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Evaluation Use in Practice

Draft Report

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS and ABBREVIATIONS

CSO	Civil Society Organization
EO	Evaluation Office
EUIG	Interest Group on Evaluation Use
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
HR	Human Resources
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IEG	Independent Evaluation Group
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
KM	Knowledge Management
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MR	Management Response
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Plan
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNWOMEN	United Nations Women
WFP	World Food Programme
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization

FOREWORD

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SYNTHESIS OF EVALUATION USE PRACTICE TRENDS WITHIN UNEG

The following information is distilled from the main body of the report and highlights general practice trends that have been identified in evaluation use from the analysis of the data collected.

SECTION 1 - Ensuring relevance of evaluations to user knowledge needs

1. The involvement of evaluation users to assist in the definition of the **scope of the evaluation** through the formation of an evaluation reference group.
2. The use of an iterative and generally formal analysis as an input into **the decision-making on what to evaluate**.
3. Using a set of methods including i) user consultation, ii) the normative and coverage approach as well as iii) application of pre-existing criteria, contribute to **evaluation use at an organizational level**.

SECTION 2 – Synthesising and communicating evaluation knowledge to increase appeal

4. Evaluation offices value positively the **benefits of effective communication** to enhance the utilization of the evaluations.
5. Standard evaluation guidance generally recommends **planning the communication of findings** and dissemination from the initial stages of an evaluation. Still, most agencies report that communication efforts for each evaluation is far from systematic or exhaustive.
6. The number of **staff supporting communication** efforts should be commensurate to the communication needs and strategy of the office. The small investment in human resources and knowledge management for communication has been a limiting element in some offices.
7. There is a general understanding of the need to **differentiate communication products** according to the type of audiences to enhance the use of evaluation.
8. Overall, Evaluation Use Interest Group (EUIG) members reported evidence that engaging in **social media generates** higher website traffic and **increased awareness** on evaluation work.
9. Beyond traditional written products other more innovative channels are increasingly being considered and used to share results and enhance evaluation use. **Visual briefs and videos** are amongst the most popular outreach tools: those who are not producing them already, report an interest in investing more resources for their production.
10. EUIG members repackage evaluation knowledge in the form of **synthesis reports**, mainly addressing key findings, lessons learned and recommendations **as a response to user needs**.

SECTION 3 - Tracking user uptake of evaluation knowledge

11. A **management response to evaluation recommendations** is a good practice approach and all evaluation offices have a system in place to track evaluation recommendations.
12. Reporting by evaluation offices to their governing bodies on the **status of recommendation implementation** and encouraging those bodies to act as an oversight mechanism for implementation.
13. Current UN agency practice allows for a partial **understanding of change** generated by evaluations.

SECTION 4 - Understanding user views on evaluation effectiveness

14. Most UN agencies seek **feedback on customer evaluation satisfaction** through ad-hoc methods.

INTRODUCTION

“In commissioning and conducting an evaluation, there should be a clear intention to use the resulting analysis, conclusions or recommendations to inform decisions and actions. The utility of evaluation is manifest through its use in making relevant and timely contributions to organizational learning, informed decision-making processes and accountability for results. Evaluations could also be used to contribute beyond the organization by generating knowledge and empowering stakeholders¹”. UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation

UNEG’s Interest Group on Evaluation Use was established under Objective 2 of the UNEG strategy 2013-2019. The group has a long history of producing relevant knowledge products and disseminating good practices on key topics for all UNEG members, and in 2018-2019, the Interest Group therefore based its work on previous knowledge UNEG to promote the use of evaluation:

A UNEG study on “Evaluation Use in the UN System” (2016) identified six key messages about evaluation use dynamics in the UN system, taken as a starting point:

1. Users and stakeholders should be involved and consulted throughout the evaluation process.
2. The support of senior decision-makers is key, as is their commitment to the implementation of recommendations.
3. Evaluators need to ensure recommendations are feasible and relevant.
4. Independent evaluations must attempt to capture organizational realities.
5. Management responses and follow-up processes must take place and be adequately supported.
6. Sharing of findings enables cross-organizational learning and use.

In line with these messages, in 2017, in addition to promoting knowledge sharing through webinars (cf. key message 6), UNEG published further guidance papers, as follows:

- Guidance on Principles for stakeholder engagement (cf. key message 1)
- Study on the implications of governance structures in promoting the use of evaluative evidence for informed decision-making (cf. key message 2)
- Checklist for quality recommendations (cf. key message 3)

Against this background, the Interest Group identified four areas on which to capitalize UNEG members practices and knowledge, to enhance learning and increase evaluation use, as follows:

- Ensuring relevance of evaluations to user’s knowledge needs (ex-ante outreach)
- Packaging evaluation knowledge to increase appeal (ex-post dissemination)
- Tracking users’ uptake of evaluation knowledge (evaluation impact)
- Understanding users’ views on evaluation effectiveness

Ten members of the Group² shared information on their practices related to these topics. This document aims at synthesizing the practices that influence the use of evidence from evaluations within this sample of UNEG members. From these, the document identifies the ones that Evaluation Use Interest Group (EUIG) members may wish to reflect upon and adapt, to enhance evaluation use.

The document is divided into four sections reflecting each of the four areas listed above, and presenting information collected from the UNEG EUIG members, based on questions endorsed by all members of interest group (see Annex A).

¹ UNEG Norm 2 Utility

² FAO, GEF, IAEA, WFP, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNWOMEN and WIPO

SECTION 1: Practices to maximize the relevance of evaluations to user knowledge needs.

This first section of the document covers the practices of member agencies to maximize the relevance of evaluation users' knowledge needs.

The questions that guided members' contributions on relevance sought to elicit understanding of:

1. The extent to which and processes by which EUIG members reach out to users and the types of user's interactions they have with users which may influence the selection of evaluation topics.
2. The method used by evaluation offices to select evaluation topics, and any used institutionalized or informal mechanisms by which evaluation stakeholders may express evidence gaps, knowledge or learning needs that evaluations may address.

