

OHCHR EVALUATION FUNCTION

STRATEGIC VISION AND EVALUATION POLICY

OHCHR is committed to being a fully results-based organization, clearly defining results in terms of the changes it plans to achieve and reviewing all aspects of its work in light of how it contributes to bring about those changes. Strategies are adapted to the intended results, calculated risks are taken and experience is used for learning. By publicizing intended results, OHCHR seeks the partnerships of key stakeholders, while also ensuring that it is accountable for its performance.

OHCHR takes a systematic and methodological approach to evaluation, as part of results-based management. It works towards an evaluation culture built around the needs of users and the impact on rights-holders.

The rationale and guidelines for the establishment of strong evaluation functions¹ within Departments in the Secretariat are detailed in the Secretary-General Bulletin 2000/8 “Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation”.

Since the issuance of the bulletin, the General Assembly and several of its bodies (such as the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions – ACABQ, and the Committee for Programme and Coordination – CPC) as well as the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and the Joint Investigation Unit have strongly reiterated the importance of having independent, credible and useful evaluation functions in the Secretariat.²

Following the rules and regulations, as well as United Nations Norms and Standards for Evaluation as developed by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and with the aim of becoming a fully results-based organization, OHCHR has therefore established an evaluation function within the Department, and adopts and regularly updates its vision and policy for evaluation. These are complemented by an evaluation plan that follows OHCHR’s programming cycle (currently four-yearly).

1. Strategic Vision for the Evaluation Function in OHCHR

The long-term goal of OHCHR’s evaluation function is to make **OHCHR’s interventions more relevant, more efficient, more effective, have a greater impact and be more sustainable.**

In the mid-term, OHCHR works to achieve this goal by focusing on three outcome-level results:

- 1. The evaluation function is a well-developed and utilized component of the RBM approach in OHCHR**
- 2. OHCHR’s senior management systematically takes and/or reviews decisions on existing and/or planned interventions, as well as on OHCHR structures and processes, on the basis of evidence provided by evaluations**
- 3. OHCHR strategically uses UN system evaluation resources (in particular OIOS and UNEG) to improve its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability**

¹ The expression “Evaluation Function” is commonly used to refer comprehensively to structures and processes in place within an organization to deal with evaluation(s).

² See as an example, GA resolution 67/226.

Annual evaluation plans within OHCHR's four-year cycle specify targets, outputs, activities and costs for each of the outcomes.

Evaluations in OHCHR contribute to the achievement of the stated goal of the evaluation function by:

- Knowledge management and increased **learning** about what works and what does not work in OHCHR's interventions and identifying **good practices**;
- Increasing availability of credible **evidence** for decision-making on start-up, maintenance, scaling-up or finalization of interventions;
- Increasing **accountability** vis-à-vis Member States, right-holders and funders³ on the use of resources and the achievement of planned results, and to UN norms and standards for human rights;
- Improving **risks mitigation** and the ability to respond to **change**.

2. OHCHR's Evaluation Policy⁴

OHCHR's Evaluation Policy is specifically tailored to OHCHR's mandate and context, and it is based on the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards for the UN system.

The purpose of the policy is to institutionalize the evaluation function within OHCHR and to ensure that evaluations at OHCHR conform to internationally accepted evaluation principles.

3. Definition and Purpose of Evaluation

The United Nations Evaluation Group defines evaluation as follows:

Evaluation is an assessment, as systematic and impartial as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, theme, sector, operational area, institutional performance, etc. It focuses on expected and achieved accomplishments, examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality, in order to understand achievements or the lack thereof. It aims at determining the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the interventions and contributions of the UN system. An evaluation should provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful, enabling the timely incorporation of findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making process of the organizations of the UN system and its members.⁵

³ In this context, "funders" should be understood to mean Member States, foundations, regional or international organizations and other entities, as well as individuals contributing through financial or other resources to the work of the Office.

⁴ This evaluation policy is based on the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards; OIOS guidelines for evaluation policies in the UN system; and several existing UN evaluation policies (UNDP, UN Women, UNHCR). It replaces the previous OHCHR Evaluation Policy, adopted in 2006.

⁵ This definition of evaluation is taken from the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) "Norms for Evaluation in the UN System", Norm 1 - Definition, page 5. The definition draws on Regulation 7.1 of Article VIII of ST/SGB/2000/8 and from the widely accepted Principles for Evaluation of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC).

