

EVALUATION POLICY AND STRATEGY

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UNITED NATIONS

ECLAC

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Acronyms

CPC	Committee for Programme and Coordination
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
IMDIS	Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
OPPBA	Office of Programme Planning, Budget, and Accounts
PPEU	Programme Planning and Evaluation Unit
PPOD	Programme Planning and Operations Division
PPRs	Programme Performance Reports
TORs	Terms of Reference
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

A. Presentation

The present document describes the revised policy and strategy for the practice of evaluation within the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). The purpose of the Commission's evaluation policy and strategy is to strengthen the evaluation function by maximizing transparency and coherence and ensuring high quality standards in its evaluations. It is hoped that this, in turn, will ultimately contribute to greater accountability, improved performance, and institutional learning within the Commission. The Commission's policy has been established in accordance with the Secretariat's rules and regulations on evaluation.¹ The ECLAC evaluation strategy outlines how this policy is put into practice, in accordance with guidelines established by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS).² The policy and strategy is also aligned with the norms and standards of evaluation established by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).³

This document details both the policy and the strategy of the ECLAC evaluation function. The background and context of the evaluation function within the United Nations System is described in the following section (section B) of the document. Section C then outlines the objectives, guiding concepts and principles of evaluation at ECLAC, while sections D and E describe the institutional framework of the evaluation function, and the evaluation process. Evaluation use and follow-up mechanisms are then detailed in section F, while the final section of the document presents the Commission's strategy for coordinating and sharing knowledge on its evaluation practice with other institutions within and outside the United Nations system.

¹ United Nations, "Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation", Secretary-General's bulletin (ST/SGB/2000/8), May 2016, [Available on-line at: <http://undocs.org/ST/SGB/2016/6>].

² OIOS, "Inspection and Evaluation Manual", September 2014 [Available on-line at: https://oios.un.org/resources/2015/01/OIOS-IED_Manual.pdf].

³ UNEG, "Norms and Standards for Evaluation, UNEG", June 2016 [Available on-line at: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>].

B. Evaluation at the UN

The evaluation function within the United Nations Secretariat was largely shaped by the reform initiative launched by the Secretary-General to increase the effectiveness of the Organization's work, in part by strengthening its results orientation. This was spelled out in the Secretary-General's "Programme for Reform," presented to the General Assembly in 1997, which affirmed the need to transition from a focus on processes to a focus on results in the Organization's planning, budgeting and reporting, *"with the aim of shifting the United Nations programme budget from a system of input accounting to results-based accountability. [...] The Secretariat would be held responsible for, and judged by, the extent to which the specified results are reached."*⁴ This led to the institutionalization of results-based management (RBM) in the Organization.⁵

Subsequent reform efforts aiming at building up on the 1997 initiative highlighted the importance of evaluation in helping the Organization to enhance its planning and budgeting system and strengthen its focus on results. In the September 2002 report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387), the Secretary-General stressed the need for a strengthened monitoring and evaluation system to allow the Organization to better measure the impact of its work. The operating procedure for the evaluation function within the United Nations Secretariat is outlined in the Secretary-General's bulletin entitled "Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation" (ST/SGB/2016/6).

1. Definition of Evaluation at the UN⁶

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

2. Types of evaluation

Evaluation in the Secretariat can be divided into two major categories, namely internal and external evaluation. The following table summarizes the key features of the current evaluation system:

(a) External evaluation

Mandatory external	
Primarily useful for oversight and support to decision-making at the governance level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandated by an intergovernmental body. • Designed, managed and conducted by an entity outside the programme being evaluated, such as the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) as part of its UN system-wide mandate or by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), or by an independent external evaluator appointed ad-hoc.

⁴ United Nations General Assembly, report of the Secretary-General entitled "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform" (A/51/950), July 1997, p. 19 [Available on-line at: <https://undocs.org/A/51/950>].

⁵ The United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) defines results-based management (RBM) as follows: "A management strategy by which the Secretariat ensures that its processes, outputs and services contribute to the achievement of clearly stated expected accomplishments and objectives. It is focused on achieving results and improving performance, integrating lessons learned into management decisions and monitoring of and reporting on performance."

⁶ Extracted from the document "Background on Monitoring and Evaluation" presented as an integral part of the instructions for the preparation of the Proposed Programme Budget 2018-2019 issued by PPBD, based on PPBME rules.

Discretionary external	
Primarily useful for programme managers, who wish to improve the performance of their programmes on the basis of objective assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requested by programme managers in the UN Secretariat as and when considered appropriate. • Designed, managed and conducted by entities outside the programme being evaluated, such as the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) or the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), or by an external evaluator. • Programme manager's role is that of 'evaluee'.

