

United Nations
Department of Political Affairs
Ref.



Policy

DPA Evaluation Policy

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Approval date: December 2017
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Review date: December 2020

DPA Evaluation Policy

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A. PURPOSE

1. This revised Department of Political Affairs' (DPA) evaluation policy presents principles and rules that guide the Department's decisions and action when planning, conducting, disseminating and using evaluations of mandate implementation - both at headquarters and in the field. This policy replaces the previous evaluation policy (2012) and supports the Department's Learning and Evaluation Framework. The policy has been developed following consultations with the Under-Secretary General and Senior Management of DPA, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), and the United Nations Evaluation Group.
2. This document provides staff and external evaluators with information on international principles for evaluation and the role and use of evaluation in DPA. It outlines the institutional framework, main organizational roles and responsibilities. It also describes mechanisms for disclosure and follow-up.
3. This policy establishes the Department of Political Affairs' (DPA) approach to ensure evaluation is systemic and on-going part of DPA's work, in addition to other management and learning tools. By providing evidence-based information that is credible and reliable, evaluation function will aim to improve the learning, management and accountability functions of the DPA and strengthen DPA's capacity for results-based management.

B. SCOPE

4. The policy applies to the entire Department, and also covers Special Political Missions (SPMs), as well Extra-budgetary projects managed by DPA.
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C. RATIONALE

5. This revised policy addresses one of the key recommendations made by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) in its 2016 evaluation report.¹ OIOS assessed the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the substantive support of DPA to conflict prevention and resolution from 2008 to 2015. Based on this analysis, one of the key recommendations was to strengthen the use of knowledge for institutional learning and accountability. This revised Evaluation Policy addresses this issue and makes provisions to adequately address independence, resources and risk-based planning. Accordingly, the policy outlines the institutional framework for establishing a dedicated evaluation function within the Office of the Under Secretary General (OUSG), defines criteria for selection of evaluations and lays out the mechanism to track implementation of recommendations arising from various evaluative and learning exercises.
 6. The policy is informed by existing evaluation policies within the UN while meeting the specific needs of DPA. It also intends to reflect the experience accumulated by DPA during the last four years and adapting to new, emerging organizational, accountability and learning needs. In addition to internal evaluation, DPA will also conduct independent, broader departmental evaluations to build on the learning, management and accountability functions within DPA.
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D. POLICY

7. This policy is in line with the Norms and Standards for evaluation developed by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), which provide the overall quality framework for independent evaluations in the UN system.²
8. DPA's Evaluation Function is harmonized with UNEG's Norms and Standards³ and is tailored to respond to the Department's specific needs and expectations. Evaluation is part of DPA's governance and management approach and includes:
 - Dedicated evaluation capacity (staff and resources);
 - Evaluation planning;
 - Implementation and conduct of evaluations;
 - Monitoring the implementation of evaluation recommendations; and
 - Feedback into current operations, guidance, and programme planning and budgeting.

9. Definition and Purpose of evaluation

- 9.1. DPA subscribes to UNEG's definition⁴ of evaluation: "An evaluation is an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional

¹ <https://oios.un.org/page?slug=evaluation-report>

² UNEG is an interagency professional network that brings together the evaluation units of the UN system, including UN departments, specialized agencies, funds and programmes, and affiliated organizations

³ For more details, see Norms and Standards for Evaluation, United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), June 2016

⁴ Norms and Standards for Evaluation, United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), June 2016

performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. 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 of organizations and stakeholders".⁵

9.2. Evaluation at DPA aims at determining the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact (as much as possible⁶) and sustainability of the interventions and contributions for the organization's institutional performance to fulfil its specific mandates. Furthermore, additional criteria related to measuring the nature and characteristics of partnerships, gender mainstreaming⁷ and human rights are mandatorily added to the above criteria, reflecting the need to understand how DPA mainstreams gender and human rights into its interventions and how partnerships with different stakeholder groups have been identified and managed.

9.3. At DPA, evaluation is envisaged to provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful to serve two main purposes:

- a) *Accountability*: The evaluation function plays a critical role in ensuring accountability by independently⁸ conducting evaluations which assess compliance with mandates, resolutions, policies and plans, and report fairly and accurately to the Under-Secretary General, DPA at large, and concerned stakeholders. It provides an independent analysis of DPA's work for relevant stakeholders to improve accountability throughout the Department.
- b) *Organizational learning and knowledge generation*: In addition, the evaluation results will lead / contribute to organizational change through integration of learning from what worked and did not work and contribute to DPA's wider efforts regarding knowledge management, guidance development and training. Evaluations generate significant knowledge on the specific topics under DPA's mandate. This knowledge is delivered in the form of evaluation reports which identify lessons learned and include recommendations. OUSG (through the Evaluation Focal Point), in conjunction with respective divisions of DPA seeks to compile, synthesize and disseminate⁹ this knowledge to the benefit of the Department's activities, stakeholders as well as the UN partners at large and its Member States. Evaluations include measuring the extent to which intended and unintended results are or are not achieved and their impact on beneficiaries and stakeholders. It is an important source of evidence about institutional performance and a key contributor to organisational learning. Although distinct in focus, scope and breadth, evaluations complement After Action Reviews and lessons learned exercises in supporting a culture of continuous reflection, learning and improvement. Through the timely implementation of recommendations

⁵ Evaluation is to be differentiated from other forms of assessment such as appraisal, audit, monitoring, review, inspection, investigation, research etc. Definitions of these terms are included in Section F under 'Terms and Definitions'. While their purpose and level of analysis may overlap to some extent with evaluation, the latter is a distinct form of assessment.

⁶ DPA's third-party role in most of its activities means that it is not necessarily a driver of results and as such, measuring impact is often problematic.

⁷ As well as gender with respect to efficiency and impact.

⁸ Independence through following UNEG Guidelines on drafting of ToRs, selection of consultants, dissemination of findings etc.

⁹ Dissemination of reports is at the discretion of DPA Management.

and lessons learned into decision-making processes of the Department, evaluations aim at being of use throughout the project or programme management cycle, in training and capacity building of staff as well as at the level of policy formulation.

- 9.4. Evaluations are conducted to: (a) objectively assess a past process or engagement to make a policy decision about future engagements, as well as informing departmental planning processes and organizational changes; (b) review an on-going engagement with the aim of making recommendations for improvement;

10. DPA Evaluation Principles

10.1. *Independence and impartiality*

- a) Evaluation independence is necessary for credibility, it influences the ways evaluations are used and allows evaluators to be impartial and free from undue pressure throughout the evaluation process. The independence of the evaluation function comprises two key aspects – behavioural independence and organizational independence. Behavioural independence entails the ability to evaluate without undue influence by any party. Evaluators must have the full freedom to conduct their evaluative work impartially, without risk of negative effects on their career development and reputation, and must be able to freely express their assessment. The independence of the evaluation function underpins free access to information that evaluators should have on the evaluation subject.¹⁰
- b) Organizational independence requires that the central evaluation function is positioned independently from management functions, carries the responsibility of setting the evaluation agenda and is provided with adequate resources to conduct its work. Organizational independence also necessitates that evaluation managers have full discretion to directly submit evaluation reports to the appropriate level of decision-making and report directly to the organization's governing body and/or the executive head.
- c) The evaluation function at DPA is functionally and operationally independent and as such, located in the Office of the Under-Secretary General (OUSG). The objective is to have full authority to carry out evaluations as decided by the Department's Learning and Evaluation Board (LEB) and present evaluation reports to appropriate decision-making levels directly. Management must not impose any type of restrictions, specifically on scope, content and recommendations of evaluation reports.

10.2. *Evaluation is transparent and participatory*

The evaluation process at DPA is transparent and involves relevant stakeholders at key stages of DPA's evaluation cycle¹¹. Information on the evaluation approach, design, and methodology must be shared throughout the process with concerned entities. This is

¹⁰ Norm 4 Independence - Norms and Standards for Evaluation, United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), June 2016.

¹¹ The evaluation cycle refers to the identification of evaluation topic(s), sign-off from the LEB, drafting of evaluation Terms of Reference, formulation of evaluation questions, conceptualization of how to measure programme / project outcomes etc, data collection and analysis, report writing, and utilization of results in management or decision-making.

essential for the credibility and utility of the evaluation and facilitates consensus building and ownership of the findings and recommendations. Transparency in evaluation improves credibility and the quality of the evaluations.

10.3. *Evaluation is utilization focused*

- a) Evaluation products must be timely and tailored to meet the needs of their intended users. The analysis of findings by evaluators has to consider the realities of activities / programmes or country / regional context, and recommendations have to be practical and realistic to be implemented.
- b) Evaluations must respond to a management need and contribute to improved operational effectiveness of DPA or the broader system. There must be clear intent by management to use the findings of all commissioned evaluations. Evaluations must be chosen and undertaken in a timely manner so that they can inform decision-making with relevant and timely information.

10.4. *Human Rights and Gender*

DPA incorporates specific principles and safeguards to ensure that all evaluations undertaken or commissioned by DPA include a focus on the protection and promotion of human rights and gender issues following UNEG/G (2011)2 Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation.¹² This is even more critical in light of DPA's department-wide prioritisation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda following UNSCR 1325 (2000) and subsequent evaluations. Evaluations should conduct gender-sensitive analyses, assess level of gender-mainstreaming of the programmes/ activities and make specific gender-relevant recommendations.