UNEG Standard 4.1; "Evaluations should be designed to ensure that they provide timely, valid and reliable information that will be relevant to the subject being assessed and should clarify identify the underlying intentionality."

Having a clear intention implies knowing whose decisions the evaluation intends to influence. This should lead to the identification of relevant evaluation questions, the appropriate scope of evaluation, the design of stakeholder engagement to promote ownership, the appropriate formulation of recommendations, an effective dissemination plan and a successful learning strategy."

Consultation with evaluation users and constituencies

Users outreach norms within EUIG

The majority of organizations who provided inputs use consultations in one way or another in order to select which evaluations should be commissioned and conducted. There is a wide variety in the type, format and channels used to consult a myriad of stakeholders. The sample encompasses cases such as; ad hoc on demand requests from relevant project managers but also well-structured examples of consultations at senior management level, and the governing bodies level. Consultations are made at different levels of the organizational hierarchy of the various organizations such as department senior staff, regional offices, member states, formal evaluation decision-making bodies (evaluation committees), etc.

Evaluation Reference Group
Consultation



All organizations consult evaluation users to define the scope of their evaluations. And with only one exception they articulate these consultations through an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG). The difference among the organizations resides in the depth of the engagement with users (number of times consulted and evaluation phases) and the level of use of the feedback provided by these users.

Identified Practice Trend

The involvement of evaluation users to assist in the definition of the scope of the evaluation through the formation of an evaluation reference group.



UNICEF consults evaluation users twice on the scope of evaluations and once when designing the TORs. WFP consults at least 4 times to solicit comments on draft documents (TORs, Inception report, evaluation report, summary evaluation report) and invites stakeholders from country offices, regional bureaux and HQ to a 2-day stakeholder workshop for every centralized evaluation (policy, strategic, country strategic plan, corporate emergency).

Usual user response to consultation

All organizations affirmed that users, when consulted, **respond with interest**, and that their inputs **add value** to their evaluation portfolio. For example, UNICEF advised that evaluation users see it as an opportunity to be heard and to have their priorities reflected in the evaluation itself. EUIG members such as UNICEF and WFP, which have a decentralized evaluation system, underline that the number of opportunities and the quality of the engagements at country level may require a dedicated process of mapping of evaluation processes, to identify good practices referring to decentralized stakeholders' engagement.

Methods and processes to select topics for evaluation

The mechanisms by which decisions were reached regarding what topics were selected for evaluation was determined to be of significant interest and therefore formed part of this reporting.

Normative and coverage methods

These methods include specific provisions at various levels of the normative hierarchy (evaluation charter, evaluation policy, annual plan, etc.) to commission evaluations. The type of evaluations frequently selected under this category are mainly policy, country, final evaluations, etc.

Practice – The WFP Approach

The WFP is emblematic in its effective definition of coverage norms for evaluation selection. It has defined clear principles in its Evaluation Policy regarding the conduct of evaluations, including clear definitions for the evaluation of policies, country portfolios, corporate emergencies, strategic themes and projects/activities.

Application of existing criteria

The application of existing criteria to select the evaluations is also a frequent occurrence in the group of organizations studied. UNFPA and WIPO use the results of a formal evaluation evidence-gap analysis / knowledge gap exercise to strategically plan evaluations.

Practice in Depth – The UNFPA Approach

To identify evaluations for 2018-2021, UNFPA followed three key steps to identify (a) strategic evaluation priorities in relation to the UNFPA strategic plan, 2018-2021; and (b) knowledge gaps where centralized evaluations would add value.

First, an evidence-gap analysis was conducted by assessing the coverage of centralized evaluations managed during 2014-2017 against the outcomes and outputs of the UNFPA strategic plan. Second, based on 8 criteria (strategic relevance, associated risk, potential for joint or UN wide evaluation, investment, evaluation feasibility, potential for replication and scaling up, knowledge gap and formal commitment to stakeholders) a tentative list of proposed centralized evaluations was subject to selectivity analysis to assess their relevance and utility. The list of potential evaluations was used as the basis for bilateral consultations with major stakeholders at all levels of the organization. Third, consultations presenting the draft quadrennial budgeted evaluation plan were held with the UNFPA Executive Committee, senior management at headquarters and regional levels, the Oversight Advisory Committee, and the Executive Board. **Consultations** were also undertaken **with other United Nations organizations**, with a view **to identifying possible joint evaluations**.

WFP undertook a formal consultative process with senior managers to identify key themes that would be topics for strategic evaluations. The analysis and suggested topics, along with their sequencing, were presented to senior managers for discussion (not approval). The analysis was based on evidence gap analysis, assessment of priority themes from the WFP Strategic Plan and on interviews with stakeholders. This was done as it was the only type of evaluation for which there was no formal coverage norm.

Identified Practice Trend

All the organizations studied use an iterative and generally formal analysis as an input into the decision-making on what to evaluate.



Organizations used a **variety of methods to ensure relevance** when selecting evaluation topics. Different organizational contexts advise different solutions and methods. Overall, the lesson learned is that a smart use of the mix described by the three categories (normative and coverage methods, consultation response and rationalization, application of existing criteria) contribute to ensuring evaluation use at the organizational level.

There are various mechanisms for users to express **evidence gaps and knowledge needs** that evaluations may address. All organizations use a variety of structured and formal mechanism based on and specific normative framework while also using some less formal approaches such as ad hoc meetings with stakeholders holding particulars interest. Some of these organizations have expressed their views in question one of this section. One specific example worth highlighting is WFP.

