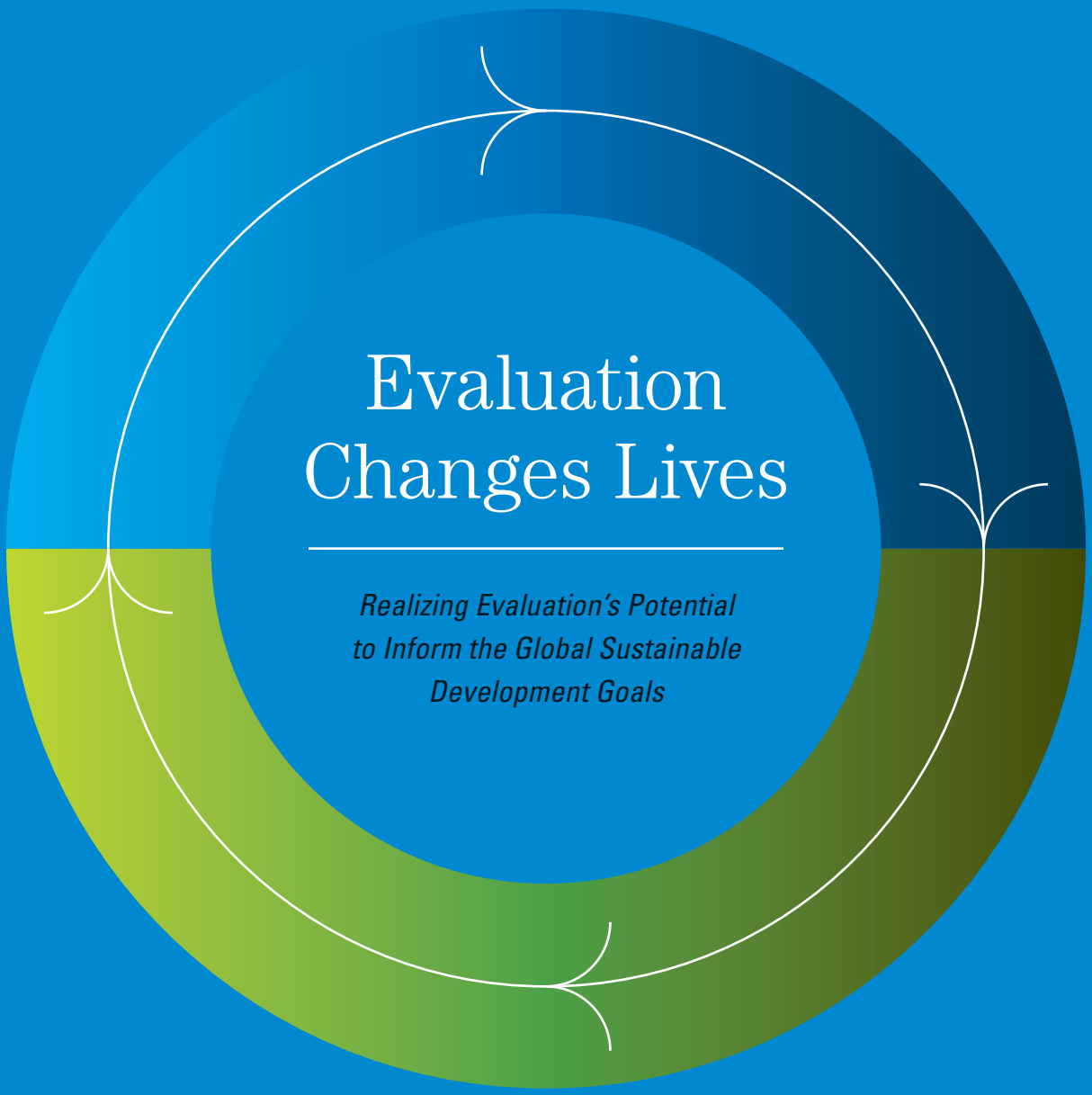
United Nations Evaluation Group

2015

A New Era *for* Sustainable Development &
International Year *of* Evaluation



Evaluation Changes Lives

Realizing Evaluation's Potential to Inform the Global Sustainable Development Goals

2015 Evaluation

UNEG
United Nations Evaluation Group

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Evaluation…is essential and the current constrained budgetary climate makes it more important than ever.

Ban Ki-moon
United Nations Secretary-General

Introduction

Offering Credible Evidence to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations Evaluation Group was established in 2003 after a review of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Evaluation, formed in 1984. UNEG is a voluntary professional network whose members comprise the evaluation units of 45 UN agencies. UNEG promotes professional evaluation knowledge to strengthen the UN, and to enhance programmes, policies and governance worldwide in pursuit of the UN's goals: *a sustainable future of dignity, without extreme poverty and inequality, with human needs better met and economies transformed, while the environment is protected and peace and human rights are realized.*

From the UN, the centre of global policymaking, UNEG offers a coordination platform for global and country-level evaluation cooperation and learning. UNEG respects country ownership and enables lawmakers, evaluation networks and practitioners to tap into the knowledge they need to build national evaluation capacity. UNEG's goal is to bring the most credible evidence available to implementing and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the next 15 years, with cost-effective, appropriate and continuously improving policies and programmes. UNEG, as a global professional coordination hub, fosters South-South, triangular and horizontal cooperation, supports UN reform and works to further its member agencies' and clients' effectiveness, efficiency and impact, and the sustainability of their results.

UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation, and UNEG's large archive of published reference books, are global public goods documenting best practices. Used consistently, they help embed high-quality evaluation within the UN agencies' cultures, and wherever they are used worldwide. As donors and countries themselves demand evidence of results, and measurable improvements in people's lives, the need for high-quality evaluation is ever more pressing. Says UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, "Evaluation … is essential and the current constrained budgetary climate makes it more important than ever." ●

Marco Segone
UNEG Chair 2015-2017, and Director, Independent Evaluation Office, UN Women

Indran Naidoo
UNEG Vice-Chair 2014-2016 and Director, Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP

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UNEG Vice-Chair 2014-2016 and Chief, Evaluation Division, UNRWA

Helen Wedgwood
UNEG Vice-Chair 2015-2017 and Director, Evaluation Office, WFP

Colin Kirk
UNEG Vice-Chair 2015-2017 and Director, Evaluation Office, UNICEF.

UNEG: Helping the UN Build a Better

In 2015, the world finds itself at *a turning point*. Depending upon decisions made this year, the world could descend further into violence, suffering and environmental crisis or it could turn towards a brighter, more peaceful and sustainable future serving all people for generations to come. Across the UN, we are engaged in building a better world and defining our collective vision for the future. The discussion is underway about how to end poverty and transform economies, while protecting our environment, ensuring peace, and realizing human rights, social justice and gender equality. Yet how will the world realize its goals of a people-centred agenda for sustainable and equitable development? What do we need to know? What do we need to do differently and better?

The world's nations and their citizens need to own these questions — and their answers. This is a key element in a new paradigm of accountability, national ownership, partnerships and transparency. People have a right to know about decisions and actions that affect them. "Respect people's right to evidence" can be a rallying cry for policymakers and citizens alike.

Evaluation can play a transformational role here. Evaluation can help us understand if policies and programmes are effective and, most importantly, if they are reaching the most disadvantaged communities, families and individuals: women and men, girls and boys. Evaluation can help us know if public money is being used efficiently and wisely. Evaluation can help us see what is working and not working, and why. Evaluation can answer these questions in the public interest. But once evaluators gather that evidence, governments and citizens must have access to it, and use it to inform public debates and decisions, so they can resist harmful actions and interventions. Most UN entities have an evaluation office to help gather evidence and promote its use. Yet working alone, these units cannot realize evaluation's full potential.

This is where UNEG comes in. As a professional network, it sets quality standards, provides professional support and amplifies

United Nations evaluators' voices. This, in turn, enables evaluation offices across the organization to provide strategic, meaningful contributions to the global community, the United Nations system and to each office. By fostering appropriate analysis and well-informed decisions, UNEG helps the sharpen and strengthen the organization's relevance, efficiency and effectiveness.

