

Working  
Paper



**UNEG**  
United Nations Evaluation Group

# Principles for Stakeholder Engagement

**UNEG SO2 Use of Evaluation**

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## Summary of Principles

**Principle 1. Identify the stakeholders and the role these will play in the evaluation.**

**Principle 2: Promote an inclusive and diverse stakeholder engagement with a tailored approach by stakeholder**

**Principle 3. Engage stakeholders early on and throughout the evaluation process**

**Principle 4. Seek opportunities to engage with stakeholders in order promote an evaluation culture**

**Principle 5. Ensure communication with stakeholders is clear and tailored to their specific needs**

**Principle 6. Abide to the highest ethical standards in engaging with evaluation stakeholders, ensuring respect and sensitivity to stakeholder's diversity and human rights**

**Principle 7. Seek and use stakeholders' feedback on the evaluation process for effective learning and continuous improvement of evaluation practice**

## Background

The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) is an inter-agency professional network that brings together the evaluation units of the United Nations system, including United Nations departments, specialized agencies, funds, programmes and affiliated organizations. UNEG works to support the strengthening and harmonization of evaluation practices across its members. The aim is to ensure that the United Nations evaluation functions provide credible and useful evidence to inform and strengthen the work of the United Nations system in pursuit of its goals.

In 2015, the UNEG sub-group for Strategic Objective 2 “UN entities and partners use evaluation in support of accountability and programme learning” commissioned the study “Evaluation Use in the UN System: conclusions from the data”<sup>1</sup>. This study found that the level of reported evaluation use was variable, both within and across organizations, and recommended, as part of its main messages, for users and stakeholders to be involved and consulted throughout the evaluation process.

As a follow up to this study, in 2016 the UNEG SO2 working group decided to develop a guidance/principles document for stakeholder engagement. This document aims at providing general principles for stakeholder engagement in the conduct of any evaluation, taking into account the results from the aforementioned study, the 2016 revised Norms and Standards and other global evaluation standards. The suggested principles were drawn from the practical experience of the participating UNEG members and global good practices in the evaluation field (i.e. key principles of participatory approaches).

## Defining stakeholder engagement

Attention to stakeholders is important throughout the evaluation process. Otherwise, there is not likely to be enough understanding, appreciation, information sharing, legitimacy or commitment to produce a credible evaluation that will ultimately be used (Bryson, J., Patton, M.Q., Bowman, R.A, 2010). In the “Encyclopaedia of evaluation”, Greene, J. (2005) defines *stakeholders* as “the people who have a stake or a vested interest in the program, policy, or product being evaluated and therefore also have a stake in the evaluation”. Moreover, Greene clusters stakeholders into four groups:

- a) People who have decision authority over the program, including policy makers, funders and advisory boards;
- b) people who have direct responsibility over the program, including program developers, administrators in the organization implementing the program, program managers and direct service staff;
- c) people who are intended beneficiaries of the program, their families and their communities; and
- d) people disadvantaged by the program, as in lost funding opportunities.

Greene (2005, p. 397) also presents a definition of stakeholder involvement as follows:

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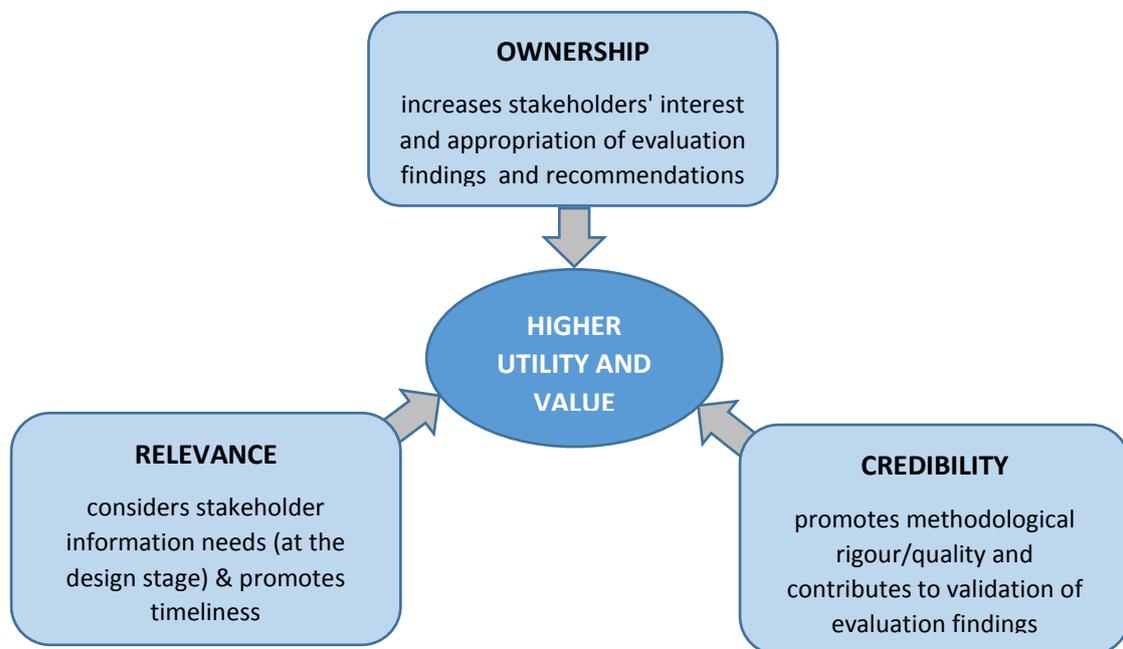
<sup>1</sup> United Nations Evaluation Group (2016). Evaluation Use in the UN System: Conclusions from the Data. New York: UNEG.