(b) Internal evaluation

Self-evaluation	
Primarily useful when formulating best-practices and lessons learned; can cover crosscutting issues relevant to a number of subprogrammes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodic evaluations conducted by programme managers for their own use. • Directed at time-limited objectives and continuing functions. • Timing, scope and other characteristics of a self-evaluation study determined by the nature and characteristics of activities programmed and other relevant factors. • Normally address issues that are over and above those covered by mandatory self-assessments. • Normally not required to be reported upon at the intergovernmental level. Self-evaluation activities are those that result in evaluation outputs in the form of evaluation reports that meet the norms and standards of evaluation in the UN System established by the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG), and will be assessed accordingly in context of the biennium report of OIOS on "Strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives".
Mandatory self assessments / Monitoring	
Helpful to management in periodically reviewing programme implementation and assessing whether the programme is on track to achieving the results expected at the end of the biennium. These are considered monitoring activities and are not evaluations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compulsory self-assessments performed by programme managers as often as considered useful, but at least once during the biennium, usually at its end. • Framed by the logical frameworks in the approved strategic framework and budget documents. • Assess whether and to what extent the expected accomplishments were achieved, based on collection and analysis of data related to indicators of achievement, and delivery of outputs; information generated from other types of evaluation and assessment may also be used. • Findings reported in the Secretary-General's biennial report on the programme performance of the United Nations (PPR) and in reporting on the implementation of the senior managers' compacts. • At the discretion of programmes, findings may also be reported elsewhere (e.g. to other intergovernmental bodies, various stakeholders, the general public). • Record progress and report results and accomplishments in the electronic tools designed for this purpose. • Use information generated by measuring the extent to which Expected Accomplishments were achieved through the collection of indicator data.

C. Evaluation at ECLAC

1. Definition of Evaluation at ECLAC

A process that seeks to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, theme, sector, operative area or institutional performance in the light of its objectives and expected accomplishments, analyzing both expected and unexpected results. An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes.

2. Key objectives of evaluation

Evaluation is an integral part of the work of ECLAC in all of its substantive areas and has contributed to improve programme planning, design and implementation. As an important accountability mechanism, it enhances the Commission's legitimacy and credibility. It also helps ECLAC to ensure a results orientation in the activities it undertakes, and to identify the impacts of its interventions. Moreover, it is an important driver of institutional learning, allowing ECLAC to replicate best practices and apply innovative approaches.

The evaluation function at ECLAC has three main objectives:

(a) Accountability

Evaluation at ECLAC constitutes an important accountability mechanism for reporting to United Nations governing bodies, member States, donors, implementing partners and beneficiaries, enhancing the legitimacy and credibility of the Commission's work in supporting economic and social development in the region. Evaluation also contributes to the identification and dissemination of the Commission's key achievements.

(b) Managing for results

Evaluation assists ECLAC managers to more effectively plan objectives, expected accomplishments, outputs and activities for results leading to a more efficient allocation of resources. Evaluations are also useful to identify the results of the diverse activities the Commission undertakes, and recognize strengths and weaknesses in the Commission's work processes.

(c) Learning, innovation and organizational change

The lessons learned and recommendations derived from evaluations allow ECLAC managers to identify effective practices and innovative approaches which are useful for the continuous improvement of the Commission's work. They also serve as key inputs in determining corrective action to be taken to improve the Commission's overall performance and effectiveness.

3. Guiding principles

All definitions presented in this section are aligned with those of UNEG, as set out in its Norms for Evaluation in the UN System and those of OIOS as set out in its List of Key Oversight Terms.⁷

Guiding principles: Human rights, gender mainstreaming, regional cooperation and engagement, internal and inter-agency coordination, and participation and inclusion are the key principles guiding the ECLAC evaluation function. In practice, this means that all evaluations should incorporate these principles as lines of analysis of the evaluation, by reviewing how these principles were respected and promoted throughout the design and implementation of the project, programme or area under evaluation. More than that, however, ECLAC also seeks to ensure that the evaluation process itself applies these same principles, and that evaluations ultimately contribute to promoting and reinforcing them.

(a) Human rights

Evaluations should always assess the extent to which the activities and products of ECLAC respected and promoted human rights, equity and justice, including whether ECLAC interventions treated beneficiaries as equals, safeguarded and promoted the rights of minorities, and helped to empower civil society. Moreover, the evaluation process itself, including its design, the collection of data, and dissemination of the evaluation report, should be carried out in alignment with these principles.

(b) Gender mainstreaming

Evaluations should examine whether the design and implementation of the Commission's activities took the needs and priorities of women into account, whether they treated women as equal players, and whether they served to promote women's autonomy. In March 2013, ECLAC launched its gender mainstreaming strategy, which underlines the importance of incorporating gender considerations in its evaluation processes.⁸

(c) Regional cooperation and engagement

ECLAC strives not only to respond to development needs in Latin America and the Caribbean, but also to serve as a forum and facilitator in building regional consensus and supporting public policy formulation to meet the challenges facing the region. It promotes multilateral dialogue, sharing knowledge and building networks at the global, regional and subregional levels. The Commission also seeks to promote intra- and interregional cooperation between the regional commissions and to collaborate with other regional organizations, particularly other United Nations entities. Moreover, the engagement and ownership of the Commission's partner countries within the region is essential to ensuring that its work is aligned with regional priorities, that its activities help build technical and institutional capacities, and that its impacts are sustainable. To this end, evaluations should examine whether ECLAC activities respond to these priorities and the extent to which its counterparts are involved in planning and implementation processes.

