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IAEA PROGRAMME EVALUATION POLICY

Notice to the Staff

Evaluation

1. An Agency-wide function known as the Programme Performance Assessment System (PPAS)¹ was established in 1994 to evaluate the results of Agency programme activities, regardless of the funding source (regular budget or extra budgetary resources, or the Technical Co-operation Fund).
2. Programme evaluation is the third part of the Agency programme management process, a results oriented sequence of: (a) programme planning/formulation, (b) programme implementation, including performance monitoring and assessment of delivery, and (c) programme evaluation. The overall programme management process ensures that programme elements remain relevant and responsive to Member State needs, that priorities are assigned to programme activities and that objectives are met.
3. Programme evaluation is the process of conducting an objective and systematic examination of the extent to which a programme has achieved or is achieving over time its stated objective and, therefore, is having the desired effect in terms of Member State needs and priorities. Programme evaluations focus on determining results and examining why and how these results were achieved or why certain goals were not attained. The results are used to provide feedback to programme planning and formulation, as well as implementation. They also provide input to the Medium Term Strategy and the preparation of the biennial programme and budget.
4. In addition to in-depth independent evaluation of selected programme areas or topics conducted by OIOS, programme and project managers are encouraged to do their own self-evaluations, in collaboration with their staff, as part of their ongoing programme management responsibilities, whether directed at time-limited objectives or continuing functions. The Programme Evaluation Section within the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) will provide guidelines and methodological support in this regard.

Objectives

¹ SEC/NOT/1789 (issued 99-07-30), which is effectively replaced by this document. PPAS is hereafter referred to as "programme evaluation".

5. Evaluation aims to provide assurance about the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of programmatic policies, activities, services and functions. For technical co-operation projects, it also determines the sustainability of such activities. It aims at improving the performance and management of the programme.

6. Evaluation also contributes to greater transparency in Agency activities and facilitates communications, both internally and externally, clarifying understanding of needs and performance expectations by the Secretariat, the Board of Governors and Member States. It is intended to provide appropriate assurance, and therefore accountability, of the achievement of programme results, including established objectives and the impact of the programme.

Scope and Types of Evaluations

7. Evaluations can be carried out at the Major Programme, Programme, Subprogramme or Project level. They may relate to activities in one or several Agency programmes relating to a particular topic, as well as activities which are Agency-wide and cut across Major Programmes and Departments. Management and support activities also come within the scope of evaluation.

8. Evaluations focusing on TC activities will be continued in order to maintain the visibility and address the sustainability of these activities as requested by Member States.

Selection of Activities for Programme Evaluations

9. Selected areas of the Agency's activities will be targeted each year for evaluation on the basis of an evaluation plan developed for the full biennium and included in the programme and budget document. The two-year evaluation plan, prepared in the context of a multi-year plan, will be approved by the Director General. Changes to evaluation plans require the approval of the Director General, who can direct that additional evaluations be conducted as warranted.

10. The selection and prioritization of areas for evaluation will take into account feasibility, the importance of the activity, previous reviews if any, Member State interests, the outcome of needs and risk assessment or special requests by Agency senior management, and the potential use of the results. Attention will be given to ensuring a balanced coverage of the Agency's programmes.

11. In order for it to be possible to complete an evaluation in a limited period of time and for the results to be of practical value, the purposes of each evaluation should be limited in number and explicitly specified in terms of reference approved by the Director General.

12. Evaluations can be carried out after the completion of an activity or during the implementation phase to assist managers in taking corrective action on issues identified as needing attention. Evaluations are retrospective in the sense that they focus on the achievement of objectives and on meeting Member State needs in the past but they will also cover current activities in order to provide a full context. Furthermore, they will be prospective in allowing for

lessons to be learned so that adjustments to changed circumstances can be made or used as input to planning.

13. The results of evaluations may assist in providing input to:

- Improving the policies and the design and/or performance of services, programmes and projects;
- Making choices among activities in order to identify those which will have the greatest impact and which are most responsive to Member State needs; and
- Utilizing lessons learned and best practices for future programme or strategy development.

Frequency

14. As a general rule, all Agency programmes will be subject over time to a programme evaluation based on the criteria established in paragraph 10 above. The frequency of evaluation for any given area of activity will be proposed by OIOS, after consultation with programme managers, and taking into account developments and changes in Member State needs and in the Agency's operating environment, and approved by the Director General.

Evaluation Teams

15. Programme evaluations can be conducted by (a) external evaluators acting in their personal capacity, (b) Secretariat staff who are independent of line management responsible for the programmatic area or (c) a combination of internal and external evaluators, depending on the specific requirements of the evaluation.

16. The decision to conduct an evaluation using external consultants, Secretariat staff, or a combination of the two will be determined by DIR-OIOS at the planning stage, with input from the responsible programme or project manager. As a general rule, contracting with an external institution or individual to perform an entire evaluation is not envisaged. In those exceptional cases where it is determined that the most appropriate means for conducting an evaluation is to contract with an institution, DIR-OIOS will manage both the contract and the work of the contractor, with input from the programme manager. This is necessary to ensure the independence of the evaluation.

17. The terms of reference for each evaluation and the members of programme evaluation teams/panels will be proposed after wide consultations and approved by the Director General. The number of evaluators in a given team or panel depends on the size of the programme being evaluated. The members selected must bring different types of expertise and experience and must all have a record of excellence and high technical and professional standing. At least one member of the team should be experienced in the technology or technical areas addressed by the evaluation and at least one other should be experienced in using the specific evaluation methods. Attention must be given, to the extent possible, to a balanced geographical distribution of external evaluators.

Reporting and Follow-Up

18. All findings and recommendations made by the evaluation teams/panels and contained in their reports should be carefully analysed by the programme managers concerned in conjunction with OIOS. The results of each evaluation and the follow-up action plans and recommendations should be addressed to the Director General for approval. The results of the evaluations will be reported to the Policy-making Organs as appropriate, and will be taken into account by programme managers and the Office of Programme Support (MTPS) in the programme planning and formulation process.

Responsibilities

19. All programme managers are responsible for ensuring that sufficient resources — financial as well as staff — are set aside in both the programme and budget and the Financial Plan to plan and conduct evaluations in accordance with the present policy. This requires a commitment of adequate staff time to prepare, conduct (and/or oversee the conduct of) evaluations. It is the responsibility of the programme managers to take into account the results of evaluations in the formulation of their programmes.

20. OIOS, which reports directly to the Director General, is responsible for ensuring the proper deployment and conduct of evaluations and for preparing a multi-year plan of evaluation activities, developed in consultation with programme managers. The Office is also responsible for ensuring that the necessary reports to the Director General and the Policy-making Organs and follow-up action plans are prepared and that appropriate measures are taken to use the evaluation results in the formulation of the Agency's programme.

Implementation and Procedures

21. Detailed guidelines and procedures to be followed in conducting programme evaluations, including self-evaluations, will be developed by OIOS and made available to Agency staff, so as to ensure a standard, Agency-wide approach.