*“Stakeholder involvement refers to the participation of stakeholders in one or more components of the evaluation process. Involvement implies a role beyond providing information or responding to data-gathering instruments. Stakeholders who are involved in an evaluation process contribute to important decisions regarding evaluation planning, implementation and use.”*

The importance of engaging stakeholders in evaluation, and the debate about the extent to which this should happen, has been long discussed. In 1991, the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD-DAC) included the ‘participation of donors and recipients’ among the 11 principles for evaluation of development assistance<sup>2</sup>. Within the United Nations, the revised *UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation* (2016) highlight the importance of stakeholder engagement to enhance the relevance and use of evaluation, and define a variety of possible mechanisms that evaluators can use to ensure an “inclusive and diverse stakeholder engagement in the planning, design, conduct, and follow-up to evaluations”<sup>3</sup>.

Stakeholder engagement is important for both value-based and instrumental reasons. First, engaging stakeholders is morally essential to respect the fundamental rights and dignity of affected groups<sup>4</sup>. Second, it makes evaluations more relevant and effective, insofar as evaluators, who remain to a certain extent outsiders, gain important information and insights into the development intervention under assessment. It also helps understand inherent biases and what is at stake for different parties (adapted from Heider, 2014). Moreover, the aforementioned UNEG study highlights that stakeholder engagement also leads to more ownership of stakeholders over the findings, thus improving the quality of recommendations and increasing the use of the evaluation product and its results. Figure 1 summarises the benefits of inclusive and diverse stakeholder engagement in the planning, design, conduct and follow-up of evaluations.

**Figure 1. What inclusive and diverse stakeholder engagement would do**



Source: UNEG SO2 working group own creation, based on UNEG Standard 4.6

<sup>2</sup> Principles for evaluation of development assistance, Development Assistance Committee, 1991

<sup>3</sup> Norm 2, and Standards 2.2, 4.1, 4.6, and 4.11

<sup>4</sup> Integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluation, UNEG, 2014, page 7 and 32

Engaging stakeholders however presents its own challenges, as the intended degree of engagement has to be in line with the evaluation’s purpose. Concerns may arise in terms of independence, methodological rigour, ethics, etc. In addition, vested interests, power dynamics and differentials have to be taken into account, especially when dealing with vulnerable populations.

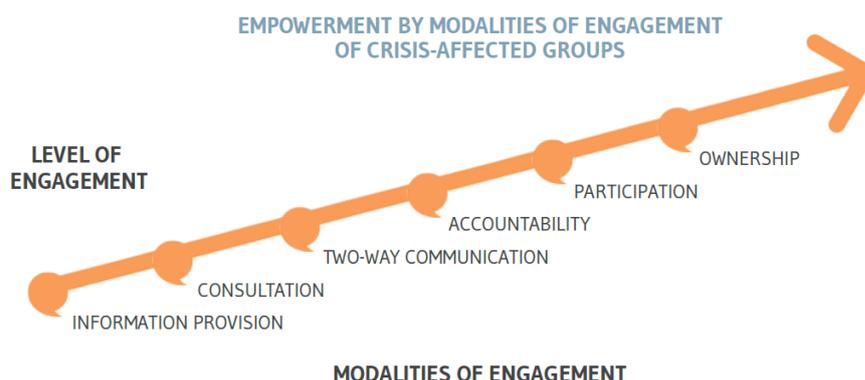
The nature and degree of stakeholder engagement therefore can be fluid, adapting to the context and specific needs that arise throughout the evaluation process. Stakeholder engagement is a dynamic process that can evolve depending on the evaluation stage or moment during which the engagement takes place. To be meaningful, the engagement should be customised to the profile of the stakeholder and adapted to particular constraints resulting from unequal gender roles<sup>5</sup> and unfavourable circumstances experienced by marginalised groups.

