



# PROFESSIONAL PEER REVIEW OF THE UNESCO EVALUATION FUNCTION

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ACRONYMS	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
INTRODUCTION	9
THE EVALUATION FUNCTION AND ITS INDEPENDENCE IN UNESCO	13
RESOURCING THE EVALUATION FUNCTION: FINANCE AND STAFF	17
EVALUATION PLANNING	21
EVALUATION QUALITY AND CREDIBILITY	22
FOLLOW UP AND USE OF CORPORATE EVALUATIONS	23
THE DECENTRALIZED EVALUATION SYSTEM	26
PARTNERSHIPS AND EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT	31
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	33
ANNEX A: LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED	39
ANNEX B: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED	41
ANNEX C: TERMS OF REFERENCE	42

## ACRONYMS

IOS	Internal Oversight Services
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations System
MOPAN	Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
OAC	UNESCO Oversight Advisory Committee
RBM	Results-Based Management
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SISTER	System of Information on Strategies, Tasks and the Evaluation of Results
SRR	Strategic Results Report
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNCF	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UN SWAP	United Nations System-Wide Action Plan

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

This Professional Peer Review of the evaluation function of UNESCO was carried out under the provisions contained in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Function of UN organizations.<sup>1</sup> It is the first Peer Review of UNESCO's evaluation function and was carried out at the request of UNESCO.

The purpose of this UNEG Peer Review is to strengthen the UNESCO evaluation function so it can more effectively contribute to UNESCO's organizational decision-making, programme effectiveness, learning and accountability for results. The Terms of Reference and questions were structured in line with the UNEG framework; the overarching review question was: 'Are UNESCO's evaluation policy, function and its products: independent; credible; and useful for learning and accountability purposes?'

This review covers UNESCO's entire evaluation system - comprising both corporate and decentralized functions - and assesses the role and strategic positioning of financial and human resourcing, evaluation planning, evaluation use, and quality assurance mechanisms. Whilst reviewing the period covered by the current Evaluation Policy (2014 – 2021) and UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy, the review focuses on the period since 2016. The Peer Review builds on the findings of several prior assessments of UNESCO's evaluation function – most recent of which is the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network's (MOPAN) assessment covering 2017-2018.

## ASSESSMENT

The Panel's answer to the overarching question relating to the independence, credibility and utility of UNESCO's evaluation function is substantially positive. The IOS's Evaluation Office has made very significant progress toward ensuring it operates in line with UNEG norms and standards for evaluation. Its products are useful for both learning and accountability purposes and the Evaluation Office serves an increasingly important role in contributing to UNESCO's ability to be a results-based organisation. The Panel endorses fully the MOPAN assessment's conclusion that UNESCO has 'A high-quality central evaluation service' and that 'UNESCO's Evaluation Office has established consistently high standards across centrally managed evaluations, such that UNESCO is well-positioned as a learning organisation'.

The Panel finds that UNESCO's corporate evaluation function is mature and well-grounded: IOS's Evaluation Office fulfils most of the aspirations it set itself in its policy. Its evaluations and other products are respected by staff across UNESCO and by the Executive Board alike.

Whilst the Evaluation Office's corporate evaluation function is mature, there is some way to go before the decentralized evaluation function can achieve the same status. It is built on shakier foundations, and the policy framework underpinning decentralized evaluations is still being developed. The Panel considers this is where the Evaluation Office needs to focus most attention, a conclusion also reached in the MOPAN review.

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<sup>1</sup> UNEG FRAMEWORK FOR PROFESSIONAL PEER REVIEWS OF THE EVALUATION FUNCTION OF UN ORGANIZATIONS (2011): [HTTP://WWW.UNEVALUATION.ORG/DOCUMENT/DETAIL/945](http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/945)

In terms of the Evaluation Office's enabling context, UNESCO has introduced fundamental changes to strengthen results-based management (RBM). However, inculcating a results-based mindset is still very much a work in progress.

The Peer Review provides 12 recommendations to UNESCO's Evaluation Office and the Internal Oversight Service, UNESCO's senior management and Director-General, its Executive Board and the Oversight Advisory Committee. The findings and recommendations are presented in line with the UNEG norms for evaluation of independence, credibility and utility.

## INDEPENDENCE

The evaluation function has many of the attributes needed to ensure its independence. The Director of IOS can select evaluation topics and issue reports without interference; the evaluation function has direct access to the Executive Board and the Director-General. However, the functional independence of UNESCO's evaluation function would be enhanced by changes in how it is resourced and how its staff are appointed.

### *BUDGETARY INDEPENDENCE*

The nominal allocation of 3% of programme budget – both regular and extrabudgetary funds – is positive. The 3% allocation from regular budget in the current biennium has allowed the Evaluation Office to undertake corporate evaluations without significant budget constraints. The measure does increase but does not fully satisfy the need for UNESCO's evaluation function to have budgetary independence. Nor does it fully ensure that UNESCO can achieve the coverage it needs. The Panel considers that additional steps are needed to ensure that Evaluation Office has the budget to achieve robust coverage across sectors and to cover organisation-wide issues:

**Recommendation 1: The Panel recommends UNESCO consider a mechanism for pooling the 3% of the activity or non-staff Regular Budget allocation that Sectors earmark so it is a fungible resource available to the Evaluation Office. (For: Senior Management, Director of IOS, Evaluation Office)**

This would allow the Evaluation Office to finance more strategic and crosscutting evaluations that span the sectors or address institutional issues not the purview of specific sectors.

UNESCO's approved Evaluation Policy allows the Evaluation Office to draw down one-third of the 3% allocated for decentralized evaluation 'to provide funding towards cross-cutting corporate evaluations, dissemination of lessons learned and synthesis work'. This policy is not being implemented at the same time as there has been a lack of investment in strengthening the decentralized evaluation system:

**Recommendation 2: The Panel recommends that the Evaluation Office implement its policy and develop a mechanism to draw down this 1% from extrabudgetary funds. (For: Senior Management, Director of IOS, Evaluation Office)**

These funds should help the Evaluation Office to finance initiatives to strengthen the quality of the decentralized evaluation system, as well as to increase the work relating to cross-cutting corporate evaluations, dissemination of lessons learned and synthesis work, as originally envisaged.

### *APPOINTMENT OF EVALUATION OFFICE STAFF*

The independence of the evaluation function is reduced by the fact that the head of IOS is unable to appoint senior Evaluation Office staff members, and the authority to appoint rests with the position of the Director-General. The involvement of the Oversight Advisory Committee in the selection process

for senior positions will also help to safeguard independence and professional standards of the evaluation function:

**Recommendation 3: To safeguard the independence and professionalism of the Evaluation Office, the Panel recommends that all its staff positions, including the head, are selected and appointed by the Director of IOS rather than the Director General; and that a member of the Oversight Advisory Committee with evaluation expertise sits on the recruitment panel for the positions of Director IOS and head of Evaluation Office. (For: Executive Board, Director-General, Oversight Advisory Committee)**

#### *SAFEGUARDING THE PROFILE AND STATUS OF EVALUATION WITHIN UNESCO'S CO-LOCATED EVALUATION OFFICE*

The Panel recommends institutionalising practices that should help safeguard the future status of the Evaluation Office both within IOS and within UNESCO. UNESCO's evaluation function has benefitted significantly from the fact that the current Director of IOS is an evaluation professional. Future post-holders may not have this professional background.

**Recommendation 4: The Panel recommends there should be an explicit requirement for future Directors of IOS to have competence and experience in evaluation, and that this is featured in all future Job Descriptions for the position. (For: Executive Board, Director-General, Senior Management)**

The Panel also considers that, as a co-located unit, Evaluation Office should continue to build its own profile within IOS and UNESCO:

**Recommendation 5: The Panel recommends that the Director of IOS take measures to increase the profile of Evaluation Office within UNESCO and with the Executive Board, including ensuring the head of Evaluation Office and lead evaluators progressively present evaluation findings to the Programme Commission (PX) of the Executive Board and other governance committees. (For: Director of IOS)**

#### CREDIBILITY

The Panel agrees with the 2019 MOPAN assessment's conclusion on the credibility of UNESCO's corporate evaluation function. The Evaluation Office has set itself high standards and has either achieved them or is on the way to doing so, within tight staffing and budgetary constraints. UNESCO has progressively lifted the quality of its corporate evaluations such that these have a high degree of credibility.

#### *STRENGTHENING DECENTRALIZED EVALUATIONS*

The Panel considers the task of strengthening the decentralized evaluation system one of IOS's most difficult and most important challenges, however. The Evaluation Office's synthetic reviews, its self-assessment and the 2019 MOPAN assessment identify decentralized evaluations as weaker and lower quality than corporate evaluations. The volume and significance of decentralized evaluations is only likely to increase in the coming years and they will play an increasingly important role in underpinning the credibility of UNESCO's evaluation function. Strong decentralized evaluations are needed to serve as credible inputs to organisation-wide evaluations of results. The Panel notes that IOS has several ongoing initiatives to improve the decentralized evaluation system and has made several specific additional commitments in the July 2019 Management Response to the MOPAN report.

The Panel notes the contribution the Evaluation Focal Point Network makes to lifting the quality of the decentralized evaluation function. But the Panel considers that structurally the Network will only be

able to upgrade the quality of the decentralized evaluation function to a limited degree - even with increased investment. IOS needs to look to other complementary solutions and to make more fundamental changes:

**Recommendation 6: The Panel recommends the Evaluation Office takes additional steps to strengthen the quality of the decentralized evaluation system and decentralized evaluations. (For: Director of IOS, Head of Evaluation Office).** There are several non-exclusive options the Evaluation Office can consider. These options include the following:

- Appoint dedicated additional capacity within Evaluation Office to provide systematic, consistent quality assurance and technical backstopping to decentralized evaluations.
- Establish regional Monitoring and Evaluation officers, who would play a support function role to all offices within a region.
- Outsource the role of quality assurance for decentralized evaluations to a private provider – establishing a contract with a provider who will provide backstopping through the lifecycle of evaluations.
- Implementing the MOPAN management response commitment to establish a roster of approved evaluation consultants for decentralized evaluations, potentially introducing a higher degree of professional standards and greater independence of evaluation findings; and implementing other recommendations made in successive synthesis reviews.

If Evaluation Office draws down the 1% of the 3% nominally identified for decentralized evaluations, it could potentially finance efforts to strengthen the system.

#### *UPDATING THE EVALUATION POLICY*

The Panel recognises that the current Evaluation Policy establishes a strong framework for UNESCO's evaluation function and is both ambitious and strategic. There are several elements that need to be updated when it is revised.

**Recommendation 7: The Panel recommends that when the Evaluation Policy is updated in anticipation of the new Medium-Term Strategy the following are considered:**

- Ensure it reflects the updated 2016 UNEG norms and standards and revised DAC evaluation criteria.
- Reflect the emerging UN reform context and spell out the implications for evaluation at corporate and country level of the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, including in joint and system-wide evaluations.
- Reflect changes introduced by UNESCO's ongoing strategic transformation process
- Include a new more detailed policy framework for decentralized evaluation
- Include information on the professionalisation of staff
- Define in greater clarity some elements relating to the governance of the evaluation function

## *THE OVERSIGHT ADVISORY COMMITTEE'S ROLE IN STRENGTHENING UNESCO'S EVALUATION FUNCTION*

The Oversight Advisory Committee has played a strong role in the oversight and strengthening of the evaluation function. It has been able to do this largely because the Committee has members with specialist expertise on evaluation:

**Recommendation 8: The Panel recommends steps are taken to ensure the Oversight Advisory Committee can continue to play a strong role in monitoring and strengthening UNESCO's evaluation function. (For: Executive Board, Director-General, Oversight Advisory Committee). Specifically:**

- The requirement for a member of the Oversight Advisory Committee to have expertise in evaluation is adhered to as new members of the Committee are recruited.
- That the member with expertise in evaluation is henceforth always an official member of the recruitment panel for the following two positions: Director of IOS; and head of Evaluation Office.
- That the Oversight Advisory Committee provide the Evaluation Office with advice and guidance on identifying relevant strategic evaluations.

## UTILITY

The value that UNESCO's evaluation function adds is clear both in terms of results-based management and accountability. It has a track record of producing corporate evaluations that are highly relevant; and there are good examples of its evaluations leading to action. The Panel has identified measures that could help improve the utility of Evaluation Office's evaluation products.

### *ACHIEVING MORE STRATEGIC COVERAGE OF CORPORATE EVALUATIONS*

The Panel considers the Evaluation Office can take a more strategic approach to identifying corporate evaluations. There is a need to position evaluation so that it can play its full role on performance and results: and this should include commissioning major corporate evaluations on topics of strategic relevance. There is a need to make planning of evaluations more systematic. The Oversight Advisory Committee could have a role in helping to identify topics of strategic relevance in future:

**Recommendation 9: The Panel recommends that IOS and the Evaluation Office also considers strategic corporate evaluation topics in their next workplan to ensure they address UNESCO's strategic organisational needs and to inform the development of the next Medium-Term Strategy. (For: Director of IOS, head of Evaluation Office)**

Several evaluation topics were raised by senior management and other stakeholders, which the Evaluation Office may want to consider as it draws up its 2020 evaluation plan. These topics, listed in the body of the report, would help inform the content and structures underpinning the next Medium-Term Strategy. The Evaluation Office could also take a more considered and structured approach to how it draws up annual evaluation plans.