10.5. *Ethics*

Evaluators should have personal and professional integrity and abide by UNEG ethical guidelines for evaluations and the UNEG Code of Conduct¹³ for Evaluation in the United Nations system, to ensure that the rights of individuals involved in an evaluation are respected. Evaluators must act with cultural sensitivity and pay particular attention to protocols, codes and recommendations that may be relevant to their interactions with women, minority groups, etc. Per UNEG ethics norms, evaluators are required to sign the code of conduct.

11. **Categories of evaluations**

DPA evaluations fall into three main categories:

- a) *Departmental evaluations*, which are independent assessments undertaken by the independent evaluation function located in OUSG alone or with the support of external¹⁴ evaluators. These will include:

¹² Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation Towards UNEG Guidance UNEG/G (2011)2

¹³ <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100>

¹⁴ DPA (or other UN) staff who were / are not part of the process being evaluated may be involved in the evaluation.

- i. Strategic evaluations of relevance to the organisation looking at Special Political Missions (SPMs), country, regional, global programmes covering cross-cutting issues, for example gender, human rights, etc.; and
 - ii. Assessments that are utilized to assess issues of corporate strategic significance concerning organizational performance and normative and operational coherence.
- b) *Decentralized evaluations*, which are conducted by independent external evaluators but managed by respective DPA divisions / offices / SPMs etc. – with support from OUSG (subject to resources and capacity). They are conducted in full consultation or in partnership with relevant stakeholders and UN partners, to the extent possible. Decentralized evaluations are utilized to assess issues of significance and play a crucial role in managing for results.
 - c) *Interagency, joint evaluations*¹⁵, which are carried out with other UN entities and or implementing partners. With the complimentary and overlap of mandates and activities of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)¹⁶ and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), these entities are the most likely sources of partnership. DPA is committed to promoting and participating in relevant, interagency, joint or system-wide evaluations and lessons learned initiatives, provided it has the capacity and funds to do so. Such requests will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

12. Criteria for Selecting Evaluations

- 12.1. Evaluations will be selected based on priority and relevance to DPA's strategic goals. OUSG and the Policy and Mediation Division (PMD) will review the evaluation topics submitted by DPA divisions/offices and/or SPMs before being included in the draft Learning and Evaluation Plan that is presented to the LEB. The annual evaluations will cover (i) strategic, (ii) regional, and / or (iii) thematic areas that are cross cutting (taking into consideration the Department's commitment to gender mainstreaming) for the whole of DPA with results, lessons and recommendations that have an impact on and benefit for the Department. In reviewing the topics, the following criteria will apply:
- a) Address areas that are critical to DPA's work based on the DPA Strategic Plan goals or other strategic documents;
 - b) Assess a new policy or procedure instituted by DPA, to identify and document impact, results and lessons learned;
 - c) Provide clear lessons for DPA's future engagement; and
 - d) Provide a frank assessment and result in clear and implementable recommendations.
- 12.2. Evaluation exercises can also be requested or strongly recommended by other entities, such as the Executive and or Deputies Committees, OIOS, or Member States (donors).
- 12.3. The DPA Annual Learning and Evaluation Plan will be a "living" document that will be open to amendments such as ad-hoc evaluations as a result of unexpected requests by the Security Council, General Assembly, Member States, donors etc. To the extent possible, OUSG, PMD and DPA divisions/offices should make available resources to meet such ad-hoc requests.

¹⁵ Whereas "*Joint evaluations*" may be difficult to undertake, information sharing and planning on planned evaluations should be greatly encouraged.

¹⁶ Through the Division of Policy, Evaluation and Training, a shared service of DPKO and DFS.

13. Evaluations linked to programme planning

13.1. OUSG will support respective DPA divisions /offices and SPMs in leading / undertaking evaluations pertinent to their work-plans (subject to resources and capacity). To this end, DPA's respective divisions/offices will be encouraged to include evaluations in annual project / programme planning (including for Extra-budgetary projects). Evaluations in individual activity / project planning should aim to cover, inter alia, the following areas:

- i. Evaluability Assessment¹⁷;
- ii. Mid-Term Review; and
- iii. Final Evaluation.¹⁸

13.2. *Strategic Framework.* The evaluation function should inform and complement the mandatory performance assessment and reporting DPA undertakes as part of Results Based Budgeting (RBB).

