



Report of the UNEG Evaluation Practice Exchange (EPE) 2013 Seminar

April 15 and 16, 2013

New York, USA

Lead Agencies: UNICEF and OCHA

This report, prepared by the Organizing Committee, encompasses the discussions and outcomes from the UNEG EPE 2013

Introduction

1. The UNEG Evaluation Practice Exchange Seminar (EPE) 2013 was held at UNICEF Headquarters in New York from 15-16 April 2013. The meeting was organized by the UNEG EPE Organizing Committee (OC) co-chaired by Abigail Taylor Jones (UNICEF) and Jock Paul (OCHA). Members of the OC included Cynthia Viveros-Cano (OIOS), Shatho Joy Nfila (OIOS), Roberto La Rovere (UNDP), Olivia Roberts (UNFPA), Geeta Dey (UNICEF), Jin Zhang (UNEG Secretariat), and Maria J Santamaria (WHO).

2. Deborah Rugg (UNEG Chair/OIOS) opened the EPE by welcoming participants to the EPE, 133 in total, the most ever to date for an EPE event. She thanked UNICEF as host agency and the hosting committee. Deborah mentioned as we move towards 2015 which is currently been designated as the 'International Year of Evaluation', the 2013 evaluation week will be the starting point for working towards the 2015 evaluation agenda – with evidence-based policy and utility as key areas of focus in moving forward. She also mentioned that the EPE is an opportunity for members to come together to share experiences, knowledge and expertise and learn from the challenges and ideas of colleagues.

3. She also welcomed the participants to the Evaluation Week, which included the EPE, the High Level Panel on the Tuesday afternoon, which was opened by Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, and the panel members were Michel Sidibé, Executive Director, UNAIDS, Pius Bigirimana, Permanent Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister of Uganda, Nick York, Director for Country, Corporate and Global Evaluations, World Bank, and Carman Lapointe, Under-Secretary-General, Office of Internal Oversight Services. **The key focus was on UN Results – Are we achieving them? How do we know?** It sought to discuss whether or not the United Nations is achieving its objectives, how evaluation is contributing to the measuring of the results, if evaluation findings and recommendations are actually used for programme and policy improvements, and how the collective capacity of UN programmes can be built to improve its evaluation ability; and the AGM, with the opportunity to consider the results of the review of UNEG, and have informed discussions about the future direction of UNEG. Finally Deborah said that the EPE is a forum for a frank exchange of positive and negative experiences, emerging practices and challenges between UNEG members.

4. Colin Kirk (UNICEF) welcomed all the participants to UNICEF House on behalf of the hosting agencies. He said that since 2007, UNEG has organized the annual Evaluation Practice Exchange (EPE) Seminars and this year's EPE will be the first hosted in New York, with a record number of participants. Colin said that the EPE is a platform for sharing information and experiences related primarily to evaluation approaches and methodologies and enables peer learning and support and the objective of the seminar is to:

- a. Facilitate regular learning and exchange of experience amongst UNEG members
- b. Foster peer support and learning on a continuous basis during and between EPE annual events
- c. Improve the credibility and utility of UN evaluations and contribute to the advancement of the evaluation function

He also said that this year the EPE was organized in decentralized approach, and so has had many working parts that have now all come together. This offered the opportunity for a large number of

agencies to be involved in presentations with each of the six session chairs organizing their own sessions, coordinated by the OC. He thanked and congratulated the OC and sessions chairs for all their hard work and also thanked UNICEF colleagues who organized all of the significant logistical preparations.

5. Jock Paul (OCHA) and Abigail Taylor Jones (UNICEF) welcomed the participants and introduced the members of the OC and thanked them for their valuable contributions and dedication to the event. The EPE was planned to have a mixture of plenary and group work sessions, organized around parallel sessions. They gave a brief overview of the 6 sessions which was organized into 3 parallel sessions.

The six themes/sessions were:

- i. **Knowledge management and traditional evaluations** – benefitting from both efforts - to explore the relevance of evaluation in a changing information context, as well as usage and timeliness of evaluation findings with a focus on the relationship between Evaluation and Knowledge Management
- ii. **Enhancing participation and the use of new audio-visual technologies** – focused on participatory evaluation processes focusing mainly on three aspects: (i) multi-sectoral approaches to accelerate the achievement of MDGs, (ii) the enhancement of national ownership and joint interventions, (iii) the advancement of ONE-UN reform
- iii. **Managing Evaluations** - followed selected key aspects from the phases of the evaluation process (preparation phase, design phase, field phase and reporting phase), with a focus on key challenges and best practices at each phase
- iv. **Decentralizing Evaluation** - explored the issues as attempts are made to make evaluation more relevant and useful to programming through the process of decentralizing
- v. **National Evaluation Capacity Development** - explored how various UN agencies develop their activities, what the commonalities and synergies are at the different levels of activity and the ideas for the future
- vi. **Evaluation in humanitarian and conflict affected contexts** - explored evaluations undertaken in conflict and humanitarian settings, and highlighted some of the differences, challenges, and innovations in these types of evaluations, as compared to development evaluation

6. The plenary sessions of the EPE were videoed taped and this was organized by the UNEG Secretariat. Unfortunately, the quality of the videos produced by the external contractor was of very poor quality, and even though they were given very clear instructions to only film certain parts of the plenary sessions that had been identified by the session leaders, they submitted an unedited version of the whole event. The videos along with the interviews that took place during the EPE may become available on the UNEG website at a later date.

April 15, 2013 Morning Session

7. Panel Discussion: Knowledge Management and Traditional Evaluations – Benefiting from both efforts.

The moderator was Ms. Fabia Yazaki – Evaluation and Communications Research Unit/Department of Public Information and the Panelists were (in order of presentation):

- Ms. Tina Tordjman-Nebe – Evaluation Office/UNICEF-HQ, on behalf of the UNEG Working Group on Knowledge Management
- Mr. Ian Thorpe – Knowledge Management, Monitoring and Evaluation/UN Development Operations Coordination Office
- Mr. Mark Pedersen – Evaluation Team/Policy, Evaluation and Training Division/DPKO-DFS
- Ms. Kate McBride – Knowledge Management and Guidance Team/Policy, Evaluation and Training Division/DPKO-DFS
- Ms. Kyoko Ono – Guidance and Learning Unit/Department of Political Affairs

Key Learning Points: The purpose of this thematic session was to bring together members of the Knowledge Management (KM) and Evaluation (E) communities within the UN to better understand how the two fields can benefit from one another, both from a conceptual point of view and in practice, through the experience of a development agency and UN Secretariat Departments (DPA and DPKO-DFS).

a. Presentation by Tina Tordjman-Nebe - UNICEF

Tina Tordjman-Nebe's presentation addressed the relationship between KM and E with a focus on process use and utilization, discussing how KM can be seen as a vector for making E more useful. The achievements and challenges of UNEG's Working Group on KM were highlighted. Among its achievements since the group first convened in 2011, the UNEG Working Group on KM has elaborated on KM definitions, identified innovative methodologies, and provided advice for the UNEG Secretariat publication on evaluation capacity in the UN System.

One key challenge is that KM is not taken seriously in many Evaluation Units, and is often only considered at the end of an evaluation. Due to a weak understanding of KM within the E community, there is a need to strengthen this effort. Unpacking the differences and synergies between KM and E reveals that the two fields can learn from one another. Evaluation can learn from KM's focus on innovation (e.g. audio-visual methods) and its people-centred approach. KM can learn from E's strengths in credibility and quality of the knowledge acquired (e.g. UNICEF's GEROS system – grading of country level evaluations). The differences between KM and E are not static, and so there is scope for bridging the two fields.

