United Nations
Interregional Crime and Justice
Research Institute

UNICRI Evaluation Policy (2015)

Introduction

1. This document presents the UNICRI Evaluation Policy, as the set of principles and rules that guide UNICRI's decisions and actions when planning, conducting, disseminating and using evaluations. This policy replaces the Evaluation Principles approved in 2011 by the Board of Trustees in its Twentieth Regular Session (UNICRI/287/26).

2. The Unit responsible for carrying out the evaluation function of UNICRI is the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (MEU).

3. The policy provides staff as well as external stakeholders with information on international principles for evaluation, and their role and application in UNICRI. It serves as a frame, which is to be complemented by the UNICRI Evaluation Guidelines. The policy will be revised and updated every five years to reflect new developments and mandates.

4. The policy also situates independent evaluations at UNICRI into a large evaluation context at the United Nations. UNICRI has become officially in 2015 a member of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), network of reference in the UN for developing norms and standards.

5. This evaluation policy responds to the formal requests from the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), the General Assembly and the Secretary General, summarized in the regulations 'Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation' (ST/SGB/2008). This rule mandates the conduct of evaluation in the Secretariat decision making cycle.

6. Furthermore, the above stated mandate is complemented by UNEG Norms and Standards for evaluation in the UN system, in particular UNEG Norm 3, which states that 'each organization should develop an explicit policy statement on

evaluation', UNEG Standard 1.2 'UN organizations should develop an evaluation policy and regularly update it, taking into account the Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN system' and UNEG standard 1.3 'the evaluation policy should be approved by the Governing Bodies of the organization, and or the Head of the organization, and should be in line with the applicable UNEG Norms for Evaluation and with corporate goals and strategies'.

Conceptual framework

7. UNICRI subscribes to the UNEG's definition of evaluation: '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 result chain, processes, contextual factors and causality, in order to understand achievements, or the lack thereof' (UNEG Norm 1.2).

8. Moreover, evaluation at UNICRI aims at determining the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the interventions and contributions of UNICRI to fulfil its specific mandates (UNEG Norm 1.2)

9. An evaluation should provide information that is credible, reliable and useful, to serve three main purposes: accountability, organizational learning and knowledge generation, thus, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of both recipients and donors (OECD, Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance 1991)

10. As evaluation is part of the project and programme management, all projects or programmes in UNICRI are subject to be evaluated. In principle, all projects with a total of budget over 0.5 Million USD should allocate a fixed 6% for evaluation costs.

11. Evaluations may be carried out during implementation to identify areas for improvement (formative evaluation) or at the end of the intervention to determine the extend to which intended outcomes were produced (summative evaluation). The scope and level of detail is clearly determined in the Terms of Reference of the evaluation.

Evaluation principles

12. Evaluation in UNICRI is guided by the following principles. They are based on the Norms for Evaluation in the United Nations System agreed by UNEG.

    a. *Independence and Impartiality:* The evaluation process should be independent and impartial. It should be free from unlawful influence by the operational management and decision-making bodies. To avoid conflict of interest, evaluators need to be independent, implying that they must not have been directly responsible for the design or overall management of the subject of evaluation, nor expect to be in the near

future. The evaluation should be conducted in a way that avoids bias and maximizes objectivity, in addition to being objective in design.

b. *Utilization focus*: The rationale for an evaluation should be clear. The scope, design and implementation of the evaluation should generate relevant, timely outputs responding to the established needs.

c. *Transparency and consultation:* Full information on the evaluation should be shared throughout the process among stakeholders to build confidence in the findings. Evaluation reports should be available to major stakeholders.

d. *Ethics:* Evaluators should be competent in their provision of the service, act with integrity in their relationships with all stakeholders and be accountable for their performance and their product. Evaluation should be conducted respecting confidentiality, privacy and communication principles. Evaluators should be sensitive to the cultural and social environment of all stakeholders and conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to this environment. Evaluation should be conducted legally and with due regard to the welfare of those involved in the evaluation, as well as those affected by its findings. Evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender inequality.

e. *Competencies:* Evaluators should be objective, have experience in conducting evaluations, and have sufficient technical expertise in the field subject to evaluation and in terms of data collection and analysis. In selecting the evaluators, gender balance and geographical diversity should be considered.

f. *Quality:* All evaluations should meet the requirements outlined in the Standards for Evaluation in the United Nations System. The key areas for review should be clear, coherent and realistic. The evaluation design, data collection and analysis should reflect professional standards and the intellectual integrity of evaluators should be guaranteed. Evaluation findings and recommendations should be presented in a clear manner.

g. *Timeliness*: Evaluations should be designed and completed in a timely fashion, ensuring the usefulness of the findings and recommendations in addition to their capacity to support management in decision-making.

Institutional framework, roles and responsibilities

13. *The Board of Trustees* fosters an enabling environment for evaluation throughout UNICRI, and approves the UNICRI Evaluation Policy. The annual report prepared by UNICRI to the Board, includes information on evaluation activities during the year, and proposes an annual evaluation work plan for Board approval. If deemed necessary, the Board may also request ad-hoc evaluations, including thematic or project evaluations.

14. *The Director of UNICRI* is responsible ensuring that the role and functions of evaluation are clearly stated. The Director is also responsible for ensuring that adequate resources are allocated to enable the evaluation, as well as for ensuring that evaluations are conducted in an impartial and independent manner. The Director ensures that necessary measures are in place to use evaluation work into the programming cycle.

15. *The programme managers of UNICRI* support evaluation by ensuring that all necessary information is provided to the evaluation teams, for ensuring that adequate resources for evaluation[1] are reserved in the unreleased and released budgets and for implementing evaluation recommendations in their work.

16. *The Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (MEU)* is responsible for the independent evaluation function of UNICRI. As such, the MEU plans, conducts, and coordinates evaluations, and ensures the effective dissemination throughout UNICRI and to external stakeholders of lessons learned. The MEU is headed by the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, who reports directly to the Director of UNICRI on evaluation work. Likewise, the MEU, under the guidance and leadership of the Senior Programme Officer, lends methodological support to programme managers and Implementing Partners[2] in their planning and monitoring responsibilities, as well as quality assurance in the formulation of new projects.

Planning, managing and budgeting evaluations

17. Proper and useful evaluation implies that there is a clear intent to use the evaluation findings, recommendations and lessons learned. The planning, management and budgeting of evaluations is conducted in line with UN rules and procedures (ST/STG/2000/8).

18. The evaluation work plan prepared by MEU makes sure that evaluations are chosen and undertaken in a transparent and timely manner so that they provide decision makers with relevant and timely information. The UNICRI evaluation work plan includes a provisional budget forecast. The UNICRI evaluation budget is derived from the resources allocated in project budgets.

19. During an evaluation, the methods to be applied must be appropriate for obtaining the required information. Qualitative, quantitative or mixed data and methods may be used. All relevant information available, including material from programme monitoring and performance measurement systems, including external auditor information should be utilized.

20. Evaluations may be conducted by one or several evaluators (i.e a team or panel of experts). The selection of external evaluators should be based on technical expertise experience in the thematic field under evaluation. Non staff personnel

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[1] 6% of total budget in projects over 0.5 Million USD.

[2] Implementing Partners within the Framework for Engagement of External Parties, applicable to entities under the administration of the UN Secretariat.

working at UNICRI can be part of evaluation teams, if they have not been involved in the formulation or implementation of the subject evaluated.