### *FOLLOW UP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND TRACKING THE IMPACT OF EVALUATIONS*

To 'close the circle' so that evaluations have a greater chance of leading to stronger institutional performance, the Panel considers that the Evaluation Office can put in place measures to track the



impact of evaluations. This is needed to ensure evaluation drives learning and institutional improvements. The impact is being tracked but inconsistently and the full value of evaluation is therefore not being realised:

**Recommendation 10:** The Panel recommends that the Evaluation Office focus attention on strengthening the extent to which it ensures evaluation informs UNESCO’s planning and influences policy and decision-making. (For: Director of IOS, Evaluation Office, Head of Evaluation Office).

*STRENGTHENING COMMUNICATION OF EVALUATION PRODUCTS*

Likewise, the Panel considers that the impact of evaluation would be strengthened if key findings are better communicated. There is a need to ensure that presentation is better tailored to audiences to ensure that Evaluation Office’s products achieve maximum impact:

**Recommendation 11:** The Panel recommends that Evaluation Office commits additional human resources to strengthening the communication of its evaluation products.

*ADDITIONAL EVALUATION OFFICE CAPACITY NEEDS*

Evaluation Office has a limited human resource base. A modest increase in its permanent staffing profile would better allow it to meet the challenges it will face. The Panel has a specific Recommendation in this respect:

**Recommendation 12:** The Panel recommends that Evaluation Office’s professional staff numbers be increased by at least one post which could focus on delivering improvements to communication and knowledge management; with potentially a second post focusing on strengthening the decentralized evaluations (Recommendation 6), dependent on how IOS/Evaluation Office chooses to address this challenge. (For: Senior Management, Director of IOS, Head of Evaluation Office).

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# INTRODUCTION

## ABOUT THE PEER REVIEW

1. This Professional Peer Review (hereafter Peer Review) of the evaluation function of UNESCO was carried out under the provisions contained in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Function of UN organizations. It is the first Peer Review of UNESCO's evaluation function and was carried out at the request of UNESCO. The Peer Review Panel was comprised of four members:

Dr. Elil Renganathan, Peer Review Chair, Head, WHO Evaluation Office, World Health Organization (WHO)

Ms Rachel Sauvinet-Bedouin, Senior Evaluation Officer, Evaluation Office, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Mr Paul de Nooijer, Senior Inspector, Policy and Operations Evaluation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the Netherlands

Dr Daniel Arghiros, Senior Evaluation Consultant to the Peer Review Panel

2. The Panel would like to thank the Director of the Internal Oversight Service and the Evaluation Office team for facilitating the review in such a collegial and professional spirit. UNESCO's facilitation of the entire review was exemplary. The Panel would also like to thank sincerely all those to whom they spoke for their open and frank contributions.

3. The views expressed in this report are those of the members of the Peer Review Panel in their individual capacities.

## PURPOSE AND SCOPE

4. The purpose of this UNEG Peer Review is to strengthen the UNESCO evaluation function so it can more effectively contribute to UNESCO's organizational decision-making, programme effectiveness, learning and accountability for results. The ToR and questions were structured in line with the UNEG framework.<sup>2</sup> The review was guided by the overarching question contained in the ToR: 'Are UNESCO's evaluation policy, function and its products: independent; credible; and useful for learning and accountability purposes?' (See Annex C for Terms of Reference.)

5. The Peer Review provides recommendations to UNESCO's Evaluation Office and the Internal Oversight Service, in which it is located, UNESCO's senior management and Director-General, the Oversight Advisory Committee, and UNESCO's Executive Board. This review covers the entire evaluation system comprising both corporate and decentralized functions; it assesses the role and strategic positioning of, financial and human resourcing, evaluation planning, evaluation use, and quality assurance mechanisms. It is aimed at improving the overall quality of the evaluation function. Whilst reviewing the period covered by the current Evaluation Policy (2014 – 2021) and UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy, the review focuses on the period since 2016. The Peer Review was anticipated in UNESCO's 2014-2021 Evaluation Policy and was requested in 2019 to inform the development of the next UNESCO Evaluation Policy and associated material.

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<sup>2</sup> 'UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation'.

## PREVIOUS ASSESSMENTS OF UNESCO'S EVALUATION FUNCTION

6. This Peer Review builds on the findings of several prior assessments of UNESCO's evaluation function within the review period. These provide background and context for understanding the evolution of the function.

7. In preparation for this Peer Review the Evaluation Office produced a comprehensive Self-Assessment Report against the UNEG Norms and Standards (finalized October 2019). The present report reflects on and builds on this self-assessment. The Panel considers the Evaluation Office's self-assessment a very frank and constructive reflection on the state of UNESCO's evaluation practice. The self-assessment is explicit about areas where the Evaluation Office considers it should focus to improve its performance and the Panel endorses many of the judgements made. The Panel's external perspective frames the broader institutional context in which the evaluation function works and, we hope, will help UNESCO focus effort on the most pressing needs.

8. The Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) reviewed the evaluation function in 2017-2018 in the context of its UNESCO-wide assessment. The MOPAN assessment examined the status of the evaluation function and its contribution to UNESCO's performance management systems – the extent to which UNESCO manages for results and applies evidence-based planning and programming to operations. The assessment identified UNESCO's evaluation services as one of the six strengths it highlighted, concluding that UNESCO has 'a high-quality central evaluation service'. It judged that 'UNESCO's Evaluation Office has established consistently high standards across centrally managed evaluations, such that UNESCO is well-positioned as a learning organisation'.<sup>3</sup> As this report makes clear, the Panel endorses this judgement and agrees that UNESCO has established a high-quality corporate evaluation service.

9. In terms of areas for improvement, the MOPAN assessment identified the need for UNESCO to improve the quality of decentralized evaluations and the need to provide a stronger body of evaluative evidence on UNESCO's normative engagement. The MOPAN assessment noted that the 'coverage and quality of decentralised evaluations requires strengthening' and noted that whilst the 'recent increase in finance for evaluation will help...staffing constraints may remain'.<sup>4</sup> The Panel agrees with the MOPAN assessment relating to decentralized evaluations, as stated in the body of this report, and makes specific recommendations in relation to this. The Evaluation Office may want to review its response to MOPAN's finding on the coverage of normative work: there may be more it can do to address this issue.

10. In late 2017, the Evaluation Office conducted a review of UNESCO evaluation function as a baseline for the 2019 UNEG Peer Review exercise.<sup>5</sup> The review, written by an external consultant, was based on

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<sup>3</sup> 'UNESCO 2017-18 MOPAN Performance Assessment' (The MOPAN Secretariat, March 2019), 51, <http://www.mopanonline.org/assessments/unesco2017-18/UNESCO%20Report.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> 'UNESCO 2017-18 MOPAN Performance Assessment', 52.

<sup>5</sup> Geert Engelsman, 'Review of UNESCO's Evaluation System: Baseline for a UNEG Peer Review' (UNESCO, 2017).

a document review, a stakeholder survey of key stakeholders and a self-assessment conducted by the Evaluation Office. It provides a useful assessment that the current paper builds on.

11. In 2014 – 15, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of the United Nations System undertook a system-wide analysis of the evaluation functions of UN organizations.<sup>6</sup> In terms of the overall maturity of the function, UNESCO's Evaluation Office was among those considered 'above average and high' and scored among the top 10 organizations.

## APPROACH, PROCESS AND LIMITATIONS

12. The review was guided by three core criteria, as defined in the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation, that need to be satisfied for evaluation functions and products to be considered of high quality: i) independence of evaluations and of the evaluation system, ii) the credibility of evaluations and iii) the utility of evaluations. The Panel used a peer exchange approach to support its assessment, and discussed shared challenges facing evaluation in multilateral agencies with UNESCO's staff.

13. Beyond UNESCO's Evaluation Office and IOS, the Panel met a broad range of stakeholders. This included UNESCO senior management from UNESCO's corporate units and sectors, members of the Executive Board, members of the Oversight Advisory Committee and headquarters-based and field staff (see Annex B for a full list of interlocutors). The Panel addressed the set of evaluation questions presented in the Peer Review Terms of Reference (listed in Annex B of the Panel's Terms of Reference) but have not structured the report against them.

14. The Peer Review Panel was formed in June 2019, reviewed and agreed Terms of Reference in July, and the external consultant was recruited in September. The consultant conducted face-to-face interviews and remote interviews with the Evaluation Office and IOS team and interviewed 22 UNESCO staff engaged in corporate and decentralized evaluations in October. Based on interviews, a literature review and the Evaluation Office's self-assessment, the consultant drafted and shared a Key Findings document with the Panel. Building on the observations in this report, the Panel then held meetings in Paris 7-11 October 2019. The present report represents evidence and analysis from all these inputs.

15. In terms of scope limitations, the Peer Review did not conduct a quality assessment of completed corporate and decentralized evaluations reports. Since 2017 all corporate evaluation reports have been subject to an external quality assurance review against UNEG norms and standards, as part of the Evaluation Office's quality assurance mechanism; and decentralized evaluations have been subject to a meta-analysis of their compliance with these standards. The Panel reviewed the quality of UNESCO's quality assurance system and was satisfied with the standard. Whilst the Panel received views from four representatives of the overseas field network, the review did not visit UNESCO's field entities. The Panel did not repeat the stakeholder survey that was conducted in 2017 to serve as a baseline for the present study.<sup>7</sup>

## STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

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<sup>6</sup> 'Analysis of the Evaluation Function in the United Nations System, JIU/REP/2014/6' (UN Joint Inspection Unit, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> With only 12 responses to this survey, the size of the sample was considered too small to enable meaningful comparison with a repeat survey.

16. The report addresses the independence, credibility and utility of UNESCO's evaluation function sequentially. However, reflecting how the Evaluation Office operates, the report examines the corporate evaluation function and decentralized evaluations separately. The section on decentralized evaluations covers all aspects of decentralized evaluations together. To show the links between the Panel's findings and its recommendations, the latter are presented in the body of the report. They are collated and highlighted in the final section.

#### OVERVIEW OF UNESCO

**Mission and mandate:** to contribute to peace-building, poverty eradication, sustainable development, and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information.

**Governance:** UNESCO's General Conference, comprising representatives of its 193 Member States, determines the main lines of work and the budget. The General Conference elects an Executive Board represented by 58 Member-States and the Director-General. The Executive Board is responsible for overseeing the execution of UNESCO's programme, within the mandate laid down by the General Conference. The Secretariat is UNESCO's executive branch and is accountable to the Director-General and the Executive Board.

**Organisational structure:** The UNESCO headquarters in Paris is responsible for overall management and administration and global-level programme management and coordination.

**Major Programmes:** UNESCO has five Major Programmes which correspond to the following Programme Sectors: Education, Culture, Natural Sciences, Social and Human Sciences and Communication and Information Sector. UNESCO also comprises the Paris-based Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), the Montreal-based UNESCO Institute for Statistics and nine institutes that are integral to, and legally part of, UNESCO ('Category 1 Institutes').

**Staffing and Field Presence:** Approximately 2,200 staff, 1,100 of whom are posted outside Headquarters and based in 53 field offices and Category 1 Institutes/Centres.

**Strategy:** UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy (2014-21) outlines two overarching objectives – peace and equitable and sustainable development – and two global priorities, Africa and gender equality. The strategy defines nine strategic objectives which are translated into programmatic priorities in the Programme and Budget documents. The Programme is defined for four years while the budget allocation is approved every two years.

**Finances:** Funded by a combination of assessed contributions, comprising its regular budget (RP) given by Member States (USD\$ 507m approved RP contributions for 2018-19) and voluntary contributions (termed 'extrabudgetary resources', \$597m in 2018-2019). UNESCO lost approximately 22% of its assessed contributions since 2011 following the suspension of contributions by two Member States and their subsequent departure from the Organization.

A **strategic transformation process** that aims to deliver improvements in UNESCO's performance and to prepare the ground for UNESCO's 2022-2029 Medium-Term Strategy is underway.

# THE EVALUATION FUNCTION AND ITS INDEPENDENCE IN UNESCO

## About UNESCO's Evaluation Function

### Governance

The Internal Oversight Service (IOS) is the custodian of UNESCO's evaluation function. The evaluation function was originally in the Bureau of Strategic Planning and the Evaluation Section (now the Evaluation Office) was established in 2000 as a unit within the Internal Oversight Service.

The head of the Evaluation Office reports to the Director of IOS who is accountable for the quality of UNESCO's evaluation function.

### Resources

Professional posts: 6 (one chief of section, four senior / principal evaluation specialists, one evaluation specialist).