Another challenging area is that KM is too often focused on the post-evaluation phase. The application of KM in the process of evaluation can improve process use, such as strengthening the project (e.g. by organizing documentation/archives before the evaluation team arrives) boosting morale, creating shared understanding (e.g. by developing a theory of change in a participatory way), networking, and learning to learn (e.g. by exposing planners and project managers to the language of results measurement which in turn can bolster resource mobilization

and the design of future projects). This was illustrated with a UNFPA example of empowerment evaluations with Moroccan Women's NGOs.

b. Presentation by Ian Thorpe - UNDOCO

Ian Thorpe's presentation provided an overview of knowledge sharing in the context of evaluation. In essence, both evaluation and KM are about learning – finding out how to do our work better and help others based on our experiences. KM and E, however, are different in a number of important ways. Evaluation tends to be more focused on accountability, whereas KM does this less explicitly and is more focused on learning. Evaluation also relies on the evaluators' external perspective, while KM relies on reflection from programme stakeholders' perspective. Both insights are important. Related, evaluation is more concerned with the macro-level issues, and KM focuses more on the individual, more immediate efforts.

Given these different perspectives, it is possible to find a converging area in the sharing of innovative tools and techniques. For example, information aggregated through KM techniques and tools can be used as a basis for evaluation, helping to flag areas that need evaluations, and helping to validate questions, identify key people and even available data. Synergy may also be found in engaging communities of practice. Evaluations of KM are also needed – figuring out the use and value of KM work.

c. Presentation by Mark Pedersen and Kate McBride – DPKO-DFS

Mark Pedersen presented on the work of the Evaluation Team and Knowledge Management Team for the Division for Policy, Evaluation and Training (DPET), which serves both DPKO and DFS. DPET aims to make success replicable through an integrated cycle of policy, training, and evaluation of mission progress towards mandate implementation. E and KM offer complementary lenses to collect and assess performance to strengthen performance.

Some key challenges for the joint structure are resources versus priorities versus workload. The Evaluation team has 4 people, and the Knowledge Management team has 8 people, serving both departments. Coordinating and exploiting related tasks, in order to minimize the burden on missions, remain a challenge. Also, while people value the work of evaluation, no one wants to be evaluated. High staff turnover and constant repetition of the training cycles for new staff can also make it very difficult to do both KM and E and build a "learning organization". Another challenge is whether to go narrow and deep or broad and wide. The technical versus political aspects: understanding the context is important. There remains a lack of clarity on terminology and tool usage between KM and E. Lastly, the dissemination of learning products, primarily through the Peacekeeping Policy and Practice database (PPDB), does not guarantee that staff read or make use of them. Recent improvements to the PPDB make it easier for staff to identify current versus historical learning products (lessons learned, after-action reviews, surveys of practice) and guidance documents. However, it is currently not technically possible for staff to know or to flag learning products as very useful. And how do we know if people are applying what they are learning?

There are several possibilities for the way forward: a central database containing all mission reviews, evaluations, and similar products; strong connections with clients, including after the evaluation; reduced numbers of recommendations and focusing on high risk areas for significant

improvement; strengthened relationship with the Inspection and Evaluation Division in the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (IED/OIOS) to limit gaps in evaluation; better understanding of the right tools for different tasks; and recognizing the climate of financial constraints and being able to adapt accordingly.

d. Presentation by Kyoko Ono - DPA

Kyoko Ono presented on DPA's experience of bridging KM and E, providing an overview of the Department's new learning and evaluation framework, approved in 2012. The main trigger for this was DPA's strengthening and field-orientation starting in 2007. DPA was able to secure extra-budgetary funding for evaluation. In 2009, the Guidance and Learning Unit was established, aiming to bring coherence and institutional learning to DPA with KM. Learning often starts from the field, with guidance following. There is a small staff of 6 who are responsible for mission assessment, planning, and integration.

The new framework for learning and evaluation introduces an annual plan, senior managers' board, and a set of different tools. What has worked so far includes the following: availability of different lessons learning tools for different purposes, built on DPKO's learning tools; a targeted, accumulating body of knowledge that feeds into guidance development; implementation of recommendations when leadership is on board; and outsourcing of exercises through XB funding. The predominantly political nature of DPA's issues and the lack of empirical data to assess the work has been a challenge towards objectivity and towards making KM and E part of the operational culture.

Moving forward, building upon partnerships will be key, as seen from DPKO's experience. The annual plan and Learning and Evaluation framework needs to be tested. In addition, finding appropriate training on evaluation for DPA staff will be another crucial step.

e. Question & Answer Session/discussion

The post-panel discussion focused on the definitions of knowledge management and evaluations; the role of KM and E specialists as curators of information and points of contact to enhance knowledge sharing of quality products and sharing of tacit knowledge network of trusted colleagues; the challenge of keeping lessons learned alive. (It's hard to get an overview of lessons learned studies of the past few years); building learning into the evaluation process (not just extracting data and ending up with a report but enabling a learning process throughout the evaluation, with the key stakeholders on the ground); dealing with context and requirement of replicable exercises (evaluations should identify transferable lessons learned and those not transferable); making the management part of KM more systematic; how should KM be evaluated (change of people's behaviour has to be tracked; lessons learned feed into policy change and training); are we succeeding in documenting and learning from failure?; demand for knowledge has to be created (incentives have to be adapted to make staff use it Making it accessible is not enough).

f. Issues to be taken forward by UNEG or at next EPE

Promote a clearer understanding of the synergy between the KM and E among the Evaluation community; explore the strengthening of the interaction between KM practitioners and Evaluators

in their learning common objective. Explore the questions posed in the Q&A Discussion by the Evaluation community (see above).

April 15, 2013 - Morning Session

8. Enhancing participation and the use of audio-visual technologies in joint evaluation – Agency MDG-F.

The speakers were Nadia Hadi, Head of Office of the UN Resident Coordinator, United Nations Timor-Leste; Pablo Galarza Schoenfeld, Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator, UN Resident Coordinator Office, Ecuador; and Regie Guillen, Regional Field Coordinator, UNICEF, Philippines. The moderator was Gianluca Giuman, MDG-F, M&E Specialist.

- a. **Background information:** Between 2012 and 2013 the MDG-F developed a process of joint evaluation in [9 focus countries](#) where the Fund has financed from 2 to 5 joint programmes per country. These case studies or participatory country evaluations have given countries the opportunity to explore innovative practices in evaluation, and specifically in the field of “joint evaluation.” The three experiences that were shared in the EPE, Ecuador, the Philippines and Timor-Leste, are a testimony of the way innovation can enhance citizens and multiple stakeholders’ participation in evaluation processes. Evaluations were conducted with participatory approaches and planned as knowledge-generating exercises. These evaluations were linked to strong communication campaigns aimed to use evaluations to influence thinking and action.

The experiences of Ecuador, Timor Leste and the Philippines:

- b. **Ecuador:** The MDG-F has financed four [joint programmes in Ecuador](#) : (1) governance in the water and sanitation sector, (2) conservation and Sustainable Management of the Natural and Cultural Heritage, (3) Youth, Employment, Migration, (4) Development and Cultural Diversity to reduce Poverty and promote Social Inclusion.

Ecuador was the object of a [participatory country evaluation](#). In Ecuador a video-evaluation was conducted to capture the results of the Youth Employment and Migration joint programmes. A photo-evaluation is underway to analyze the sustainability of programmes.