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum (2007), proposes five types of engagement that an evaluation can include:

1. **Inform:** provide stakeholders with balanced and objective information.
2. **Consult:** seek views and inputs from the stakeholders; obtaining their feedback on analysis, alternatives or decisions at key steps of the evaluation process.
3. **Involve:** work directly with the stakeholders throughout the process to ensure that their concerns and perspectives are consistently understood and considered.
4. **Collaborate:** partner with the stakeholders for decision-making throughout the evaluation process (i.e. for the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred position or action point). Collaboration implies a shared ownership between the organisation and the stakeholders, and entails a greater level of delegated decision-making.
5. **Empower:** stakeholders also share the responsibility for making decisions and accountability for the results of such decisions.

Similarly, in a study on engaging crisis-affected people in humanitarian action<sup>6</sup>, ALNAP identified six phases for stakeholder engagement, ranging from information provision to ownership.

**Figure 2. Degree of empowerment of crisis-affected groups in different approaches to engagement**



Source: extracted from ALNAP’s 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting background paper, 11-12 March 2014

<sup>5</sup> Time use is one of those examples : stakeholder engagement implies taking into account the burden of reproductive and domestic work, unequally distributed between men and women

<sup>6</sup> Engagement of crisis-affected people in humanitarian action, background paper, ALNAP annual meeting, 2014

The following principles, and examples of these in practice, are part of a joint effort “to improve the involvement and consultation of users and stakeholders involved in evaluations across the UN system” (UNEG, 2016, pg.16), building from the UN experiences and lessons in the conduct of evaluations.

## Principles for Stakeholder Engagement

The following principles are meant to serve as guidance for evaluation practitioners, particularly those working with the UN.

### STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION

#### Principle 1. Identify the stakeholders and the role these will play in the evaluation

Stakeholder identification and analysis is integral to the engagement planning process of any evaluation. The list of stakeholders, and the degree of their involvement in the development intervention under assessment, should be mapped, with due consideration of gender and human rights aspects. Based on the definition by Greene, stakeholder mapping should include also individuals and communities who were affected by the program/project, but not as direct beneficiaries.

The stakeholder identification exercise should also assess the stakeholder’s motivations and interests in the evaluation, determining their potential role in the process. Of the various types of stakeholders that may exist, it is important to define the primary intended users and their information needs (intended users) at the beginning of the evaluation process, considering that no evaluation can answer to the diverse interests of all stakeholders. The information needs of this more specific group should serve to focus the evaluation.

Table 1 presents an array of techniques proposed by Bryson et al (2011) for stakeholder identification during the planning and design stage of an evaluation process.

**Table 1. Examples of stakeholder identification and analysis techniques**

Technique	Purpose	Reveals
<b>Basic stakeholder analysis technique</b>	To identify the interests of individual stakeholders in the <i>program</i> and their interests in the <i>evaluation</i>	Key evaluation questions
<b>Alignment, Interest and Influence Matrix (AIIM)<sup>7</sup></b>	To identify main stakeholders and suggest possible course of action towards them.	Level of alignment and interest of the different stakeholders If used both during formulation of an intervention and during a mid-term or final evaluation: progress made by stakeholders in relation to the desired pathways of change
<b>Power versus interest grids</b>	To determine which players’ interests and power issues must be considered	Players, context setters, subjects and crowd Common ground all or subsets of stakeholders

<sup>7</sup> Guidance note for AIIM available at: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/6509.pdf>

		Possible coalitions of support and/or opposition Strategies for changing views of stakeholders. Ways to advance the interests of the powerless
<b>Stakeholder influence diagrams</b>	To identify how stakeholders influence one another	Who influences whom among the stakeholders Who the most influential stakeholders are
<b>Bases of power – directions of interest diagram</b>	To identify the sources of a stakeholder’s power To clarify stakeholder’s interests or stakes To help the planning team identify common grounds across all stakeholders groups	The goals the stakeholder seeks to achieve or the interests they seek to serve, as well as the power based on which the stakeholder can draw to pursue those interests
<b>Participation planning matrix</b>	To indicate probable level of stakeholder participation and relationship of evaluator with stakeholder	Expectations for involvement and action plans for communication
<b>Purpose network or hierarch</b>	To engage the expanded evaluation team in identifying purposes beyond the initial evaluation purpose and establishing the primary purpose or intended use of the evaluation	Causal network or hierarchy of purposes indicating which purposes are prerequisite to or help achieve other purposes Primary evaluation purpose

Source: extracted from Bryson et al (2011) article: “Working with evaluation stakeholders: A rationale, step-wise approach and toolkit”, pg.4 and ODI Guidance note on “The Alignment, Interest and Influence Matrix (AIIM).

## INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

### Principle 2. Promote an inclusive and diverse stakeholder engagement with a tailored approach by stakeholder

UNEG Standard 4.6 on Stakeholder engagement and reference groups calls for an inclusive and diverse stakeholder engagement in the planning, design, conduct and follow-up of evaluations as a critical element to ensure ownership, relevance, credibility and the use of evaluations. Inclusiveness involves meaningful engagement of stakeholders with diverse perspectives, which has an intrinsic empowering value while also enhancing credibility of the evaluation through triangulation and cross-validation of evidence (Van Hemelrijck, A. and Guijt, I., 2016). Furthermore, UNEG Norm 14 states “that Organizations should promote evaluation use and follow-up, using an interactive process that involves all stakeholders”.

