Divisional / Regional Directors at the appropriate level (Division, Branch or Unit) to respond to Evaluation Office

³² 'Performance Assessment' is the term used to refer to both evaluations and reviews.

calls for information regarding projects reaching operational completion and to ensure colleagues provide complete and reliable data. The Project Performance Assessment Focal Points will monitor the progress of, and keep records for, upcoming, ongoing and completed management-led Mid-Term and Terminal Reviews in their Division/Office/Branch/Unit and ensure that completed project-level Final Terminal Review Reports are provided to the Evaluation Office for validation. Project Performance Assessment Focal Points serve as a point of contact regarding the response to, and implementation of, recommendations made in Mid-Term and Terminal Review Reports.

48. **Sub-Programme Coordinators** (SPC) review relevant evaluation reports and provide comments. They coordinate the collation of comments on draft reports and the preparation of management responses for sub-programme evaluations. They are responsible for ensuring that project and sub-programme level evaluation findings inform strategic planning processes.
49. **Legal Officers** will ensure that legally binding grants and funding agreements with UNEP contain evaluation-related provisions that are in-line with UNEP's Evaluation Policy. Where provisions for evaluation must vary from agreed standard texts, Legal Officers will liaise with the Evaluation Office to prepare the agreed text.
50. **Fund Management Officers** (FMO) ensure that the approved financial provision for all performance assessments (mid-term/ terminal; evaluation/review) is held within project budgets until required for evaluation/review processes. The FMO assists in the transfer of project-level evaluation resources to the Evaluation Office cost centre or clears project-level evaluation expenditure (fees and travel) that has been authorised by the Director of the Evaluation Office. FMOs are expected to contribute to evaluation processes by; providing financial information, participating in interviews and providing comments on draft project evaluation reports.
51. **Project Managers**³³ are responsible for providing up-to-date information on project and implementation to inform the Evaluation Office of impending operational completions. When a project is selected for evaluation they comply with the requirements and processes set out in the Evaluation Manual including *inter alia* timely: access to detailed project-related documentation; input to evaluation Terms of Reference, comments on draft evaluation reports and a comprehensive evaluation management response. Project Managers are responsible for providing evidence pertaining to the implementation of evaluation recommendations. For projects where a performance assessment is required according to internal UNEP or external donor requirements, and the project has not been selected for independent evaluation by the Evaluation Office, a management-led review will be conducted. The responsibility for management-led reviews rests with Project Managers.

³³ The same roles and requirements apply to Task Manager roles for GEF / GCF projects.

7. Policy Implementation, Reporting and Review

Roll-out and Implementation

52. On approval of the policy, roll-out will be supported by communication and capacity-building products for embedding an understanding of the policy's purpose and objectives and of evaluation roles and accountabilities across UNEP.
53. The Evaluation Operational Strategy and Evaluation Manual will link the Evaluation Policy to UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy and Programme of Work, with performance indicators for monitoring the overall evaluation function. It will complement UNEP's corporate monitoring strategy 2010³⁴, as part of a coordinated approach to strengthening the evidence base for decision-making, performance management, learning and accountability for results.
54. The Evaluation Manual will detail management arrangements and implementation plans for the policy's provisions on the development of evaluation capacity; resourcing, coverage, selection, conduct, reporting and use of evaluations; and adherence to quality and impartiality standards. It will follow a phased approach taking into account the availability of resources and will commence with the further development and testing of guidance, quality standards, training materials, rating, reporting and validation systems for management-led reviews. Along with the roll-out of guidance and systems developed, a sustainable financing mechanism and human resource requirements will be operationalized progressively.

Guidance to be Issued by Evaluation Office to Operationalize the Policy

55. The priority areas, standard procedures and detailed guidance for the operationalisation of this evaluation policy are provided in the Evaluation Operational Strategy and the Evaluation Manual. The Evaluation Operational Strategy and the Evaluation Manual will be prepared by the Evaluation Office and approved by its Director under the authority delegated by the Executive Director.