Practice in Depth – The WFP Approach

WFP has an interesting mechanism to identify evidence gaps, knowledge and learning needs at country level to strengthen evidence-based programming. Each WFP Country Office is required to prepare a Concept Note for its Country Strategic Plan that describes the context, country priorities and WFP lessons learned and results to date, inter alia. The Concept Note is reviewed by the Office of Evaluation with a particular focus on the ‘Lessons Learned’ section to determine the extent to which evaluation evidence was used to inform the programme design and decision-making. This assessment is provided to the Country Office by the Director of Evaluation during a Strategic Programme Review Process, which is the first step in a two-step process. The written “review” of the Concept Note, including links to evaluative evidence and Technical Notes on Country-specific Evaluation Planning and Budgeting, are shared with the country office following the meeting.

The second phase of this process involves a review of the full Country Strategic Plan where officers look at the extent to which the Country Offices has made any of the changes that the evaluation recommended in the first phase regarding the use of evaluative evidence. They also look at the concrete plans and budgets for evaluations.

One specific example on the use of a formal knowledge and evidence gap analysis worth highlighting is the one done by WIPO in 2018.

Practice in Depth – The WIPO Approach (Phase 1)

WIPO conducted a knowledge gap analysis on the evidenced provided by the evaluations in the previous 6 years. For this purpose, they developed and populated a database representing the universe of evaluations findings, conclusions and recommendations linking them to WIPO’s main planning framework and more specifically WIPO strategic objectives, Programs and sectors. The evaluation team analyzed findings, conclusions and recommendations from the evaluation reports against these frameworks:

- (a) The major areas of WIPO’s work and type of evaluations;
- (b) All administrative sectors of the organizations;
- (c) Organization strategic goals and Programs; and
- (d) Geographic and thematic coverage of evaluations.

Practice in Depth – The WIPO Approach (Phase 2)

In a second phase, the team analysed the data by identifying and extracting each finding, conclusion recommendation from the 20 evaluation reports. Each finding, conclusion, recommendation and evaluation question was coded and linked to one of the five evaluation criteria. All these pieces of information were attributed independently by the two members of the team to one of three following categories: substantive - when the topic presented IP related substance, managerial - when the main topic described a Programmatic or procedural issue and crosscutting - when its nature encompasses more than one issue alone.

Additionally, the data and information was stratified by attributes such as evaluation criteria, geographic, thematic and organizational/type of intervention criteria. The evaluation team described the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the evaluative evidence Synthesizing findings, conclusions and recommendation describing an evidence gap map of the organization.

Identified Practice Trend

Using various approaches including i) user consultation, ii) the normative and coverage approach as well as iii) application of pre-existing criteria, all contribute to evaluation use at an organizational level.



SECTION 2: Practices to maximize the relevance of evaluations to user's knowledge needs.

This second section examines EUIG members' practices to entice user interest in the evaluation products, related to processes and products to communicate evaluation knowledge and increase appeal.

UNEG standard 4.11; “Communication and dissemination are integral parts of evaluations. Evaluations functions should have an effective strategy for communication and dissemination that is focused on enhancing evaluation use”

The questions that guided members' contributions in respect to practices for packaging evaluation knowledge to increase appeal to users were:

1. The extent to which evaluators in different offices systematically reflect on the best ways to communicate their findings in appealing manner.
2. The range of different products processes or channels used by offices to reach out to various types of evaluation users, how well they are targeted and what factors contribute to successful outreach.
3. The efforts made to repackage evaluation knowledge to adapt to certain users' needs.

Growing awareness of the need for more communication

The practices of EUIG members related to communication reflect a **growing recognition** that, to reach a wider audience or increase the interest of traditional evaluation users, evaluation functions need to stay attuned to fast evolving models of communicating and adjust their practices and products accordingly.

Many offices report an **interest in investing** more for this purpose, evidenced by efforts in developing new communication products and diversifying channels to communicate evaluation evidence.

The fact that many offices³ have updated (or are in the process of developing) a **communication strategy** and/or **knowledge management (KM) strategy** is one reflection of an awareness of the importance of working on the communication and dissemination of evaluation results, to be more systematic in using communication tools to enhance evaluation use.

Practice – The FAO and WFP Approach

FAO report that a general reflection on how to improve communication of findings is carried out on a regular basis. WFP's evaluation policy as well as evaluation policies of other UNEG members include a commitment to ensuring the 'use' of evaluations (implying that it is everyone's business).

³ FAO, GEF, ILO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNWOMEN and WFP

Most EUIG members⁴ require that evaluations plan the communication of findings **from the inception phase**, as per their standard evaluation approaches and guidance. FAO, UNFPA, ILO, GEF, UNWOMEN and UNFPA report that a **communication and dissemination plan** should be included in the evaluation terms of reference. This plan reflects how to communicate evaluation results to different audiences.

Practice – The WIPO Approach

WIPO sends an informative leaflet to all stakeholders at the very beginning of the process, to engage stakeholders.

Identified Practice Trend

Evaluation offices appear to have understood the benefits of effective communication to enhance the utilization of the evaluations.



The extent to which different agencies systematically **put into practice** the principles reportedly included in their guidance **varies**. For instance, UNWOMEN reports that despite their established “Minimum communication package”, communication is not systematically done. FAO notes that despite it being a requirement for all evaluations, communication plans are more often formalized for major evaluations. Last, WFP report that although the plan is always done it is not always completed. The GEF appears to invest more systematically into communication activities, as shown in the box below.

Practice in Depth – The GEF Approach

In the GEF, communication is quite systematic for every evaluation targeted to their Council Replenishment Group, and the Assembly: GEF IEO evaluations are discussed at the semi-annual GEF Council meetings. The Comprehensive Evaluation of the GEF is planned to make sure timely communication of its findings to the Replenishment Group. At the GEF Assembly (every 4 years), the GEF IEO hosts side events and presents videos. Large or strategic evaluations also have set of dedicated communication tools, such as briefs, webinars, and infographics. The IEO reaches out to the global environmental conventions to which GEF is a financing mechanism. The office also shares evaluation findings with country stakeholders by participating in expanded constituency workshops.