The process: the participatory video evaluation created the space to include multiple stakeholders from a very early stage. A participatory consultation was undertaken to (i) discuss the idea and scope of the evaluation, (ii) single out the territories and identify the (iii) participants. (iv) Participants were involved in training sessions, evaluation questions were established by youth, and youth were trained to lead (v) the production of the evaluation, as well as (vi) the postproduction. The Youth were allowed to express their opinions without filter or mediation, so that the audio-visual tools faithfully capture their points of view and opinions. The last steps of the evaluation included (vii) the discussion of results and (viii) the dissemination both with the central government and with decentralized entities and communities.

The Youth presented a critical analysis of the programme. It is interesting to point out that the results of video evaluation do not coincide with those of a formal independent evaluation, but complement the latter by providing a non-filtered opinion of agents.

The results: 3 videos were produced by the right holders (one for each province); the voice of the people was heard directly by policy makers; the youth were empowered and had new advocacy tools; the process strengthened national and local capacities to build in Ecuador a culture of evaluation from the perspective of people.

- c. **Timor-Leste:** The MDG-F financed two [joint programmes in Timor-Leste](#): (1) Promoting Sustainable Food and Nutrition Security, (2) Supporting Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights in Nation-building. Timor Leste was the object of an independent [participatory country evaluation](#) that mainly focused in the areas of "coordination and ownership" and "changes in behaviours, attitudes and practices". The analysis was conducted at the policy level and at community level. Territorially, the evaluation covered three levels of analysis: central, district and village. A participatory **photo evaluation** was undertaken as part of this evaluation endeavour, focusing on the community level to bring evidence about "changes in behaviours, attitudes and practices" and also to support communities to reflect about programmes results. Participating communities were located in the most remote areas of the country.

When the **photo evaluation** was concluded a national exhibition called "[Lian Husi Rai](#)" (Voices from the community) was organized based on the key participatory country evaluation findings. The exposition focused on the community level and gave voice to agents by sharing their stories through the photos. In parallel, programmes conducted district field visits to share the main findings and to discuss how these findings can be used at local level in terms of future interventions.

- d. **Philippines:** The MDG-F financed four [joint programmes in the Philippines](#) with a total grant of US\$23 million:

(1) Strengthening the Philippines' Capacity to Adapt to Climate Change, (2) Enhancing Access to and Provision of Water Services with the Active Participation of the Poor; (3) Alternatives to Migration: Decent Jobs for the Filipino Youth; (4) Ensuring Food Security and Nutrition for Children 0-24 Months Old.

The Philippines will be the object of an independent participatory country evaluation (forthcoming). A [participatory video evaluation](#) was conducted using the methodology of the "most significant change stories. The main objectives of the evaluation were:

- (i) to empower community stakeholders through mobilization and active participation
- (ii) to elicit the Most Significant Change (MSC) among community partners and stakeholders

The process: Video Evaluation was conceived as a complementary tool to promote community participation in evaluation processes. The main phases of the process being:

- (i) workshops on participatory video evaluation. In this space a process of finding individual stories was promoted in different communities
- (ii) Gathering individual and collective stories

- (iii) the community has filmed their own stories
- (iv) film screening with stakeholders
- (v) sharing products with local and central level partners and stakeholders
- (vi) identifying gaps and policy issues

- e. **Conclusions:** The experiences of Ecuador, Philippines and of Timor-Leste show that video and photo evaluations can be used as part of the overall evaluation process, as an advocacy, campaign and promotional tool, as a medium to ensure genuine people's participation and as a tool for the documentation of best practices in joint programme implementation. The added value of video evaluation is that it accounts for the voices of people in the evaluation process; complements M&E by further substantiating qualitative aspect of the evaluation process, promote community ownership of the evaluation process and outcomes.

Evaluation results are too often a matter of niches. The experiences showcased in the panel suggest ways to bring the community on board, to share results with them, and to be accountable to national and local partners and people. The presenters strongly believed that participatory evaluation processes and audio-visual tools can provide pathways to share results with different audiences and that their outcomes are important inputs for knowledge management strategies. An important task is to gather the results of these exercises into policy documents and institutionalize the findings.

April 15, 2013 - Afternoon Session

9. Managing Evaluations - Agencies: UNFPA (organizer), UNCDF, UNDP, DESA

The session on the theme of managing evaluations was structured around the phases of the evaluation process (preparation phase, design phase, field phase and reporting phase), with a focus on key challenges and best practices in the management of evaluations at each phase. The session aimed to engage with participants and discuss their experiences, identify areas of good practice, and make recommendations for the future work of UNEG in this area. The format for the session consisted of four breakout groups, each focusing on a goal related to the successful management of an evaluation. The discussions of each group are summarized below.

Breakout group discussions:

a. Ensuring the successful constitution of the evaluation team (led by UNDP)

The use of consultants versus in-house evaluation teams was presented for discussion by UNDP. The opportunity that in-house teams would utilize the full potential of agencies' evaluation units was raised. The discussion focused on how evaluation teams were viewed as 'internal' or 'external' depending on their constitution, and how the independence of a team was perceived differently by different evaluation stakeholders. Managing perceptions of independence was viewed as a key aspect for managing evaluations. The role of UNEG in helping to define and clarify independence for stakeholders was raised by the group, and updating UNEG Norms and Standards to address this issue was suggested.

The group discussed whether the constitution of the evaluation team affected the usefulness and use of the evaluation results. The role of Reference Groups in helping to address issues related to the use of internal teams was raised. The role of Advisory Groups to help address independence and enhance credibility was also recognized by the group.

b. Ensuring meaningful participation by national stakeholders (led by DESA)

The group discussed how the involvement of national stakeholders in evaluations is viewed as beneficial at the national level in terms of improving the quality and relevance of evaluations, enhancing ownership and use of evaluation results, and helping to ensure the independence of the evaluation.

Involving national stakeholders at different stages of the evaluation process was discussed. Involving national stakeholders in the design of a programme/intervention (including discussing the need for evaluation) could help integrate national stakeholders into both the implementation and final evaluation of a programme, and ensure national ownership of evaluation results. The group discussed the role UNEG could play in helping to clarify the roles, responsibilities and rights of national stakeholders.

'Triangulating' the views of different national stakeholders was highlighted as a way to help address any potential subjectivity of views, and address criticism of the evaluation process. The

methodology used should be adapted accordingly. The group discussed how the typology of stakeholders varied according to organizational mandate, and thus needed due consideration on how best to involve them.

c. Ensuring the implementation of ethical principles during the field phase (led by UNCDF)

The potential for unintentional ‘unethical mistakes’ during the field phase was discussed using a case study. Participants highlighted ethical issues within the case study and also raised challenges from their own experiences. The need for evaluation offices to be ‘fit for purpose’ in terms of recognizing and responding to these challenges by implementing ethical principles was discussed. Adherence to ethical guidelines should be given due consideration in order to ensure the credibility and quality of the evaluations. The group agreed that, although focusing on the final evaluation product is important, the process by which the evaluation was conducted and adherence to ethical principles should also be given special importance.

Participants suggested continuing to implement the peer review of evaluation functions as a process where implementation of ethical guidelines is reviewed. The new UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality (GE) and Women’s Empowerment was discussed as a tool that is helping assessing the integration of GE dimensions into evaluations on a system-wide basis. The group also highlighted the role of Advisory Boards and Steering Committees to help ensure that ethical principles are applied, as well as ensuring communication with stakeholders throughout the evaluation process. Finally, participants recommended a clear dissemination strategy to share UNEG guidance on ethical principles more widely, especially among programme management and operations staff.

d. Ensuring more effective quality assurance systems and tools (led by UNFPA)

The UNFPA system for quality assessment of final evaluation reports was presented for discussion. Participants presented systems used by other agencies and discussed their respective benefits and limitations, as different agencies assessed quality at different stages of the evaluation process, which provided interesting comparisons. Ensuring the transparency of the quality assessment process was identified by the group as a key element of an effective quality assurance system.