In the coming years, UNEG will work for a stronger, system-wide UN mechanism to provide evidence of what works and what does not work in system-wide initiatives, including United Nations reform and the System-Wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. UNEG will support each one of its members, no matter its size, resources and capacities, to ensure its evaluation functions are relevant and robust. It will help its members to serve and strengthen the United Nations, in development and humanitarian contexts, in stable and fragile countries, and ultimately, for all the world's people.

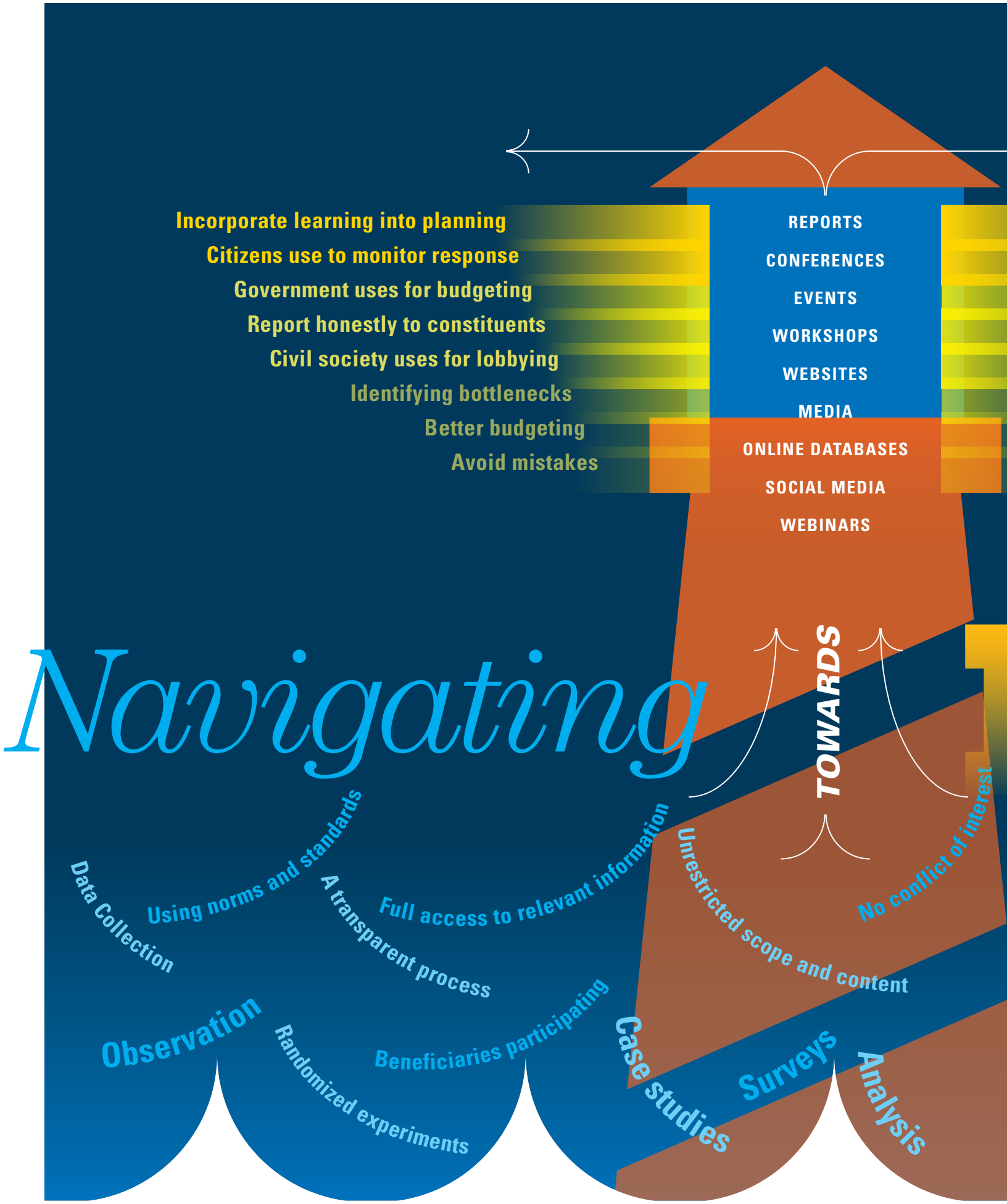
As the United Nations Secretary General says. The UN can't do this alone. Even nations can't do it alone. As the Secretary General says in his report, *The Road to Dignity by 2030:* "The new agenda must become part of the contract between people, including civil society and responsible business, and their governments — national and local." The emerging paradigm requires global alliances and partnerships to build tomorrow's world.

This is why UNEG is engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, united under the banner of EvalPartners, a global partnership to strengthen national capacities for equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluation. EvalPartners brings together parliamentarians, policy makers, UN agencies, multilateral banks, private foundations and civil society organizations. Together, they can strengthen countries' capacities to demand high-quality evaluation, to supply it, and to use the evidence generated by good quality evaluation system to inform their national development strategies. UNEG is a key EvalPartners partner, committed to make a difference — as we demonstrated when we successfully advocated for the General Assembly Resolution on national evaluation capacity building approved in 2014.

UNEG will serve the United Nations in building a world that works: free of poverty, discrimination and gender inequalities; a world of peace, social justice and respect for the environment. Evaluation is a means of empowering people, towards these goals. It should be embraced as an adjunct to democracy and enhanced human rights. To help meet these massive challenges, UNEG needs to be strong. If it is, it can offer powerful evidence, knowledge, and understanding of what works.

During 2015, UNEG faces tremendous challenges to progress towards the vision set out above. There could not be a better moment for UNEG and its members to step forward, as the world seeks a more sustainable and equitable future. During the International Year of Evaluation and beyond, UNEG will be carrying the torch of evaluation, spreading the illumination of evidence and helping to build a better world. ●

The UNEG Executive Group would like to take this opportunity to thank Deborah Rugg, former UNEG Chair (2013-2015), for her leadership in the coordination of this publication and her efforts to strengthen evaluation function during her tenure as UNEG Chair.


Incorporate learning into planning
Citizens use to monitor response
Government uses for budgeting
Report honestly to constituents
Civil society uses for lobbying
Identifying bottlenecks
Better budgeting
Avoid mistakes
REPORTS
CONFERENCES
EVENTS
WORKSHOPS
WEBSITES
MEDIA
ONLINE DATABASES
SOCIAL MEDIA
WEBINARS
Navigating
TOWARDS
Data Collection
Using norms and standards
A transparent process
Full access to relevant information
Unrestricted scope and content
No conflict of interest
Observation
Randomized experiments
Beneficiaries participating
Case studies
Surveys
Analysis

Evaluation Stages

1 CONDUCTING

2 DISSEMINATING

3 IMPACTING

Organizations and agencies use for learning, transparency, course correction

Management responds, proposes actions, sets deadlines for improvement

Different priorities Indicating where progress is advanced

Scale-up and replication of successful practices

Evidence so stakeholders can reach consensus

Reports freely submitted to decision-makers

Data for making cross-country comparisons

Statisticians gather more credible data

Results

A trusted, honest evaluator

Valid methodologies Adequate funding

Measurable, relevant indicators

Multilevel, mixed methods

Inclusive interviews

Literature review

Report successes and failures

Find evidence of efficacy

Using Evaluation Evidence for Learning and Accountability

Information provided by
Shravanti Reddy, Evaluation Specialist,
UN Women Independent Evaluation Office

Shining a spotlight on gender equality and human rights

How does evaluation change results for people in disasters, children in poverty, the environment, human rights? How are evaluations being taken up, integrated into policy and programme decisions? Thousands of success stories could be told; these are a few examples.

How do we know if humanitarian aid, or a development programme, was effective in combating discrimination? Did it unwittingly contribute to or reinforce existing discrimination? Did women, men, girls and boys share equally the programme benefits? Or do programme benefits differ depending on an individual's race, ethnicity, religion, disability status or sexual orientation? Were any groups excluded or unintentionally harmed by the programme? What can we do next time to increase equality and decrease discrimination?