Evaluators usually deal with a wide range of stakeholders with diverse backgrounds, values, needs and perspectives when conducting evaluations. With this in mind, each stakeholder engagement effort might require a tailored approach and mechanism depending on the type of audience, their level of interest or motivation in the evaluation, the relationship the evaluator and stakeholder wish to establish and the outcomes they want to achieve from such relationships during the different stages of the evaluation. At times it might be necessary to tailor the engagement processes and activities to enable the participation of specific stakeholder groups that are often overlooked or who face additional barriers to participation (adapted from The State of Victoria, pg. 10).

Building from the stakeholder identification and analysis exercise (see principle 1) evaluators may develop a *stakeholder engagement plan* or use the *participation planning matrix* mentioned in table

1 to define the mechanisms to attend to the diverse stakeholders' information needs, and establish strategies to ensure their feedback is considered throughout the evaluation process.

A trend seen in recent years has been the shift towards more *participatory approaches* for stakeholder engagement in evaluations. These inclusive processes, which are located at the end of the IAP2 participation spectrum, promote a two-way engagement with stakeholders, moving away from an extractive data collection to engaging in a more continuous and meaningful feedback process with evaluation stakeholders in general. While not the rule, the empowering nature of these participative evaluation processes has been well recognized<sup>8</sup>, hence the importance of stakeholder engagement that is informed by the various and progressive levels of empowerment<sup>9</sup> of the targeted audiences. Participatory processes also help build relationships of trust and mutual respect with stakeholders, given the high level of interaction and engagement they entail. Box 2 highlights one example of a participatory method promoted by DFID, "the beneficiary feedback" approach.

### **Box 1. DFID's "Beneficiary Feedback" approach in evaluation**

In an attempt to increase the voice and influence of beneficiaries in aid programmes, and thus improve the development results, the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom is promoting a "beneficiary feedback" approach to development evaluation.

A beneficiary feedback approach "*involves a one way or two way flow of information between beneficiaries and evaluators for the purpose of improving evaluation process, findings and use. It is a structured and systematic approach that cuts across all stages of evaluation - from design to dissemination. It is relevant to all types of evaluation design. It is not a subset of participatory evaluation; and goes beyond evidence gathering. It can engage both extractive and/ or participatory methods*". The term beneficiary involves i) those in whose name funds are raised or contributed i.e. men, women, girls and boys living in poverty, vulnerability or affected disasters, including those who have benefited, who have been negatively affected, and who should have benefited but have not been reached, and ii) those included at the outcomes level of the results chain.

In summary, DFID's paper proposes for **all** evaluations to follow a process of due consideration of the different types of feedback that are appropriate at different stages of the evaluation (design, evidence gathering, validation and analysis, dissemination and communication). Four types of feedback, that can be used in a complementary manner throughout the different stages, are identified as follows: i) one-way feedback to beneficiaries, ii) one-way feedback from beneficiaries, iii) two-way feedback with inter active conversation between beneficiaries and evaluators but with evaluation team retaining independence and power, and iv) two-way feedback through participatory evaluation with beneficiaries as part of the evaluation team.

A well implemented beneficiary feedback approach can therefore enhance the evaluation practice in four ways: i) generation of more robust and rigorous evaluations; ii) reducing participation fatigue and

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<sup>8</sup> Patton, M. Q. (1997a). "[Toward distinguishing empowerment evaluation and placing it in a larger context](#)" (PDF). *Evaluation Practice*. **15** (3): 311–320.

Patton, M. Q. (1997b). *Utilization-focused evaluation: The new century text*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the evolving levels of empowerment already distinguished by Sara Llongwe's *Empowerment Framework* (Control, Participation, Conscientisation, Access, Welfare) can be used during evaluations to gauge the extent to which the process of evaluation has actually empowered stakeholders

beneficiary burden; iii) supporting of development and human rights outcomes; and iv) enhancing programmes.

Source: DFID paper on “Beneficiary Feedback in Evaluation”<sup>10</sup> (2015)

As part of these participatory processes, it is also important that evaluators follow a transparent and extensive process to collect stakeholder’s feedback on the evaluation findings and results. All stakeholders, not only the primary intended users, should be given sufficient time to reflect on and comment on the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.

A tool used by many organizations to formally document all received comments and ensure a transparent feedback process in their evaluations is the *comments matrix*. In this matrix, evaluators respond to each of the comments received, clarifying if it has been accepted or rejected and the reason behind this decision. In this process, evaluators consider the comments provided by the diverse stakeholders and incorporate those where sufficient evidence has been given. Providing enough time and space for feedback and discussion on the draft evaluation report contributes to ownership and the use of evaluations, as it shows stakeholders that their comments are important and are taken seriously. This process could also serve to validate recommendations and confirm their feasibility for future implementation.