(d) Internal and inter-agency coordination

Many of the Commission's programmes and projects are implemented in coordination with its subregional and national offices, or in partnership with other United Nations agencies, both at intra- and interregional level. Effective coordination in programme planning and implementation is critical to ensuring that resources are used efficiently and results are achieved. Evaluations should consider the extent to which ECLAC has coordinated its activities with its offices away from headquarters and with other United Nations partners.

⁷ UNEG, "Norms and Standards for Evaluation", June 2016 [Available on-line at: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>].

OIOS, "List of Key Oversight terms", April 2013, [Available on-line at https://oios.un.org/resources/2015/01/list_key_oversight_terms.pdf].

⁸ ECLAC, "Strategy for Mainstreaming Gender at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) 2013-2017", October 2013, [Available on-line at <http://repositorio.cepal.org/handle/11362/40448>].

(e) Participation and inclusion

Assessments of the work of ECLAC should consider whether all stakeholders, including the United Nations, national counterparts, and beneficiaries were able to take active roles in project implementation and whether particular emphasis was given to the inclusion of minorities and vulnerable groups. Similarly, the evaluation process should involve all stakeholders, including programme managers and other implementing partners, in an inclusive manner in the evaluation design, data collection, and quality assurance process.

(f) Internationally agreed principles, goals and targets

ECLAC will take measures to ensure that the principles and values to which the United Nations is committed to are upheld and promoted in its evaluation practice. In particular, ECLAC will take measures to ensure that all of its evaluations include an assessment of whether and how the activities, projects or programmes being evaluated have promoted and contributed to the achievement of the goals and targets set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

4. Norms

The Commission's norms and standards for evaluation are aligned with those established by UNEG in its 2016 document entitled "Norms and Standards for Evaluation"⁹. These have been adapted in this paper to the context of the evaluation function within ECLAC.

(a) Utility

In all evaluations commissioned by ECLAC, there should be a clear intention to use the resulting analysis, conclusions or recommendations to inform decisions and actions. At ECLAC, the utility of evaluation manifests through its use for accountability, managing for results and learning, innovation and organizations change, which are ensured through an intentional process to select, design and conduct evaluations and the institutionalization of a proper evaluation follow-up process.

(b) Credibility

All evaluations at ECLAC are to be carried out through transparent evaluation processes, inclusive approaches involving relevant stakeholders, a rigorous methodology and robust quality assurance systems to ensure the credibility of evaluation results, findings, recommendations and lessons learned.

(c) Independence

In order to ensure the independence of the evaluation function, it should be fully transparent and free from undue influence. While evaluations at ECLAC are managed by its staff, measures are taken to maximize to the extent possible the independence of the evaluation function. The evaluation function is separate from other management functions within PPOD so as to ensure full discretion in the supervision of evaluations. Moreover, ECLAC takes various measures to safeguard the independence of the evaluative process. For example, the function of ECLAC staff is limited to setting the ECLAC evaluation policy and guidelines, evaluation planning and monitoring, task management of evaluations and quality assurance. ECLAC contracts its evaluators externally, and their independence from the evaluation subject is considered a prerequisite for their selection. Additionally, ECLAC ensures that evaluators have full access to all relevant information and are provided full freedom to conduct their evaluative work impartially, without the risk of negative effects on their career development, and are allowed to freely express their assessment.

⁹ UNEG, "Norms and Standards for Evaluation", June 2016 [Available on-line at: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>].

(d) Impartiality

ECLAC should ensure impartiality at all stages of the evaluation process, including the planning and design of evaluations, selection of evaluation consultant(s), involving all relevant stakeholders, and ensuring that evaluators conduct evaluations in an impartial manner by objectively conducting their evaluations, ensuring the validity of evaluation results and taking into consideration the views of all stakeholders.

(e) Ethics

As established by UNEG norms, ECLAC should ensure that evaluations are conducted with the highest standards of integrity and respect for the beliefs, manners and customs of the social and cultural environment; for human rights and gender equality; and for the 'do no harm' principle for humanitarian assistance. Evaluators must respect the rights of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence and that sensitive data is protected and that it cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators should obtain informed consent for the use of private information from those who provide it. When evidence of wrongdoing is uncovered, it must be reported discreetly to a competent body (such as the relevant office of audit or investigation).

(f) Transparency

All stakeholders should be consulted in the evaluation process in order to create ownership and facilitate consensus to facilitate transparency in the evaluation process. Terms of Reference (TORs) and evaluation reports should be shared with all members of the ERG, including representatives of the implementing partners and made accessible to the public. Management responses and evaluation recommendations implementation plan should be made accessible to all ECLAC staff through its publications in its intranet.

(g) Professionalism

All of ECLAC evaluations should be conducted with professionalism and integrity. Professionalism is ensured through rigorous selection processes of evaluation staff and external consultants (evaluators), rigorous evaluation methodologies and quality control systems.

5. Types of evaluation conducted by ECLAC

Besides the internal mandatory self-assessments carried out by the monitoring and evaluation focal points of substantive Divisions with the technical assistance of Programme Officers of the Programme Planning and Operation Divisions, ECLAC regularly conducts internal self-evaluations.