13.3. The evaluation function sits alongside its on-going roll-out of Enterprise Risk Management. Consideration of risks to performance and achievement of the Department's mandate may be considered in the selection, planning and conduct of evaluations.

E. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

14. ***Learning and Evaluation Board.*** Established in 2013 and chaired by OUSG Chief of Office with support from PMD. The LEB is responsible for:

- 14.1. Reviewing DPA's Annual Evaluation Plan in advance of approval by the USG, taking into consideration the Department's priorities and available human and financial resources;
- 14.2. Monitoring the implementation of the Annual Plan and all the exercises it comprises, and adjusting the Plan during the year, as needed; and
- 14.3. Making recommendations for follow-up, including on both the dissemination of the exercises' findings and recommendations at both HQ and the field.

15. **The Office of the Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs (OUSG)** is responsible for overseeing department-wide evaluations.

15.1. *The Evaluation Focal Point is responsible for conducting and managing evaluations, and will report, through the Chief of Office of OUSG, to DPA leadership. The Focal Point will support PMD to draft DPA Annual Learning and Evaluation Plan based on inputs received from SPMs, offices and divisions for submission to the LEB for review and approval.*

¹⁷ The Evaluability Assessment examines the extent to which a project or a programme can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion. Going forward, DPA will aim to produce guidelines on carrying out Evaluability Assessment. These guidelines will need to be in-line with the Department's commitment to gender mainstreaming.

¹⁸ Mid-Term Review and Final Evaluation to be undertaken if the Evaluability Assessment recommends an evaluation.

16. **Heads of Special Political Missions and DPA Directors.** Whereas the Evaluation Focal Point leads Department-wide evaluations, respective Senior Officials (SRSGs, Special Coordinators, Special and Personal Envoys) backstopped by DPA and Directors of DPA Divisions are encouraged to undertake decentralized evaluations pursuant to their work programmes. OUSG, with support from PMD, will offer technical and substantive support as and when possible to ensure compliance with UNEG Norms and Standards.
17. **Selection and Role of External Evaluators.** DPA may require the services of external evaluators to supplement its internal capacity for conducting evaluation. External evaluators are selected through a competitive process based on their professional competence and reputation, as well gender and diversity criteria. External evaluators are independent and will not have been involved in the design and / or management of the programme / actively evaluated. They are expected to comply with basic professional ethics and standards as outlined in the UNEG Evaluation Standards and submit a report accordingly.

18. Management Response and Application of Evaluation Recommendations

- 18.1. **Acceptance or Rejection of Recommendations:** Evaluations require a commitment to respond and act by the relevant authorities and managers, addressing the recommendations derived from evaluations. The findings, conclusions and recommendations of each evaluation report should be subject to a review by relevant stakeholders at DPA, against a set of criteria specified in the Terms of Reference for each evaluation exercise. The response to each evaluation should be tracked to include comments of acceptance, non-acceptance as well as plans for follow-up action. The responsibility to implement the recommendations rests with DPA management, as delineated in the "Implementation Tracker" for each evaluation. A systematic follow-up on the implementation of the recommendations is facilitated by PMD and the Evaluation Focal Point.
- 18.2. **Monitoring and Implementation of Recommendations:** OUSG, with support from PMD, monitors the implementation of recommendations and requests responsible managers to update the status of the recommendations¹⁹. Monitoring of the Implementation Tracker will be continual with biannual updates to the Under-Secretary General, Learning and Evaluation Board and DPA Management. This will be a standing agenda point at meetings of the LEB which will assess progress in implementing recommendations.
- 18.3. Whilst DPA Management will be responsible for implementing recommendations from DPA's various evaluations. OUSG is responsible for establishing dissemination and feedback mechanisms for communicating evaluation results within DPA, as well as to relevant stakeholders. DPA Management reserves the right to classify an evaluation as confidential, and or determine the breadth of its dissemination.

19. Budgeting of Evaluations

¹⁹ In-line with timelines stipulated by the Learning and Evaluation Board

- 19.1. *DPA Senior Management*. Senior management is responsible for ensuring sufficient funding is available for evaluations to be carried.
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F. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