The use of weighted scoring of different assessment criteria was discussed. Participants commented that weighting should reflect the inter-linkages between related elements (credibility of data, methodological choice, and analysis of findings).

The group noted that there was no direct link between the quality of evaluation report and the use of evaluation results but that there were other drivers, such as stakeholder participation, which helped ensure ownership of results and were related to ensuring quality throughout the entire evaluation process. Specific challenges related to assessing the quality of decentralized evaluation reports were also discussed, and the need for quality assessment systems to be designed accordingly was highlighted.

e. Key messages and recommendations

Representatives of the four organizing agencies and volunteer rapporteurs from each breakout group met to discuss the findings from each group and identify common issues and challenges. The following recommendations to UNEG were developed, which focus on how UNEG could support agencies to respond to the challenges of managing evaluations:

Recommendation 1: Update UNEG Norms and Standards to provide greater clarity on issues such as the independence of evaluation functions;

Recommendation 2: Produce contextualized versions of UNEG Norms and Standard aimed at different stakeholders in the evaluation process and broader audience. Suggested target audiences include programme managers, national stakeholders, and donors;

Recommendation 3: Hold a workshop to analyse the various quality assessment systems currently in use by UN agencies and identify key aspects to use to update the existing UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports and UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Terms of Reference.

April 15, 2013 - Afternoon Session

10. Decentralizing Evaluation – Agencies UNCDF (lead), UNICEF, UNDP, WHO, UN Women

The goal of this session was to explore different approaches to setting up decentralized evaluation systems within the UN, drawing upon the experience of EPE participants with a view to coming up with a series of lessons learned and issues that need to be addressed when moving forward with decentralization of evaluation at institutional level.

The session was divided into two parts:

- i) Experiences by participating agencies in setting up decentralized evaluation functions
- ii) Group discussions with broader session participants on decentralized evaluation approaches in their agencies

A variety of approaches to setting up decentralized evaluation systems were presented: some agencies where the key role is played by central evaluation units; others where it is the responsibility of programme management; or hybrid approaches. Progress in implementing the systems is mixed. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that the decentralized evaluation functions are beginning to meet some of their intended objectives in bringing evaluation results closer to those being evaluated using national evaluation systems. For some agencies, the issue of decentralizing evaluation should be extended to supporting better RBM approaches internally and with partners with design, reporting/monitoring increasingly done using an evaluative lens where possible.

Key points from the presentations

- a. **UNICEF** presented its systemic approach to evaluation where countries are at the centre of a networked partnership with all stakeholders. This demands the use of country-led M&E systems and capacity development to ensure international standards are met. The evaluation function is steered from the HQ Evaluation Office, in direct linkage with M&E specialists at the Regional and Country level. This creates opportunities for more context-relevant evaluations, although it also demands a corporate system to ensure good quality and credibility: the Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System (GEROS), an organizational-wide quality assurance system. The systemic approach presented requires an enabling environment and fostering evaluation capacities across different levels to ensure linkages between strategic planning and the use of quality evaluations.
- b. **UNDP** described its evaluation function linking it to the programming arrangements at the global, regional and country level. An Evaluation Office reporting to the governing body, plans and conducts all independent evaluations. Operational units are responsible for commissioning all decentralized evaluations. Support to decentralized evaluation function is provided by M&E specialists posted in country offices and the regional M&E advisors posted at HQ and the Regional Service Centers. All completed evaluations and their management response are made public through the online Evaluation Resource Center. This platform is also used to track the

implementation status of the management response. There are many challenges to strengthening the M&E function within a decentralized set up of UNDP. These include uneven demand for evaluative evidence, lack of capacities and resources and weak institutional mechanisms to enforce evaluation standards across the board. Key lessons learned in strengthening UNDP's decentralized M&E function point to: the paramount role of the demand for evaluative evidence, leadership commitment to results focus, and the need for coherent systems for, and practices of, results based management.

- c. **UN Women** described its decentralized evaluation function model, which is unique and tailored to its triple mandate (normative, operational and coordination) and the need for evaluative information at corporate, regional and country level that supports normative and operational coherence. Decentralized evaluations are managed by programmatic offices and planned through biannual Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Plans (MERP). The decentralized evaluation function has a link to the corporate function as they both enhance and complement each other. Regional Evaluation Specialists, who are part of the corporate evaluation office, play a key role in strengthening the decentralized evaluation function through capacity development and technical support. Achievements of the decentralized evaluation model include enhanced quality, improved capacity, increased profile for evaluation, and better coordination. Challenges encountered include the need to clarify roles, strengthen capacities and maintain independence while ensuring quality and use. As a way forward, UN Women aims at implementing the MERPs, developing Regional Evaluation Strategies, and conducting country and regional-level evaluations. Evaluating normative and operational coherence and promoting evaluation of GE through joint-evaluations is also important. The System-Wide Action Plan (SWAP) for Implementation of the UN Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women Evaluation Indicator provides a framework to track progress on gender-responsive evaluation for decentralized and corporate evaluations, in addition to UN Women's own meta-evaluation processes.
- d. **WHO** presented its context of decentralization at the structural and programmatic levels. As the two previous agencies, decentralized evaluations at WHO are commissioned by technical programmes (headquarters, regions and countries), while corporate evaluations are commissioned by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (IOS). To promote evaluation across WHO and the integration between corporate and decentralized evaluation functions, the Global Network on Evaluation (GNE) has been set up by the Evaluation Policy. The GNE is composed of 26 focal points representing country, regional, headquarters, and global levels. The Chair of the GNE is the Executive Director of the Office of WHO Director General. The GNE aims to promote the institutionalization of evaluation and to foster evaluation culture across WHO. Some of the issues raised during the presentation include those of technical nature in the context of a fully decentralized evaluation function (how to assess the performance of an agency when evaluating a national programme, and whose evaluation is it?); and those addressing the management of the coordination of centralized and decentralized evaluation functions (how to keep the momentum of GNE while building a critical mass of staff interested in evaluation in the organization?).
- e. **UNCDF** presented its hybrid system of decentralized evaluation with regional offices taking greater responsibility for the design and management of programme and project evaluations with

the support of the HQ-based Evaluation Unit. It presented the case of the management of a decentralized evaluation in West Africa, which involved fully the partner government. The presentation highlighted some of the bottlenecks encountered during the process: (i) differences in evaluation methodology (ii) differing use of formal evaluation standards in approving reports (iii) questions over who had final approval for the report. On the other hand, the involvement of the national partner in the evaluation process increased the likely impact of the evaluation. While the final report met the objectives of both UNCDF and the national evaluation systems, the main lesson learned was to agree on objectives and approaches for the evaluation early in the design stage

- f. In the final presentation, **UNCDF** provided background on how it was seeking to decentralize evaluation beyond the evaluation function and into the programme cycle with a view to building an evaluation culture by embedding evaluative approaches in programme and project design and monitoring. Some examples included i) work at the project level to develop and apply evaluability standards which sought to check that expected development results are clearly articulated and amenable to measurement, and that M&E plans and budgets are adequate, including performance indicators; (ii) efforts focused at the sector-level overall in developing results chains to guide broader programme design and sector-level performance reporting; (iii) ongoing initiatives working with project managers to apply self-evaluation techniques, applying the 5 DAC criteria at different levels of the results chain to ongoing results-focused monitoring. The presenter emphasized the importance of ensuring that increased demand for self-evaluation does not come at the expense of a sufficient volume of external evaluation to externally validate results (or not) across the full range of an organization's interventions.