⁴ FAO, ILO, UNFPA, UNWOMEN, WFP and WIPO

Identified Practice Trend

Standard evaluation guidance generally recommends planning the communication of findings and dissemination from the initial stages of an evaluation. Still, most agencies report that communication efforts for each evaluation is far from systematic or exhaustive.



Actual investments in communication for evaluation use

Some members (UNFPA, FAO, WFP, GEF) mention a specific effort relative to representing evaluation results in visual manner, but report that using visuals is constrained by the fact that:

- Evaluators rarely plan enough **time** required to produce visuals, because
- They often underestimate the **workload** required for acquiring and processing data, and
- Teams often miss the necessary **skills** set to produce visuals.

Communication strategies are often not well known or owned by evaluation offices, beyond the communication team. Offices do not systematically analyse the extent to which their various products are used and by whom. Some (FAO, ILO, WFP) have tracked evaluation use through a survey to users and other measures, yet evaluation offices have little feedback on who they reach and how effective they are in generating interest and change.

The **human resources** dedicated to communication remain limited in the agencies surveyed, in comparison to the full range of strategies mentioned for effectively using communication tools to increase evaluation use. Despite an investment in HR for communication and KM in the last 10 years, few offices have permanent staff dedicated to it, and few have enough people working on the topic.

- **FAO** has one non-permanent person
- **WFP** one P-4 Communications Officer (under recruitment) plus 2 full-time consultants
- **UNFPA** one permanent staff supported by a social media consultant (part time)
- **ILO** one full-time official dedicated to communications and KM
- **GEF** one full-time staff dedicated to KM
- **UNWOMEN** one consultant dedicated to communication.

Practice – UNICEF Approach

UNICEF has created a new section titled, Innovation, Learning and Uptake dedicated to enhancing evaluation use. Included is also innovation work, KM, communication and dissemination aspects of evaluation.

Each agency determines its own mixture of full-time or part-time staff, its use of consultants and the focus of their work e.g. communication in general, knowledge management, social media etc.

Significant investment is done by only a few: e.g. WFP reports a commitment to strengthening the Communications Unit and related investment in technology/software/platforms; GEF also invests into communication, in the form of planning for these activities as an office effort. ILO invests in applying new technologies and software to highlight evaluation results in a more interactive and user-friendly manner.

Identified Practice Trend

The number of staff supporting communication efforts should be commensurate to the communication needs and strategy of the office. The small investment in HR and KM for communication has been a limiting element in some offices.



Communication strategies increasingly acknowledge the benefits of tailoring products to audiences

The main purpose of communication strategies is to identify the types and number of audiences and outline the best products to reach them. FAO and ILO distinguish between primary, secondary and tertiary level of audiences, while UNWOMEN developed different Theories of Change for external and internal audience. Only a few agencies conduct a mapping of audience needs and provide detailed information on which products will developed, and for which audience (ILO, UNWOMEN, WFP).

Evaluation findings and recommendations tend to **aim primarily at high-level decision makers**. All evaluation offices have **clearly identified** products for their Executive board, Governing Body, Council, etc. whereas products for other audiences are more generically defined. Except for some cases – presented later – products for decision makers are **traditional in style** and mainly consist of written material in three main forms:

- evaluation reports
- summaries or briefs
- annual or semi-annual reports.

Several offices also tailor their final presentations to the needs of decision makers such as senior management and technical staff in headquarters and decentralized offices (FAO, GEF, ILO, UNICEF, UNFPA and WFP). Webinars are used to reach out to decentralized officers by UNFPA when it is not possible to present in person.

Members also acknowledge that users vary from evaluation to evaluation and that **messages and outreach tools need to adapt** to their needs. However, only few are actively doing it. Overall, communication channels are established with key and conventional users of the evaluation knowledge at the preparatory stages of the evaluation. Still, these are well defined mainly for decision makers and governing bodies.

Identified Practice Trend

There is general understanding of the need to differentiate communication products according to the type of audiences to enhance the use of evaluation.



Typical communication products used within EUIG

i) [Mainstream products to communicate evaluation findings](#)

As well as producing reports and summary versions for audiences that may not have the time to read full reports opportunities are created to discuss findings with stakeholders, such as in exit conference / workshops. In addition, an effort put into presenting findings by developing capacities for “professional presentations” – that includes graphic design, less words and an emphasis on key messaging – is underlined as generating positive feedback (WFP, GEF, FAO, UNESCO, and FAO).

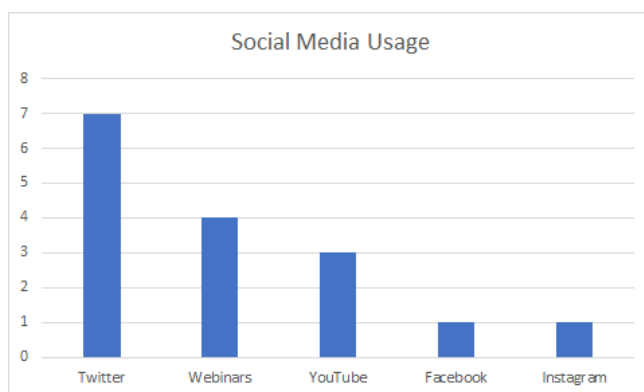
Websites are widely used for ‘wider audiences’ though the latter is rarely defined. Websites are the traditional entry point to evaluation material from any external user and stakeholder. They are the custodians of all the material produced and members are keen in making them more attractive, user friendly and ensure better access to data sources (FAO, UNICEF, UNFPA). As part of their website, most members provide an online database or repository for evaluation reports (FAO, IFAD, ILO, GEF, UNICEF, UNWOMEN, WIPO, WFP etc.).

Practice – The ILO Approach

ILO has developed an innovative evaluation Dashboard (i-eval Discovery) within its webpages that showcases planned and completed evaluations, in addition to their related lessons learned, good practices and recommendations.