Another practice adopted by some UN agencies, such as IFAD and FAO, to promote inclusive and transparent feedback processes and enhance the use of evaluation findings, is the conduct of *stakeholder workshops* (FAO) or *National Round Table Workshop* (IFAD) at the end of their Country Programme Evaluations. These events tend to bring together nearly all stakeholders involved in the evaluation process to discuss the findings, conclusions and way forward. In closing the evaluation process, the stakeholder workshops serve as a platform to provide feedback to stakeholders and engage with stakeholders in issues beyond the evaluation.

Although the benefits of implementing participatory approaches in evaluation are well recognized, it is also important to ensure that evaluation processes are not compromised, including the independence of the evaluation. For this purpose, some practical tips to ensure independence when engaging with stakeholders during an evaluation process are provided in the below table.

**Table 2. Do’s and Don’ts for Ensuring Independence**

Do ...	Do NOT ...
Ensure that the evaluation office’s operational independence is clearly stipulated in the evaluation inception paper or ToR	Succumb to undue pressure from any stakeholders, during the consultation process, to change any aspects of the inception paper or ToR without a rationale that the evaluation team deems to be well-founded
Liaise with managers and other stakeholders to convey the independence of the evaluation and what this means	Allow veto power over any aspect of the evaluation, while consulting with stakeholders for their inputs on the evaluation,
Monitor other stakeholders’ adherence to their responsibilities for independence, and ensure	Wait until the end of the evaluation to flag threats to independence

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/428382/Beneficiary-Feedback-Feb15a.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/428382/Beneficiary-Feedback-Feb15a.pdf)

appropriate corrective action	
Communicate unresolved stakeholder infringements on the evaluation's independence to the evaluation's manager or the Director of the Evaluation Office, in order to determine appropriate action (including, in extreme cases, mentioning non-cooperation in the evaluation report)	Share data collection instruments with any stakeholders until data collection is complete, except in the pre-testing of these instruments, in order to reduce opportunities for information leaks

Source: adapted from OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Manual

<p><u>Related Norms and standards:</u></p> <p>UNEG Norms and Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Norm 14 Evaluation use and follow-up</li> <li>• Standard 4.6 Stakeholder engagement and reference groups</li> </ul> <p>Program Evaluation Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utility Standard U2 Attention to Stakeholders</li> <li>• Utility Standard U5 Relevant Information</li> </ul> <p>OECD DAC Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3.15 Incorporation of stakeholder's comments</li> </ul>
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### **Principle 3: Engage stakeholders early on and throughout the evaluation process**

For evaluations to be more relevant and influential, evaluators need to take into due account what stakeholders consider as key issues. Involving stakeholders early enough in the evaluation process helps ensure more meaningful contributions from their side, and enhances the utility of the evaluation. Research has found, for example, that deep involvement of core stakeholders is better than marginal involvement of many (WPIC, 2013). A good practice is to involve relevant stakeholders, such as the primary intended users, early on in the evaluation process (i.e. at the scoping phase of an evaluation), giving them the opportunity to contribute to the evaluation design by identifying issues to be addressed and evaluation questions to be answered (adapted from OECD/DAC criteria 2.5). In doing so, however, evaluators need to ensure that such interaction and involvement does not jeopardize the independence of the evaluation. An example of the process followed by ILO Evaluation Office (EVAL) is presented in Box 1.

### Box 2. Engaging stakeholders early in the evaluation process

For the conduct of high level evaluations (those mandated by the Governing Body and at the strategic or institutional level), ILO’s Evaluation Office includes a scoping phase that comprises interviews with key stakeholders identified by the evaluation team and the ILO departments concerned. The key stakeholders at this stage are the ILOs tripartite partners: ILO staff, the employers and workers groups and in selected cases, the inter-agency UN partners. When face-to-face interviews are not possible the team relies on skype interviews and in some cases, on a short questionnaire. Data collected during the scoping phase cover the following aspects: 1) stakeholders’ expectations of the evaluation and any specific issues they would like the evaluation team to look into 2) nomination of field visit countries to identify countries with successful practices and/or lessons learned, and 3) any other issues the stakeholder would like to address with the evaluation team. Overall, the inclusion of stakeholders from this early phase has benefited the evaluation in four ways: 1) it has contributed to higher stakeholder engagement and buy-in throughout the evaluation process (as evidenced by the response rate to surveys as well as the quality and number of comments received to the draft report); 2) it has helped the evaluation team identify relevant events and global/regional meetings for further data collection; 3) it has served to identify opportunities for collaboration on joint missions with other ongoing evaluation processes; and 4) it has also provided insight into whether there is common understanding amongst the stakeholders on a given issue or strategy, thus helping in the design of the evaluation questions.