Internal self-evaluations at ECLAC are typically commissioned and managed by the Commission's PPOD and are carried out by external consultants. In some cases, ECLAC undertakes evaluations by agreement with (and with financing from) an external donor. Internal self-evaluations are in some cases submitted to the Executive Secretary, and depending on their scope and relevance, they might also be presented to the ECLAC member States. Internal self-evaluations constitute the entire portfolio of evaluations conducted by ECLAC and are therefore the subject of the present policy and strategy document. These evaluations address various dimensions of the Commission's work, categorized here according to four different levels of analysis:

(a) ECLAC biennial programme of work

At the broadest level of analysis, ECLAC may undertake evaluations aimed at assessing its entire programme of work over a two-year period, examining the extent to which its activities and results fulfilled its mandate and met the targets set for the biennium.

(b) Cross-cutting and strategic issues

ECLAC may undertake evaluations examining specific cross-cutting or strategic issues of relevance to its mandate and activities.

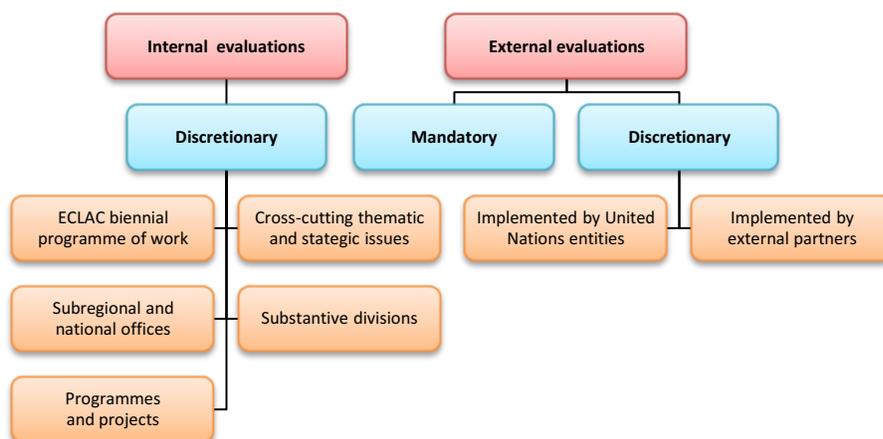
(c) Substantive divisions, subregional and national offices

ECLAC may undertake evaluations of its individual substantive divisions, subregional and national offices, to examine the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact of its work of its subprogrammes, and/or subregions or countries covered by its subregional and national offices over a given period.

(d) Programmes and projects

The majority of ECLAC evaluations are undertaken at the level of its individual programmes and projects, which are often implemented in partnership with other United Nations entities or external donors.

Diagram 1
ECLAC evaluation system



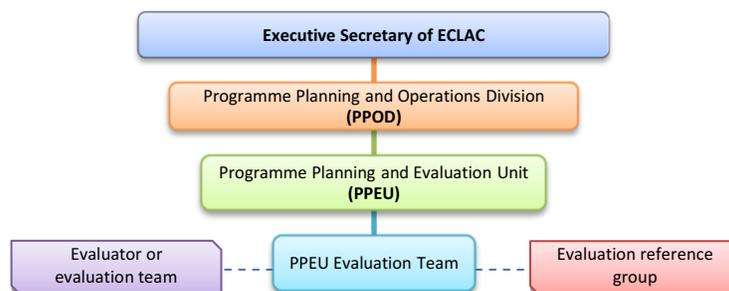
Source: Programme Planning and Evaluation Unit (PPEU).

D. Institutional framework

1. Institutional framework of the evaluation function

The evaluation function at ECLAC is a subset of its overall monitoring and evaluation system. The Commission’s evaluation function is situated within the Programme Planning and Evaluation Unit (PPEU) of PPOD. The PPEU Evaluation Team is composed by a Programme Officer and an Evaluation Assistant, reporting to the Chief of the PPEU. The unit operates under the overall supervision of the Deputy Executive Secretary for Management and Programme Analysis, who, in turn, reports directly to the Executive Secretary of the Commission. The PPEU Evaluation Team is separate from other management functions in the Division so as to ensure, to the extent possible, independence in the evaluation function.

Diagram 2
Institutional structure of the evaluation function



Source: Programme Planning and Evaluation Unit (PPEU).

2. Roles and responsibilities

(a) Executive Secretary of ECLAC

The Executive Secretary of ECLAC carries overall responsibility for the Commission's programme of work, and is accountable to the Secretary-General, the United Nations Member States, as well as the States members of ECLAC. As part of his/her roles and responsibilities, the Executive Secretary:

- ✓ Approves the evaluation policy of ECLAC
- ✓ Oversees the selection of the Deputy Executive Secretary for Management and Programme Analysis
- ✓ Approves the Commission's biennial evaluation plan before its submission to the United Nations Secretariat and General Assembly for final approval
- ✓ Draws on evaluation recommendations to inform strategic decision-making regarding the Commission's programme of work

(b) Programme Planning and Operations Division (PPOD)

The evaluation function of ECLAC is carried out by the Evaluation Team under the guidance of the PPEU Chief and the overall supervision of the Deputy Executive Secretary for Management and Programme Analysis, head of the Programme Planning and Operations Division. It implements all aspects of the evaluation function, with the following responsibilities:

(i) Evaluation planning and governance

- ✓ Develops and regularly updates the evaluation policy and strategy
- ✓ Develops and regularly updates evaluation guidelines
- ✓ Prepares the biennial evaluation plan and corresponding budget
- ✓ Periodically reports on the overall outcomes of the evaluation function
- ✓ Ensures that evaluation results feed into the Commission's programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting processes
- ✓ Incorporates evaluation findings in the Commission's organizational learning and knowledge management systems

(ii) Management of evaluations

- ✓ Commissions the evaluations
- ✓ Selects external evaluators based on a competitive selection process
- ✓ Manages the overall evaluation process and provides relevant information and documentation to evaluators
- ✓ Provides coordination with programme stakeholders and facilitates quality assurance of evaluations through joint review of evaluation deliverables
- ✓ Coordinates the preparation of management responses to evaluations, as well as the definition and implementation of follow-up actions with the respective divisions

(iii) Communication and dissemination

- ✓ Regularly updates programme managers on planned evaluations, evaluations in progress, and the findings and follow-up actions of completed evaluations
- ✓ Regularly updates intranet and Internet sites on the evaluation function, providing access to the evaluation policy, guidelines, completed evaluation reports and their respective management responses, as well as other related up-to-date information on the evaluation function
- ✓ Establishes partnerships with evaluation networks and other associations active in the area of evaluation

(c) ECLAC division programme managers and other implementing partners

Programme managers in the various substantive divisions and subregional and national offices of ECLAC play an important role in the preparation, quality review and follow-up processes of evaluations and are formally represented in the evaluation process through the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG).¹⁰ Specifically, they:

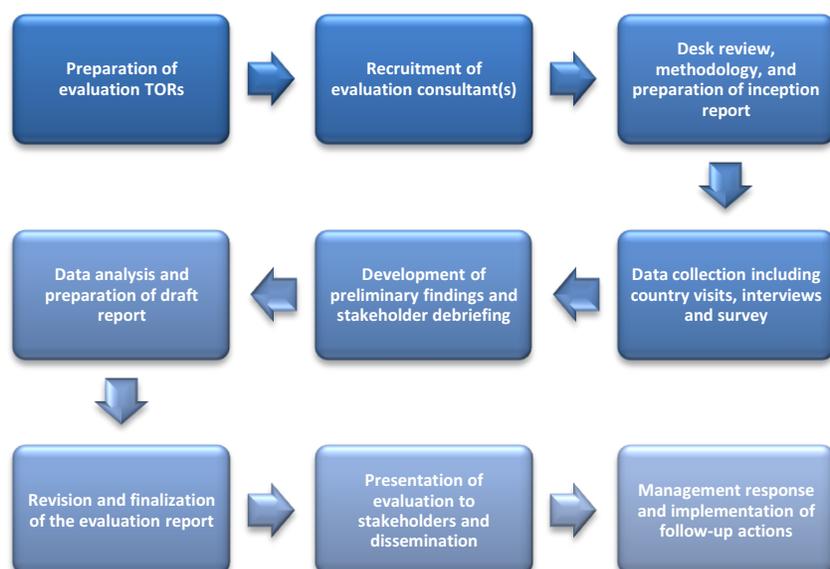
- ✓ Nominate representatives to the ERG
- ✓ Provide relevant information and documentation to evaluators and act as informants in the evaluation process
- ✓ Review the evaluation report for robustness of evidence and factual accuracy
- ✓ Establish and implement follow-up actions in response to evaluation recommendations

(d) Evaluator/Evaluation team (External consultant)

- ✓ Undertakes the desk review, designs the evaluation methodology and prepares the inception report
- ✓ Conducts the data collection process, including the design of the electronic survey and semi-structured interviews
- ✓ Carries out the data analysis
- ✓ Drafts the evaluation report and undertakes revisions

E. The evaluation process

Diagram 3
Steps in the evaluation process



Source: Programme Planning and Evaluation Unit (PPEU).

¹⁰ See page 16 for further details on the ERG.

1. Planning and budgeting evaluations

One year before the beginning of each biennium, the evaluation plan of ECLAC is delivered, along with programme budgets, to the Office of Programme Planning, Budget, and Accounts (OPPBA) in the United Nations Secretariat, after which they are formally submitted to the General Assembly for final approval. This plan indicates the topic, estimated cost and time frame of each evaluation. Evaluations of programmes and projects are selected based on their planned closure dates, while thematic and strategic evaluations are determined by PPOD in consultation with ECLAC substantive divisions and subregional offices, according to need and relevance in the given biennium. The evaluation plans submitted as part of the programme budgets are considered to be estimates rather than formal commitments, and adjustments are sometimes made to respond to changing conditions.