Several offices prepare newsletters, shared by email on a regular basis (usually three times per year) and on websites (UNESCO, GEF, WFP, ILO) to attract attention on evaluation to a broader public. UNESCO prepares a newsletter for every corporate evaluation as a summarized version with highlight of findings in an easy to read format and WFP provide e-mailed ‘news flashes’ after every EB session.

Social media channels are also used to attract attention to the evaluation function, to inform evaluation partners about planned evaluation-related events, or to disseminate findings.



Twitter is the most commonly used social media platform, in particular during conferences and workshops, to spread the information to a broader audience. It is also used to build relationships, promote exchange of information with regional evaluation associations (GEF) and disseminate information on events, campaigns, international days etc.

Webinars are used (GEF, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNWOMEN) to announce new / recently published content, to present results but also to enable the audience to interact with evaluation managers and ask questions about specific evaluations (GEF, UNICEF). YouTube is also used where members post their video library (UNWOMEN, FAO, GEF) and ILO experiences live Facebook events. The Instagram page recently created by the GEF IEO captures photos from evaluation field work. For some a social media package has become a minimum requirement for every evaluation (UNFPA, UNWOMEN). Still, some agencies that dedicate attention and resources to communication (e.g. WFP) do not yet use social media. It is recognised that daily social media activity requires a lot of effort and resources.

Identified Practice Trend

Overall, UNEG members reported evidence that engaging in social media generates higher website traffic and increased awareness on evaluation work.



ii) [Advanced communication products](#)

The use of visual storytelling tools and infographics are more often being used by all EUIG members including short videos used by several offices to communicate to wider audiences (FAO, WFP, UNFPA, UNWOMEN, GEF). They are not only used to share contents from evaluations, but also to raise awareness about methodologies (e.g. Evaluation pills of UNFPA), or to show the perspectives of people on the ground. In addition, they enable key messages to be summarized in an attractive manner and help get people's attention. Evaluation offices have understood the power of audio-visual communication, and they often have videos produced professionally. Audio files are also used, for posting short messages in the form of podcasts on websites mainly when resources do not allow producing videos.

Practice – The WFP Approach

WFP has developed web-based interactive reports into which videos or other media are inserted for further information. These are posted on the WFP external website and advertised through an emailed newsletter and are done for the Annual Evaluation report.

Practice – The UNWOMEN Approach

The UNWOMEN 'Transform' magazine for gender-responsive evaluation is accessed on average 2000 times annually, which is *4 times more than evaluation reports. Their video on Evaluating SDGs has been viewed more than 4K times in its English version and even more in all language versions combined.

Communities of Practices are used to assist in sharing knowledge and create awareness and FAO, WFP, IFAD, ILO and GEF have supported their establishment and use as dissemination channels, and more broadly as a way to engage with practitioners and evaluators. Some agencies (WIPO and WFP) are developing on-line courses on evaluation for appropriate stakeholders in the evaluation process.

Identified Practice Trend

Beyond traditional written products other more innovative channels are increasingly being considered and used to share results and enhance evaluation use. Visual briefs and videos are amongst the most popular outreach tools: those who are not producing them already, report an interest in investing more resources for their production.



iii) Communication products and strategies specific to decentralized evaluations

UNWOMEN corporate evaluations mainly target HQ Senior Management and the Executive Board, whilst decentralized evaluations mainly target Regional / Country Office staff and national partners. UNWOMEN produces a global meta-analysis and a global meta-evaluation on a yearly basis. This approach generates some overlap when it comes to talking to donors, UN agencies etc. but generally, responsibilities are well defined.

WFP has defined specific communication channels for decentralized evaluations as part of the communication plan attached to the ToR: it has a different target audience owing to their location and structure (report to different management committees). Regarding engaging communities and beneficiaries, the Office of Evaluation launched a dedicated grant for Country Offices managing decentralized evaluations in 2018 to unfold the principle of Accountability to Affected Population. Since then, video-animations and participatory workshops on evaluation results have been successfully organized with key national/local stakeholders, including communities in rural/indigenous areas (e.g. by using drawings - Colombia).

Practice – The UNFPA Approach

UNFPA decentralized evaluations are conducted by country offices. The main aim of these evaluations is to inform the development of a new country programme. Therefore, the audience is mainly internal: senior management in HQ and technical staff. The country office however may communicate directly with donors and national government counterparts where appropriate.

Practices related to the synthesis of evaluation reporting

Most of the evaluation offices (FAO, ILO, WFP, WIPO, UNICEF, UNWOMEN, and GEF) prepare synthesis reports/meta-analysis of clustered project evaluations/country programme evaluations on a periodic basis. Traditionally, the (re)packaging is a demand-driven exercise and the analysis is frequently disaggregated into different levels (e.g. regional, country).

Practice in Depth – The WFP Approach

WFP has invested into building a repository of evaluation evidence from which synthesis reports can be prepared (products either defined ex-ante or ex-post): it entails coding reports using a qualitative analysis software (Atlas.ti) and enables the production of reports on specific themes, and responding to demands from users, looking across reports already available. There is a demand at HQ-level, in particular, but also an emerging demand coming from Regional Bureaux.

This project had been a pilot over two years and with the use of a consultant to code reports. Coded information from Country Portfolio Evaluations in the Sahel was used to inform a synthesis report of WFP's actions in the Sahel, which will be presented to the Executive Board for consideration in June 2019. WFP is studying possible scenarios continuity building on the repository and using Atlas.ti.