Staff Costs 2018/2019: \$2.115m

Activity Budget 2018/2019: \$91,266

For the first time in the 2018/19 biennium Programme Sectors put aside a percentage of their operational budget to fund corporate evaluations towards the 3% target for evaluation set in the Evaluation Policy (total resources: \$1.071m).

### Evaluation Type and Coverage in 2018

Corporate Evaluations: managed and/or conducted by the Evaluation Office with support from external consultants, published on UNESCO website: 6 completed in 2018

Decentralized Evaluations: managed by sectors or field offices and conducted by external consultants, support from the Evaluation Office provided only upon request, not published on the UNESCO website: 24 completed in 2018.

All corporate and decentralized evaluations are available to UNESCO staff on the intranet via the Evaluation focal point platform.

## EVALUATION POLICY, STRATEGY AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

17. UNESCO's Evaluation Policy 2014-2021 establishes a strong framework for an integrated evaluation system. The policy is explicit that the evaluation function's objective is to provide credible evidence to support UNESCO to achieve its mandate. It aspires to position evaluation as a management tool for enhancing accountability, promoting organizational learning and knowledge management, and informing decision-making processes.<sup>8</sup>

18. The policy defines the Evaluation Office's mandate for evaluation, the allocation of responsibilities within UNESCO, and defines the evaluation system. The policy addresses the guiding principles for evaluation in UNESCO, key requirements for planning and resourcing evaluation, roles and responsibilities, quality assurance mechanisms, evaluation follow-up and evaluation use.

19. UNESCO's evaluation system consists primarily of corporate evaluations, conducted by the IOS Evaluation Office, and decentralized evaluations, managed by other UNESCO entities. One of the aims of the policy was to ensure UNESCO's Evaluation Office system met the UNEG 2005 Norms and Standards. Key elements of the evaluation system have the status of mandatory requirements and are

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<sup>8</sup> 'UNESCO 2017-18 MOPAN Performance Assessment'.

embedded within UNESCO's online Administrative Manual. This gives its policy added authority within the organisation.

20. To facilitate the implementation of the evaluation policy, the Evaluation Office developed an Evaluation Strategy covering 2016-2018. This document focuses on the strategic actions to be taken by the IOS Evaluation Office in support of its expected results. The strategy provides a situation analysis outlining the key challenges, the main result areas and the strategic actions that will be implemented to achieve the results. The strategy also assesses major risks to implementation, along with mitigating measures, resource requirements and arrangements for monitoring, reporting and reviewing the strategy. The strategy also contains an implementation plan with key milestones. Evaluation Office reports against its strategy and the implementation plan in each of its annual reports in a comprehensive and transparent way.

21. Although the Evaluation Strategy was intended to cover 2016-2018, the Evaluation Office noted that it continues to apply the strategy (and extrapolate the targets) in 2019 pending the recommendations of this Peer Review: it will draft a new strategy in the light of the findings of the Peer Review.

22. In terms of Evaluation Office's enabling context, UNESCO has introduced fundamental changes to strengthen results-based management (RBM). UNESCO has developed systems that enable it to report on programme implementation and progress against expected results. It has also begun to assess progress using evaluative evidence and has used this to inform the design of its current Programme and Budget. There have also been changes in the five UNESCO Sectors, and the organisation is applying this results-based management focus and logic to both its standard-setting and programme implementation work. UNESCO's standard template for project documents (August 2017) obligates staff to spell out monitoring and evaluation (M&E) arrangements for programmes they implement. But because many of the programmes that are now due for evaluation predated this requirement, it is challenging to evaluate them – their evaluability is questionable. This difficulty should lessen as programmes with stronger in-built monitoring and evaluation systems are due for evaluation. Despite progress made, inculcating a results-based mindset is still very much a work in progress – as both interviewees and the MOPAN study attest.<sup>9</sup>

#### *UPDATING THE EVALUATION POLICY*

23. The Panel considers that the Evaluation Policy establishes a strong framework for UNESCO's evaluation function and that the 2016-18 Evaluation Strategy operationalizes the policy effectively. Elsewhere this report contains several recommendations that will need to be reflected when these documents are updated. Here we list some general areas that will also need to be addressed when the policy is revised. **The Panel recommends that the Evaluation Policy is updated in anticipation of the new Medium-Term Strategy (2022-2029) and that when it is updated, the following are addressed:**

- Ensure it reflects the updated 2016 UNEG norms and standards and updated DAC evaluation criteria.
- Reflect the emerging UN reform context and spell out the implications for evaluation at corporate and country level of the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, including involvement in joint and system-wide evaluations.

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<sup>9</sup> 'UNESCO 2017-18 MOPAN Performance Assessment', 36 ff.

- Reflect changes introduced by UNESCO’s ongoing strategic transformation process
- Include a new more detailed policy for decentralized evaluation (see section below)
- Include information on the professionalisation of Evaluation Office staff

## THE POSITIONING OF EVALUATION AND ITS STRUCTURAL INDEPENDENCE

24. The Peer Review Panel considers that in many important respects UNESCO’s evaluation function has independence from the operational management and decision-making functions of UNESCO. There is room to strengthen its independence, however.

25. UNESCO’s evaluation function is co-located with other internal oversight functions but operates separately from them. The Evaluation Office is one of three units within the Internal Oversight Service: it sits alongside the Internal Audit and Investigations Offices. The Internal Oversight Service is considered the custodian of the evaluation function, and the position of director of IOS is responsible for the Evaluation Office and accountable for the quality of the service it provides. The Director of IOS is the line manager of the head of the Evaluation Office. The JIU study of 2014 noted that of itself co-location does not determine the quality of an evaluation function – either in UNESCO’s case or more generally.<sup>10</sup> Whilst there is merit in an agency’s evaluation function being an independent unit rather than a co-located unit, the Panel makes no recommendation in this regard. The Panel noted helpful synergies between with the IOS’s audit and evaluation functions.

26. UNESCO’s Evaluation Policy and its Administrative Manual, containing all UNESCO’s mandatory rules, spell out the conditions that underpin its independence. The Internal Oversight Service director is appointed for a one-term six-year appointment - to underpin the position’s independence. The director’s appointment or dismissal must be approved by the Executive Board. Whilst UNESCO’s Administrative Manual notes that the Director of the Internal Oversight Service reports to and is accountable directly to the Director-General rather than the Executive Board, the Director of IOS has the authority to submit reports directly to the Executive Board (or otherwise disseminate them) without clearance from the Director-General or UNESCO’s senior management.

27. UNESCO has established an additional body, a standing committee called the Oversight Advisory Committee, that helps to safeguard the independence of its oversight function including the evaluation function. The Committee operates in an advisory capacity to assist the Director-General in fulfilling oversight responsibilities, and its annual reports are shared with the Executive Board. The Oversight Advisory Committee routinely assesses the effectiveness of UNESCO’s evaluation function as well as its risk management, internal control and fraud control systems. The Committee’s reports review the performance of IOS’s evaluation function and make recommendations on measures to strengthen evaluation. The Oversight Advisory Committee plays a critical role in the oversight and strengthening of the evaluation function. It can do this largely because it contains members with specialist expertise on evaluation.

28. The Panel considers the Oversight Advisory Committee makes a valuable contribution to strengthening both the independence and the quality of the evaluation function, and that its ability to

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<sup>10</sup> ‘Analysis of the Evaluation Function in the United Nations System, JIU/REP/2014/6’, 22.



continue to play this role should be sustained. There is an existing requirement for one member of the Oversight Advisory Committee to have expertise in evaluation (Article 5.3e of its revised ToR). **The Panel recommends that the provision for at least one member of the Oversight Advisory Committee to have evaluation expertise continues to be upheld as new members of the Oversight Advisory Committee are recruited.**

#### *MEASURES TO ENHANCE THE STRUCTURAL INDEPENDENCE OF UNESCO'S EVALUATION FUNCTION*

29. The Panel recommends institutionalising practices that will help to enhance the independence, professionalism and profile of UNESCO's evaluation function within IOS. We consider these changes will help ensure the future independence and effectiveness of UNESCO's evaluation function.

#### **Appointment of Evaluation Office Staff**

30. Currently the Director of IOS does not have the authority to appoint the head of Evaluation Office or any other senior Evaluation Office staff. The IOS Director is required to submit three equally capable potential candidates to the Director-General. To safeguard the independence and professionalism of the Evaluation Office, **the Panel recommends that all its staff positions, including the head of the Evaluation Office, are selected and appointed by the Director of IOS rather than the Director General.** As the officer accountable for UNESCO's evaluation function, the Director of IOS should have full authority to appoint all staff.

31. Furthermore, to further safeguard the independence and professional standing of the evaluation function, **the Panel recommends that a member of the Oversight Advisory Committee who specialises in evaluation is henceforth always an official member of the recruitment panel for the positions of Director of IOS and head of Evaluation Office.**

#### **Required Competences for the Director of IOS Position**

32. The Panel notes that the Evaluation Office is a co-located unit and therefore that the reporting line between the head of Evaluation Office and the Director of IOS is appropriate. However, to ensure that future Directors of IOS can continue to properly represent the evaluation function the Panel considers it important that all future holders of the position have a degree of professional understanding of the norms and standards of an organisation's evaluation function. There is a need to institutionalise this requirement so that the effectiveness of UNESCO's evaluation function is less dependent on the personal commitment to evaluation of future Directors of IOS. **The Panel recommends there should be a requirement for professional understanding and familiarity with evaluation embedded in the Job Description for future Directors of IOS to have a degree of evaluation competence and experience.** The Panel also considered that the division of responsibility between the positions of IOS Director and head of Evaluation Office should be more explicitly set out in a future iteration of the Evaluation Policy.

#### **The Evaluation Office should be encouraged to establish a higher profile with stakeholders**

33. As a co-located unit within a combined oversight service, special effort is needed to ensure the evaluation function has a profile independent of IOS. To increase the profile of Evaluation Office with the Executive Board, **the Panel recommends that the Director of IOS takes additional measures to increase the profile of the Evaluation Office within UNESCO and with the Executive Board, including ensuring the head of Evaluation Office and lead evaluators progressively present evaluation findings to the Programme Commission (PX) of the Executive Board and to other governance committees (e.g.**

those relating to conventions). We understand that this has begun and encourage the Director of IOS to continue to institutionalise the practice.

### **UNESCO's new evaluation policy will need to elaborate on aspects of the governance of the evaluation function**

34. The Panel recommends that when the Evaluation Policy is updated, it is more explicit on the governance of the evaluation function, including:

- Procedures for the recruitment of the Director of IOS and that it reiterates the Term Limit of this post
- Make explicit the reporting lines of the Head of the Evaluation Office within UNESCO senior management and governing bodies
- Spell out with greater clarity the division of responsibility between the head of the Evaluation Office and the Director of IOS

#### INDEPENDENCE IN SELECTING EVALUATION SUBJECTS

35. UNESCO's Evaluation Office has full discretion in deciding the corporate evaluation programme: its policy states that the Evaluation Office has the authority to select topics for evaluation and their timing, and it has sole responsibility for establishing a quadrennial corporate evaluation plan. At the start of each year, Evaluation Office staff discuss with the Assistant Directors-General in charge of each sector which corporate evaluations the Evaluation Office will undertake. (As described in the section on the decentralized evaluation function, field offices and headquarters entities manage their own decentralised evaluations – but keep Evaluation Office informed, although not consistently)

#### BEHAVIOURAL INDEPENDENCE AND IMPARTIALITY OF STAFF AND EVALUATORS

36. The Evaluation Office demonstrates the required degree of independence and impartiality for corporate evaluations. UNESCO's Evaluation Policy explicitly subscribes to the UNEG's 'Norms and Standards for Evaluation', in particular Norm 4, which provides standards for behavioural independence. Interviews confirmed that the sample of corporate evaluations discussed were conducted impartially. Interviewees stated that the Evaluation Office selected consultants; could not cite instances where access to information or interviewees were limited; and stated that sector leads were not allowed to influence recommendations aside from making factual corrections. All consultants are obliged to make a declaration regarding any conflict of interest when undertaking an evaluation.

## RESOURCING THE EVALUATION FUNCTION: FINANCE AND STAFF

#### FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE OF THE EVALUATION FUNCTION

37. The way funds are committed to UNESCO's evaluation function gives it a measure of independence, and there has been progress in recent years in ensuring it has adequate resources. However, the volume of funds it receives and the lack of fungibility in their use, still limits its independence in practice.

## Regular Programme Resources

38. UNESCO's Evaluation Policy sets an overall target of 3% of programme expenditure (regular and extrabudgetary budget resources) as the recommended minimum level of investment in evaluation and in July 2016 the Director General reinforced this with a note to UNESCO's senior leadership allocating 'as of this biennium, 3% of operational or activity budget as the minimum level of investment in evaluation' (DG/Note/16/12). The Evaluation Office has since issued an Information Note explaining how to operationalise the policy with respect to different sources of funding.<sup>11</sup> None of this 3% is allocated to Evaluation Office's budget itself.