Asking and answering these questions is essential for the United Nations, given that gender equality and human rights are part of its core mission. Yet most evaluations have not done so. Our publication, UNEG Guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation, reminds UN evaluators to ask these questions and gives them concrete advice on how to gather credible evidence to answer them.

The Guidance asks that data be broken into its components (disaggregated). Now, more evidence is accruing about who is being left behind. By raising awareness of hierarchy and power, it teaches researchers to gather data in unbiased ways. Some women, for example, may not speak up in front of their fathers, and so interview protocols may have to be changed to allow these women's voices to be heard. Evaluators might discover that even when land reform gives women the right to own land, discrimination can prevent them from registering it. They can then recommend that future programmes focus not only on obtaining the right for women to own land, but also on removing the discrimination they face while trying to register it.

Now, 69 United Nations agencies that must report on how their work impacts gender equality are using the Guidance. Within the system and among governments, as people ask new questions and seek answers, evaluation is becoming an agent of change for gender equality and human rights.

Information provided by
Olivier Cossee, Evaluation Advisor,
UNDP Independent Evaluation Office

Guided by Evidence, Supporting Afghanistan's Transition to Recovery

TO LEARN MORE about mainstreaming gender equality and human rights into development, see *UNEG Handbook & Guidance: Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation* (2011, 2014). Also see EvalPartners, UN Women and IOCE, Parliamentarian Forum for Development Evaluation and (UNEG)'s new book "National evaluation policies for sustainable and equitable development. How to integrate gender equality and social equity in national evaluation policies and systems" available for free download at *http://mymande.org/selected-books*

The UNDP Independent Evaluation Office has produced dozens of Assessments of Development Results (ADRs) since this modality for country programme evaluation was rolled out 15 years ago. ADRs' process and format are standardized, with some flexibility. The 2012-2013 ADR conducted in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan illustrates how customizing a standard evaluation process to special circumstances can improve its utility.

The evaluation posed many challenges:

- Vast size of the programme: The Afghanistan programme was UNDP's largest in the world, representing some 15% of UNDP's total budget delivery. The programme being evaluated was worth more than US$ 3 billion.
- Lack of security and stringent UN security procedures: lack of security in rural Afghanistan hampered the capacity of international evaluators to visit programme sites and engage with communities. Security incidents often cancelled or postponed missions with very short notice.
- Lack of local interest: While the Government was interested in the evaluation, the country office management in place in 2012 did not welcome it and tried to postpone or cancel it.

IEO made it very clear that the evaluation was not optional, and opted to strengthen its data collection tools. A so-called Beneficiary Assessment was commissioned to a local firm and involved interviews with 20 communities in 10 provinces of the country to elicit their feedback on the assistance provided. This proved invaluable to understand local dynamics and the results achieved by the programme at the community level. Once the assessment was completed, the main evaluation mission conducted an intense, three-week long information-gathering process with stakeholders in Kabul and a few provincial capitals. In a follow-up, IEO conducted two debriefing meetings with the country office management. By then, a new and much more collaborative management was in place, eager to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of UNDP's programmes in Afghanistan.

Once the evaluation report was completed, the IEO Director and the Evaluation Manager travelled to Kabul twice: one time to present the report to national stakeholders (country office, government officials, donors) and to collect feedback in an informal manner, and the second time to present the evaluation findings in a more formal 'stakeholder workshop', the standard dissemination event at the end of each ADR. The 'debriefing mission', not part of the standard methodology, proved useful to prepare and to some extent 'demine' what could have been a rather contentious stakeholder workshop, given the many issues raised in the ADR report. Similarly, a series of one-to-one debriefing meetings were also held in New York with the Missions to the United Nations

How do you know this one peso you allocated benefitted the Filipinos? Without evidence from monitoring and evaluation, we will never be able to answer that."

Mario L. Relampagos
Undersecretary, Department of Budget and Management, Philippines

of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Japan, EU and DfID, and in Washington with the US State Department. Finally, the evaluation findings were presented at a stakeholder workshop in April 2014. In the same workshop, the UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia-Pacific presented their management response to the evaluation. It was a well-attended event, in which IEO was able to put forth a critical report which was nevertheless welcomed by UNDP, the Government and donors. A rapport had been built and a genuine dialogue instituted through which the evaluators were able to communicate a difficult message.

In summary, the following steps helped ensure the utility of the evaluation in this challenging environment:

- More extensive efforts in data collection, so evaluators could argue from a strong informational basis.
- A long process of dissemination, with individual meetings followed by broader consultations.
- Maintaining independence and a critical outlook throughout — watering down the message just to facilitate its acceptance would have amounted to failure.

TO READ the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office report on Afghanistan see *http://web.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/adr/afghanistan.shtml*

Information provided by
Colin Kirk, Director,
UNICEF Evaluation Office

Helping governments improve health and nutrition for children in poverty

UNICEF used evaluation to assist Ghana with its LEAP (Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty) programme, which provides cash and health insurance to extremely poor households. In 2010-2011, evaluation data revealed that the cash transfer had a very low value and that payments were irregular — shortcomings highlighted to the relevant Minister and his deputy. The evaluation evidence was used in advocacy which led, the next year, to a tripling of the payment. Now, the evaluation results are being used to improve the design and roll-out of a LEAP extension programme (LEAP 1000) for vulnerable pregnant women and mothers of children under 1.

In China, as of 2010, malnutrition linked to poverty and low-quality food was causing anemia and stunting among 20% of children under five years old in a poor, rural area. UNICEF supported a pilot project to offer parents in a single poor county a micronutrient sachet to be given at home. The sachet included a food supplement called "Ying Yang Bao," developed by Chinese scientists. The evaluation of the project showed that the nutrients significantly reduced anaemia and stunting, and helped to boost children's intellectual development. Impressed with the evaluation results, the Qinghai provincial government said that, from 2012, it would spend $1.6 million annually to distribute the supplement to babies in 15 other poor counties.

TO LEARN MORE about how UNEG member UNICEF uses evaluation for the benefit of children in need please visit *http://www.unicef.org/evaluation.*

Information provided by
Michael Reynolds, Evaluation Advisor,
UNDP Independent Evaluation Office

Evaluation Brings Agency Strategy in Line With New Realities

Evaluation is about improving the quality of life of citizens, on the ground. It's about measuring whether what has been promised has been delivered.

Indran Naidoo
Director, Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP

Evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan 2008-2013

The United Nations Development Programme's Strategic Plan lies at the heart of its management system. The Plan guides the organization and provides a framework for accountability to its partners. The Evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan (2008-2013) was conducted by the Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP in 2012 and presented to the UNDP Executive Board at the Annual Session in June 2013. It provided an assessment of UNDP performance during the period covered by the Plan and an organizational assessment of UNDP's use of the Plan itself. In doing so, it analysed lessons learned from the body of evaluations undertaken by the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office in the last few years and engaged with a variety of stakeholders. It thus represented the Independent Evaluation Office contribution to the design of the new Strategic Plan.

The evaluation concluded that UNDP was a stronger organization than it was when the Strategic Plan was approved. The overall strategic planning system had been strengthened but UNDP also faced a more challenging context and higher expectations from donors and programme countries alike. The evaluation revealed that UNDP continued making important contributions to development across all its focus areas, although strengthening efficiency and ensuring that results are sustainable remained challenging. Another major challenge had been ensuring that the significant efforts made at UNDP headquarters to promote certain approaches (for example, mainstreaming of gender equality) resulted in effective implementation at the country level.

The thrust of the evaluation was that UNDP needs to build on its decentralized nature, a major strength of the organization consistent with its emphasis on national ownership. The evaluation recommended that UNDP strengthen its support to the country level and keep this level as the unit of analysis for performance monitoring. The evaluation noted the trade-offs faced by UNDP including that between national ownership and organizational priorities or the trade-off between long-term capacity- development needs and short-term results. It also recognized the challenges to effective programming and performance UNDP faced as a result of its funding arrangements, specifically its heavy reliance on non-core resources.