Main points from the discussions

The focus on decentralized evaluation was welcomed; it is increasingly an element being assessed in peer reviews of UN evaluation functions.

Discussants agreed that there were many advantages to well-developed decentralized evaluation systems: strengthened local accountability for results, increased ownership and participation by local stakeholders in evaluative exercises whether external or as part of ongoing programme cycle management. This is a key element of broader UN approaches to improve the quality and impact of its work whether in the normative, humanitarian or development fields.

At the same time, capacity within many organizations was still sometimes lagging to manage such systems and generate reports that are in line with UN norms and standards. Such changes in focus and operations would require significant efforts to change organizational culture with senior management interest and corresponding changes in accountability structures necessary to introduce systems focused on really managing for results.

There was also increasing focus on improving the integration of M&E systems so that higher level strategic and thematic evaluations were able to make better use of project and programme evaluations that met minimum standards. This would also require more attention to issues around evaluability with projects and programmes being designed with evaluation and results-oriented monitoring and reporting in mind. There is potential to make greater use of nationally-generated data to prevent double work and increase the participation in evaluation by partners.

Conclusions and next steps

Moving forward, there was agreement that this topic could be worthy of future work in UNEG, both with a view to increasing the sharing of best practice between agencies on setting up decentralized evaluation structures internally, but also as part of broader work on better integrating RBM approaches into evaluation systems more formally with better and more rigorous RBM and evaluation in mind. It was agreed to propose future work on this as part of discussions on the future strategic direction of UNEG.

April 16, 2013 - Morning Session

11. Evaluation in Humanitarian and conflict affected contexts - Agencies: OCHA (lead), OIOS, UNV, WFP, UN Women and ALNAP (invitee)

Scott Green, OCHA, gave an overview presentation that highlighted some of the key challenges in conducting evaluations in humanitarian and conflict settings, and then discussions were hosted in an “Open Space” format to share experiences among EPE participants on how colleagues have addressed and dealt with these challenges. Participants moved around, and participated in discussions as they wished.

Scott Green’s presentation noted the following factors are particularly important in undertaking and considering evaluations in humanitarian and conflict affected contexts.

a. Environmental Factors

- Evaluation practice generally assumes a democratic environment is in place but in humanitarian action, access is typically being restricted due to security problems.
- In humanitarian and conflict setting, what kinds of trade-offs might be involved?
- How can evaluators safely seek out their views and not put themselves or others at risk? Respect core principle of Do No Harm and maintain analytical integrity?

b. Boundaries between M&E and needs assessment converge

- In crises situations there are often no available data-sets and coordinated needs assessments may produce poor or unreliable results in the initial phases.
- In the absence of routine data collection systems, the role of evaluators may need to shift towards the identification of unmet needs and to provide a rapid feedback or complaints mechanism from populations when other social structures have failed.
- Evaluation function therefore must play other roles and gap filling functions. RTEs are a good example of this mixed role.

c. Co-ordination Challenges: the need for joint/joined up approaches

- Acute nature of many humanitarian crises typically requires urgent action by a multitude of actors. Co-ordination is a major challenge and the effective alleviation of human suffering requires it.
- Co-ordination remains a key evaluation criteria, which all evaluations must examine in depth. In order to overcome challenges in attributing the results of different agency projects during humanitarian responses, and easing the burden on staff responding to emergencies, joint evaluations are becoming more common in humanitarian settings, and are more established than joint evaluations in development programming

d. Unique Challenges in the evaluation of impact

- In humanitarian settings, the objectives are to keep affected people alive (preventing negative outcomes), and/or returning them to better state than pre-disaster. However baseline data does not exist, and not ethical to create control groups.

e. Utilization of humanitarian evaluations

- In an atmosphere of high staff turnover and short project cycles, how can practitioners and managers ensure that humanitarian evaluations and their findings inform response. What key steps should managers take, and are these different in humanitarian evaluation?

f. Leadership

- Evaluations and analysis of humanitarian response consistently suggest that ineffective leadership is a major constraint. How can evaluations contribute to improved humanitarian leadership by considering the factors that make humanitarian leadership successful, and identifying actions to improve the quality of leadership?

Paul Knoxe from ALNAP (Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action) then gave a presentation on its role as a convener and highlighted resources and networks available for humanitarian evaluations.

The following themes were then discussed in “open space” conversations:

a. Utilization (hosted by Paul Knoxe ALNAP and Tijana Bojanic OCHA)

Group discussed the meaning of utilization: noted that the expectation is often one of instrumental use, based on the idea that organizations are rational: new information will be incorporated into programming. However, the reality is that information is incorporated through political and social processes: and so utilization is seldom direct or instrumental. Organizations are not ‘rational’. The process of utilization is one of organizational change. As evaluators, we should be aware of this and educate stakeholders – ensure that they do not have unrealistic expectations.

Factors affecting utilization

- Ownership – decision-makers should feel that the questions asked are useful to them, and should be engaged in creation of recommendations.
- Timing – to be useful, information must come at the right time, before decisions are made
- Team composition – evaluators who are ‘like us’ have more influence, so teams should be led by professional peers (albeit from other organizations or countries).
- Relationships: evaluators can and should spend time building trust
- Steering committees – one possible way of creating ownership (see above)
- Positivity – positives and good practices are more likely to be picked up and used? Evaluators can look for items to build on, as well as ones to stop...
- Body of evidence – single evaluations are less likely to influence change than a body of evidence
- Robustness – does the quality of evaluation affect utilization?
- Utilization requires planning and preparation

b. Evaluating humanitarian coordination – OIOS evaluation of OCHA hosted by Marianne Vestergaard; Ellen Vinkey; Arild Hauge, OIOS

The non-linearity of the preparedness-emergency-recovery-development phases with early recovery and development needing to take emergency preparedness into consideration in order to build resilience towards potential future emergencies. This resulted in a discussion about the importance of working together within the UN system, with implementing partners and host

governments, but also the challenges faced by stakeholders in order to avoid duplication of work in this spectrum of work.

The political nature of identifying situations as emergencies, as seen in some contexts where host governments are reluctant to label a specific situation “emergency”, which poses specific challenges to the UN system’s combined efforts to intervene in a humanitarian situation.

The challenges of measuring the impact of coordination – what are the outcomes and impacts of good coordination efforts among humanitarian actors? And how do we measure or show coordination success? An engaged discussion took place on the importance of good working relationships within the IASC at global, regional and country level as well as close collaboration with implementing partners in order for coordination to be successful. Issues around cluster coordination and inter-cluster coordination were discussed as well as the “human factor” of ensuring good cooperation and joint planning in UNCTs.

A brief discussion took place on the issue of internal evaluation units vis-à-vis external evaluations and the issue of “competence” versus independence of evaluators. Further, this discussion involved the challenges related to conducting and coordinating Real Time Evaluations in settings with lack of baseline data and differing political agendas with humanitarian actors and host governments.

c. Counterfactual in impact evaluations in humanitarian contexts hosted by Marian Read, WFP

“How do you deal with the lack of a counterfactual in impact evaluations in humanitarian contexts?”