Patton, for instance, emphasizes the need for the primary intended users to be very clearly defined at the beginning of an evaluation, and engaged throughout the evaluation process. This is, according to him, one of the most effective ways of ensuring evaluation use as, “intended users are more likely to use evaluations if they understand and feel ownership of the evaluation process and findings...” (2002, p. 1) (UNEG, 2016, pg. 14). It is important to note, however, that focusing on a few stakeholders as the primary audience does not necessarily mean not engaging with a wider group of stakeholders during the evaluation process

A good practice used within the UN system to keep stakeholders engaged throughout the evaluation process is the establishment of *reference or consultative groups*. One example is the case of OIOS evaluation on robust peacekeeping, for which a reference group composed of the different stakeholders/Offices within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations was created. The evaluation team consulted with the reference group at key stages of the evaluation: scoping phase, finalization of the terms of reference, first reaction to evaluation results, and review of draft reports.

Involving different types of stakeholders (see principle 2) in different phases of an evaluation brings both benefits and risks. Table 2 details some important considerations to take into account during the stakeholder engagement process.

**Table 3. Benefits and risks of stakeholder engagement levels**

Engagement level	Purpose of the engagement	Communication / Engagement approach	Pros / Benefits	Cons / Risks and challenges
Inform	Provide stakeholders with balanced	One way communication approach to stakeholders	Expedient process (does not require a lot of time investment)	No feedback required No or little ownership, interest and use of evaluation

	and objective information			
<b>Consult</b>	Seek views and inputs from the stakeholders, obtain feedback	Limited two-way communication approach (feedback to and from stakeholders)	Potential for feedback is increased	Minimal ownership and potential for use of evaluation findings Might require time to manage expectations of consulted stakeholders
<b>Involve</b>	Work directly with the stakeholders throughout the process	Two-way or multi-way communication with inter active conversation with stakeholders. Learning on both sides. Decision-making separately	Opportunity for learning Increased quality and breadth of feedback	Requires more time for planning and to manage expectations
<b>Collaborate</b>	Partner with the stakeholders for decision-making throughout the evaluation process	Two-way or multi-way – with learning, negotiations and decision making on both sides.	Increased ownership and learning from the collaboration process Feedback embedded throughout the process  Enhanced credibility  Potentially improves evaluation (design, implementation, dissemination and quality)	More time consuming Requires clarification of collaboration parameters (roles and responsibilities) Potential risk of being perceived as not independent Potential risk of not meeting the evaluation objectives and standards (methodological rigour)
<b>Empower</b>	Share the responsibility for making decisions and accountability for the results of such decisions	Stakeholders have formal roles in governance structure, and participate as evaluation team members. Participatory inclusive approach – empowerment evaluation	Enhanced learning and strengthened evaluation capacity  Enhanced credibility  Increased ownership of the evaluation and its findings from stakeholders	High amount of time and efforts required for communication, follow up and decision making Potential risk of being perceived as not independent Potential risk of not meeting the evaluation objectives and standards (methodological rigour)

Source: own elaboration with inputs from IAP2 and UNEP's and Accountability: The Stakeholder Manual Vol 2: The practitioner's handbook on stakeholder engagement (2005)

Related Norms and standards:

UNEG Norms and Standards:

- Standard 4.6 Stakeholder engagement and reference groups

Program Evaluation Standards:

- Utility Standard U1 Stakeholder identification

#### **Principle 4. Seek opportunities to engage with stakeholders in order promote an evaluation culture**

A way of promoting evaluation culture, as well as evaluative thinking, is through capacity development. While this process can be supported by external partners, capacity development should be owned and driven by partner countries themselves (OECD)<sup>11</sup>. The evaluation approach could consider opportunities for key stakeholders to be better integrated into the evaluation learning process (e.g. through workshops, learning groups, debriefing sessions, participation in field visits). Depending on the type of evaluation, some stakeholders may be more involved than others, for instance in internal evaluations (ILO, 2014). Following such an approach and seeking opportunities to build and strengthen national evaluation capacities, for example, is a way of empowering stakeholders, as it provides them with the necessary skills and capacities to lead national evaluation processes and take final decision-making in their hands.

Likewise, evaluations can also support capacity development while engaging with stakeholders in many other ways. An evaluation may, for instance, support capacity development by improving evaluation knowledge and skills, strengthening evaluation management, stimulating demand for and use of evaluation findings, and supporting an environment of accountability and learning (OECD/DAC 2010). Similarly, international development partners may seek collaboration with recipient countries (i.e. government department responsible for evaluation) to implement joint evaluations to assess development results at a country level. Other ways of promoting an evaluation culture and strengthening capacities at the national level can be through the participation of national government representatives in the evaluation field visits and interviews, and by giving priority to working with national consultants or evaluation associations, as well as national research institutes.