In addition to the human resources assigned to evaluation as part of the Commission's overall programme of work for each biennium, ECLAC aims to allocate approximately 2-5% of the total budget of each of its programmes and projects to evaluation. In order to attain this benchmark, and as stipulated in the Development Account guidelines, all DA account projects should allocate between 2-3% of its total budget to conducting an external evaluation of the project. Furthermore, and whenever feasible, all XB projects and programmes over US\$200,000 should earmark appropriate resources for monitoring and evaluation functions. Additionally, and subject to the availability of resources, PPOD will carry out at least one ad hoc thematic or strategic evaluation per biennium. Evaluation costs generally include:

- ✓ Human resources
- ✓ External evaluator fees
- ✓ Travel of external evaluator and ECLAC staff
- ✓ Editing and translation of evaluation reports
- ✓ Evaluation training needs

2. Preparation of the evaluation terms of reference (TORs)

For each of the evaluations conducted by ECLAC, terms of reference are prepared by the PPEU Evaluation Team, including, but not limited to, the following information:

- (a) General background of the project, programme or thematic area to be evaluated, including its objectives and main activities.
- (b) The main elements of the methodology proposed for the evaluation, indicating its objective, purpose, scope, main evaluation questions and criteria.
- (c) Roles and responsibilities in the evaluation process.
- (d) Deliverables, deadlines, payment schedules and conditions.
- (e) Profile of the evaluator or evaluation team members.

3. Recruitment of evaluation consultants

In order to ensure the independence of the evaluation function, it should be fully transparent and free from undue influence. While evaluations at ECLAC are managed by its staff, measures are taken to maximize to the extent possible the independence of the evaluation function. The evaluation function is separate from other management functions within PPOD so as to ensure full discretion in the supervision of evaluations, and the Programme officer in charge of Evaluation has the authority to submit reports directly to the Executive Secretary. Moreover, ECLAC takes various measures to safeguard the independence of the evaluative process. For example, the function of ECLAC staff is limited to task management of evaluations. In addition, ECLAC contracts its evaluators externally, and their independence from the evaluation subject is considered a prerequisite for their selection. Additionally, ECLAC ensures that evaluators have editorial independence, demonstrate impartiality in their assessment and are given access to all relevant information on the subject of the evaluation.

Once the TORs for the evaluation have been completed a vacancy announcement for external consultant(s) is circulated through Inspira.¹¹ The announcement is further disseminated through various monitoring and evaluation networks, and through direct e-mail to ECLAC's evaluation roster of consultants.

Regardless of the timing for the evaluation, all evaluation candidates are assessed on Inspira based on the criteria set in the TORs and short-listed candidates are then invited to an interview. Once the evaluation is completed in Inspira, the contract is negotiated with the selected consultant following the established procedures for hiring consultants at ECLAC.

4. Evaluation methodology

Evaluations are generally carried out over the course of three to six months, depending on their scope (project evaluations are generally shorter while thematic and strategic evaluations require more time). All evaluations are conducted in three main stages:¹²

(a) Inception

As part of the inception phase the evaluator should, based on the evaluation TOR, prepare a more detailed work plan of all the activities to be carried out related to the evaluation, clearly defining its outputs and deliverables and detailing the methodology to be used. The evaluator should also draft an inception report based on the approved work plan and the secondary data review. The inception report should include a detailed evaluation methodology including the description of the types of data collection instruments that will be used and a full analysis of the stakeholders and partners that will be contacted through the evaluation as part of the data collection efforts as well as drafts of the data collection tools to be used for the survey, focus groups and interviews.

(b) Data collection

The following data collection methodologies should be considered when conducting any evaluation at ECLAC:

- (i) Desk review of all relevant documentation and secondary data collection analysis.
- (ii) Self-administered surveys
- (iii) Semi-structured interviews and focus groups to validate and triangulate information and findings from the surveys and the document reviews.
- (iv) Field visits

Methodological triangulation is an underlying principle to any evaluation conducted at ECLAC. Suitable frameworks for analysis and evaluation are to be elaborated – based on the questions to be answered.

(c) Reporting

Full-fledged evaluations include the following reports to be prepared by the external consultants, while assessments might include the three types of reports or be limited to the last two:

- (i) Field Visit Report and preliminary findings, which should include the main results of the field visits (if any) and the preliminary findings based on data analysis of surveys, interviews and focus groups.
- (ii) Draft final evaluation Report, which should include the main draft results and findings, conclusions of the evaluation, lessons learned and recommendations derived from the evaluation.
- (iii) Final Evaluation Report, which should include the revised version of the preliminary version incorporating to the extent possible all the comments and observations from the evaluation management team of ECLAC and the ERG.

¹¹ Inspira is the on-line United Nations recruitment and human resources management system.

¹² The evaluation planning and implementation process is outlined in more detail in the document Preparing and Conducting Evaluations: ECLAC guidelines.

- (iv) Presentation of the results of the evaluation. A final presentation of the main results of the evaluation to ECLAC and other stakeholders involved in the evaluation will be conducted at the same time of the delivery of the final evaluation report.

5. Quality Assurance

ECLAC uses several means to ensure the highest standards of quality in its evaluations.