Additional examples of repackaged evaluation products include:

- FAO prepare programme evaluation reports on a biannual and annual basis, respectively.
- IAEA adopted a combined country-level evaluation and audit approach, as a way to provide clients with benefits of each discipline, minimize burden on the evaluand, generate efficiency gains, and increase acceptance and interest with more comprehensive reports.
- The GEF IEO prepares meso-level evaluation products that synthesize existing evaluation evidence with limited fieldwork, on a topic that is known to be of interest (e.g. transformational change; additionality). These products target stakeholders with the governance function (Council), stakeholders that carry out decisions of the governing bodies (GEF Secretariat and GEF Agencies), as well as country clients.
- Limited number of agencies report having searchable databases. UNFPA and UNICEF EO report efforts in this direction, for data sources to be more accessible. These are reported to require dedicated HR.

Other agencies, for example UNESCO do not repack evaluation knowledge due to the architecture of their organization and a lack of economies of scale with the exercise.

There is not yet a consolidated/precise understanding on the utility of each product, but some general tendencies emerge from practice, as to which products need to be kept. Staff in evaluation offices have general perceptions regarding the relative utility of some communication products and some of these are that:

- Decision-makers or senior managers use brief / synthesis material they receive: “Short and just in time”. (In WFP: Memo for Executive Director, talking points for senior managers, presentations to the Board; in the GEF: briefs and professional presentations for various constituencies’ members). These are considered useful for high-level take-up or evaluation messages. They meet a demand.
- The provision of tailored information at sectoral / political events, conference or meetings also meets interest: the capacity to repackage evaluation data into a product that adapts to a given theme of interest, and thus the capacity to extract data from reports, is key. (Cf. WFP atlas, GEF, UNFPA).

Process wise, GEF, ILO and WFP started analyzing some web-based product use based on traffic / clicks. Except for UNWOMEN and UNFPA, very little analysis is done of social media or of returns beyond web-based communication activities or channels. There is no systematic knowledge at this point, related to the utility of different communication strategies or products, beyond the general perceptions of evaluation staff.



Currently UNWOMEN tweets daily and has about 5K followers mostly composed of the evaluation community in the UN System and CSOs. The twitter account has in average a 4% growth in following per month (about +200 followers per month). Each of the IES tweets has an average of 800 impressions (i.e. the number of times people have seen the tweets) and average engagement rate of 0.9%.

Across agencies, there is no evident intention to reach the wider world beyond evaluation stakeholders, as research or press would do. And while the “wider audience” is often not (or only broadly) defined, no mention is made of reaching out to beneficiaries or local communities except for few exceptions at early stages (IFAD, FAO).

Identified Practice Trend

UNEG members repackage evaluation knowledge in the form of synthesis reports, mainly addressing key findings, lessons learned and recommendations as a response to user needs.



SECTION 3: Practices related to tracking user uptake of evaluation knowledge.

This third second section examines the extent to which evaluation offices effectively engage in the uptake of evaluation knowledge by the end users.

The questions that guided members' contributions on tracking the effects of evaluations were:

1. The extent to which your office measures the actions taken by evaluation users and the depth of any dialogue with users based on those measurement actions.
2. The systems or tools your office uses to track what users learned from the evaluation and the extent to which you can measure any changes generated by the evaluation.
3. The main challenges your office faces when measuring uptake of evaluation knowledge and outreach to users.

The UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluations document stresses the importance of the uptake of evaluation knowledge.

Standard 2: Management of the Evaluation Function highlights the role that those involved in managing the evaluation have in this regard. Standard 2.1 states *"An adequate follow-up mechanism on the implementation of actions"* whilst Standard 2.2 requires *"Reporting, dissemination and the promotion of learning"*.

These standards require a pro-active approach from those offices charged with overseeing the evaluation processes.

EUIG member practices on evaluation recommendations follow up

STAKEHOLDER COMPLIANCE

From the mapping exercise, management responses (MRs) are required by most responded Agencies, but the degree of compliance to this requirement by evaluation stakeholders **varies among Agencies** and between different types of evaluations (e.g., centralized and decentralized evaluations). FAO, for example, reported that the rate of management responses being prepared varied between project evaluations, country programme evaluations and thematic/strategic evaluations. ILO, UNICEF and UNWOMEN systematically track the number of evaluations that have a management response and those that do not. WFP has a Standard Operating Procedure that includes a quality review of the management response before it is approved, as well as process standards, for both centralized and decentralized evaluations.

AGENCY TRACKING

To track the implementation of recommendations based on MRs, **most Agencies reported to have a tracking system in place**, making use of an IT platform. Most have designed their own tracking database, except IAEA and WIPO which makes use of a commercially available software called TeamMate. Most of these platforms are online and accessible to both the evaluation functions/offices and evaluation stakeholders. At UNESCO, evaluation recommendations are included in its corporate database along with those from internal and external audits and JIU, which provide important input for strategic management decisions. The GEF IEO presents the Management Action Record to the Council and makes the Record public through its website. In WFP, a similar corporate solution is under development whereby recommendations will feed into the corporate risk register.

Identified Practice Trend

A management response to evaluation recommendations is a good practice approach and all evaluation offices have a system in place to track evaluation recommendations.



Engagement with stakeholders in following up on the recommendations varies from no further engagement as users would self-report the status of the implementation (usually in the case of decentralized evaluations) to periodic dialogs with users. In some Agencies, evidence on the implementation is required before a recommendation can be closed such as at IAEA and WIPO. At ILO, the recommendations from high-level evaluations are considered closed only after its Evaluation Advisory Committee is satisfied with the follow-up actions.

The frequency in the follow-up varies from every quarter (WIPO, UNICEF) to every six months (UNESCO, IAEA, UNWOMEN) to once a year (GEF) or longer. UNWOMEN, in particular, has the implementation status of evaluation recommendations as one of the nine evaluation Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) whose data is aggregated and sent by the evaluation office to the senior management. When FAO conduct follow-up evaluations of similar projects or on similar topics, they integrate processes to measure the extent to which issues raised in previous evaluations (including the implementation of recommendations) have been addressed.