³⁴ Implementation of the Programme of Work 2010-2011 Monitoring Plan, UNEP 2010.

8. Oversight and Reporting

Internal Feedback to Management

56. The UNEP Evaluation Office will prepare a report for distribution to the SMT every six months (July and January), the report will cover findings, lessons and recommendations of broad strategic relevance from completed evaluations. The report will also cover UNEP management's compliance with evaluation policy requirements especially those relating to preparation of evaluation management responses and associated recommendation implementation compliance levels.

Review of Evaluation Function Performance and Compliance with International Norms

Self-assessment

57. UNEP Evaluation Office will prepare a self-assessment against the UNEG Norms and Standards normative framework, supported by documentary evidence, at the end of every biennium³⁵.

Independent External assessment

58. To provide a mechanism to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of UNEP's evaluation function, this policy provides for review by an independent external review team every seven or eight years.³⁶ The Director of the Evaluation Office will recommend that a formal review of the evaluation function of UNEP be undertaken. The decision will be endorsed by the Executive Director.

Report to the Annual Sub-Committee of the CPR by Evaluation Director

59. The Evaluation Office will regularly report on the implementation of its work programme to the Executive Director.
60. In accordance with GC 4/75 (1V), the Executive Director shall report to subsequent sessions of the UNEA on evaluations carried out in the organization. The ED will ensure that a regular segment is created within the UNEA/ CPR agenda to discuss evaluation

³⁵ The self-assessment rubric was approved by the UNEG AGM in 2020

³⁶ UNEG provides a mechanism for professional peer reviews of evaluation functions in UN organizations. Such an external review is also recommended when there is a change of incumbent of the Director position of the UNEP Evaluation Office.

issues and the Director of the Evaluation Office will brief the UNEA/ CPR on evaluation plans, findings and activities.

Dissemination and Public Disclosure

61. After the completion of evaluations, evaluation reports are disseminated to all evaluation stakeholders and made publicly available, with a formal management response, on the UNEP web page and document repository.

Policy Updates

62. This evaluation policy will be periodically updated, usually at the end of each Medium-Term Strategy period. Updates may also be required at other times in response to changes in the internal or external operating environment or in response to observations made by external oversight and review bodies. The Director of the Evaluation Office will recommend a policy revision which will be approved by the ED.

9. Functions and Processes Related to Evaluation

63. Evaluation is distinct from monitoring and audit. However, evaluations are informed by robust monitoring, whilst audit and evaluations should operate in a complementary manner.
 - **Monitoring** is a continuous function providing managers and key stakeholders with regular feedback on the consistency or discrepancy between planned and actual activities and project / programme performance and on the internal and external factors affecting results. The corporate monitoring function in UNEP is overseen by the Policy and Programme Division. Monitoring of project and programme implementation in UNEP follows the principle of subsidiarity and is devolved to project and programme managers. Information from systematic monitoring, at all levels, serves as a critical input to evaluation.
 - **Audit** is an independent, objective assurance activity designed to improve an organization's operations. It assesses and contributes to the improvement of governance, risk management and control processes in responding to risks regarding the reliability and integrity of financial and operational information; effectiveness and efficiency of operations; safeguarding of assets and compliance with regulations, rules, policies and procedures. UNEP does not have its own internal audit body. Internal Audit of UNEP is undertaken by the UN's Office for Internal Oversight Services. UNEP's Audit Focal Point is the Director of the Corporate Services Division.
 - **Management-Led Reviews** are assessments of projects, programmes, strategies, policies, topics, themes or sectors that are commissioned and overseen by UNEP staff outside of the Evaluation Office. In UNEP, the Evaluation Office has the sole prerogative to issue evaluations. All other performance assessments overseen by UNEP Managers are considered to be management-led reviews. Official UNEP documentation should reflect this distinction.