- (a) **Guidelines:** All ECLAC evaluations are carried out in accordance with evaluation guidelines developed by PPEU. These guidelines outline the evaluation process, key evaluation criteria and questions, as well as the format and content of deliverables, including the TORs, inception report, presentation of preliminary findings, the report of the evaluation and the follow-up action plan.
- (b) **Evaluator competencies:** ECLAC follows a defined set of criteria for the experience and qualifications required in the selection of the evaluator. Key competencies required by ECLAC for the assignment of a consultant to an evaluation include:
 - (i) An advanced degree in a field relevant to the topic of the evaluation
 - (ii) Relevant and extensive experience in conducting evaluations
 - (iii) Relevant experience in the subject being evaluated is desirable
 - (iv) Experience in the region(s) where the programme or project has been implemented
 - (v) Relevant language proficiency
 - (vi) Experience with international (development) organizations is required. Experience in Regional Commissions and United Nations projects is highly desirable.
 - (vii) Proven competency in quantitative and qualitative research methods, particularly self-administered surveys, document analysis, and informal and semi-structured interviews are required.

While the large majority of evaluations are carried out by a single external evaluator with the support of ECLAC evaluation staff, teams composed of two or three consultants may be required for larger thematic and strategic evaluations.

- (c) **Review of evaluation deliverables:** The task manager provides continuous guidance and feedback to the evaluator throughout the evaluation process and reviews all evaluation deliverables, including the inception report, methodological data collection tools, presentations to implementing partners, and the draft and final evaluation report. ECLAC programme managers in the respective substantive divisions also provide continuous feedback to the task manager and evaluator.
- (d) **Evaluation Reference Group (ERG):** An ERG, composed of a representative of each programme implementing partner, is a formal panel set up to provide feedback on the evaluation's preliminary finding and review the draft evaluation report. Comments by all panel members are consolidated by PPEU and submitted to the evaluator, who addresses them in the revision process as well as through a response template.

6. Dissemination Policy

Once each evaluation report has been finalized, a formal meeting to present the evaluation to the directors, unit chiefs, programme officers and planning and monitoring focal points of the Divisions involved in the implementation of the cooperation project or programme is held. During the meeting, the evaluator presents the main findings resulting from the evaluation of the programme or Project activities, lessons learned, best practices and recommendations to improve the implementation of such types of activities. All evaluations are then uploaded on the Commission's Internet and intranet sites. Moreover, evaluation results are summarized in the biennial report on the activities of the Commission, as well as during annual strategic planning meetings with substantive divisions and offices away from headquarters.

F. Evaluation use

1. Evaluation follow-up process

As a result of every evaluation conducted by ECLAC, a wide range of findings, lessons learned, best practices and recommendations are identified. The Programme Planning and Evaluation unit (PPEU) of the Programme Planning and Operations Division (PPOD) is responsible for following-up the implementation of actions in response to evaluation recommendations, coordinating and supervising the activities carried out by the different substantive Divisions of the Commission.

(a) Objective of the evaluation follow-up process

The follow-up process of evaluation's recommendations is of great usefulness for the institution, specifically for:

- (i) The continuous monitoring of key actions, undertaken to implement evaluation recommendations, provide useful information for the Commission to report to its different donors and stakeholders by providing relevant information related to the measures taken to improve its activities.
- (ii) The monitoring of recommendations, also enhances results based management, as carrying out activities that support the implementation of recommendations promotes the efficiency, efficacy and/or effectiveness of the various activities carried out within ECLAC and in coordination with other entities; achieving an improvement in the performance of the work of the different Divisions.
- (iii) Furthermore, this process promotes institutional change through the identification and promotion of best practices and lessons learned that will further contribute to the continuous improvement process of the Commission.

(b) Response matrix and evaluation recommendations implementation plan

Once the final edited version of the evaluation report is ready, the PPEU as well as the representatives of the ERG review the recommendation included in the final report and decide on their acceptance or not, prepare a draft response matrix and evaluation recommendations implementation plan, detailing each of the recommendations and key actions proposed by the evaluator in the final report and that have been accepted by ECLAC.

A meeting with representatives from PPOD and the directors, chief units, programme officers and planning and monitoring focal points of the Divisions is held to agree a final response matrix and evaluation recommendations implementation plan. The final matrix is distributed via e-mail to all the stakeholders involved in the follow-up process, and is also uploaded at the ECLAC intranet webpage.

(c) Monitoring Process

Based on the agreed response matrices and implementation plans, a consolidated evaluation recommendations follow-up matrix per Division will be prepared. By the end of each year, the substantive Division in charge of the following-up on the implementation of evaluation recommendations will be requested to update the status of implementation of each of the agreed action, using the consolidated evaluation recommendations implementation follow-up matrix.

(d) Finalization of the follow-up process

The established date of completion for each specific action, will depend on deadline agreed between the substantive division and PPEU in the follow-up matrix. As substantive Divisions report actions as implemented, they will be withdrawn from the Division's consolidated matrix. On the other hand, the follow-up process of the implementation of the recommendations related to a specific evaluation, will be considered as concluded, once all the agreed actions related to that specific evaluation have been reported as implemented.

2. Information dissemination process

(a) Intranet

To ensure a generalized knowledge of the recommendations follow-up process, as well as appropriate management of the information resulting from this process, response matrices and evaluation recommendations implementation plans will be uploaded to ECLAC's intranet, and updated on a yearly basis, until the closure of the process.