Evaluation is an integral part of each stage of the programming cycle (situation analysis, planning and implementation) and not only an end-of intervention activity. It is closely linked but distinguished from other assessment functions such as monitoring, audits and reviews.⁶

Recognizing the relationship between organizational and individual learning, OHCHR incorporates evaluation findings into OHCHR training modules and learning programmes. Likewise staff training and learning programmes (e.g. induction training and management programmes) must include a focus on the evaluation function.

Given the limited resources that OHCHR can invest in evaluation, the organization decides on which types of evaluation (thematic evaluations, impact evaluations, decentralised evaluations, etc.)⁷ are best suited to its purposes on a case-by-case basis.

As part of the UN System, OHCHR is the subject of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) mandated and system-wide evaluations. OHCHR also engages in self-evaluations; in external evaluations conducted by independent specialists; and supports donor evaluations of its programmes, projects and interventions. The possibility of engaging in peer or joint evaluations is assessed on an as-needed basis.

According to the United Nations Evaluation Group norms:

Purposes of evaluation include understanding why, and the extent to which, intended and unintended results are achieved, and their impact on stakeholders. Evaluation is an important source of evidence of the achievement of results and institutional performance. Evaluation is also an important contributor to building knowledge and to organizational learning. Evaluation is an important agent of change and plays a critical and credible role in supporting accountability.

In line with this definition, evaluations in OHCHR contribute to knowledge management, the development of future policies, strategies, programmes, operations and functions by the collation, analysis and dissemination of experience from current and completed activities. Evaluations seek the causes and explanations as to why

⁶ Drawing from the UN Women Evaluation Policy, these functions are defined as follows: Monitoring is a continuous management function that aims to provide regular information and early indications of progress, or lack thereof, in the achievement of intended results. It is commonly equated with reporting as it is one of the main forms of collecting information. It is mainly concerned with if the programme/intervention is doing things right. While evaluation is also concerned with if a programme/intervention is doing things right, it is also concerned if it is doing the right things, why and how the programme/intervention achieved its intended and unintended results and whether there are better ways of achieving the results and sustainability. Review is the periodic or ad hoc rapid assessment of the performance of an intervention. It does not apply the due process of evaluation but can be a source of information for it. Audit is concerned with assessing the adequacy of management controls to ensure the economical and efficient use of resources; the safeguarding of assets; the reliability of financial and other information; the compliance with regulations, rules and established policies; the effectiveness of risk management; and the adequacy of organizational structures, systems and processes. The focus of audit is on compliance, while the focus of evaluation is on results and enhancing the understanding of what works, why and how. Audit provides evaluation with key information regarding the efficiency of programmes/interventions.

⁷For the purpose of this paper, the following definitions are used: thematic evaluations are exercises focusing on a specific theme of importance to the organization. Impact evaluations look at the organizations capacity to contribute to changes in the enjoyment of rights/in the lives of people – they are scientific exercises, mainly quantitative, based on comparison to reference groups that are not the subject of the intervention. As such, they are of difficult implementation by an organization such as OHCHR; following Amnesty International example, OHCHR will focus – at least at the beginning – on high-quality impact studies using a more participatory, qualitative approach. Decentralised evaluations are used to assess against the five evaluation criteria programmes, projects or interventions away from headquarters.

activities succeed or fail to succeed and produce information that helps make future activities more relevant and effective.

Evaluations provide a basis for accountability. They provide decision makers and the general public with professional documentation and evidence as to the results and use of resources.

Evaluations also fulfil a number of other important purposes. These include:

- Identifying and qualifying examples of good practice that can be incorporated in training and learning programmes, as well as inform the development of projects;
- Encouraging team-building through the implementation of participatory and consultative evaluation methods;
- Promoting a better understanding, within and outside OHCHR, of its policies and programmes/interventions;
- Supporting advocacy efforts through drawing organizational and international attention to specific human rights issues;
- Documenting OHCHR's experiences, thereby contributing to the development of institutional memory;
- Strengthening partnership and promoting inter-agency cooperation through the implementation of joint evaluations; and,
- Fostering a transparent and self-critical organizational culture.

4. Guiding Principles of and Norms for Evaluations

In implementing the evaluation function, OHCHR applies the following guiding principles:

Human rights: Evaluation is guided by the principle that human rights are the cornerstone of the United Nations Charter, a universally recognized value supported by the United Nations human rights machinery and the full recognition, implementation and enjoyment of which is the ultimate goal of OHCHR.