39. In terms of the activity budget of the evaluation function, UNESCO Programme and Budget (C/5) provides a separate budget line for the overall Internal Oversight Service. The single budget allocation is not disaggregated and is intended to fund the evaluation, internal audit and investigation functions of IOS. The General Conference approves UNESCO's Programme and Budget containing the quadrennial corporate evaluation plan (which is a nominal rolling plan). Once the overall Internal Oversight Service budget envelope is approved by the General Conference, the Director of Internal Oversight Service alone has the full authority to allocate resources to the oversight functions (evaluation, internal audit, investigation).

40. The amount of Regular Programme budget the Evaluation Office receives to finance its activities - as distinct from staff costs - is modest and decreasing. The amount has almost halved over the past two biennia. It received \$182,000 for 2016-17 and \$91,266 in 2018-19, giving the office no more than \$46,000 for each of the last two years to finance its activities. To some extent the reduction is offset by the fact that sectors increasingly budget for evaluations in line with the '3% policy', but not entirely. Funds for staff costs have remained broadly the same for the last two biennia (\$2.11m and \$2.114m respectively).

41. The activity budget needs to cover broader thematic and cross-cutting evaluations and any activity the Evaluation Office takes to strengthen the management of decentralized evaluations (e.g. training for the Evaluation Focal Point Network). The Evaluation Office noted in its self-assessment that the current budgetary setup makes it challenging to fund cross-cutting /cross sectoral thematic evaluations. It notes that that going forward, these would need to be funded on a pro rata basis by the Sectors and Central Services.<sup>12</sup> This arrangement was reached to fund an evaluation on gender equality in the last biennium. If the Evaluation Office wants to undertake more high-level strategic evaluations that address organizational issues, it will need access to more resources. Unit costs of evaluations was \$55,000 in 2018 which the Panel considered at the low end - with little to no room for further economies without compromising quality. This average cost also represents strong value for money.

*THE INTRODUCTION OF THE 3% FORMULA IS HELPING TO FINANCE CORPORATE EVALUATIONS BUT THE POLICY CAN BE IMPROVED TO ENHANCE BUDGETARY INDEPENDENCE*

42. The current biennium, 2018-2019, is the first in which the five Sectors have fully implemented the '3% policy' with respect to Regular Programme resources: each of the Sectors allocated 3% of their

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<sup>11</sup> 'Information Note: Resources for Evaluation' (IOS Evaluation Office, n.d.).

<sup>12</sup> 'Self-Assessment Report: UNEG Peer Review of the UNESCO Evaluation Function (Unpublished)' (IOS Evaluation Office, October 2019), col. (B.11, Table 2).

operational budgets to evaluation. The Evaluation Office estimated that the target 3% for the 2018-19 biennium should yield approximately \$1.5m, or \$ 750,000 for each year. This comprises 3% of the sectors' operational budgets - which in 2018-2019 was approximately \$50m – of an expenditure plan of approximately \$518m. Whilst the funds are still only allocated in principle, this does represent a genuine change: in 2016 only 1.2% of regular programme resources were committed to evaluation.

43. The Panel considers the nominal allocation of 3% of the regular programme budget is a very positive measure. It sends a strong signal about the importance of evaluation and is leading to substantive change. The Panel notes that implementation of the 3% policy has helped the Evaluation Office to improve coverage without significant budget constraints. The Oversight Advisory Committee noted in its report on 2018 higher 'availability of funds for strategically significant corporate evaluations and IOS efforts to increase sectoral coverage' and that the 3% target 'has been reached by all sectors'.<sup>13</sup>

44. However, the measure increases but does not fully satisfy the need for UNESCO's evaluation function to have budgetary independence. Nor does it fully ensure that UNESCO can achieve the coverage it needs. The Panel considers that additional steps are needed to ensure that Evaluation Office has the budget to achieve robust coverage across all sectors and all organizational issues. Under UNESCO's current policy, the Evaluation Office can only access the 3% that Sectors allocate to evaluation for specific evaluations in that Sector; the funds are not fungible. The Evaluation Office can – and has – accessed these funds for cross-sectoral evaluations (such as the gender study mentioned above) but this requires approval from budget owners and is complex. Moreover, the Evaluation Office must seek consent from the Sector Executive Office for each transaction – including hiring consultants or going on a mission, detracting from the independence of the process.

45. **The Panel recommends UNESCO consider a mechanism for pooling the 3% allocated against all the sectors to the Evaluation Office's budget.** This would allow the Evaluation Office to undertake strategic evaluations and achieve more robust coverage of all sectors. This change would mean that all these funds are under the budget of IOS, and that use of funds will be fungible between the sectors and can be used for evaluations that span the sectors or are organization wide.

### **Extrabudgetary Resources**

46. UNESCO's policy of allocating 3% to evaluation also applies to the use of extrabudgetary resources to finance decentralized evaluations. There is a difference, however: UNESCO's approved Evaluation Policy allows the Evaluation Office to draw down one-third of the 3% allocated for decentralized evaluation 'to provide funding towards cross-cutting corporate evaluations, dissemination of lessons learned and synthesis work'.

47. This policy is not yet being implemented: the Evaluation Office does not draw down this portion of the 3% allocation. Indeed, this review could not find any further reference to the facility beyond the policy itself: it was not referred to in an explanatory note sent to staff on the Regular Budget 3%, and it is not reflected in the current draft of the Evaluation Guidance Manual. In its Management Response to the MOPAN report UNESCO makes a general commitment to increasing resources for decentralized evaluations by 'continuing to apply the policy of allocating three percent of programme budgets for

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<sup>13</sup> 'Annual Report of the Oversight Advisory Committee 206 EX/21.INF' (UNESCO, 8 March 2019).

evaluation’ but is not specific about how it will be done.<sup>14</sup> **The Panel recommends that the Evaluation Office implement its policy and develop a mechanism to draw down the identified 1% from extrabudgetary funds.** In addition to the uses identified in UNESCO’s Evaluation Policy, a proportion of the 1%, could finance steps to improve the quality of decentralized evaluations – it could finance a stronger quality assurance system for decentralized evaluations, as proposed in this report (paragraph 101).

## STAFFING

48. The Evaluation Office has six permanent, fixed-term professional posts and long-term consultants. Its staff complement has not changed since UNESCO’s financial crisis in 2012. UNESCO still operates under severe financial constraints and staffing numbers in corporate functions have been static since the crisis. The Evaluation Office had two vacancies for nearly two years, limiting its capacity to take forward initiatives it identified in its policy and strategy. The Evaluation Office complements its staffing with short term staff paid from its activity budget, secondments, and savings from staff absences.

49. All Evaluation Office staff are based in UNESCO’s Paris headquarters. When the UNESCO field network was being redesigned in 2012/13, starting with Africa, there was a plan to place a monitoring and evaluation specialist in each regional office to support field offices in that region. However, whilst the field office network in Africa was partially reformed, UNESCO’s budget was inadequate (following the financial crisis) and key posts such as these were never created. Thus, to this day UNESCO has no full-time staff outside of Paris to support decentralized evaluations.

50. Given its existing policy and strategy, the Evaluation Office is stretched. The self-assessment notes its staffing complement has not enabled it to adequately support key areas of its operations. The gaps it identifies are:

- the decentralized evaluation function for which support remains ad hoc
- strengthening communication to support the Evaluation Office in developing targeted knowledge products and outreach

51. The Panel independently concluded that additional staffing resources are needed to meet both these needs but, as spelled out later in this report, also identifies the need for an investment in better knowledge management – a resource to help ensure that knowledge generated by evaluations is actioned. Improving knowledge management and communications could be combined into one post (see paragraphs 74-76 on communication).

52. Depending on how the Evaluation Office chooses to address the need to improve the quality of decentralized evaluations function, there could be the need for a second additional post:

**The Panel recommends that Evaluation Office’s professional staff numbers be increased by at least one post to improve communication and knowledge management; with a potential second post, dependent on how the Evaluation Office chooses to enhance the quality of the decentralized evaluation function.**

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<sup>14</sup> ‘Management Response to MOPAN Assessment of UNESCO (Letter from Director-General to Delegate of Norway and Head of MOPAN Secretariat)’ (UNESCO, 2 July 2019), 15.

## EVALUATION PLANNING

### ACHIEVING MORE STRATEGIC COVERAGE OF CORPORATE EVALUATIONS

53. UNESCO's Evaluation Policy sets out the principles determining the coverage of evaluations. It aims to provide full evaluation coverage of each 'expected result area' of its Programme and Budget covering 2018-21 (the 39 C/5) over the course of the four-year programme cycle. The four-yearly Strategic Results Report is UNESCO's primary method of reporting progress on its strategic goals to its stakeholders, particularly the Executive Board. There was an absence of recent evaluations in two of the five major programme areas for UNESCO's first Strategic Results Report in 2016. The next Strategic Results Report will be produced in early 2020. The IOS's annual report on 2018 notes that the Evaluation Office has achieved broader coverage against expected results of the Programme and Budget 2018-21 39 C/5: it is between 75% and 90% for all sectors apart from Communication and Information, which stands at 50%.<sup>15</sup>

54. At the start of each year the Director of IOS and the head of the Evaluation Office meet Sector Assistant Director Generals to identify evaluation subjects and agree a 'rolling plan'. The Evaluation Office also responds to special requests from members of the Executive Board. However, in its self-assessment, the Evaluation Office notes that in practice the approach taken has meant that the resultant annual evaluation plan is not optimal. It notes that it would like to be able to take a more strategic approach to planning corporate evaluations and that its resources are predominantly targeted at covering sectoral expected results – leaving insufficient space to investigate cross-cutting and strategic organisational issues. It was also noted that prior to these meetings, sector leads rarely liaise with their field networks to ensure they incorporated a broader field-based perspective.

55. The Panel also identified this limitation and considers the Evaluation Office can take a more strategic approach to identifying corporate evaluations. There is a need to position evaluation so that it can play its full role on performance and results: and this should include commissioning major corporate evaluations on topics of strategic relevance. There is a need to make planning of evaluations more systematic. **The Panel recommends that IOS and the Evaluation Office strengthens the way it identifies corporate evaluation topics to ensure they address UNESCO's strategic organisational needs.**

56. The Panel's interlocutors, including senior management, raised several evaluation topics which the Evaluation Office may want to consider as it draws up its 2020 evaluation plan. Several of these topics would help inform the content and structures underpinning next Medium-Term Strategy. **They include:**

- an evaluation of the systems and structures underpinning UNESCO's operational model including its strategic planning processes and its results-based management systems
- an evaluation of the Strategic Transformation reform process
- a formative evaluation of the field network to inform ongoing reform discussions within the Strategic Transformation process (interviewees noted that the Africa network could be examined again, and the Asia and Latin America networks could be evaluated)

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<sup>15</sup> 'Internal Oversight Service Annual Report 2018' (UNESCO, 2019), 9. At the time of the review evaluations relating to the Communication and Information Sector were ongoing so coverage in this Sector will be higher in due course.

- An organisation-wide evaluation of UNESCO's promotion of human rights
- An evaluation of the cooperation between the UNESCO Secretariat and the 'National Commission' network - it was last evaluated in 2011.

57. Finally, in terms of coverage, the 2018 MOPAN report recommended that the Evaluation Office provides a stronger body of evaluative evidence on UNESCO's normative engagement. UNESCO's Management Response states that it will build on experience of managing evaluations of six of UNESCO's Cultural Conventions and the Convention on Doping in Sport, but does not go further than this.<sup>16</sup> UNESCO supports norms and standards outside the Conventions it facilitates: there is room for UNESCO to consider how to address these too as it considers the MOPAN recommendation.

## EVALUATION QUALITY AND CREDIBILITY

58. UNESCO's corporate evaluations currently meet the quality criteria stipulated in the UNEG Norms and Standards. The Evaluation Office commissions annual synthetic reviews of all evaluations and these analyses provide UNESCO with assessments of evaluation quality: the Evaluation Office has demonstrated that it is implementing the synthetic review recommendations to progressively strengthen the systems underpinning the quality of evaluation products. Thus, the Panel does not make any further recommendations in this regard. The quality of decentralized evaluations is discussed separately.

59. As noted in the introduction, the Peer Review did not itself conduct a quality assessment of completed corporate and decentralized evaluations reports. Since 2017 all corporate evaluation reports have been subject to an external quality assurance review against UNEG norms and standards, as part of the Evaluation Office's quality assurance mechanism; and all decentralized evaluations have been subject to a meta-analysis of their compliance with these standards. The Panel used as evidence the meta-analyses that are based on the quality assurance reports. The Panel reviewed a sample of assurance reviews of corporate evaluations against the original evaluations and considered the review process constitutes a robust review process and standard.

60. With respect to corporate evaluations, mechanisms are in place to ensure the effectiveness of the evaluation process and the quality of evaluation deliverables. The entire evaluation process is managed by a member of the Evaluation Office staff and an Evaluation Reference Group is normally established. Expert Groups, with external specialists, are also sometimes established for evaluations that address technically specialist areas. The Evaluation Office is responsible for drawing up ToR. This is done in consultation with the sector and the Reference Group. Consultants are then recruited by the Evaluation Office in line with UNESCO's procurement guidelines and the ensuing process continues to be managed by the Evaluation Office. Evaluation Office staff also sometimes either lead or participate in evaluations.