The utility of evaluation was facilitated by the fact that it fed directly into the development of the new strategic plan. This evaluation was one of the first from the Independent Evaluation Office to have management's response included in the report. Moreover, to ensure utility of the evaluation, UNDP's Executive Board requested UNDP 'take [the] evaluations' recommendations fully into account when preparing its next strategic plan,' with a focus on three recent evaluations including the evaluation of UNDP Strategic Plan (2008-13). As a result, UNDP prepared a matrix that provides a high-level summary of how UNDP has systematically addressed these recommendations in the text of the Strategic Plan.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
please see: *http://erc.undp.org/evaluationadmin/manageevaluation/viewevaluationdetail.html?evalid=6689*

Evaluation can answer citizens' demands to know how public money is being spent, and if these are the most effective ways to achieve results. Evaluation is a right.

KABIR HASHIM
Member, Parliament of Sri Lanka

Information provided by
Arild Hauge, Deputy Director,
Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP;
former Chief of Section, Inspection
and Evaluation Division, UN Office of
Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)

Cutting Greenhouse Gas Emissions

When the Secretary General launched his commitment to Climate Neutrality, experts expected that only a few of the 52 UN entities would be actively participating. But the Secretary General's Environmental Management Group saw it as a model for the world: By doing an inventory of the United Nation's greenhouse gas emissions, reducing its carbon footprint and helping the system achieve climate neutrality, we can "walk the talk and demonstrate the robustness of our climate policy," an official said.

The independent evaluation done by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services-Inspection and Evaluation Division helped raise awareness and had the effect of bringing senior managers on board. The evaluation exercise helped clarify roles and responsibilities and the needs for technical guidance. The robustness and integrity of the emissions measurement and reporting became better as a result. Thanks in some part to the evaluation, all 52 entities enrolled in establishing emissions inventories. Peacekeeping Operations was enrolled, accounting for nearly half the organization's carbon footprint. The evaluation added a constructive, critical point that an official called "extremely useful… It was a very, very good investment of time, in what became a resounding, overall success." As a result of the evaluation, all 52 UN entities use uniform greenhouse gas emissions collection methods, tools, data, definitions, and the same calculator.

Information provided by
Rahul Sur, Chief, Peacekeeping Evaluation
Section, Inspection and Evaluation Division,
Office of Internal Oversight Services

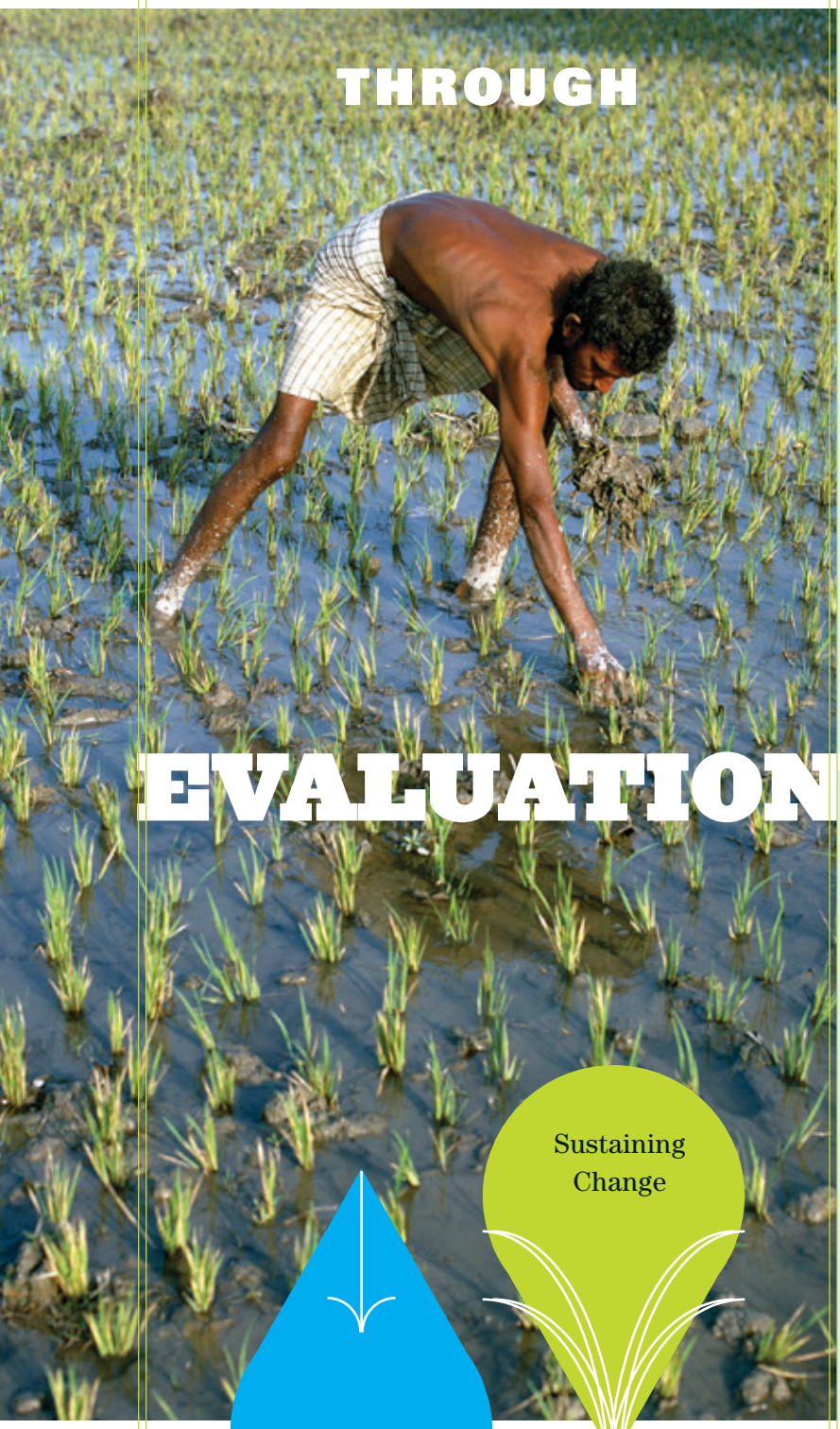
Evaluating the Protection of Civilians in Conflict Zones

The 10 largest UN peacekeeping missions are mandated to "protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence," When they are seen as failing to do so, the media takes notice and the UN loses people's trust as scepticism grows about peacekeeping missions' effectiveness. An evaluation of peacekeeping looked at how peacekeeping operations protect civilians when they are under 'imminent threat of physical violence.' It found that, although different responses may occur, force is almost never used. The Security Council, troop-contributing countries and missions differ in their views on why. Troops worry about being penalized for using force. Commanders on the ground may also receive contradictory instructions from mission headquarters and from their own countries. Some mission leaders don't use force because they say their troops are outnumbered or thinly stretched. The evaluation recommended obligatory reporting when a contingent fails to follow mission orders and more specific guidance for troops.

The evaluation touched a nerve. Following its release, dozens of news stories ran worldwide and the Security Council took up the question, with member states saying its serious issues deserve attention and discussion. Fifteen years after the last big review of Peacekeeping (the Brahimi Report of 2000), the Secretary General announced a new full review, an initiative expected to be comprehensive and potentially far-reaching in its impact on the structure or objectives of UN peacekeeping. Protection of civilians will almost certainly be one of the challenges considered.

SEE THE REPORT itself at: *http://www.un.org/Depts/oios/pages/ga_report/a-68-787-dpko.pdf.* If you'd like to learn more about how OIOS-IED evaluates units of the Secretariat, see the IED evaluation manual at this link: *http://www.un.org/Depts/oios/pages/OIOS-IED_Manual.pdf.* ●

Cultivating change



Nurturing Inquiry

Sustaining Change

Evaluations Ask

Was it relevant to the beneficiary?

Was it effective? Efficient?

Were there unintended effects?

How well did it work?

Evaluation Is

Making the world we want

Knowing what is and isn't working

Having a strategy

Knowing what to do differently

Evaluations Ask

Was the impact positive?