Managing for results: Evaluation supports OHCHR's commitment to manage for results by assessing the extent to which OHCHR processes, products and services contribute to effectively achieve human rights change (and to ultimately improve the universal enjoyment of rights). Evaluation is one key element in knowledge management and highlights the need for quality in the design of programmes/interventions so that results are clear, measurable and can be monitored and evaluated. Through the generation of evidence, evaluation enables more informed management and decision-making for strategic planning and programming.

Human rights-based development: Evaluation is guided by a people-centred approach to development, which enhances capabilities, choices and rights for all men and women. Evaluation abides by the universally shared values of equity, gender equality and respect for diversity.

Gender equality and protection and promotion of women's human rights: Evaluation is guided by the principles, norms and standards pertaining to equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex and protection and promotion of women's human rights, including the right to be free from violence. Equality between men and women is both a human rights issue and a precondition for, and an indicator of, sustainable people-centred development.

In line with UNEG guidelines, these are the norms informing evaluation in OHCHR:

Intentionality

Proper application of the evaluation function implies that there is a clear intent to use evaluation findings. In the context of limited resources, the planning and selection of evaluation work has to be carefully done. Evaluations must be chosen and undertaken in a timely manner so that they can and do inform decision-making with relevant and timely information.

Impartiality

Impartiality is the absence of bias in due process, methodological rigor, consideration and presentation of achievements and challenges. It also implies that the views of all stakeholders are taken into account. Impartiality increases the credibility of evaluation and reduces the bias in the data gathering, analysis, findings, conclusions and recommendations. Impartiality provides legitimacy to evaluation and reduces the potential for conflict of interest.

Independence

The evaluation function has to be located independently from the other management functions so that it is free from undue influence and unbiased and transparent reporting is ensured. To avoid conflict of interest and undue pressure, evaluators need to be independent, implying that members of an evaluation team must not have been directly responsible for the policy-setting, design, or overall management of the subject of evaluation, nor expect to be in the near future.

Quality of evaluation

Each evaluation should employ design, planning and implementation processes that are inherently quality-oriented, covering appropriate methodologies for data-collection, analysis and interpretation.

Transparency and consultation

Transparency and consultation with stakeholders are essential features in all stages of the evaluation process. This improves the credibility and quality of the evaluation.

Ethics

Evaluators must have personal and professional integrity, respect the rights of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence, and ensure that sensitive data cannot be traced to its sources. In light of the Universal Declaration, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality.

5. Institutional Framework

The institutional framework for OHCHR's evaluation function is the following:

The Senior Management Team (SMT) is the custodian of the evaluation policy. The SMT:

- Endorses the evaluation policy and its subsequent revisions, for approval by the High Commissioner (HC);
- Ensures the independence of the evaluation function;
- Is responsible for the endorsement of the Evaluation Plans, which are finally adopted by the HC;
- Reviews and endorses (for HC's approval) the management response to evaluation and ensures follow-up to evaluations by OHCHR staff;
- Uses and draws on the findings and recommendations of evaluations for oversight and approval of policies, strategies, programmes, interventions, etc.

The Policy, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Service (PPMES), placed within the headquarters-based Executive Direction and Management (EDM) and reporting to the Deputy High Commissioner (DHC), is the custodian of the evaluation function.

PPMES is responsible for presenting the biennial evaluation plan of OHCHR which, taking its point of departure in the objectives of OHCHR's Management Plans and Strategic Frameworks, covers field presences as well as headquarters functions.

Further, PPMES:

- Commissions, participates in, supports and undertakes evaluations – including by OIOS and donor countries;
- Disseminates and contributes to dissemination of evaluation results;
- Builds and maintains an electronic database of evaluations;
- Builds and maintains a system to record management responses to all evaluations and monitor their implementation;
- Develops and improves methods of evaluation and evaluation guidelines;
- Works with other entities in OHCHR so as to broaden the sense of ownership and involvement in the evaluation function;
- Reviews the Evaluation Policy, as needed;
- Helps to build organizational capacity for evaluation and support the spread of good evaluation practice Office-wide, including through training; and,
- Participates in international co-operation on evaluation, acts as focal point for inter-agency evaluation initiatives and represents OHCHR at inter-agency evaluation fora, including the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).