The joint evaluation with UNHCR evaluation provides irrefutable empirical evidence of the extent to which traditional approaches to refugee assistance have failed to promote sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance amongst populations who have been forced into exile. In the chilling words of the synthesis report, unacceptably high numbers of refugee households remain food insecure; rates of chronic malnutrition reached or exceeded the high severity threshold in all four contexts; livelihoods options for refugees were very limited, women’s livelihoods activities were especially precarious and often exposed them to risk. Marian presented the WFP/UNHCR experience in identifying comparison groups and dealing with the lack of a traditional counterfactual to undertake this series of impact evaluations.

Issues discussed:

Experience in humanitarian contexts: Participants in the conversation had experience in Tajikistan, DRC, Zimbabwe, Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan, Fukushima/Japan, Botswana, Lebanon, Bangladesh, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Chad, etc. Sectoral contexts included IDPs/Refugees, Shelter, Health, Sanitation, livelihoods, emergency preparedness, cash transfer programmes, nutrition, food security, nuclear, peacekeeping, etc. Many participants, although not all, had undertaken evaluation in these contexts.

Findings regarding counterfactual: no agency had experience using randomized control trial experimental design such as with/without, before/after “treatment” and generally it was not considered an appropriate approach in a humanitarian context.

Alternatives:

Identification of comparison groups and use of non-experimental design were discussed. For example:

- comparisons were made on livelihoods before and after (using recall for before)
- comparisons were made for emergency preparedness approaches, between different agencies, however more suggestions of how to go about evaluating the impact of emergency preparedness was sought, especially given the situation where the event (shock) did not actually occur
- comparisons were made using multi-country approach (protracted refugee camp situations in different countries), triangulating findings across countries and preparing synthesis reports
- comparisons were made between groups that did not receive the intervention because they were not registered (e.g. non-registered refugees in Bangladesh)
- comparison was made within countries between refugees/IDPs in camps, with host populations and with vulnerable groups within host populations
- comparison between different interventions (cash versus food) with similar objectives targeting similar populations

In some cases, such as Fukushima nuclear crisis, a comparison or counterfactual was not appropriate – instead how the emergency centre dealt with the crisis was the focus of the evaluation.

Alternative impact evaluation methods to randomized control trials:

A mixed method approach which combines the use of theory of change with triangulation of secondary source references showing trend data on certain indicators; quantitative household survey data; and data from qualitative methods such as focus group discussions and key informant interviews was recommended and an example given (see attachment).

A reminder regarding monitoring: the importance of stronger monitoring systems in humanitarian contexts was noted, in order to ensure timely corrective action is taken to meet the principle of ‘do no harm’.

d. Joint experience in integrating gender dimensions into an evaluation of results of the MONUSCO peacekeeping operation in 2012: How can collaboration between entities help ensure the integration of gender equality principles in evaluations in conflict settings? Hosted by Jan Muir (OIOS) and Florencia Tateossian (UN Women)

UN System Evaluation Norms and Standards require that human rights and gender equality perspectives are taken into consideration in evaluations. Both perspectives share interrelated principles such as inclusion, participation and fair power relations. However the integration of the gender dimension in evaluation in conflict settings presents challenges as well as opportunities.

These were evident in the experience of OIOS and UN Women in 2012 when, following discussions between the two entities, a UN Women evaluation specialist worked for three months with an OIOS team evaluating performance and achievement of results in UN peacekeeping activities in DRC. The collaboration was intended to ensure that a gender perspective was visibly mainstreamed through the evaluation, and that both entities would gain longer-term insights from the experience. Two publicly-released reports resulted.

The challenges identified in the Conversation included:

- *The joint nature of the evaluation itself*, as evaluations involving two or more partners take more time and are more difficult to manage. The transaction costs incurred must be weighed against the benefits. Senior-level understanding and acceptance of the potential risks and benefits is important. An MoU and/or a formally-structured collaboration can ensure that expectations concerning outputs and outcomes are clear;
- *The need to produce separate reports for separate boards or committees*, each with their own protocols and constraints (e.g. word limits). Consideration could have been given to ensuring that both entities' reports and recommendations were available to both the receiving boards/committees (including by aligning the finalization schedules);
- *The frequent lack or inadequacy of sex-disaggregated data*, making it more difficult to assess gender outcomes;
- *The longer-term sustainability of such an arrangement*, which takes resources away from other priorities of the “donating” entity.

The benefits included:

- *Access to the deep expertise and credibility of UN Women* on gender issues in evaluation;
- *The opportunity to transcend the perspectives of individual entities*;
- *Better evaluation reports*, as an integrated gender perspective results in better evaluations, just as it has been shown to result in better programs;
- *Critically, and as an enduring output, the development of a framework based explicitly on Resolution 1325 (Women and Peace and Security)* to evaluate gender issues in peacekeeping contexts.

e. Co-ordination Challenges: the need for joint approaches hosted by Jock Paul, OCHA

In order to reduce burdens on country teams in the midst of an emergency response, and overcome attribution challenges, joint evaluations can play an important role in humanitarian settings. OCHA has led various inter-agency evaluations, in collaboration with HQ based steering groups, and country level reference groups.

Some of the challenges discussed:

- Light management approach with multiple partners
- Developing and sustaining country level ownership
- Supporting and ensuring follow up to inter-agency evaluations (as recommendations are not tracked or monitored by each agency)
- Identifying utility and take-up of recommendations from joint evaluations across emergencies

Benefits discussed included:

- Ability to present and get a picture of the whole response
- Joint evaluations have helped identify broad policy issues and inform change

f. How to conduct evaluation in the context of humanitarian and conflict settings while facing the problem of baseline data? Hosted by Dieudonné Mouafo, UNV

The evaluation objectives were to provide an independent assessment of the UNV- DFS collaborative activities, identify UNV's comparative advantage and the value added by UN Volunteers to UN peacekeeping operations, and make recommendations for the future of the partnership.

Methodology comprised four lines of evidence: a Desk Review, online surveys, key informant interviews and field visits to four UN peacekeeping missions.

Main challenges

The absence of baseline information and available and reliable data, along with the difficulty of getting DFS/DPKO Senior Management initial buy-in of the evaluation remained the main evaluation challenges encountered.

The following key points emerged from the open cafe conversation

- The measurability of the impact of humanitarian interventions, especially from beneficiary perspective given the difficulty of accessing population in such volatile contexts.
- The availability, reliability and quality of data can be problematic for various reasons: high personnel turn-overs, safety and security issues, destruction of national systems, etc.
- The independence and objectivity of the evaluation can be challenged by the sensitivity of information, the reliability of the process on the local UN system (field logistics), or the difference of perspectives between the field and the headquarters
- The transaction costs, which can go up very quickly (field condition, coverage) can become a major concern for the conduct of the evaluation

Solutions

- Being innovative by exploring alternative data collection or sources, including appealing to recall and oral community memory to reconstruct the facts or mitigate the absence of corporate memory
- Conducting a stakeholder analysis could be a way of addressing some information/data gaps
- Using mixed methods including an important in-house work to complement consultants investigations or external expertise could be a valid alternative to the data problem
- Effective communication (packaging the evaluation findings), clear messaging and transparency are key to engaging stakeholders, including advocacy to demonstrate the relevance and benefits of the evaluation

- Joint work is beneficial in such context not only for cost-effectiveness but also because it can allow access to partners data
- Effective risk assessment (identification of key risks and develop sound mitigation or exit strategies), coupled with a sound context analysis, understanding of field realities and cultural sensitivity are key factors for a successful evaluation.