61. As mentioned, all corporate evaluation reports are subject to an external peer review against UNEG quality criteria: they are reviewed and quality assured by an independent evaluator based on the UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports. Where they have the capacity, members of the Evaluation Office team will peer review ToR, inception reports and draft final reports: however, there is no

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<sup>16</sup> 'Management Response to MOPAN Assessment of UNESCO (Letter from Director-General to Delegate of Norway and Head of MOPAN Secretariat)', 4.

systematic internal peer review system and such an arrangement would be feasible only when the team is at its full staff complement. As indicated, for a further form of quality assurance, the Evaluation Office commissions meta-analyses of corporate evaluations (and decentralised evaluations).

62. Several UNESCO staff members who had served on reference groups were interviewed and they confirmed that they had been involved in reviewing ToR, reading draft evaluation reports, and reviewing recommendations. All the interviewed UNESCO staff whose operations were evaluated considered that the evaluations were of a good quality – even when they did not agree with all the recommendations.

63. There is evidence that the Evaluation Office has acted on quality enhancement recommendations made in successive synthetic reviews, but some issues remain. For example, in response to earlier recommendations it has issued consultants with UNEG standards guidance material, provided a standardised evaluation report template, and made more explicit its requirements that all evaluations address UNESCO's global priorities of Gender Equality and Africa. The 2019 draft synthetic report notes that all eight corporate evaluation reports fully meet minimum quality requirements.<sup>17</sup> However, the report notes that the Evaluation Office could do more to ensure stronger mainstreaming of gender considerations in evaluation practice; and more systematic analysis of the contributions of the evaluated project to the Sustainable Development Goals. It also notes that evaluation reports could be made more concise, that executive summaries could be stronger, and that recommendations could be better targeted to those responsible for implementation.<sup>18</sup> The 2018 report on evaluations commissioned in 2017 also found that they 'tend to be too descriptive and too long.'<sup>19</sup> The synthetic review noted that evaluations 'need to focus more on the usage of evaluation outcomes by the evaluation's primary user'...and need to be 'more analytical to foster understanding and learning.'

## FOLLOW UP AND USE OF CORPORATE EVALUATIONS

64. The Evaluation Office has established systems for following up on the implementation of corporate evaluations and these broadly work. The Panel considered that additional attention to, and resources for, this could ensure the evaluation system contributes more to UNESCO's effectiveness.

### EVALUATION FOLLOW UP

65. UNESCO's Evaluation Policy provides a robust mandate for the follow up of recommendations in corporate evaluations. The policy states that there is a general principle to provide a management response to each evaluation. This requirement is mirrored in UNESCO's Administrative Manual. The policy states the management response should be submitted no later than a month after the completion of the evaluation and should include an action plan setting out what will be done in response to significant recommendations. Entities that 'own' an evaluation produce the action plans that set out how management intends to address accepted recommendations. Action plans are

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<sup>17</sup> 'Synthetic Review 2019' (IOS Evaluation Office, September 2019), 48.

<sup>18</sup> 'Synthetic Review of Evaluations in the UNESCO System IOS/EVS/PI/148 REV.2' (IOS Evaluation Office, May 2016), 48.

<sup>19</sup> '2017 Synthesis Report IOS/EVS/PI 168' (IOS Evaluation Office, January 2018).



presented on a template that contains the accepted recommendation, the planned actions to implement the recommendations, who has responsibility for the action and the expected date of completion.

66. The Evaluation Office tracks the follow up of corporate evaluation recommendations, and reports on the status of implementation to the Executive Board and to the Oversight Advisory Committee. The Evaluation Office asks evaluation owners to update the status of action plan implementation twice a year. Interviews confirmed that in most cases action plans, and implementing the embedded commitments, is taken seriously by sector Executive Offices. Some interviewees said they found this form of monitoring effective as it helped to ensure that management acted on issues such as resourcing. However, some interviewees considered that this form of tracking led to bureaucratic processes and not meaningful action. The IOS Annual Report gives a numerical report on the number of outstanding recommendations and is a public document. The recently established Administration and Management Sector has begun to collate outstanding action is now responsible for holding UNESCO units to account for delivering on outstanding action plans. This may lead to greater pressure to implement action plan commitments.

## EVALUATION USE

67. UNESCO's Evaluation Policy is clear that a primary purpose of evaluation is to inform whether programmes should be continued, reoriented or ended. UNESCO's Administrative Manual states there is a need to demonstrate how lessons have been considered. New programme proposals should draw on 'the findings of evaluations and regular monitoring' and that 'each Major Programme should incorporate as appropriate...monitoring and evaluation'.<sup>20</sup> There is evidence that evaluations inform sector strategies, the design of new interventions, and new phases of existing interventions. Several UNESCO sector staff were able to point to ways a corporate evaluation had informed a new strategy or intervention – noting that they had been timed to help a new phase of a programme. As could be expected, interviewees found mid-term evaluations most useful, as these allowed them to adapt and improve future iterations of the programme.

68. UNESCO's policies also mandate the use of evaluative knowledge in future programming, but the Panel considered there is a gap between its policy and current practice. The policy aims for the Evaluation Office to hold annual consultations with entities to discuss evaluation follow-up as well as forward planning. These consultations are to be used by the Evaluation Office to 'learn how evaluations are being used to improve policy, programme design and implementation'.<sup>21</sup> The Panel considers that the Evaluation Office could strengthen how it monitors and records decision-making that results from an evaluation – systematically bringing together what has changed as a result of evaluations. There is a need for these findings to be fed into UNESCO's planning processes in a more systematic way: they need to be conveyed to the Bureau of Strategic Planning in a way that ensures recommendations inform strategic plans. The Panel appreciates that with its current staffing profile the Evaluation Office would struggle to focus attention on improving knowledge management aimed at strengthening the implementation of recommendations. Nevertheless, we consider it a priority. **The Panel recommends**

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<sup>20</sup> 'Administrative Manual' (UNESCO, June 2017), secs 4.2 a) and b).

<sup>21</sup> 'UNESCO Evaluation Policy' (UNESCO, 2015), para. 40.

**that the Evaluation Office focus attention on strengthening the extent to which it ensures evaluation informs UNESCO's planning.**

69. As part of its work to embed a stronger results orientation, there is a requirement for staff to use lessons from evaluations in all new programming. UNESCO's Country Strategy guidance requires an explanation of how a new programme will be monitored and evaluated and its Project Document Template requires responsible officers to 'build on previous achievements and lessons learnt' – drawing on evaluations or audits. The template requires officers to set out an evaluation plan from the outset and to budget for it. More broadly, there is a requirement for officers to indicate challenges, corrective actions and lessons learned within UNESCO's 'System of Information on Strategies, Tasks and the Evaluation of Results' (SISTER) programming tool. The intention is that these lessons inform the planning of new interventions.

70. The IOS annual report on 2018 gives several examples of evaluations that had helped to inform the strategic direction of UNESCO's programmes. For example, a 2016 evaluation of UNESCO's Role in Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises helped frame UNESCO's first Institutional Framework on Crisis Preparedness and Response, published in 2018. The annual report also states that a 2017 Education Sector evaluation on girls' and women's education generated recommendations and a theory of change that was used as the foundation of a new strategy.<sup>22</sup>

#### *USE OF EVALUATION RESULTS FOR STRATEGIC DECISION MAKING*

71. As indicated above, the Strategic Results Report is intended to provide an assessment of programme performance. The report aims to inform strategic decision-making for the subsequent Programme and Budget, and corporate evaluations are one of the most important sources of evidence. In the 2016 Strategic Results Report all the Major Programmes refer to lessons from previous evaluations. Evaluation reports were cited at least 25 times, according to IOS's count.

72. In its annual report the Internal Oversight Service presents the Executive Board with comprehensive syntheses of evaluation results, analysing the implications for UNESCO's achievement of results. These also contain recommendations for the Executive Board to consider. The Panel heard from members of the Executive Board that the Board values and reflects on the findings and recommendations of corporate evaluations and more generally has a high degree of confidence in IOS and the Evaluation Office, and the credibility of its products. There is less evidence that the Executive Board acts on evaluation recommendations – largely due to decision-making processes and the varied interests of Member States within the Executive Board. Though the Panel cannot confirm this, the Board has reportedly not yet used its authority to end a programme in line with an evaluation recommendation.

73. The Internal Oversight Service has recently changed the way it presents individual evaluations to the Executive Board to try to ensure it achieves more impact. Formerly it presented evaluations collectively. This was in the context of discussions on the IOS Annual Report during the Executive Board spring session and of the synthetic review of evaluations at the autumn session. Following an Executive Board decision, the Board will now discuss individual evaluations when it discusses the relevant sector programme. As this change is recent the Panel is unable to judge whether it is changing the Board's use of evaluations.

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<sup>22</sup> 'Internal Oversight Service Annual Report 2018', 11.

## COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION STRATEGY

74. UNESCO's Evaluation Policy is for all evaluation reports to be disseminated to implementation partners, Member States (the Executive Board and General Council), UNESCO entities, the general public, and donors. Evaluations are also posted on the UNEG evaluation report portal for UN colleagues, and the general public can access the reports via the Evaluation Office website. A complete repository of corporate evaluations, including their recommendations, is publicly available on the UNESCO's website.

75. UNESCO has various mechanisms for distilling and disseminating lessons learned. The Evaluation Office also uses key insights and lessons learned from its annual 'synthetic evaluations' to distil. It has also produced an online newsletter containing an overview of key evaluations, short summaries of key findings and lessons learned as well as other topics in evaluation or evaluation issues – called 'Evaluation Insights'.

76. UNESCO has improved how it communicates and disseminates lessons from its corporate evaluations over the last few years. There is still room to improve how it presents evaluation products – and to better tailor its presentation to Senior management, Executive Board and other Member States, and the general public. The Evaluation Office's self-assessment notes this need itself, and successive synthetic reviews have noted the need for more concise and clearer presentation. **The Panel concurs and recommends that the Evaluation Office commits additional human resources to strengthen its communication of evaluation findings.**

## THE DECENTRALIZED EVALUATION SYSTEM

77. This section brings together findings about the decentralized evaluation system. It sets out UNESCO's policy and practice regarding decentralized evaluations. It notes that they are qualitatively weaker than corporate evaluations, and notes efforts to strengthen them. The Peer Review Panel consider there are several ways in which the Evaluation Office can further strengthen decentralized evaluations but that this will require additional resources.

### EVALUATION POLICY AND PRACTICE

78. In contrast to corporate evaluations, decentralized evaluations are managed by UNESCO entities with programmatic responsibilities. Evaluations are managed by programme sector units in headquarters or in field units. UNESCO's policy is clear that all extrabudgetary projects are subject to a form of evaluation; and spells out the form an evaluation should take. Self-evaluation is required for projects with budgets under USD 500,000; self-evaluation with external validation for projects with budgets ranging from USD 500,000 to USD 1.5 million; and external evaluation is required for all projects with budgets of USD 1.5 million and higher.

79. The coverage of decentralised evaluations has been inconsistent in recent years but is improving. The Oversight Advisory Committee expressed concern regarding coverage, noting in its April 2017

report that ‘implementation has been quite weak; many programmes have not yet complied’.<sup>23</sup> Its report on 2018 noted again that the target was not yet reached for decentralized evaluations but made no specific recommendations.<sup>24</sup> IOS’s report on 2018 also noted that decentralized evaluations coverage by sector had been uneven.

80. As discussed above, a similar ‘3%’ funding principle applies to the financing of decentralized evaluations as that for Regular Programme resources, with, in principle at least, an important difference: one-third of the nominal allocation for decentralized evaluations is intended to contribute to broader evaluation work. The Evaluation Policy states that:

*“The target for funding evaluation activities related to extrabudgetary projects is set at 3% of project budgets. Two-thirds of this allocation is to be used for decentralized evaluations, project evaluation capacity-building, monitoring and evaluation, national evaluation capacity building, while one-third is to provide funding towards cross-cutting corporate evaluations, dissemination of lessons learned and synthesis work.”<sup>25</sup>*

81. The Evaluation Office has not put in place a mechanism to draw down the allocated 1% towards the funding of cross-cutting work, so none has been accessed. The Evaluation Office notes it would need to develop a mechanism to draw this down – and, where funding has been earmarked by a specific donor, with the donors’ approval. As set out in the section on financial independence, the Panel recommends that the Evaluation Office develops a mechanism to access this 1%. At the very least, these funds would help the Evaluation Office strengthen the quality of decentralized evaluations and the capability of the system.

82. Partly reflecting the multiplicity of funding sources, the Evaluation Office does not yet have an accurate way of assessing how much of the ‘remaining’ 2% is committed to the activities identified in its policy. It can, however, identify accurately how much is spent specifically on external evaluations. The Evaluation Office noted that it is seeking to improve its monitoring of the investment in evaluation of extra-budgetary projects from all sources of funds. But it is constrained by limitations in UNESCO’s existing current programming management tool - SISTER. This platform was supposed to be upgraded in a way that allowed an evaluation ‘marker’ to be entered, but implementation has been paused and it is not clear when it will be possible to systematically track spending.