Value for money

Evaluation Is

Evaluations Ask

How could it be improved?

Analysis of planning

Evaluation Is

Were funds, expertise and time converted into results?

Better design for the future

Was the approach useful?

Ground on which partners collaborate

Is it sustainable after assistance ends?

Improvement over time

Could an alternative have been better?

Dialogue about barriers, equity, sustainable finance

Would change have happened anyhow?

Validating a theory of change

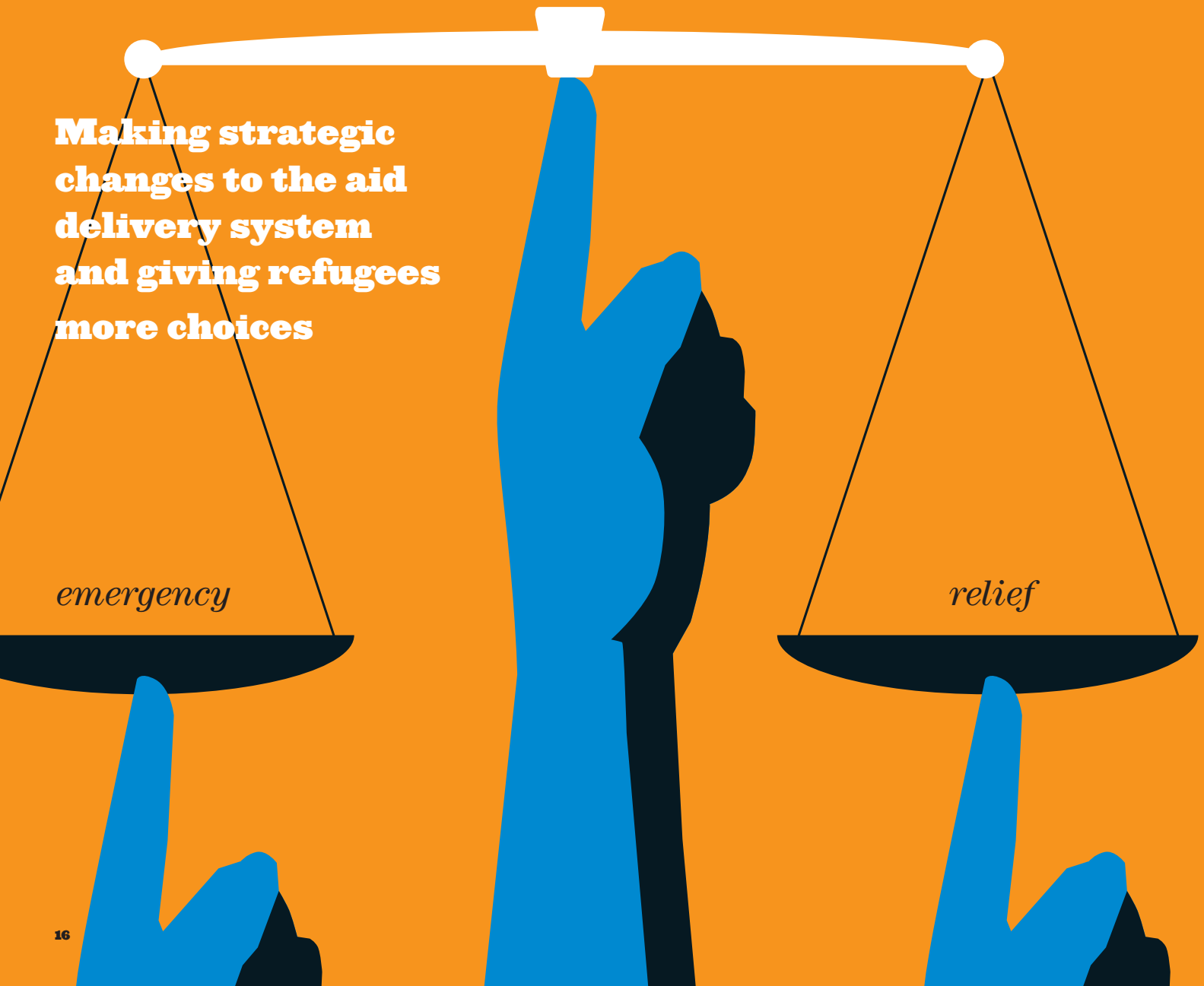
Is it working as intended?

Scientific evidence

Information provided by Scott Green, UNEG Vice Chair 2013-2015, Independent System-Wide Evaluation (ISWE) Secretariat Coordinator, and Helen Wedgwood, Director, Office of Evaluation World Food Programme (WFP) and UNEG Vice Chair 2015-2017.

Achieving policy impact through joint evaluations of disaster response:

Making strategic changes to the aid delivery system and giving refugees more choices



Members of the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) have in recent years increasingly been making use of joint evaluations. They work as a tool for monitoring the progress made in implementing key policy changes introduced into the humanitarian system. They are also a tool that can assess the policy changes' impact, and drive further policy changes. From 2007 to 2012, a series of inter-agency real-time evaluations were introduced during the first few months of large, sudden-onset natural disasters.

What evaluators learned wasn't always new, but creating a space and time for critical reflection and correction, during the early-response phase of a humanitarian disaster, was innovative. These results contributed, in late-2011, to a major redefinition of global coordination in response to disasters. "Evaluations emphasized that in responding to disasters, the humanitarian actors needed to get better at talking to communities and affected people about their needs, to improve participation in planning, and to provide more information to communities about relief and recovery plans," says Scott Green, who was the Chair of the Evaluation Management Groups at the time. "We are now seeing more systematic attempts to be accountable to people adversely affected by disasters in every phase of a response: during needs-assessment, project design, aid distribution and in learning afterwards." This also requires soliciting feedback and putting in place complaint mechanisms for aid recipients.

Inter-agency coordination tools are also improving and greater attention is now being paid to empowered leadership to help make faster, more efficient decisions, especially when the emergency is rated "Level 3," or exceptional in its scale and complexity, when domestic capacity required to respond is overwhelmed. Evaluation results clearly helped spur these changes. "The evaluations really drew attention," Green says. "The whole framework in which coordination activities take place has been re-conceptualized. It was a major reminder that during every emergency response, we've got to get better."

Another example of evaluation driving positive changes in people's lives can be found in the case of a jointly commissioned evaluation by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The aim was to assess the impact of food assistance on the approximately 24,000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar living in two refugee camps, established for more than 20 years, and the surrounding populations in Cox's Bazar district, Bangladesh.

"The evaluation revealed the need to enhance the refugees' dietary diversity and urged alternative food assistance approaches better adapted to the refugees' livelihoods needs," notes Helen Wedgwood of WFP. Responding to this, WFP identified electronic vouchers as an option for providing refugees with a greater choice of food items. The Government of Bangladesh approved the new e-voucher approach in December 2013 and it was launched in 2014. The vouchers are now enabling refugees to purchase a range of food items according to their own families' needs and preferences. E-vouchers particularly benefit women, whose customs constrain them from moving outside the camps, because they are able to safely access food from the local shops. E-vouchers are less costly than food distribution and give refugees greater choice in the foods they consume and when they can access their entitlements. E-vouchers are expected to enhance the nutritional value of the assistance, increase the security and accuracy of the assistance and have positive 'spill-over effects' on the domestic economy by providing business to food traders and shops. Refugees' registration process is also streamlined, and there is potential for UNHCR to include non-food items in the future.

As observed by Ewen MacLeod of UNHCR, "This particular evaluation served as a reminder to UNHCR's and WFP's governing bodies that coordinated action to support similar innovations in other countries is required if the world is not to forget its commitments to refugees first made in 1951." ●

EMPOWERED NATIONS *by* EVIDENCE

National Evaluation Capacity *for* Meeting Development Challenges

UNEG believes evaluation forms a natural learning and feedback bridge linking the monitoring and accountability functions. It is an essential part of any accountability system, as it generates the credible, critical information that everybody needs to know — on what and how we are doing — in order to decide on how to move forward together. Monitoring is necessary and important to show if targets are being achieved or not. Equally important, rigorous evaluation needs to be combined with monitoring, so that we can understand how and why targets are or are not being achieved, where improvements are needed and what actions we should take to perform more effectively. All levels need feedback loops and learning.