Supporting the development of a learning and evaluation culture has also been identified as a growing demand within the United Nations systems. As stated in the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit report (2014, pg. 3), *“while an accountability-driven culture continues to be most important, the changing global dynamics and emergent requirements of the global landscape, including the emerging demands coming from the on-going debates on the post-2015 development agenda, call for an increased focus on learning and development of the learning and evaluation culture (i.e. the learning organization)”*. In this sense, evaluations that encourage a strong stakeholder engagement can serve as a platform to promote self-reflection and self-examination, as well as evidence-based learning; two main characteristics of an evaluation culture within organisations. If managers and staff are involved in the process of measuring and analysing results information, they are likely to see the value of such efforts and to make use of the information gathered (Mayne, J., 2008).

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/dcdndep/49366153.pdf>

Related Norms and standards:

UNEG Norms and Standards:

- Norm 9 National Evaluation Capacity

OECD/DAC Criteria:

- 1.6 Capacity Development

## EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

### **Principle 5. Ensure communication with stakeholders is clear and tailored to their specific needs.**

Effective communication is essential in ensuring a strong stakeholder engagement during the evaluation process. For meaningful participation, efforts must be made to translate jargon into a language that is easily understandable by all stakeholders. Evaluators should use simple and easily understandable messages to address the information needs of different stakeholders. As noted by Patton (2002), “it is the evaluator who must find ways of bridging the communications gap”.

In this relation, UNEG Standard 4.11 on Communication and dissemination (2016) states:

*“Evaluators should communicate to stakeholders how the evaluation results may affect them as individual entities or groups. Messages should seek to secure productive stakeholder participation in evaluation processes and to maximize the use of evaluation results and recommendations. Messages should be presented in simple and easily understandable formats tailored to the specific needs of different audiences.”*

To ensure effective communication throughout the evaluation process, some agencies develop a *communication strategy* for their high level or corporate strategy evaluations. For example, in its Terms of Reference for high level evaluations, ILO’s Evaluation Office includes a section detailing the strategy to promote the evaluation use. This section presents the type of communication products that will be developed for the diverse target audiences after the evaluation process has been concluded (i.e. short “moovly” - videos for audiences who want the two minute version of the key findings and conclusions, quick fact summaries with infographics for ILO and UN staff, and a short PowerPoint version which is used for disseminating the key findings, conclusions and recommendations to the constituents and to accompany the full report on our website).

Some useful tips and considerations to ensure a common understanding amongst stakeholders and promote their participation throughout the evaluation process are provided in Figure 3.

Related Norms and standards:

UNEG Norms and Standards:

- Norm 7 Transparency
- Standard 4.9 Evaluation report and products
- Standard 4.11 Communication and dissemination

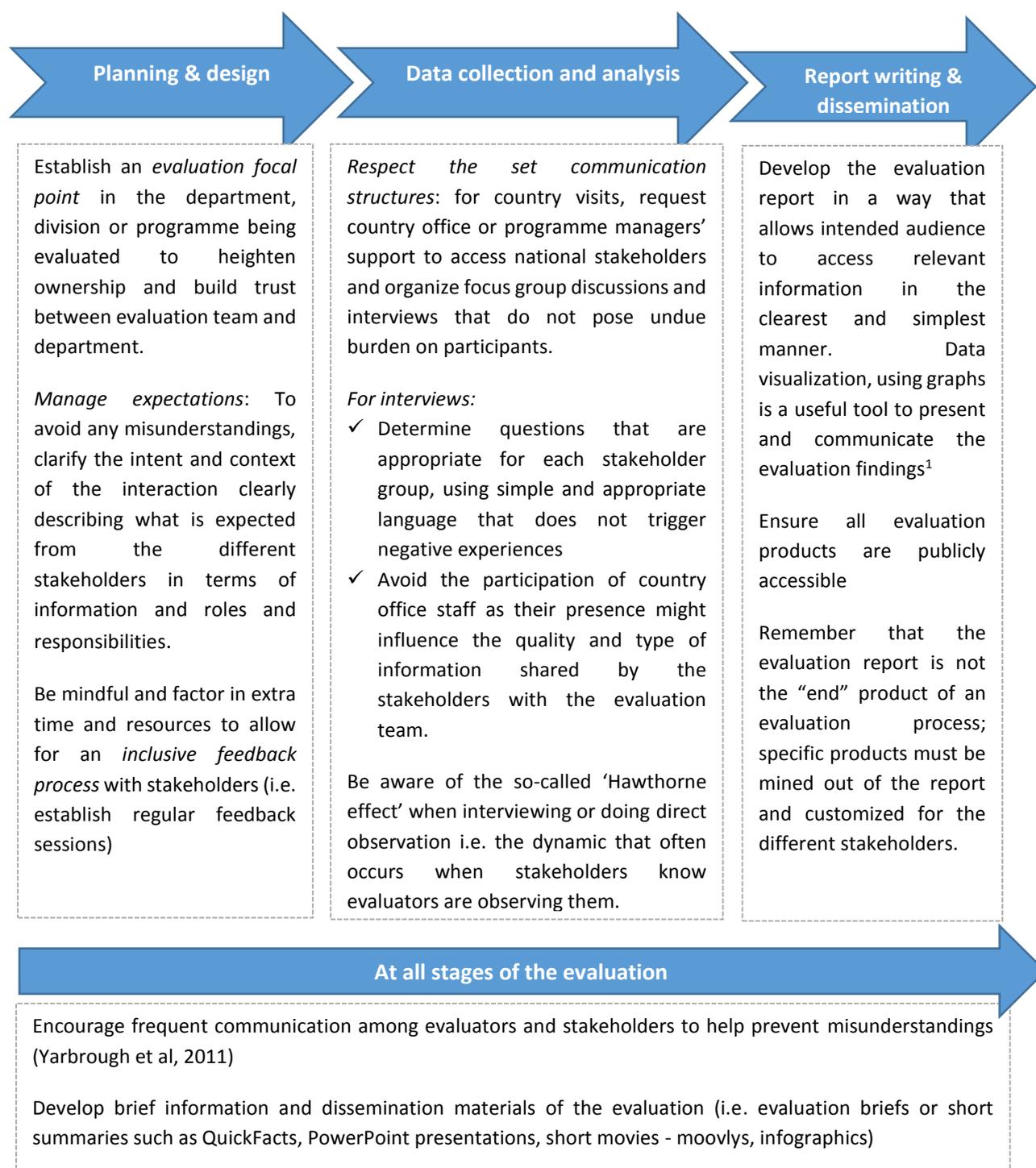
OECD/DAC Criteria:

- 4.3 Dissemination

Program Evaluation Standards:

- Accuracy Standard A8 Communication and reporting

**Figure 3. Considerations for effective communication in stakeholder engagement**



## RESPECT AND SENSITIVITY FOR STAKEHOLDER DIVERSITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

**Principle 6. Abide to the highest ethical standards in engaging with evaluation stakeholders, ensuring respect and sensitivity to stakeholder's diversity and human rights.**

Over the years, a number of organisations have stressed the importance of following professional and ethical standards for the conduct of evaluations in their guidelines<sup>12</sup>. Successfully engaging identified stakeholders while taking into account ethical considerations is fundamental to foster a relationship of mutual trust and understanding between the evaluators and different evaluation stakeholders.

Evaluators should therefore take into account and incorporate several ethical considerations when managing, commissioning and/or conducting evaluations. These include, among others:

- be knowledgeable about background situations and set aside any preconceived view (Heider, 2014);
- be respectful for the differences in culture, customs, religious beliefs and practices of all stakeholders, being mindful of their social and cultural environment, including the cultural norms and power dynamics;
- ensure the welfare, anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants and stakeholders, especially of vulnerable groups (i.e. children in forced child labour, victims of commercial sexual exploitation and/or trafficking situations) that participated in the evaluation. The ethical standard for such stakeholders is to be considerate of the location and space in which any discussions should take place, and never identify them by name in any lists of interviews/meetings in annexes or supplementary documentation; and
- respect values of human rights and gender equality, underpinning the commitment of “no one left behind” and “do no harm” (i.e. it is important to be mindful of gender roles and minority groups when setting up focus groups or interviews);

Related Norms and standards:

UNEG Norms and Standards:

- Norm 6 and Standard 3.2 on Ethics
- Norm 8 Human Rights and gender equality

OECD DAC Criteria:

- 1.3 Evaluation Ethics
- 3.3 Consultation and protection of stakeholders

Program Evaluation Standards:

- Propriety Standard P3 Human rights and respect

## CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT OF EVALUATIONS

### **Principle 7. Seek and use stakeholders’ feedback on the evaluation process for effective learning and continuous improvement of evaluation practice**

Evaluators should seek stakeholder’s views and perspectives on the evaluation process in order to improve their work. Collecting stakeholder’s feedback at the end of the evaluation process and reflecting on their insights shows a commitment to improving the evaluation practice. Some agencies, for instance, sends a survey to managers and staff of the entity evaluated, asking for feedback on the evaluation process and output at the end of each evaluation. OIOS, for instance, circulates a survey to all stakeholders who have been involved/consulted in the evaluation, asking for feedback on the evaluation (professionalism, credibility, and utility).

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<sup>12</sup> OECD/DAC Quality standards for Development Evaluation (2010), AEA Guiding Principles for Evaluators (2004), UNEG Norms and Standards (2016), UNEG guidance on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation (2014), Australian Evaluation Society (2010), GEF Evaluation Office Ethical Guidelines (2007)

Patton (2008) proposes the following questions to collect feedback on the evaluation process:

- What was valuable about the evaluation process and findings?
- How were findings and recommendations used?
- What was not helpful?
- What can be learned from this particular evaluation to improve future practice?

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