83. The Evaluation Office cannot actively plan decentralized evaluations as it does not try to control which are done and their timing. Until a few years ago it was unsighted on what evaluations would take place when. However, it is now able to list planned and completed evaluations and these are presented as an annual plan of decentralized evaluations. The Evaluation Office uses this list to help it manage its staff time to backstop upcoming evaluations. In its self-assessment the Evaluation Office reports that it is now more systematically contacted during the planning phase of projects to advise on how much money entities should budget for evaluations. Interviews confirmed that staff responsible for

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<sup>23</sup> ‘Summary Report of the Oversight Advisory Committee 201 EX/22.INF’, 12 April 2017, para. 16.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Internal Oversight Service Annual Report 2018’, para. 25.

<sup>25</sup> ‘UNESCO Evaluation Policy’, para. 31.

decentralized evaluations do consult the Evaluation Office on how much of a donor funded project they should dedicate to evaluation – particularly with larger projects.

84. The Evaluation Office has the authority to elevate a decentralized evaluation to a corporate evaluation if the subject is of strategic importance. It has done this on a case by case basis, for example, with high-value programme or strategic projects.<sup>26</sup> The Evaluation Office has other ways of seeking to enhance standards of decentralized evaluations: it ensures its staff are members of Reference Groups on large or strategically significant decentralized evaluations.

#### *IMPARTIALITY, USE AND DISSEMINATION OF DECENTRALISED EVALUATIONS*

85. Impartiality is not guaranteed in decentralised evaluations. The officer in charge of the programme can choose when an evaluation is undertaken and selects the consultants. The Evaluation Office, on request, will supply a list of potential consultants, but currently consultants do not have to be selected from this list. There are no controls either on the quality of consultants or in their having some sense of loyalty to the programme officer in charge.

86. The Evaluation Office's synthetic reviews and its self-assessment identify decentralized evaluations as a weaker and lower quality than corporate evaluations. The MOPAN assessment also noted the 'coverage and quality of decentralised evaluations' as one of seven areas for improvement for UNESCO.<sup>27</sup> The 2019 Synthetic Review noted some of the reasons for the disparity in quality as stemming from the absence of quality assurance in the process or prior to finalisation of reports. In the Management Response to the MOPAN report, the Evaluation Office committed to strengthening the quality of evaluation terms of reference, providing evaluators with a roster of quality evaluators, and establishing a mandatory quality assessment process for all reports.<sup>28</sup> When these measures are implemented, this should help improve quality as well as address impartiality issues.

87. Decentralized evaluations are not part of the Evaluation Office's recommendation follow-up system; there is very little, if any, explicit follow-up to decentralized evaluations. There is no obligation to write a management response or action plan following a decentralized evaluation. Those interviewees who had been involved in decentralized evaluations confirmed there is a lack of interest in follow up and that most evaluations are done to meet accountability requirements – learning was rarely mentioned as an incentive. Given that many decentralized evaluations are of one-off donor supported projects this is not very surprising. The 2019 Synthetic Review also considers there is a need to encourage a learning mindset among those responsible for decentralized evaluations.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Recent examples are the 8.8 million Euro, EU-funded Evaluation of the Networks of Mediterranean Youth (NET-MED Youth) Project (2014-2018) and the evaluation of UNESCO's Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE).

<sup>27</sup> 'UNESCO 2017-18 MOPAN Performance Assessment', 52.

<sup>28</sup> 'Management Response to MOPAN Assessment of UNESCO (Letter from Director-General to Delegate of Norway and Head of MOPAN Secretariat)', 15–16.

<sup>29</sup> 'Synthetic Review 2019', para. 82.

88. Decentralised evaluation reports are uploaded on the intranet for internal staff but are not publicly available. It is not the Evaluation Office's policy to make decentralized evaluations publicly available, though there is inconsistency in their availability. Some sectors and field offices do put decentralized evaluations online and some commissioning donors also make them publicly available. There is an inconsistency in the Evaluation Office's policy toward decentralized evaluations as the Evaluation Policy requires those conducting decentralized evaluations to develop a communication/dissemination strategy but this does not include a requirement to share them on a public website.<sup>30</sup> Some agencies do make decentralized evaluations publicly available accompanied by a disclaimer concerning the evaluation standards. UNESCO may want to consider this when revising its Evaluation Policy.

89. In its self-assessment, the Evaluation Office also notes that it has not leveraged the decentralized evaluation system in a way that enables UNESCO to conduct more joint evaluations on relevant system-wide issues such as the Sustainable Development Goals.

#### MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN DECENTRALIZED EVALUATIONS AND CAPABILITY

90. The IOS Evaluation Office is aware of these shortcomings and efforts are being taken to further strengthen the decentralized evaluation function.

91. In 2016 the Evaluation Office established an Evaluation Focal Point network, a 'community of practice', to help to improve decentralized evaluation capacity and the quality of decentralized evaluation. The network comprises around 75 staff based in headquarters sectors and in field offices. The initial cohort of Focal Points received training via a three-day regional training course in 2017, which several interviewees said they found helpful. Focal Points are a point of contact within their units for both the Evaluation Office and for staff conducting evaluations. They collate information for the Evaluation Office and disseminate evaluation information to their units. They are also expected to work alongside staff in their units who are conducting evaluations to strengthen the quality: for example, reviewing evaluation ToR, inception reports and draft reports.

92. The Evaluation Office provides ongoing support and engagement to the network but to date its ability to invest in the network has been limited by the capacity of its existing staff. The Evaluation Office now also provides online training material – available to all staff in UNESCO but targeted at Focal Points. A new range of training material was launched at the time of the Peer Review.

93. The Panel was informed that the Evaluation Office has gradually systematised its relations with the network of Focal Points and continues to take steps to strengthen the network and its engagement with it. Evaluation Office staff have been designated as points of contact for Focal Points on a geographic and sectoral basis, to ensure Focal Points know who they can seek advice from. Interviews with several members of the Evaluation Focal Point Network indicated that they felt they received helpful backstopping support from Evaluation Office. Focal Points said they mostly revert to the Evaluation Office for advice on budgeting for evaluations and for comments on evaluation ToR and found responses helpful.

94. The Evaluation Office is also taking steps to better formalize the role of a Focal Point. It has developed terms of reference for Focal Points, though at the time of the review these had not yet been shared. The Director of IOS will send a letter to each unit Director with the terms of reference of the

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<sup>30</sup> 'UNESCO Evaluation Policy', 24.

Focal Point to increase the profile of the role, and in the expectation that line managers will make space for this role. If Focal Points' roles and responsibilities are systematically formalised in their performance objectives (on My Talent), this would help incentive staff to serve as effective Focal Points.

95. As initial members of the network have moved on and new members have joined, there may be a need to ensure they receive the same intensive training received by the first cadre in 2017 – as self-administered online training is unlikely to provide the same depth of learning initially. The Evaluation Office estimated that approximately 20% of Focal Points have changed since the Network was established.

96. The Panel consider that the Evaluation Focal Point Network is an extremely positive initiative and it is helping to strengthen capacity to undertake decentralized evaluations. It is also improving the Evaluation Office's ability to map decentralized evaluations. However, it is important not to expect more of the Network than it can deliver in practice. The Panel considers that it is unlikely to be able to provide the input needed to increase the quality of decentralized evaluations to the degree needed. Members of the Evaluation Focal Point Network can serve as evaluation managers but will mostly lack the technical capacity to play a deeper role.

97. The capacity of Focal Points is also stretched. The Evaluation Focal Point Network is one of several communities of practice: there are networks for Gender, Counter Violent Extremism and Results Based Management. And some members of the evaluation network also represent these other networks. It also does not seem that when people become members of the Evaluation Focal Point Network other job responsibilities are taken from them: several members interviewed felt that this the role was added to an already stretching set of responsibilities.

98. The Evaluation Office is finalising an Evaluation Manual/Handbook primarily to provide guidance to programme staff conducting a self-evaluation and/or managing a decentralized evaluation. It brings together all information and materials on evaluation in one document. This was in draft form at the time of the Peer Review. It is a comprehensive manual and benefitted from review by the Oversight Advisory Committee.

99. The Evaluation Office needs to focus now on improving the quality of decentralized evaluations for several reasons. Strong decentralized evaluations are needed to serve as credible inputs to organisation-wide evaluations of results achieved; they are needed to provide greater coverage of UNESCO's work beyond corporate evaluations; and they are needed to help build a culture of results-based management at all levels. The challenge is significant because the number and importance of decentralized evaluations in UNESCO is likely to increase in the coming years. Decentralized evaluations will likely represent an ever-increasing proportion of UNESCO's results. If current funding trends continue – and the volume of extrabudgetary funds for earmarked projects continues to increase relative to regular budget - the number of decentralized evaluations will also inevitably increase. To reduce transaction costs of managing multiple small projects, UNESCO is pursuing a corporate policy of consolidating projects into larger programmes. As sectors progressively phase out small projects, it is anticipated that a higher number will reach the financial threshold requiring external evaluations – leading to even more decentralized evaluations.

100. As mentioned above, the Director-General's July 2019 Management Response to the MOPAN assessment committed the Evaluation Office to various measures to improve the quality of decentralized evaluations. In due course, the Evaluation Office should develop a roster of evaluation experts for decentralized evaluations and establish a mandatory quality assessment process for all

reports.<sup>31</sup> Once implemented they should help lift the quality of evaluations. In addition to these, and the recommendation that the Evaluation Office applies its policy of drawing down 1% of the 3%, the panel offers two additional recommendations:

101. **The Panel recommends the Evaluation Office takes additional steps to strengthen the quality of the decentralized evaluation system and decentralized evaluations.** There are several non-exclusive options the Evaluation Office can consider. They include the following:

- Appoint dedicated additional capacity within the Evaluation Office to provide systematic, consistent quality assurance and technical backstopping to decentralized evaluations;
- Establish regional Monitoring and Evaluation officers who will provide this support function to all offices within a region. This could be considered as an option whilst the Strategic Transformation review is considering the shape of UNESCO's field network. The Panel notes that this option is in line with the shape of UNESCO's regional presence that UNESCO envisaged before the financial crisis in 2011/2012.
- Outsource the role of quality assurance to a private provider – establishing a contract with a provider who will provide backstopping through the life of decentralized evaluations – from the Terms of Reference to quality assurance of the evaluation drafts.
- Implement other recommendations made in successive synthetic reviews that will contribute to strengthening the Network and the quality of decentralized evaluations.

102. **Secondly, the Panel also recommends that the Evaluation Office establish a more detailed policy framework for decentralised evaluation, embedded it within the revised Evaluation Policy.** This would need to elaborate on the links between decentralized evaluations and UNESCO's results framework, UN reform and system-wide evaluations.

## PARTNERSHIPS AND EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

103. UNESCO currently plays a leadership role in helping to strengthen evaluation in the UN system. UNESCO's Evaluation Policy is explicit that it will work in partnership with UNEG and its task forces and will, where possible, join in system-wide evaluations, and it is implementing this commitment within its resource constraints.<sup>32</sup>

104. As the current UNEG chair, the Director of IOS plays a prominent role in shaping and delivering UNEG's policy. In 2018 UNESCO temporarily hosted the secretariat of UNEG and Evaluation Office staff have been engaged in key initiatives. These include serving as chair to the working group on the revision of the UNEG Norms and Standards and the Task Force for the Evaluation of Normative Work. IOS's Evaluation Office is also involved in developing the UNEG Strategy for 2020-2025. UNESCO is also leading a process to improve system-wide evaluation harmonization and collaboration – including an

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<sup>31</sup> 'Management Response to MOPAN Assessment of UNESCO (Letter from Director-General to Delegate of Norway and Head of MOPAN Secretariat)', 15–16.

<sup>32</sup> 'Internal Oversight Service Annual Report 2018'.



initiative to establish an Independent System-Wide Evaluation (ISWE) function. The Evaluation Office led an evaluation coalition comprising the World Bank, UNICEF and NORAD evaluation units to synthesize evaluation data to inform educational management, policy and planning in support of SDG-4. Other examples of UNESCO's system-wide engagement are its work on gender. The Evaluation Office reports to the UN-SWAP on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on how UNESCO evaluation reports comply with the Evaluation Performance Indicator.