In this regard, evaluation can help in the implementation of the new global development agenda to ensure that we are doing the right things, doing these things right, and doing them on a scale that is making a difference. Evaluation will be crucial "because the new accountability framework will not be legally binding; it will rely on political will and persuasion. By assessing how programmes and policies are contributing to results, evaluation can help establish incentives for effectiveness, transparency and accountability," said John Hendra, Senior Coordinator "UN Fit for Purpose" for the Post-2015 Development Agenda, speaking during the High-Level Panel, Fourth Development Cooperation Forum in July 2014.

In September 2015, United Nations Member States will agree on the development agenda to be implemented during 2016-2030. The agenda will require accountability: governments and the United Nations will need to show that they are fit for purpose and that their policies and programs are impacting people's lives. Evaluation should be part of the accountability framework, as an important learning tool to help governments, the United Nations and other stakeholders to make evidence-based decisions and improve interventions.

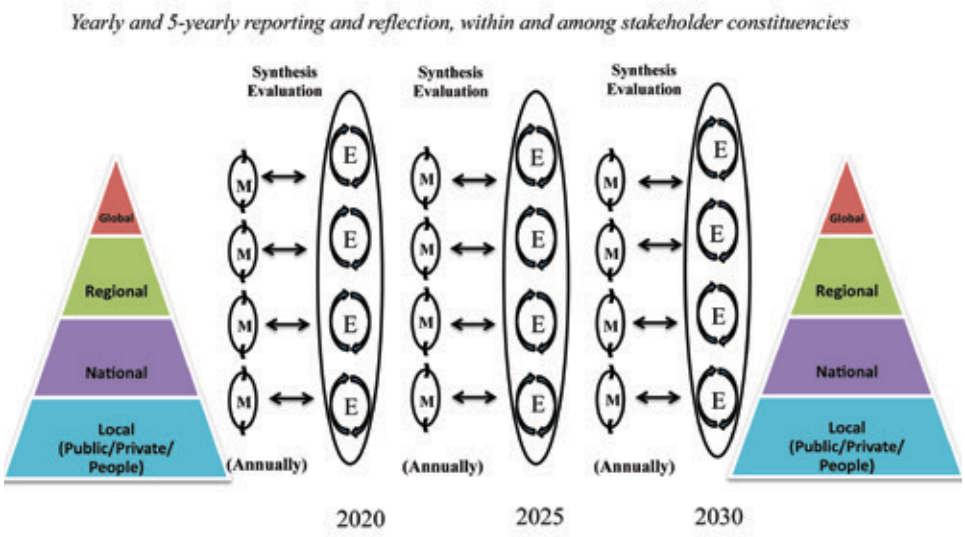
In the past, the United Nations organizations have found it a challenge to report on their contribution to the MDGs because of the lack of monitoring and evaluation systems in place. The new framework will have to capture UN, and other stakeholders', contributions. UNEG, in cooperation with other United Nations entities and national stakeholders, can play a role in supporting the development of such a monitoring and evaluation framework.

Even if a robust global framework is developed at global level, national evaluation capacities — to assess how the new agenda is being implemented — need to be in place, and to be functioning efficiently. It is widely accepted that successfully implementing the new development agenda depends on actions taken at the national and local levels, irrespective of a nation's income or region. It is nationally and locally that attention will need to be focused and investments made, if the agenda is to make transformative shifts and impact people's lives. UNEG believes that to operationalize the agenda at country level, the monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms should be based on national monitoring and evaluation systems.

There is much monitoring, but very little evaluation… Evaluation should be seen as a centerpiece of the learning process.

Amina Mohammed
Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on Post-2015 Development Planning

Evaluation
Juncture of Opportunity for Learning and Accountability



Source: OIOS/IED Evaluation of the MDG M&E Framework, 2015.

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For evaluation to be strengthened at the country level, political leadership and adequate funding are needed. There is also a need for national evaluation capacity. In the last decade, the evaluation offices of United Nations entities, and civil society groups, have been supporting national evaluation capacity development. The new General Assembly Resolution on national evaluation capacity provides further impetus. And the UNDP IEO has engaged all stake-holders around the globe, through National Evaluation Capacity Conferences. Through them, civil society has become active in building national evaluation capacities.

At the same time, civil society goups, such as EvalPartners are leading aglobal partnership for National Evaluation Capacity Development, with more than 50 organizations coming together to leverage synergies based on the added value of each organization. This initiative has helped achieve significant progress to strengthen an enabling environment for evaluation, has enhanced institutional capacities to demand, manage and use evaluations, and increased the capacities of evaluators to conduct credible and independent evaluations.

However, at the current stage of increased demand for evaluation and scarcity of funds, UNEG believes more support to strengthen national capacities is needed.Thus, UNEG is working with other UN entities, governments and civil society partners to create synergies between partners' initiatives. UNEG wants to ensure that systematized, coordinated and catalytic efforts are made to effectively enhance national evaluation capacities. Facilitating connections between supply of and demand for evaluation is a must, as well as applying systematic and synergistic approaches to assist countries. For all stakeholders, including governments, CSOs and the UN, applying a systematic and synergistic approach to assisting countries is a must. More needs to be done. All stakeholders should work together to more effectively build and sustain capacities, and strengthen national evaluation systems, to be well prepared in the near future to implement and evaluate the new development agenda at the country level.

Currently, countries adopting evaluation are linking public spending with performance. Many countries in the global South have adopted evaluation, using domestic expertise and demand, while other countries are at the first stages of establishing such evaluation capacities. "A consultant flown in for a few weeks to digest the complexity of a multi-million dollar project, and provide opinion on effectiveness, efficiency, design, impact and sustainability, is unlikely to be as good as somebody who lives the daily nuances of things," said Ziad Moussa, a Beirut-based evaluator and evaluation advocate. In any case, we know that developing national evaluation capacity is clearly much more than using national versus international consultants approach.

Here are some examples of how some countries are working towards building national evaluation capacities.

Information provided by
Colin Kirk, Director,
UNICEF Evaluation Office

Philippines: Creating a New Culture in Government Spending to Boost Human Development

How can a middle-income country improve lagging public services, spur innovation, enhance productivity and reduce poverty? As a first step, by closely evaluating the results of its spending on primary education, health, girls' secondary enrolment and other outlays. The Government of the Philippines wished to spend public money more effectively. Indeed, the government is country's largest employer, a major purchaser of goods and services. Yet old laws, habits and methods left over from the martial-law era left budgeting opaque. It was rare for departments to follow up on the results of their spending through systematic auditing, reporting and evaluation. Available data showed the country's ratings for governmental effectiveness, efficiency and accountability dropping.

In recent years, the Philippines has introduced a national monitoring and evaluation system to help it to reach its economic and development targets. UNICEF is providing technical assistance, helping to improve transparency and accountability in public budgeting and spending. Training on "performance-informed budgeting," building on systematic monitoring and evaluation, began at the Department of Budget and Management. Other departments across Government will follow, including Education, Health, Social Welfare and Development, Interior, Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources and Public Works. Evaluation knowledge, said Secretary of Budget and Management Florencio Abad, is "building a whole new culture in governance."

Information provided by
Ahmed Bencheikh, Moroccan Evaluation Association and Ziad Moussa, EvalPartners

Morocco: Heeding the Arab Spring to Improve Public Accountability

TO LEARN MORE about building national evaluation capacities please visit EvalPartners at *http://mymande.org/*, a movement to strengthen national evaluation capacities and a web platform to share knowledge on country-led M&E systems, or the International Conference on National Evaluation Capacities at *http://nec2013.org/*.