General EUIG member practices related to tracking actions taken by evaluation users based on recommendations

Most responded evaluation functions / offices **report on the status of recommendation implementation** to their governing bodies and management. WIPO and UNESCO have a specific oversight body. WIPO's Oversight Committee plays an active role in advising and recommending on closing of recommendations. UNESCO's Oversight Advisory Committee is reported on the implementation status every six months. ILO's Evaluation Advisory Committee meets four times per year reviews the progress of implementation status.

Periodic reporting to governing bodies provides an **opportunity** for evaluation offices to **engage** with Member States. WFP Director of Evaluation, for example, engages in regular and proactive dialogue with Executive Board members about evaluation findings, recommendations and follow-up. Some Board members were reported to be very engaged and make use of relevant evaluation evidence when discussing current programmes/plans. Similarly, the IAEA Director of the Office of Internal Oversight Services report on the status of recommendation implementation to two different boards once a year.

Practice – The FAO Approach

At FAO, its management presents a follow-up report on MRs from strategic evaluations to its Governing bodies. This provides an occasion for Governing bodies to request further details on the implementation of recommendations. This is a good example of ownership regarding the implementation of recommendations being entirely with the evaluation client. Rather than reporting to the evaluation function, the clients are accountable to the Governing bodies.

At GEF, its independent evaluation office (IEO) prepares an annual Management Action Record, which tracks the level of adoption of GEF Council decisions which are based on the IEO evaluation recommendations. One of the report's main objectives is to increase the accountability of GEF management on recommendation implementation. At ILO, its high-level evaluations and Annual Evaluation Report that includes statistics on recommendation implementation is also submitted to and discussed with the Governing Body each year.

Identified Practice Trend

Reporting by evaluation offices to their governing bodies on the status of recommendation implementation and encouraging those bodies to act as an oversight mechanism for implementation.



A shared concern with the methods adopted to assess the use of evaluations beyond tracking of evaluation recommendations was that they were **sometimes not conducted systematically** or on a regular basis. If they were conducted on a regular basis with a post-evaluation completion phase included in the cycle, there is an opportunity for improvement in the changes generated by the evaluations. Additionally, the procedure itself can be too mechanical and/or formal in nature. The focus on the management response potentially misses out on other factors and mechanisms that either encourage or discourage the use of the evaluation findings.

While acknowledging shortcomings on this aspect, several Agencies have already **made efforts to measure the impact of evaluation** beyond recommendation implementation.

- FAO, for example, conducts an evaluation of the evaluation function every 6 years. This exercise serves as an opportunity to measure uptake of evaluation knowledge.
- The ILO most recently underwent an independent evaluation of its evaluation function in 2016. UNICEF monitors countries on how well they have used evaluation evidence when formulating their new programme strategies. Its evaluation office also checks in regularly with regional offices for details on influential evaluations. This is based on feedback that is given by offices on how the evaluation was utilized beyond the management response.
- WFP conducted a one-off survey in 2017 which included a survey of staff on the use made of evaluation evidence.
- UNESCO recently introduced the practice of capturing findings in their annual Synthesis Reports.
- UN Women includes this information as part of their Strategic Note document within the section, Lessons Learned. Additionally, they generate feedback from users during the evaluation process and at the evaluation debriefing meeting.
- WFP is planning on introducing a new KPI as part of its annual corporate reporting related to the use of evaluation (Percentage of approved Country Strategic Plans and Interim Country Strategic Plans that receive a satisfactory or better score on the use of evaluation evidence). Similarly, one of UNWOMEN evaluation KPIs is the use of evaluations to inform programming.
- UNFPA also tracks 'Implementation of management response' and 'Use of evaluation in programme development' as part of nine evaluation key performance indicators. The later was added this year and looks at the percentage of new country programme documents whose design was clearly informed by evaluation.

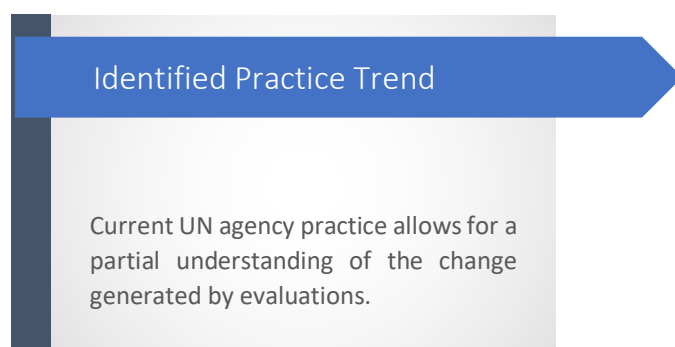
Practice in Depth – The GEF IEO Approach

GEF IEO goes through periodic independent peer reviews that assess the extent to which the evaluation function contributes to accountability and learning in the GEF. The previous peer views of the GEF IEO were completed in 2009 and 2014. A third peer view is planned for 2019. In addition, in 2015 GEF IEO produced a Knowledge Management Needs Assessment which included questions on the use of IEO evaluations including lessons learned. The following are examples of the uses of evaluations tracked by the assessment:

1. Contribution to decision-making
2. Preparation and adjustment of projects and programs
3. Improved understanding of environmental issues, GEF projects, programs, and processes.

While most agencies strive to capture lessons learned, most organizations don't have a procedure in place to systematically track lessons learned. Still, there have been attempts. To some extent, the follow-up report from FAO management addresses this issue. Additionally, the FAO corporate project information system requires the capturing of relevant OED recommendations but the extent to which this is done is unknown.

To address this challenge, WIPO is planning an evaluation in 2020 on the impact of learning generated by evaluations. UNICEF's current strategic plan measures how well the organization is doing with regards to the use of evaluations and lessons learned. Additionally, when offices develop their Country Programme Document, they are supposed to use evaluation evidence.



Challenges in measuring the uptake of evaluation knowledge include limited resources and methodological challenges. The latter pertains to the difficulty in quantifying the 'soft' aspect of evaluation use such as awareness, appreciation and commitment towards evaluations.