20. **After Action Review (AAR):** is a simple process used by a team to capture the lessons learned from past successes and failures, with the goal of improving future performance. It is an opportunity for a team to reflect on a project, activity, event or task so that they can do better the next time.
21. **Appraisal:** A critical assessment of the potential value of an undertaking before a decision is made to implement it
22. **Audit:** An assessment of the adequacy of management controls in order to ensure: the economical and efficient use of resources; the safeguarding of assets; the reliability of financial and other information; the compliance with regulations, rules and established policies; the effectiveness of risk management; and the adequacy of organizational structures, systems and processes.
23. **Credibility:** the extent to which the evaluation evidence and the results are perceived to be valid, reliable and impartial by the stakeholders, particularly the user of the evaluation results.
24. **Effectiveness:** is the extent to which a project, programme or policy achieves its objectives and outcomes.
25. **Efficiency:** is a measure of how resources / inputs (funds, expertise, time etc) are converted into outputs – qualitative and quantitative. It is an economic term which signifies that the project uses the least costly resources possible in order to achieve the desired results. This generally requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving the same outputs, to see whether the most efficient process has been adopted.
26. **Evaluation:** An evaluation is an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. 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 of organizations and stakeholders
27. **Evaluation Stakeholders:** in DPA's context, they include staff from relevant departments at Headquarters and Field Offices (including SPMs, liaison / field presences, joint offices), the Security Council, General Assembly, Member States, beneficiary Governments, implementing partners, Civil Society Organizations, donors, project / programme / policy beneficiaries and other actors involved in activities related to the project, programme or policy evaluated (Non-Governmental Organizations,

United Nations organizations, other international organizations, research institutes etc.), as appropriate.

28. **Inspection:** A general examination that seeks to identify vulnerable areas and malfunctions and to propose corrective actions.
29. **Investigation:** A specific examination of a claim of wrongdoing and the subsequent provision of evidence for possible use in prosecution or disciplinary measures.
30. **Monitoring:** Management's continuous examination of any progress achieved during the implementation of an undertaking in order to track its compliance with the plan and to take necessary decisions to improve performance.
31. **Joint Evaluation:** is an evaluation to which different agencies and / or partners participate. Note: There are various degrees of "jointness" depending on the extent to which individual partners cooperate in the evaluation process, merge the evaluation resources and combine their evaluation reporting. Joint evaluations can help overcome attribution problems in assessing the effectiveness of programme and strategies, the complementarity of efforts supported by different partners, the quality of aid coordination, etc.²⁰
32. **Lessons Learned:** is a generalization derived from evaluation experiences with projects, programmes or policies that is applicable to projects, programmes or policies of similar scope and design. It summarizes knowledge at a point in time, while learning is an ongoing process and has the potential to improve future actions. Frequently, lessons learned highlight strengths or weaknesses in preparation, design and implementation that affect performance, outcome, and impact.
33. **Management Response:** a written response from DPA Management (if necessary in consultation with Member States, UN entities and other stakeholders) to the evaluation process, findings and recommendations which is included in the evaluation report.
34. **Research:** A systematic examination designed to develop or contribute to knowledge.
35. **Relevance:** is the extent to which the objectives of a project are continuously consistent with the needs, priorities and policies of the target group, and with the DPA mandate.
36. **Reliability:** consistency or dependability of data and evaluation judgements, with reference to the quality of the instruments, procedures and analyses used to collect and interpret evaluation data.
37. **Results-based Budgeting (RBB):** is a budget process in which (a) budget formulation revolves around a set of predefined objectives and expected results, (b) expected results justify the resource requirements which are derived from and linked to outputs required to achieve such results, and (c) in which actual performance in achieving results is measured by objective performance indicators.
38. **Review:** The periodic or ad hoc, often rapid assessment of an undertaking's performance that does not apply the due process of evaluation. Review tends to emphasize operational issues.

²⁰ OECD-DAC Glossary of key terms in evaluation and results based management, 2002

39. **Sustainability:** is concerned with measuring whether the benefits of a project, programme or policy are likely to continue after its termination. Projects need to be environmentally as well as financially sustainable.
40. **Validity:** is the extent to which the data collection strategies and instruments measure what they purport to measure.

G. REFERENCES

41. Normative or superior references include:
- Norms and Standards for Evaluation, United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), June 2016
 - DPA Evaluation Policy 2012
 - Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations UNEG Guidance 2014
 - OIOS Guidance to Programmes for Developing an Evaluation Policy
 - OECD-DAC Glossary of key terms in evaluation and results based management, 2002
 - DPA Learning and Evaluation Framework 2014

H. MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE

42. The Evaluation Focal Point in OUSG will be responsible for oversight and monitoring of compliance with the policy.

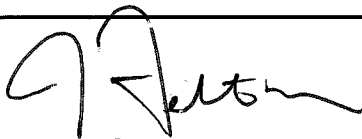
I. CONTACT

43. The contact for this policy is the Evaluation Focal Point / Programme Evaluation Officer responsible for the evaluation function within the Office of the Under-Secretary-General.

J. HISTORY

44. This policy comes into effect in December 2017, superseding its predecessor of 2012. It is due for revision in August 2020.

SIGNED:



DATE:

14 December 2017