Arab Spring protests engulfed the region, King Mohamed VI gave a speech praising government accountability. He had, after his ascension, presided over an "equity and reconciliation" process, offering reparations and legal reforms. During the decade from 1999 to 2009 (the decade following the death of King Hassan II and the accession to the throne of the King Mohamed VI), Morocco went through many economic, political, institutional and social reforms. These included transitional justice, elections and political change, the development of the family code, justice reform, municipal reforms and advanced regionalization.

A next step on the path, in 2011, was a National Committee to rewrite Morocco's constitution, and the King invited the Moroccan Evaluation Association (MEA), then only three years old but active, to join. The organisation, made up of the professors, consultants and civil servants who founded it, grasped the moment. Benefitting from a favourable context of reforms and initiatives regarding the modernisation of the state and society, they put forward their evaluation agenda. MEA presented the "Memorandum on the constitutionalization of the evaluation of public policies" to those revising the constitution. They knew evaluation could become a force for better governance and services to lift citizens' wellbeing.

Their efforts were successful. The resulting referendum, of 1 July, 2011, established the constitutional principle of public policy evaluation in the new Constitution of Morocco (Article 70). Introduced and cited nine times in the new Constitution, evaluation emerged as one of the key ways the government enacts its ambitions to renovate the management of public affairs.The constitutional text gives responsibility for evaluating public policies to all the stakeholders in political and civil society — parliamentarians, local authorities, members of the Court of Auditors, the media. — Morocco established evaluation bodies in the national Higher-Education Council, Human Development Initiative and ministries such as the Ministry of Transport.

With all the constitutional changes, many challenges exist, in practice, in implementing the new principle of public policy evaluation. MEA is promoting the institutionalization of evaluation function, in combination with various national partners, generating public debates and organising national capacity development activities. MEA is working to embed evaluation in regional, local and municipal governments, and Morocco's Cabinet. At the same time, MEA is sharing lessons learned and innovative practices with evaluation networks in the Arab and the African regions through organising regional forums and conducting joint studies to improve evaluation processes across countries. ●

By Marco Segone, Chair of UNEG and Co-Chair of EvalPartners

PARTNERING FOR THE International Year of Evaluation:

UNEG has joined the global evaluation community to celebrate in 2015

During UNEG's Annual General Meeting in 2013, UNEG decided to join EvalPartners, the global multi-stakeholders' partnership co-led by the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE) and UN Women. Our purpose was to strengthen national evaluation capacities, and to ensure UNEG would maximize its capacities, contribute its utmost to the global evaluation community and benefit reciprocally from it. UNEG's most important act since joining EvalPartners has been making 2015 International Year of Evaluation (EvalYear) a reality. This is an opportunity to advocate for independent, credible and useful evaluations for evidence-based policy making at international, regional, national and local levels.

Declaring 2015 the International Year of Evaluation was an important milestone in the journey to strengthen an enabling environment for evaluation functions at the United Nations and beyond. EvalYear brings a strategic opportunity to shape the future of evaluation functions.

The year is already building on a strong partnership among all stakeholders: civil society organizations working on evaluation, United Nations agencies and governments. Celebrations and activities have started with the adoption of the UN Resolution, and an event organized by UNEG on 17 December 2014 where representatives from Member States, UNEG and EvalParterns, in a symbolic way, lighted the evaluation torch to renew their joint commitment to advocate for stronger evaluation functions, to prepare countries for the implementation of the new sustainable development agenda 2016-2030. Currently, the torch is (symbolically) passed onto to all partners during many evaluation events around the world.

UNEG believes social equity and gender equality are central to realize sustainable and equitable development, including the new Sustainable Development Goals agenda currently being debated at the United Nations. Evaluation must inform the SDGs' design and implementation, globally and at the national level. National development policies and programmes should be informed by the evidence that a credible, independent, equity-focused and gender-responsive national evaluation system generates in order to ensure policy coherence at regional and country levels. At the same time, strong national evaluation systems will help implement the global sustainable development agenda at the country level.

Given the importance of national evaluation systems, in the past few years parliamentarians have become one of the most important stakeholders in our discipline. They are pursuing oversight powers, and advocating for stronger evaluation policies and systems in their countries. The first-ever group of its kind, the Parliamentarians Forum for Development Evaluation in South Asia, was established to strengthen the demand for, and use of, evaluation in national policy making. The African Parliamentarians Network for Development Evaluation has been established as well, with EvalPartners playing a distinctive role. EvalPartners has also helped establish the Women Parliamentarians Group in the Middle East North Africa region, and laid the foundation for the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Development Evaluation.

Parliamentarians have not acted alone. They are being joined by Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluators (VOPEs), evaluation champions within

government and civil society and from the international community. Thanks to these partnerships, the regional consultation on national evaluation policies conducted by the Parliamentarians Forum for Development Evaluation in South Asia, in September 2014, drew stakeholders from all eight countries of South Asia. Together they discussed model policies and their importance, and developed country work plans to establish equity-focused and gender-responsive National Evaluation Policies in South Asia.

These worldwide partnerships also helped develop the Global Evaluation Agenda for 2016-2020 — a strategic opportunity to shape the future priorities of the global evaluation community. The Global Agenda is being developed now, through a highly consultative, global brainstorming process. It will be launched at an EvalYear event in November 2015. The priorities that will be set by the agenda are expected to be the biggest challenges faced by the international evaluation community: rallying support to overcome the lack of national evaluation policies; stimulating political will for evaluation when it's lacking; combatting the dearth of resources allocated to evaluation by most nations; correcting the absence of national evaluation capacity. For all these challenges, we need adequate strategies to strengthen national evaluation capacities.

SEE INFORMATION on the International Year of Evaluation (EvalYear) at: *http://mymande.org/evalyear/evaluation-torch2015] http://mymande.org/evalyear/Declaring_2015_as_the_International_Year_of_Evaluation*; For information on the Parliamentarians Forum for Development Evaluation in South Asia access: *http://www.pfde.net/* ●

By Indran Naidoo, UNEG Vice-Chair for Evaluation Function, Director, UNDP Independent Evaluation Office, Andrea Cook, Director, UNFPA Evaluation Office, Judita Jankovic, Evaluation Specialist, ICAO Evaluation and Internal Audit Office

Representatives from UN Member States, UNEG and EvalPartners with the evaluation torch, symbol of their renewed commitment to evaluation as part of the sustainable development agenda 2016-2030.

Professionalization of Evaluation in the United Nations

UNEG has, since 2014, expended considerable efforts to professionalize evaluation at the United Nations. The core problem is that UN evaluation products and services do not, at times, match the expectations of those who demand them. Furthermore, while other professions enjoy a status and recognition as legitimate, and have established systems in place to ensure recognition and quality assurance, evaluation does not. Such a status is important, to assure those who demand evaluation of the quality and credibility of our products and services.

UNEG's effort to raise the bar on the supply side of the evaluation — to cultivate more credible, professional, high-quality evaluation — is not for our own sake. Ultimately, it is to strengthen the demand for, and use of, evaluations by key policy and decision-makers, and by others who commission evaluations.

The effort to professionalize evaluation in the United Nations is not new. Past initiatives provided much of the foundation upon which current activities, starting in 2014, were built. UNEG has had an Evaluation Competency Framework in place since 2008, comprised of standard job descriptions outlining evaluators' competencies and required experience,

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tailored to the level of seniority (based on UN grades), with additional competencies and required experience for evaluation unit heads. Establishing the Framework was essential to capture the competencies and skills that evaluators should have, to boost the credibility and quality of evaluators' products and processes. Now is the time to update and revise it, including updating the selection process for evaluators. The Framework should also be more actively promoted throughout the United Nations system, to raise the bar on the supply side. These will be some of the UNEG Professionalization Team's activities in 2015.

UNEG also recognizes that other options are available, rather than the Framework, to strengthen the supply side of evaluations. These options include establishing a credentialing programme for evaluators, promoting evaluators' mobility, establishing a unique evaluator job category and facilitating the accreditation of institutions that deliver evaluation training.