A general consensus amongst UN agencies is **a greater emphasis on the sharing of resources, data and methods** could help alleviate some of the key issues currently faced in measuring the uptake of evaluation knowledge and outreach. However, such changes take time – especially on a system-wide level.

SECTION 4: Practices to capture user opinion on evaluations as instruments to help improve programmes.

This fourth section examines the extent to which evaluation offices developed policies and carried out practices to canvas and collect user opinion on the usefulness of the evaluations.

The questions that guided members' contributions on capturing user opinions on evaluations were:

1. When interacting with evaluation users how effective are the methods your office deploys to raise user interest in the evaluation process and its possible outcomes.
2. What mechanisms does your office use to track user satisfaction with the evaluation and how does your office integrate that feedback into its evaluation practice.

UNEG Norm 14; Evaluation Use and Follow up *"Organizations should promote evaluation use and follow-up, using an interactive process that involves all stakeholders."*

Efforts to raise user interest in evaluations

Nearly all EUIG members have **established mechanisms to engage and inform users**. EUIG members reported practices in relation to seeking user

feedback on evaluation somewhat overlapped with the question of stakeholder engagement. Common practices include having guidelines in place for stakeholder engagement, forming evaluation reference groups, holding evaluation inception workshops etc. Although the general assumption is that greater engagement in the evaluation process increases stakeholders' interest, none of the agencies reported having any systematic method to measure whether users' engagement affected their interest in evaluations.

Tracking user satisfaction with evaluation

Two EUIG members have formal mechanisms (user satisfaction surveys) to track user satisfaction, of which one cited the challenge of low response rates to such surveys. Most others do this in an informal or ad-hoc manner. Agencies like GEF, FAO and WIPO, on the other hand, build-in user benefits and satisfaction related components in their periodic knowledge management needs assessments, professional peer reviews, independent evaluation of the evaluation function etc. Those who do such surveys, tend to have an anonymity clause in place.

WFP used to have a formal 'end of the evaluation survey', a form of 360-degree appraisal. Findings from this were also used during annual discussions with firms with whom WFP had long-term agreements, allowing for more discussions on the findings. This practice is no longer used because the end of evaluation survey that was carried out in the Office of Evaluation (OEV) using a 360 assessment was linked to a specific evaluation series, which ended after 4 years. Another model of one-way feedback had also been in place but was discontinued with the aim to redesign one consolidated mechanism to be used for all WFP evaluations. With the new Evaluation Policy and Corporate

Evaluation Strategy came a host of new priorities. As a result, a new end of evaluation survey has yet to be reinitiated.

Since most EUIG members do not have a formal system of receiving user satisfaction surveys, they also do not get any concrete evidence base for reflections on satisfaction levels. This said, most agencies do undertake informal reflections or allow users/stakeholders to give direct feedback to the office. GEF is the only agency (among the eight who responded) that holds ‘after action reviews’ after major evaluations but the extent to which users participate in such reviews is not clear.

Practice – The World Bank Approach

The World Bank Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) since 2009 undertakes periodic comprehensive client surveys to gather opinions on the quality and impact of IEG evaluations and help obtain feedback on awareness and attitudes towards IEG. The survey includes questions around use, satisfaction, influence and outreach of IEG evaluations and results are published on their website.

Identified Practice Trend

Most UN agencies seek feedback on customer satisfaction with the evaluations through ad-hoc methods.



ANNEX A

SECTION 1 - Ensuring relevance of evaluations to user knowledge needs

- Q1.** What method does your evaluation office use to select evaluation topics? (Do you reach out to your users? If so, to whom? And how?)
- Q2.** What about evaluation questions? (Are evaluation users generally consulted on the evaluation scoping? If so, whom? And how?)
- Q3.** For those who consult users, what are their most frequent types of response to these consultations? (Are they genuinely interested? Do their inputs add value to the evaluation portfolio?)
- Q4.** Has your office tested institutionalized or informal mechanisms by which evaluation stakeholders may express their evidence gaps, knowledge or learning needs that evaluations may address? Please describe briefly the type of mechanisms.

SECTION 2 – Synthesising evaluation knowledge to increase appeal

- Q1.** Do evaluators in your Office systematically reflect on the best ways to communicate their findings in appealing manner? (this refer to process as well as products)
- Q2.** Does your evaluation office create different products or use different processes or channels to reach out to different types of users? If so, which users do we reach best? How and why?
- Q3.** Does your Evaluation Office make efforts to repackage evaluation knowledge to adapt to certain users' needs? (e.g. regional or thematic synthesis) How and why?
- Q4.** How does your Office work to increase appeal of evaluation products to users? (e.g. by having a KM focal point a KM strategy and specific actions)

SECTION 3 - Tracking user uptake of evaluation knowledge

- Q1.** Does your Evaluation Office track the implementation and/or measure the effects of evaluation recommendations?
- Q2.** If answer above is yes, how far does your Office go into measuring the actions taken by evaluation users or any change that has come about as a result of evaluations?
- Q3.** If yes: Does the process of following up on recommendations lead to a dialogue with users?
- Q4.** If yes: how effective are we in understanding the changes generated by evaluations? What may be hampering this understanding?
- Q5.** Does your Evaluation Office have any systems/tools in place to track what users learned from evaluations? Please describe.
- Q6.** What are the main challenges that your Evaluation Office faces when measuring uptake of evaluation knowledge and outreach to users?

SECTION 4 - Understanding user views on evaluation effectiveness

Q1. During the conduct of evaluation, when we interact with evaluation users, do we have ways to raise users' interests in the evaluation process and possible outcomes? Are they effective?

Q2. Do we track whether users are satisfied with the benefit they got from evaluations? Are these anonymous?

Q3. If we do, do we have a system to ensure we reflect on our practice, when users are not satisfied.