105. Capacity constraints have not permitted the Evaluation Office's engagement in joint evaluations to date. Evaluation Office's self-assessment notes that some joint evaluations are taking place at decentralized level, but they are not being captured. Related to this, the Evaluation Policy identifies the need to join evaluations of UN country teams in the field – but again it has been unable to engage yet. The Panel notes that with reform of the UN system and more joint delivery at country level, the ability to participate in joint country level evaluation will become ever more important. IOS will need to consider how it could resource this and adapt to these changes in the UN.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

106. The Terms of Reference posed the following overarching question for the Peer Review to answer: ‘Are UNESCO’s evaluation policy, function and its products: independent; credible; and useful for learning and accountability purposes?’ The Panel’s overall answer is that the IOS’s Evaluation Office has made very significant progress toward ensuring its products are independent, credible and useful and that they are increasingly useful for both learning and accountability purposes. The Panel endorses the MOPAN assessment’s conclusion that UNESCO has ‘A high-quality central evaluation service’ and that ‘UNESCO’s Evaluation Office has established consistently high standards across centrally managed evaluations, such that UNESCO is well-positioned as a learning organisation’.<sup>33</sup> UNESCO’s corporate evaluation function is mature and well-grounded: IOS’s Evaluation Office fulfils most of the aspirations it set itself in its policy. Its evaluations and its reflections on UNESCO’s performance are respected by staff across UNESCO and by the Executive Board alike.

107. Whilst the Evaluation Office’s corporate evaluation function is mature, there is some way to go before the decentralized evaluation function can achieve the same status. It is built on shaky foundations, and the policy framework underpinning decentralized evaluations is still being formed. The Panel considers this is where the Evaluation Office needs to focus most attention, a conclusion also reached in the MOPAN review.

108. The Panel notes that across UNESCO and its stakeholders there is broad appreciation for the way the Director of IOS has strengthened the Evaluation Office’s standing over the last 5 years; and praise for the professionalism of the Evaluation Office. UNESCO’s evaluation function contributes actively to UNEG including through the Director of IOS serving as UNEG Chair.

109. The main body of this report has identified the strengths and some of the challenges facing UNESCO’s evaluation function. This section draws together these findings and recommendations against the key UNEG standards of independence, credibility and utility. Some of the recommendations are relatively specific in terms of the measures the Panel recommends; others are phrased more generally, leaving it to UNESCO to reflect and decide on the best way forward. The text in parentheses at the end of each recommendation identifies to whom it is targeted.

### INDEPENDENCE

110. The evaluation function has many of the attributes needed to ensure its independence. The Director of IOS can select evaluation topics and issue reports without interference; the evaluation function has credibility and direct access to the Executive Board and the Director-General. However, the functional independence of UNESCO’s evaluation function would be enhanced by changes in how it is resourced and how its staff are appointed.

### *BUDGETARY INDEPENDENCE*

111. The nominal allocation of 3% of programme budget – both regular and extrabudgetary funds – is positive. The 3% allocation from regular budget in the current biennium has allowed the Evaluation Office to undertake corporate evaluations without significant budget constraints. The measure does

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<sup>33</sup> ‘UNESCO 2017-18 MOPAN Performance Assessment’, 51.

increase but does not fully satisfy the need for UNESCO's evaluation function to have budgetary independence. Nor does it fully ensure that UNESCO can achieve the coverage it needs. The Panel considers that additional steps are needed to ensure that the Evaluation Office has the budget to achieve robust coverage across sectors and to cover organisation-wide issues.

**Recommendation 1: The Panel recommends UNESCO consider a mechanism for pooling the 3% of the activity and non-staff Regular Budget allocation the Sectors earmark so that it is a fungible resource available to the Evaluation Office. (For: Senior Management, Director of IOS, Evaluation Office)**

112. This would allow the Evaluation Office to finance strategic evaluations that span the sectors or address organisational topics. The change would mean that all these funds are under the budget of IOS, and that the funds will be fungible between the sectors and can be used for corporate evaluations.

113. UNESCO's approved Evaluation Policy allows the Evaluation Office to draw down one-third of the 3% allocated for decentralized evaluation 'to provide funding towards cross-cutting corporate evaluations, dissemination of lessons learned and synthesis work'. This policy is not being implemented.

**Recommendation 2: The Panel recommends that the Evaluation Office implement its policy and develop a mechanism to draw down this 1% from extrabudgetary funds. (For: Senior Management, Director of IOS, Evaluation Office)**

114. These funds would also help the Evaluation Office to finance initiatives to strengthen the quality of the decentralized evaluation system, as well as to increase the work relating to cross-cutting corporate evaluations, dissemination of lessons learned and synthesis work, as originally envisaged.

#### *APPOINTMENT OF EVALUATION OFFICE STAFF*

115. The independence of the evaluation function is reduced by the fact that the head of IOS is unable to appoint Evaluation Office staff members, and the authority to appoint rests with the position of the Director-General. The involvement of the Oversight Advisory Committee in the selection process for senior positions will also help to safeguard independence and professional standards of the evaluation function.

**Recommendation 3: To safeguard the independence and professionalism of the Evaluation Office, the Panel recommends that all its staff positions, including the head, are selected and appointed by the Director of IOS rather than the Director General; and that a member of the Oversight Advisory Committee with evaluation expertise sits on the recruitment panel for the positions of Director IOS and head of Evaluation Office. (For: Executive Board, Director-General, Oversight Advisory Committee)**

#### *SAFEGUARDING THE PROFILE AND STATUS OF EVALUATION WITHIN UNESCO'S CO-LOCATED EVALUATION OFFICE*

116. The Panel recommends institutionalising practices that should help safeguard the future status of the Evaluation Office both within IOS and within UNESCO. UNESCO's evaluation function has benefitted significantly from the fact that the current Director of IOS is an evaluation professional. Future post-holders may not have this professional background. It is desirable for future incumbents to have a degree of professional understanding of evaluation norms and standards.

**Recommendation 4: The Panel recommends there should be an explicit requirement for future Directors of IOS to have good understanding of and familiarity with evaluation, and that this is featured**

in all future Job Descriptions for the position. (For: Executive Board, Director-General, Senior Management)

117. The Panel also considers that, as a co-located unit, the Evaluation Office should continue to build its own profile within IOS and UNESCO.

**Recommendation 5: The Panel recommends that the Director of IOS takes additional measures to increase the profile of the Evaluation Office within UNESCO and with the Executive Board, including ensuring the head of the Evaluation Office and lead evaluators progressively present evaluation findings to the Programme Commission (PX) of the Executive Board and other governance committees. (For: Director of IOS)**

## CREDIBILITY

118. As indicated above, the Panel agrees with the 2019 MOPAN assessment's conclusion on the credibility of UNESCO's corporate evaluation function. The Evaluation Office has set itself high standards and is on track to reach many of them, within its staffing and budgetary constraints. UNESCO has progressively lifted the quality of its corporate evaluations such that, reflecting the evaluation function, these have a high degree of credibility.

## STRENGTHENING DECENTRALIZED EVALUATIONS

119. The Panel considers the task of strengthening the decentralized evaluation system one of IOS's most difficult and most important challenges. Evaluation Office's synthetic reviews, its self-assessment and the 2019 MOPAN assessment identify decentralized evaluations as weaker and lower quality than corporate evaluations. The volume and significance of decentralized evaluations is only likely to increase in the coming years and they will play an increasingly important role in underpinning the credibility of UNESCO's evaluation function. The Panel notes that IOS has several ongoing initiatives to improve the decentralized evaluation system and has made several additional commitments in the July 2019 Management Response to the MOPAN report.

120. The Panel notes the contribution the Evaluation Focal Point Network is making and can potentially make. But the Panel considers that structurally the Network will be unable to lift the quality of the decentralized evaluation function, even with increased investment, to the extent necessary. IOS needs to look to other complementary solutions because more fundamental changes are needed.

**Recommendation 6: The Panel recommends the Evaluation Office takes additional steps to strengthen the quality of the decentralized evaluation system and decentralized evaluations (Director of IOS, Head of Evaluation Office).** There are several non-exclusive options the Evaluation Office can consider. These options include the following:

- **Appoint dedicated additional capacity within the Evaluation Office to provide systematic, consistent quality assurance and technical backstopping to decentralized evaluations.**
- **Establish regional Monitoring and Evaluation officers who will provide a support function to all offices within a region. This could be an option whilst the Strategic Transformation review is considering the shape of UNESCO's field network. The Panel notes that this option is in line with the shape of UNESCO's regional presence that UNESCO envisaged before the financial crisis in 2011/2012.**

- Outsource the role of quality assurance to a private provider – establishing a contract with a provider who will provide backstopping through the life of decentralized evaluations – from the ToR to quality assurance of evaluation drafts.
- Implementing the MOPAN management response commitment to establish a roster of approved evaluation consultants for decentralized evaluations, potentially introducing a higher degree of professional standards and greater independence of evaluation findings.
- Implement other recommendations made in successive synthetic reviews that will contribute to strengthening the Network and the quality of decentralized evaluations.

121. If the Evaluation Office draws down the 1% of the 3% nominally identified for decentralized evaluations, it could finance efforts to strengthen the system.

#### *UPDATING THE EVALUATION POLICY*

122. The Panel recognises that the current Evaluation Policy establishes a strong framework for UNESCO's evaluation function and it is both ambitious and strategic. There are several elements that need to be updated when it is refreshed, and the Panel have enumerated these.

**Recommendation 7: The Panel recommends that when the Evaluation Policy is updated in line with the timing of the next Medium-Term Strategy the following are addressed (Director of IOS, Head of Evaluation Office):**

- Ensure it reflects the updated 2016 UNEG norms and standards and revised DAC evaluation criteria
- Reflect the emerging UN reform context and spell out the implications for evaluation at corporate and country level of the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, including in joint and system-wide evaluations
- Reflect changes introduced by UNESCO's ongoing strategic transformation process
- Include a new more detailed policy framework for decentralized evaluation
- Include information on the professionalisation of staff
- Define in greater clarity some elements relating to the governance of the evaluation function, including:
  - Procedures for the recruitment of the Director of IOS and state the Term Limit of this post
  - Make explicit the reporting line of the head of the Evaluation Office
  - Spell out with greater clarity the division of responsibility between the head of the Evaluation Office and the Director of IOS.

#### *THE OVERSIGHT ADVISORY COMMITTEE'S ROLE IN STRENGTHENING UNESCO'S EVALUATION FUNCTION*

123. The Oversight Advisory Committee has played a strong role in the oversight and strengthening of the evaluation function. It has been able to do this largely because the Committee contains members with specialist expertise on evaluation.

**Recommendation 8: The Panel recommends steps are taken to ensure the Oversight Advisory Committee can continue to play a strong role in monitoring and strengthening UNESCO's evaluation function. (For: Executive Board, Director-General, Oversight Advisory Committee)**

Specifically:

- the requirement for a member of the Oversight Advisory Committee to have expertise in evaluation is adhered to as new members of the Committee are recruited.
- that the member with expertise in evaluation is henceforth always an official member of the recruitment panel for the following two positions: Director of IOS; and head of Evaluation Office.
- that the Oversight Advisory Committee provide the Evaluation Office with advice and guidance on identifying relevant strategic evaluations.

## UTILITY

124. The value that UNESCO's evaluation function adds is clear both in terms of helping to build a results culture and practice, and in terms of accountability. It has a track record of producing corporate evaluations that are highly relevant; and there are plentiful examples of its evaluations leading to action. The Panel has identified measures that could help improve the utility of Evaluation Office's evaluation products.

## ACHIEVING MORE STRATEGIC COVERAGE OF CORPORATE EVALUATIONS

125. The Panel considers the Evaluation Office can take a more strategic approach to identifying corporate evaluations. There is a need to position evaluation so that it can play its full role on performance and results. This should include commissioning major corporate evaluations on topics of strategic relevance. There is a need to make planning of evaluations more systematic. As indicated above, the Oversight Advisory Committee could have a role in helping to identify these in future.

**Recommendation 9: The Panel recommends that IOS and the Evaluation Office also considers strategic corporate evaluation topics in their next workplan to ensure they address UNESCO's strategic organisational needs and to inform the development of the next Medium-Term Strategy. (Director of IOS, head of Evaluation Office)**

126. Several **evaluation topics** were raised by senior management and other stakeholders, which the Evaluation Office may want to consider as it draws up its 2020 evaluation plan. These topics would help inform the content and structures underpinning next Medium-Term Strategy. They include:

- an evaluation of the systems and structures underpinning UNESCO's operational model including its strategic planning processes and its results-based management systems
- an evaluation of the Strategic Transformation reform process
- a formative evaluation of the field network to inform ongoing reform discussions within the Strategic Transformation reform process (interviewees noted that the Africa network could be examined again, and the Asia and Latin America networks could be evaluated)
- An organisation-wide evaluation of UNESCO's promotion of human rights

- An evaluation of the cooperation between the UNESCO Secretariat and the 'National Commission' network (it was last evaluated in 2011).

127. The Evaluation Office could take a more considered and structured approach to how it draws up annual evaluation plans, ensuring these better reflect organisational as well as field-based priorities.

#### *FOLLOW UP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPACT OF EVALUATIONS*

128. To 'close the circle' so that evaluations better contribute to improvements in institutional performance, the Panel consider that the Evaluation Office can put in place measures to track the impact of evaluations. This is needed to ensure evaluation leads to learning and institutional improvements. Some work is done to track impact, but it is inconsistent, and the full value of evaluation is therefore not being captured or realised, and it feeds into planning only partially.