The OHCHR Evaluation Focal Points Network (EFPN) is composed of representatives of each of the four Divisions (FOTCD, HRCSPD, HRTD and RRDD), Executive Direction and Management (EDM), Programme Support and Management Services (PSMS) and the New York Office (NYO)⁸. The Policy, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Service (PPMES) acts as chair and secretariat. The EFPN facilitates work on evaluation by:

- Identifying possible evaluation issues and bringing them to the Network for discussion;
- Liaising with the respective Divisions/Services on evaluation-related work, to ensure consultation and participation;
- Providing advice on evaluation-related issues (identification of evaluation issues; development of Terms of Reference; draft and final reports; etc.) to improve the quality of evaluation work – for example by contributing, inter alia, substantive knowledge, insights and inputs on the UN's (including OHCHR) policies and work, as applicable and necessary to the evaluation at hand;
- Supporting the conduct and/or management of evaluations on an ad hoc basis.

The Focal Points are designated by the Head of the organizational units mentioned above for a period of two years (see section 9 below) on the basis of their interest, present and past experience, and the degree to which their knowledge is useful to facilitate evaluation work.

⁸ Hereafter defined as "Divisions/Services" for ease of reference.

In addition to OHCHR's own evaluation function, the Office – as a Department of the Secretariat – can also be the subject of evaluations conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), the internal oversight body of the United Nations. Established in 1994 by the General Assembly, the Office assists the Secretary-General in fulfilling his oversight responsibilities in respect of the resources and staff of the Organization through the provision of audit, investigation, inspection, and evaluation services. OIOS covers all United Nations activities under the Secretary-General's authority, including the UN Secretariat in Geneva.

6. Planning, conduct and budgeting of evaluations

The subjects of evaluation within OHCHR will be chosen using one or more of the following criteria:

- Relevance to the OHCHR Management Plans and Strategic Frameworks for the period under review – including OHCHR's long-term expected accomplishments
- Strategic importance
- Size of investment or coverage
- Demand by stakeholders
- Potential for generation of knowledge
- Flagship programmes, interventions or strategies
- Evaluability⁹

OHCHR subscribes to the internationally agreed criteria in the conduct of evaluations: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability; and to the norms listed above.¹⁰

The preparation of Terms of Reference for evaluations, the selection of consultants, the choice of methodology for evaluations, the integration of gender equality, the participation of stakeholders without discrimination, the drafting of reports, etc. will all follow internationally recognized norms, standards and guidelines, in particular those developed by the United Nations Evaluation Group.

The budget for evaluations comes from a percentage of the overall budget of OHCHR dedicated to the implementation of results-based management (planning, monitoring and evaluation) within the organization. In particular, the Programme and Budget Review Board (PBRB) ensures that all projects proposed for approval integrate funds for a monitoring and evaluation component in their budget (this can be a percentage or an amount, depending on the dimensions of the project and its budget).

The determination of such percentage is made every two years by the HC, upon recommendation by the PBRB.

7. Follow-up to and dissemination of evaluations

The manager responsible for the intervention under review ensures that a management response is produced within two months of the receipt of a final evaluation report. The management response is submitted through PPMES to the SMT. In the case of global and thematic evaluations the management response is prepared by the DHC.

⁹ Definition of evaluability (UNEG Norm 7): "Before undertaking a major evaluation requiring a significant investment of resources, it may be useful to conduct an evaluability exercise. This would consist of verifying if there is clarity in the intent of the subject to be evaluated, sufficient measurable indicators, assessable reliable information sources and no major factor hindering an impartial evaluation process."

¹⁰ For a definition of each of the criteria, see the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC) page at: http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,2340,en_2649_34435_2086550_1_1_1_1,00.html.

The management response comments on the findings of the evaluation and describes what action is being taken to implement each of the accepted recommendations, including a completion date for each action. It also provides a full explanation in relation to any recommendation that is rejected.

PPMES undertakes to monitor the implementation of the follow-up activities and contributes to the incorporation of evaluation experience in policies, strategies and guidelines etc.

In compliance with UNEG norms, evaluation Terms of Reference and reports are made available to major stakeholders and are otherwise considered to be public documents. Exceptions can be made by decision of the High Commissioner when it is believed that parts of an evaluation, should they be made public, may endanger stakeholders – in particular victims of human rights violations and/or human rights defenders.

8. Review

The Evaluation Policy will be reviewed every two years. At that point, the membership of the Evaluation Focal Points Network will also be reviewed.