(b) Guide/bulletin

Based on the actual needs, recommendations and lessons learned identified in the evaluations carried out by ECLAC, could be consolidated into a guide or bulletin that will be widely disseminated once every biennium to all programme managers, focal points and directors of the different Divisions of ECLAC.

(c) Report of activities

It is proposed to mention all the evaluations carried out during the biennium as well as the most relevant follow-up actions on recommendations in the biennial report of activities of the Commission, one of ECLAC's main accomplishment tools, in which all the achievements and work of the different Divisions of ECLAC, as well as those of its national offices are presented to the Plenary of the Commission.

3. Institutionalization of evaluation results

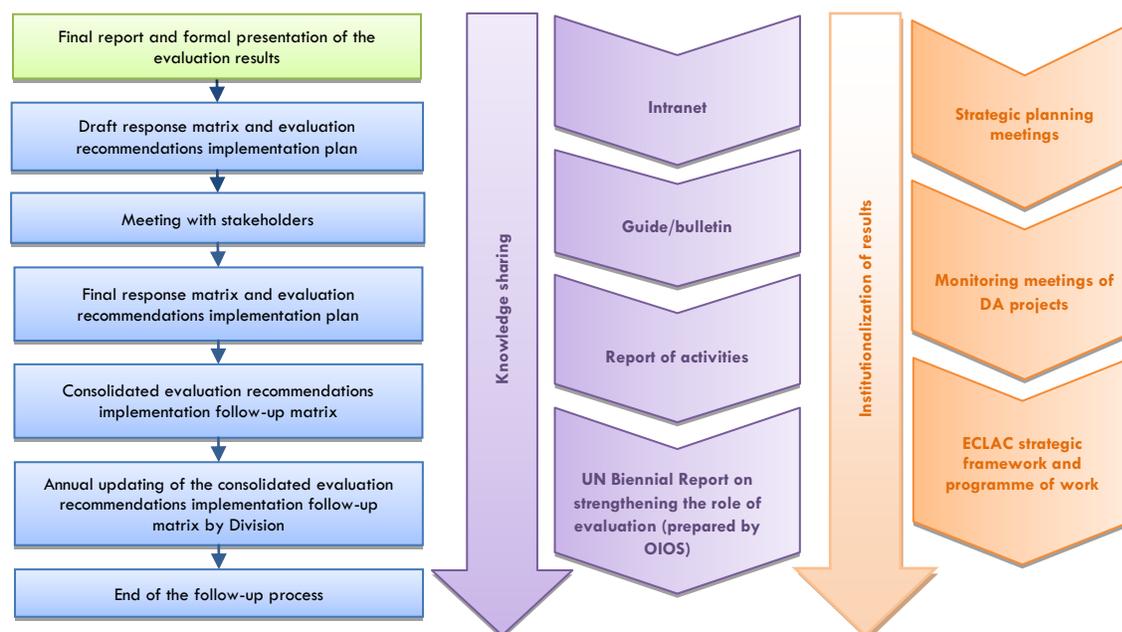
(a) Annual meetings

In the annual technical strategic planning meetings, in which together the most relevant aspects of the planning, monitoring and evaluation processes of ECLAC are analyzed, it is being proposed to share information on the main results of the evaluations carried out during the reporting period, its main recommendations and lessons learned, as well as the most relevant aspects of the recommendations implementation follow-up process and the impact such process has had on substantive Divisions. It is expected that doing so will further encourage the adoption and continuous implementation of the identified best practices and improvement processes, contributing to their institutionalization.

(b) Preparation of the ECLAC strategic framework and programme of work

When preparing the biennial strategic framework and programme of work of ECLAC, efforts will be made to incorporate the recommendations and lessons learned from previous evaluations which are pertinent to the their specific area of work, taking therefore advantage of the knowledge acquired through the evaluation recommendations implementation follow-up process.

Diagram 4
Evaluation follow-up process



G. Coordination and knowledge-sharing on evaluation

1. United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)

ECLAC is a member of UNEG, adhering to its norms and standards for the carrying out of the evaluation function.

2. United Nations regional commissions

Issues related to the implementation of the evaluation function within the Regional Commissions are discussed during annual meetings of the chiefs of programme planning divisions from all five United Nations regional commissions (ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCWA and ESCAP).¹³ Moreover, in 2012, all regional commissions jointly established an interregional monitoring and evaluation focal points network with the overall purpose of ensuring effective communication and information-sharing across regional commissions on the use and practice of monitoring and evaluation in each organization. This network serves to enhance the sharing of resources and experience in evaluation, and its alignment, where possible, with practices, norms and standards of the United Nations Department of Management, UNEG and OIOS.

3. United Nations evaluation networks

ECLAC participates in a number of United Nations evaluation networks, including the UNDP-led network "EVALUN-LAC" for evaluation in the Latin America and Caribbean region. These networks bring together experts throughout the United Nations system to conduct webinars and online discussions on various topics of interest within the practice of evaluation.

4. Global and regional evaluation networks

In addition to its current participation in evaluation networks across the United Nations, ECLAC also plans to widen its cooperation on evaluation to further networks and associations outside the United Nations system, both in the Latin America and Caribbean region and globally.

¹³ Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).