April 16, 2013 - Morning Session

12. National Evaluation Capacity Development – Agencies UNDP, UNICEF and UN Women

Evaluation Capacity Development is the process by which abilities to manage, conduct and use evaluations are obtained, strengthened, adapted and maintained over time. This theme focused on National Evaluation Capacity Development (NECD). NECD plays crucial roles in enhancing national capacities to monitor and evaluate progress in MDGs. The session explored how various UN agencies develop their activities, what commonalities and synergies are at the different levels of activity as well as on the ways forward on such initiatives within the UN. In this session 3 UN agencies involved in NECD first presented their NECD experience. In the second part participants, in sub groups, shared their experience on challenges and lessons learned and ideas on how UN agencies could better work together in NECD initiatives, including in the framework of 2015 as the proposed International Year of Evaluation.

- a. **UNDP** - NECD is an important activity of the Evaluation Office of UNDP, aimed to strengthen government capacity on evaluation. The EO's International NEC Conference is a forum to promote discussion on the issues confronting evaluation in countries, enabling participants to draw on recent innovative experiences of others and to prepare the ground for the formulation of longer-term initiatives to strengthen national government capacities for public policy evaluation through South-South and trilateral cooperation. Yet it is only one element of a broader strategy to support NECD.

UNDP presented on national evaluation capacities, highlighting the 3rd International Conference on National Evaluation Capacities that the UNDP evaluation office will organize this year in São Paulo, Brazil to discuss solutions to challenges linked to independence, credibility and use of evaluations. During the EPE session, the audience was asked to advise on ways to ensure the momentum of the conference and to further support continuation of collaboration between participants, countries and institutions with the aim to promote south-south cooperation on issues related to evaluation. Colleagues mainly suggested UNDP should consider having sub-regional and language focused conferences, for example, a NEC conference for the English Caribbean, or a NEC conference for the French-speaking Africa or Arab region. It was also suggested that the discussions during the conference prioritize tasks for the development of work plans or task forces led and organized by parties that have an interest invested in helping with the process.

- b. **UNICEF** - In considering the role of UNEG in enhancing national evaluation capacity development (NECD) participants identified areas and ways in which UNEG could take strides to more effectively build upon its leadership in guiding UN evaluation offices in efforts to strengthen NECD. Increasing demand for national evaluation capacity from within regions and countries by focusing on organizational and individual factors and advancing UNEG partnerships were areas colleagues identified UNEG could further develop. Given the challenges of building national evaluation capacity demand from a centralized HQ level, UNEG could broaden its perspective with regions and countries by making better use of

regional evaluation staff from member agencies, and reconsider the possibility of expanding UNEG membership to include external partnerships at the regional and national levels. For example, expanding membership to evaluation networks for development banks could position UNEG to be involved in NECD discussions in which it is currently not participating, and could increase external awareness about the role of UNEG and the UN in national evaluation capacity development.

It was recognized that UNEG has a role of harmonizing approaches and promoting norms and standards, however, not all UNEG members have a NECD mandate and are therefore not involved in evaluation capacity development. It was discussed that UNEG could harmonize and better coordinate by making distinctions in activities and leverage agencies' comparative advantages by differentiating activities that are generic for all agencies, versus those that are agency-specific with an NECD mandate. In increasing UNEG members' awareness of what activities are already happening at the agency/regional and country levels, i.e. in a country profile format that is accessible by a country-by-country reference system, participants thought UNEG would be in a better position to provide agencies with guidance to enhance national evaluation capacity development efforts and build upon effective partnerships.

- c. **UN-WOMEN** - The UN Women Evaluation Office in 2010 – 2013 focused on strengthening evaluation capacities, networking and knowledge generation on gender and human rights perspective in evaluation largely working with regional evaluation networks and national evaluation associations, and recently EvalPartners. This strategy was based on the assumption that networks and associations play an important role in enhancing evaluation standards, strengthening the demand for evaluation capacity, advocating for national evaluation strategies and broadening the knowledge base of their members.

The UN Women engagement with regional evaluation networks such as IPEN and AGDEN generated greater awareness of their members on gender equality and human rights issues through dialogue at evaluation conferences and targeted trainings of their members in transformative evaluation methods. It sensitized the key leaders of regional networks on the significance of gender issues for good quality evaluations and a subsequent planning of socially inclusive programmes and policies. There is the evidence of emergence of publications and communities of practice that took up interest in the measurement and evaluation of changes in gender relations and women's empowerment. The evaluation conferences in the North and the South served as opportunities for networking and knowledge exchange between evaluators, non-governmental organizations, governments and development practitioners. It has enabled UN Women to broaden its partner base and has helped to establish itself as a leading UN agency in advocating gender equality and human rights perspective in evaluation.

At a global level, UN-Women has engaged as a core partner in EvalPartners, an innovative partnership among Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluators (VOPE), United Nations entities, and donor bilateral agencies, designed to strengthen the capacities of civil society organizations. UN-Women successfully advocated for the strategic placement of

gender equality in the work priorities of EvalPartners, resulting in the establishment of a task force to coordinate these efforts and to be co-chaired by UN-Women. The EvalPartners Chiang Mai Declaration enshrined central values of equity, gender equality, and social justice as core principles for evaluation. The UN Women's partnerships made some noteworthy steps in including gender and human rights in the agendas of conferences and professional capacity development workshops, and in this way, they promoted the topics of gender equality and human rights in the evaluation standards and strategies for national evaluation capacity development. Building on strengthened partnerships, the UN Women will continue to play a role in fostering and facilitating the link between evaluation networks, associations and research institutions; UN agencies and the M&E functions of governments.

16 April 2013 - Closing Plenary Session

13. Key learning and messages from the EPE presented at the AGM

a. The key differences with this years' EPE are:

- It took a decentralized approach
- Different sessions run by different agencies
- It included participants from government, RC offices, and ALNAP
- Sessions were run in parallel, to allow maximum opportunity for discussion, and allow for participants to explore issues in depth and allow greater number of themes, and to give choice to participants

b. Key learning from the process: registration process and space constraints:

- Required a complicated prioritization process
- EPE participants were requested to identify which sessions they wanted to attend prior to EPE
- Due to constraints with UNEG website, this was done through survey monkey, and was separate from registration for AGM and EPE

c. Time constraints/challenges

- Only one and half days due to high level event
- The decision was taken to maximize time for discussion and interaction among EPE participants
- Due to differing topics and in line with EPE objectives, it was decided not to use any of the limited time for feedback and conclusions that would be discussed in the plenary

The results of EPE Sessions:

a. Enhancing participation and the use of AV technologies in joint evaluation:

- Showcased panelists from Ecuador, the Philippines and Timor-Leste
- Participatory visual evaluation does not substitute more traditional and analytical forms of evaluation, but indeed can complement them by further substantiating qualitative aspects of the evaluation process
- Participatory visual evaluation is a powerful advocacy, communication and promotional tool. It accounts for the voices of people in the evaluation; boosts empowerment processes and promote community ownership of the evaluation process and outcomes.

b. Knowledge management and traditional evaluations – benefitting from both efforts:

- Knowledge management should be incorporated in various stages of evaluation and not only at the dissemination phase. Since KM can more immediately access and reflect actions and actors on the ground, evaluation can benefit from it in identifying the need to explore issues and relevant stakeholders even before planning starts

- Learning can start from the evaluation process all the way to results, assisted by KM
- A stronger partnership between the two fronts will help practitioners in achieving the common purpose of strengthening efficiencies, accountability, coherence and institutional learning
- How to find information that matters?
- With the wealth of information derived from evaluation and KM products, there is a challenge to help users get the most relevant material and keep lessons and recommendations alive. Perhaps a central database with material rated by user reviews can be the answer

c. Managing evaluations:

The session leaders identified the following “Key messages” directed at updating UNEG Norms and Standards:

- Consider areas that need updating, e.g. need greater clarity on independence whilst ensure relevance
- Need to be contextualized to help communicate to a broader audience such as national partners, programme manager and donors/high level partners (so that they can understand their roles, rights, and the products of evaluation)
- Also need to be better contextualized to help agencies incorporate norms and standards into daily practice
- Suggested holding a workshop on updating existing checklist for evaluation reports and produce short note and ToRs with a view to improve quality of final product

d. Evaluation in humanitarian and conflict settings:

- Utilization is particularly difficult in these settings, as there is high turnover of staff and a lack of a program cycle, but utilization could be improved with good clear targeted recommendations and feedback to managers that begins before or with the draft report. Evaluation has also been used to build a collective evidence base in humanitarian settings that is then used to affect policy
- Measuring impact is very difficult due to lack of counterfactual, but if we use techniques such as comparison before and after intervention, comparison with other agency programs, and comparison with groups that may not have received assistance, we can get at measuring impact
- Joint evaluations are useful in humanitarian settings in order to measure results of collective interventions, and provide a big picture. They are also helpful in improving quality and ensuring that issues such as human rights and gender equality perspectives are taken into consideration in evaluations

e. Decentralized evaluation:

- Moving forward, there was agreement that this topic could be worthy of future work in UNEG, both with a view to increasing the sharing of best practice between agencies on setting up decentralized evaluation structures internally, but also as part of broader work on better integrating RBM approaches into evaluation systems more formally with better and more rigorous RBM and evaluation in mind

- Linkages into national systems need to be better addressed with the challenge being to meet both internal UN agency requirements for accountability and learning as well as fully supporting priorities and objectives of national systems

f. National Evaluation Capacity Development:

- (i) Building Demand:
 - Support the identification of needs from the national/regional levels
 - Elaboration of the framework (that looks at the individual, institutional and enabling environment) so that a set of indicators are established that UNEG could work on and build on ensuring that the individual level is feeding into the institutional level;
 - Strengthen advocacy and regional/sub-regional dialogue
- (ii) Partnerships (within and beyond UN):
 - Engage UN regional staff and groups – such as UNEDAP
 - Revisit possibility of opening UNEG to external partnerships, such as civil society and evaluation groups
- (iii) Coordination (ensuring coherent approaches):
 - Strengthen internal coordination among UN at regional and country levels – linking coordination to specific actions
 - Development of country specific information on the actions of UN entities to facilitate coordination; such as databases, tools, country profiles
 - Technical Guidance for national level evaluation – one concrete action could focusing on a coordinated approach for providing technical advice to UNCTs on UNDAF evaluation; (UNEDAP in Asia pacific is doing this through the peer support group of UNDG) – potential involvement of UNEG members (as representative of organization)

The EPE session was formally closed by Colin Kirk (UNICEF), the Scott Green (OCHA) and two co-chairs.

List of Participants

Agency	First Name	Last Name
DESA	Jose	Cruz-Osorio
DPKO	Jessica	Guo
DPKO	Mark	Pedersen
ESCAP	Edgar	Dante
FAO	Robert	Moore
FAO	Aurelie	Larmoyer
FAO	Marta	Piccarozzi
FAO	Tullia	Aiazzi
FAO	Federica	Coccia
IAEA	Srilata	Rao
IAEA	Carsten	Meyer
IAEA	Srilata	Rao
ICAO	Olivier	Myard
ICAO	Judita	Jankovic
IFAD	Miguel	Torralba
ITC	Miguel	Jimenez Pont
JIU (Observers)	Susanne	Frueh
JIU (Observers)	Sukai	Prom-Jackson
JIU (Observers)	Naomi	Asuki
MDG-F	Gianluca	Giuman
MDG-F	Nadia	Hadi
MDG-F	Pablo	Galarza Schoenfeld
MDG-F	Regie	Guillen
MDG-F/ Guest	Jose Carlos	Ferrer
MDG-F/ Guest	Paloma	Duran
MDG-F/ Guest	Paula	Pelaez
MDG-F/ Guest	Patricia	Fernandez-Pacheco
MDG-F/ Guest	Viridiana	Garcia
MDG-F/ Guest	Sara	Ferrer
MDG-F/ Guest	Bruno	Moro
OCHA	Victoria	Saiz-Omenaca
OCHA	Tijana	Bojanic
OCHA	Maria Agnese	Giordano
OCHA	Scott	Green
OCHA	Jock	Paul
OHCHR	Jennifer	Worrell
OHCHR	Flaminia	Minelli
OIOS	Maria	Singer
OIOS	Yee Woo	Guo
OIOS	Jan	Muir
OIOS	Emily	Hampton-Manley

OIOS	Marie-Elise	Dumans
OIOS	Demetra	Arapakos
OIOS	Christa	Lex
OIOS	Mona	Fetouh
OIOS	Yun Jae	Chun
OIOS	Fatimazohra	NOUINO
OIOS	Shatho	Nfila
OIOS	Juan Carlos	Pena
OIOS	Arild	Hauge
OIOS	Anna	Guerraggio
OIOS	Marianne	Vestergaard
OIOS	Cynthia	Viveros Cano
OIOS	Rahul	Sur
OIOS	Robert	McCouch
UN Women	Inga	Sniukaite
UN Women	Isabel	Suarez
UN Women	Laura	Gonzalez Garces
UN Women	Caspar	Merkle
UN Women	Sabrina	Evangelista
UN Women	Shravanti	Reddy
UN Women	Florencia	Tateossian
UN Women	Yumiko	Kanemitsu
UN-HABITAT	Susanne	Bech
UN/DESA	Kristinn	Helgason
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UNCDF	Andrew	Fyfe
UNCDF	Nerea	Sanchez
UNCDF	Monica	Lomena-Gelis
UNCTAD	Yuen Ching	Ho
UNDP	Juha	Uitto
UNDP	Ana	Soares
UNDP	Indran	Naidoo
UNDP	Jin	Zhang
UNDP	Alan	Fox
UNDP	Chandi	Kadirgamar
UNDP	Masahiro	Igarashi
UNDP	Vijayalakshmi	Vadivelu
UNDP	Heather	Bryant
UNDP	Michael	Reynolds
UNDP	Roberto	La Rovere
UNECE	Catherine	Haswell
UNEP	Segbedzi	Norgbey
UNEP	Michael	Spilsbury
UNESCWA	Roberto	Laurenti
UNFPA	Louis	Charpentier

UNFPA	Olivia	Roberts
UNFPA	Alexandra	Chambel
UNFPA	Louis	Charpentier
UNFPA	Hicham	Daoudi
UNICEF	Suzanne	Lee
UNICEF	Krishna	Belbase
UNICEF	Tina	Tordjman-Nebe
UNICEF	Mathew	Varghese
UNICEF	Colin	Kirk
UNICEF	Geeta	Dey
UNICEF	Abigail	Taylor Jones
UNICEF	Marco	Segone
UNICEF	Anna	Azaryeva
UNICEF	Lene	Leonhardsen
UNICEF	Erica	Mattellone
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UNIDO	Johannes	Dobinger
UNRWA	Raed	Tailakh
UNRWA	Robert	Stryk
UNV	Ravnit	Sahota
UNV	Dieudonne	Mouafo
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WIPO	Julia	Engelhardt
WIPO	Claude	Hilfiker
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