The Professionalization Team, a group of volunteers representing various UN entities, has administered an online survey and conducted interviews with UNEG members to elicit feedback on what professionalization of evaluation means to them, what the challenges are, what options the UNEG Executive Group should pursue and to assess their experience with the Framework and list options on how it might be revised and improved. A report with recommendations were prepared for the Executive Group, and it is expected that significant changes will raise the professional bar for the ultimate benefit of those who commission and use evaluations. ●

Q&A

with

Margareta de Goys

Director, Office for Independent Evaluation, UNIDO

"Evaluation is an intrinsic part of the monitoring and accountability framework of the global sustainable development agenda."

Where do you see evaluation fitting within the SDG's accountability and monitoring framework?

I haven't seen any accountability and monitoring framework and so far there has been more emphasis on developing and formulating the Sustainable Development Goals than on how they can be evaluated.

Some of the MDG's were in line with good RBM practices in that many indicators were specific, measurable, appropriate, realistic and time bound (SMART), for instance. Still, monitoring and evaluation has been a rather weak area, partly because the MDG's were translated into national goals but without proper monitoring and evaluation systems. It has also been a challenge for UN organizations to report on their contribution to MDGs.

For the SDGs there will be a need for accountability — governments and the UN will need to show that they are fit

for purpose and impacting on people's lives — the stakes are high and we cannot really fail. For this we will need a monitoring and evaluation framework, which can be used at national levels and where UN contributions can be captured — as we are also accountable. UNEG could have a role in developing such and M&E framework and related methodologies, in collaboration with stakeholders in our partner countries. UNIDO conducted an evaluation on UNIDO's Contribution to the Millennium Development Goals (2012) which showed that it was difficult to match our results framework with the MDGs', and thus it was difficult to assess our contributions. It also showed that (as many development practitioners know) impact often occurs with a long time lag, yet we try to capture results at the end of projects and programmes.

To assess the achievement of SDGs will be challenging. Their effectiveness will depend on many programmes and projects, national as well as UN and donors', and also on policies and strategies. There are thus technical as well as normative dimensions and so far we do not have monitoring systems for such complexities. There will be a need to develop a monitoring and evaluation system that can be disaggregated, and that can zoom in on a limited number but pertinent indicators.

Finally, as independent evaluation functions we need to increasingly move to assess results at high strategic levels, including how our organizations are contributing to SDGs.

What are your hopes for 2015 International Year of Evaluation?

The present focus on national capacity building is most useful but I also hope that the year will lead to more resources for evaluation, more independence of evaluation functions and evaluation findings and recommendations being increasingly used, including in strategy and policy development.

Within the UN, what would strengthened evaluation look like?

To me independence, is important, for increased credibility of our outputs and increased accountability for development results. But for independence you also need resources to commission and conduct evaluation – many UN evaluation functions are presently under resourced. Strengthened evaluation also means professional evaluation – I believe peer review is a good tool and should be increasingly used for strengthening and professionalizing evaluation in the UN

Q&A

with

Indran Naidoo

Director, Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), UNDP

"Governments should not have evaluation imposed on them."

UNDP hosts and funds the UNEG Secretariat, and UNDP IEO Director Indran Naidoo is UNEG Vice-Chair whose role is to ensure that UN evaluation functions and products meet UNEG's norms and standards. Given IEO's critical role in supporting evaluation, we asked the director to share a few thoughts.

Where do you see evaluation fitting, within the SDG's accountability and monitoring framework?

Although there have been advancements and improvements in achieving some of the MDGs before 2015, there has been unevenness in the performance amongst countries. To reduce the inequality that persists this must change, and the post-2015 Development Agenda shall be delivered in an environment of even greater accountability, when resources are declining and popular expectations are increasing. As we transition from the MDGs to the new set of Sustainable Development Goals, evaluation of these goals becomes a challenge. Firstly, the

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resources for attainment of such ambitious goals should be adequate. Secondly, evaluating this complexity shall be more difficult than the MDGs given there are both quantitative and qualitative elements to them, and there is no consensus on benchmarks, indicators and success criteria. Whilst the SDGs are more inclusive, there are many goals, each with a measurement complexity that has not been thought through when proposed. It is an evaluation challenge.

It goes without saying that evaluation is essential to accountability and reflects the quality of governance, which then becomes a proxy for direct foreign investment or development assistance. It will thus always have some consequence, and this imperative brings evaluators to the forefront of the debate. Evaluators shall be in demand at many levels, as they share expertise on how to help countries and partners measure the SDGs. The assessment of SDGs is critical for development, and it must be located within the broader accountability framework that exists.

What are your hopes for "2015 International Year of Evaluation" and beyond?

The UN has great power in terms of convening, galvanizing and providing legitimacy. The fact that you have a Resolution that has been adopted in 2014 towards declaring 2015 as the Year of Evaluation is significant. There is no historic precedent for this and it is a milestone for the field of evaluation, as it raises the profile of the profession and helps with the discourse relating to the key principles of evaluation: independence, credibility and utility.

The UNDP IEO's National Evaluation Capacity series builds government evaluative capacity through networking and convening. It continues building evaluation capacity at multiple levels, and with governments. The Year of Evaluation helps escalate this work further.

The key issue, of course, is what happens beyond 2015. It will all depend on how well the United Nations Evaluation Group, which comprises the evaluation agencies, gets together and thinks more medium- to long-term, rather than 2015 being a one-off year of celebration. It should go beyond self-proclamation, and bring about changes in the lives of people on the ground. The way that the Resolution has been structured reflects country initiative and ownership, and is thus potentially more sustainable that externally imposed initiatives.

The 2015 National Evaluation Capacity Conference will underscore, and resonate with the UN Resolution's thrust, that evaluation can be used to empower governments to build their own capacity. The aim is to give privilege to governments themselves, so that they become empowered to construct the evaluation discourse and control the process in ways that are empowering rather than disempowering, and useful to change the lives of the citizens they serve.

What role does UNEG play in the working methodologies and environment, working culture for your office and vice versa? How your office can strengthen UNEG's ongoing mandate?

The UNEG Secretariat is hosted by IEO and we fund it from UNDP resources. Aside from that I also hold the position as Vice Chair, for the strategic objective aimed at enhancing the following; UN evaluation function, peer reviews and norms and standards.

In this regard, we play a coordinating role at multiple levels. I am working on enhancing professionalization of evaluation both at the individual and agency levels, revising norms and standards, strengthening the peer review process among member agencies and supporting the application of evaluation policies as well as providing learning opportunities for evaluators.

Of course, we are also a recipient of UNEG services. When I joined the office, six months later I called for a peer review of my office, which was very useful. We benefited from having key players from UNEG and the OECD/DAC network reviewing UNDP's work. I think our office, as well as others, can strengthen UNEG's mandate. What I would like to accomplish is to increase the ability of evaluators in one office to move to another in a seamless way because all are operating according to the same script. ●

United Nations A/RES/69/237

General Assembly

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Agenda item 24

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2014

[*on the report of the Second Committee (A/69/473)*]

69/237. Building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 59/250 of 22 December 2004, 62/208 of 19 December 2007, 66/209 of 22 December 2011 and 67/226 of 21 December 2012,

Reiterating the importance of building national capacity for the evaluation of development activities,

Reaffirming that national capacity for the evaluation of development activities may be further strengthened by the entities of the United Nations development system upon request and in accordance with the principle of national ownership and with the national policies and priorities defined by Member States,

Cognizant that the United Nations Evaluation Group and the relevant actors have designated 2015 as the International Year of Evaluation and that they would potentially contribute to supporting Member States, upon their request, in building their capacity for the evaluation of development activities,

1. *Notes* that international cooperation in building national capacity for evaluation at the country level should be voluntary and carried out upon request by Member States;

2. *Invites* the entities of the United Nations development system, with the collaboration of national and international stakeholders, to support, upon request, efforts to further strengthen the capacity of Member States for evaluation, in accordance with their national policies and priorities;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to provide an update, in 2016, on progress made in building capacity for evaluation, based, inter alia, on inputs from Member States and the United Nations development system, including the United Nations Evaluation Group, as well as the Joint Inspection Unit, to be considered during the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system in 2016.

75th plenary meeting
19 December 2014

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UNEG
United Nations Evaluation Group