**Recommendation 10: The Panel recommends that the Evaluation Office focus attention on strengthening the extent to which it ensures evaluation informs UNESCO's planning and influences policy and decision-making. (Director of IOS, Head of Evaluation Office).**

#### *STRENGTHENING COMMUNICATION OF EVALUATION PRODUCTS*

129. Likewise, the Panel considers that the impact of evaluation would be strengthened if key findings are better communicated. There is a need to ensure that presentation is better tailored to audiences to ensure that the Evaluation Office's products achieve maximum impact.

**Recommendation 11: The Panel recommends that the Evaluation Office commits additional human resources to strengthening the communication of its evaluation products.**

#### *ADDITIONAL EVALUATION OFFICE CAPACITY NEEDS*

130. Evaluation Office has a limited human resource base. A modest increase in its permanent staffing profile would better allow it to fulfil the challenges it will face. The Panel has a specific Recommendation in this respect:

**Recommendation 12: The Panel recommends that the Evaluation Office's professional staff numbers be increased by at least one post, which could focus on delivering improvements to communication and knowledge management; with potentially a second post focusing on strengthening the decentralized evaluations (Recommendation 6), dependent on how IOS/Evaluation Office chooses to address this challenge. (Senior Management, Director of IOS, Head of Evaluation Office).**

ENDS

## ANNEX A: LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

### **Executive Board Members**

Mr Lee Byong-hyun, Chairperson of the Executive Board

Ms Ulrika Ferenius, Deputy for Swedish Delegation

Mr Maxim Polya-Vitry, Deputy, UK Delegation

### **Oversight Advisory Committee**

Mona Bishay Oversight Advisory Committee member

Jonathan Breul Oversight Advisory Committee member

### **UNESCO Senior Management**

Xing Qu, Deputy Director General

Nick Jeffreys Assistant Director-General for Administration

Ernesto Ranto Ottone Ramirez, Assistant Director-General for Culture

Shamila Nair-Bedouelle, Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences

Mr Moez Chakchouk, Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information

Shamila Nair-Bedouelle, Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences:

Jean-Yves Le Saux, Director of Bureau of Strategic Planning

Mr Firmin E. Matoko, ADG for Priority Africa and External Relations Sector

Nagda Landra, Head of the Executive Office of PAX.

Nada Al-Nashif, Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences Sector

### **Headquarters Staff**

Ranwa Safadi, Bureau of Strategic Planning

Sabine Detzel, Education Sector

Anne Coupez, Education Sector

Justine Sass, Education Sector

Borhene Chakroun, Education Sector

Alexander Schischlik, Social and Human Sciences Sector

Marcellin Dally, Social and Human Sciences Sector

Julius Banda, Social and Human Sciences Sector

Alexandros Makarigakis, Natural Sciences Sector

Nigel Crawhall, Natural Sciences Sector

Abou Amani, Natural Sciences Sector

Dafna Feinholz, Natural Sciences Sector

Paola Leoncini-Bartoli, Culture Sector

Lynne Patchett, Culture Sector

Francois Langlois, Culture Sector

Cedric Wachholz, Communication and Information Sector

Rosa Gonzalez, Communication and Information Sector

### **Field-Based Evaluation Focal Point Network Members**

Jun Morohashi, Education Sector - Bangkok Office

Lobna Farahat, Monitoring and Project Support Officer, Iraq Office

Zakki Gunawan, NPO, Jakarta Office

Yayoi Segi-Vltchek, Education Sector, Beirut Office

### **Internal Oversight Services**

Susanne Frueh, Director of the Internal Oversight Services



**Internal Audit, Internal Oversight Services**

Carles Soriano, Head of Internal Audit  
Helen Thanassoulis, Principal Auditor  
Sameer Pise, Principal Auditor  
Tuyet-Mai Grabel, Principal Auditor  
Hir Purkait, Principal Auditor

**Evaluation Office**

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Eliane Clevy, Evaluation Officer  
Taipei Dlamini, Evaluation Officer

## ANNEX B: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

- 'Administrative Manual'. UNESCO, June 2017.
- 'Analysis of the Evaluation Function in the United Nations System, JIU/REP/2014/6'. UN Joint Inspection Unit, 2014.
- 'Annual Report of the Oversight Advisory Committee 206 EX/21.INF'. UNESCO, 8 March 2019.
- 'Synthetic Review of Evaluations 2019'. IOS Evaluation Office, September 2019.
- 'Draft UNESCO Evaluation Manual', 2019.
- Engelsman, Geert. 'Review of UNESCO's Evaluation System: Baseline for a UNEG Peer Review'. UNESCO, 2017.
- 'Information Note: Resources for Evaluation'. IOS Evaluation Office, n.d.
- 'Internal Oversight Service Annual Report 2016'. UNESCO, 2017.
- 'Internal Oversight Service Annual Report 2017'. UNESCO, 2018.
- 'Internal Oversight Service Annual Report 2018'. UNESCO, 2019.
- 'Management Response to MOPAN Assessment of UNESCO (Letter from Director-General to Delegate of Norway and Head of MOPAN Secretariat)'. UNESCO, 2 July 2019.
- 'Self-Assessment Report: UNEG Peer Review of the UNESCO Evaluation Function (Unpublished)'. IOS Evaluation Office, October 2019.
- 'Strategic Results Report (SRR), 199 EX/4, Part I (B)'. UNESCO, 2015.
- 'Summary Report of the Oversight Advisory Committee 201 EX/22.INF', 12 April 2017.
- 'Synthetic Review of Evaluations in the UNESCO System IOS/EVS/PI/148 REV.2'. IOS Evaluation Office, May 2016.
- 'Synthesis Report 2017 IOS/EVS/PI 168'. IOS Evaluation Office, January 2018.
- 'UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation'. UN Evaluation Group, 2016.
- 'UNESCO 2017-18 MOPAN Performance Assessment'. The MOPAN Secretariat, March 2019.  
<http://www.mopanonline.org/assessments/unesco2017-18/UNESCO%20Report.pdf>.
- 'UNESCO Evaluation Policy'. UNESCO, 2015.
- 'UNESCO Evaluation Strategy, 2016 – 2018, (IOS/EVS/PI/147)'. UNESCO, 2016.

## ANNEX C: TERMS OF REFERENCE

# **Terms of Reference**

## **UNEG Peer Review of the Evaluation Function of UNESCO**

### **Table of Contents**

- I. Background
- II. Purpose and Scope
- III. Approach and Methods
- IV. Peer Review Dimensions and Questions
- V. Panel Membership
- VI. Schedule
- VII. Reference Documents
- VIII. Funding
- IX. Report and Dissemination

#### Annexes

- A. Key Reference Documents
- B. Peer Review Questions Matrix
- C. Self-Assessment Matrix

## I. Background

1. The UNESCO Evaluation Policy states that the Evaluation Office was to conduct (in 2017) ‘*a comprehensive self-assessment of the policy with an external validation, the results of which will be shared with the UNESCO senior management and the Executive Board*’. Furthermore, the Policy states that ‘*a baseline peer review of the evaluation function, including the policy, should be undertaken no later than one year following adoption of the policy*’.

2. In following this, in 2017, the Evaluation Office undertook a self-assessment of the UNESCO evaluation system with the assistance of an external evaluation consultant. The assessment aimed to serve as a baseline for the future UNEG Peer Review of UNESCO’s evaluation system. The baseline assessment essentially answered three sets of questions:

- (i) To what extent are evaluations within UNESCO *used* for results-based management, evidence-based decision-making, program improvement, organizational learning, and accountability to the governing bodies?
- (ii) How strong is UNESCO’s *evaluation system* in terms of planning, funding, staff capacity, staff support, quality assurance and communications?
- (iii) To what extent are self-evaluations and impact evaluations conducted?

3. The self-assessment report<sup>1</sup> was completed in October 2017 and shared with the UNESCO Oversight Advisory Committee (OAC).

4. It is worth noting that the UNESCO Evaluation Office has also been the subject of other studies and assessments that have included relevant analyses of key aspects of the evaluation function, namely:

- In 2014 – 15, the Joint Inspection Unit undertook a system-wide analysis of the evaluation functions of 28 JIU participating organizations, consisting of funds, programmes, specialized agencies and other organizations. The JIU report had as its objectives, inter alia, “*to describe the status and analyse the degree to which the central evaluation function of organizations meets established professional standards in the components of the evaluation function, and highlight cross-cutting strengths and weaknesses in those components.*” [Source: Analysis of the Evaluation Function in the United Nations System, JIU/REP/2014/6, 2014.]
- In 2017-18, MOPAN, the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network assessed the performance of UNESCO. An important element of the assessment was an analysis of the systems in place for managing results and the use of performance information, including the effectiveness of the corporate evaluation function (see Micro Indicators under KPI 8). [[MOPAN](#) 2017 – 2018 Assessments, UNESCO, published March 2019.]

### *Rationale for the UNEG Peer Review*

5. The UNESCO Evaluation Policy covers the 2014 – 2021 period, which corresponds to UNESCO’s Medium-Term Strategy. As stipulated in the policy, a baseline review was undertaken albeit later than planned in 2017 and is to be followed by a peer review, which is standard good practice in the UN evaluation community.

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<sup>1</sup> Annex B contains the final report of the self-assessment (*Review of UNESCO’s Evaluation System*, October 2017).

6. The UNEG Peer Review is timely in that it will inform the development of the next UNESCO Evaluation Policy in addition to the Evaluation Office's evaluation strategy, its practices and guidance material.

7. The UNESCO Evaluation Office has been in discussion with the UNEG Peer Review Working Group over the past year to find a suitable time to conduct a UNEG Peer Review of its evaluation function. In consultation with the Chair of the UNEG Task Force, UNESCO was selected for a Peer Review in the second half of 2019.

## **II. Purpose and Scope**

8. The main purpose of the UNEG Peer Review is to strengthen the UNESCO evaluation function so that it can effectively contribute to organizational decision-making, learning and accountability for results and programme effectiveness.

9. The Peer Review shall provide actionable recommendations to UNESCO's Director-General, Evaluation Office and Governing Bodies aimed at improving the overall quality of the evaluation function. More specifically, the recommendations should inform, inter alia, decision-making about the role and strategic positioning of evaluation in the context of Agenda 2030, resourcing (including both human and financial capacity), evaluation planning, evaluation use, quality assurance mechanisms, and evaluation at decentralized levels.

10. In terms of its temporal scope, the Peer Review will cover the period of 2014 to the present corresponding to the period covered by the Evaluation Policy (2014 – 2021) and UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy. The Peer Review will cover the entire evaluation system comprising both corporate and decentralized functions.

11. Other elements within the scope of the Peer Review include inter alia:

- UNESCO's Evaluation Policy will be the baseline reference. It marks the time of significant changes in evaluation practice and processes (e.g. definition of the decentralized system, policy to allocate set percentage of programme resources for evaluation purposes, introduction of quality assurance of all corporate reports, etc);
- the Evaluation Strategy of the Evaluation Office;
- all completed corporate and decentralized evaluation reports since 2014;
- quality assurance reports of UNESCO corporate evaluation reports conducted by external expert;

12. In terms of scope limitations, the Peer Review will not include a meta-evaluation (quality assessment) of completed corporate and decentralized evaluations reports from the 2017 – 2019 period. Since 2017, all evaluation reports have been subject to an external quality assurance review as part of the Evaluation Office's quality assurance mechanism.

## **III. Approach and Methods**

13. As set out in the UNEG Framework for Peer Review of the Evaluation Function, the approach to the review will be guided by the overarching question: "Are UNESCO's evaluation policy, function and its products: independent; credible; and useful for learning and accountability purposes, as assessed by a panel of professional evaluation peers against the UN Norms and Standards and the evidence base."

14. An indicative set of evaluation questions are presented in Annex B. The questions have been organized to cover all of the major dimensions of the UNESCO evaluation system. The final list of questions will be developed in consultation with the Peer Review Panel.

15. The approach to the review will also be guided by three core criteria, as defined in the UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation, that need to be satisfied for evaluation functions and products to be considered of high quality: i) independence of evaluations and of the evaluation system, ii) the credibility of evaluations and iii) the utility of evaluations.

16. In terms of methods, the Peer Review will rely primarily on the following data collection tools:

- **Self-assessment:** the UNESCO Evaluation Office will conduct a self-assessment, tentatively scheduled to be completed in July 2019, using the UNEG Norms and Standards as a framework (Annex C for the self-assessment matrix). The self-assessment report will be validated by the Peer Review Panel.
- **Document review:** the document review will include, inter alia, UNESCO's Evaluation Policy and Strategy, methodological guidance material, completed corporate and decentralized evaluation reports, UNESCO results reports (Strategic Results Report and Programme Implementation Reports) and other key reference documents. An indicative list of reference documents is presented below in section VII.
- **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews with a number of key stakeholders from different internal and external stakeholder groups. The complete list of individuals to be interviewed will be developed in consultation with the Peer Review Panel. It will include, but not be limited to, UNESCO senior management and programme staff, UNESCO Evaluation Office staff, UNESCO Governing Bodies representatives, UNESCO Oversight Advisory Committee, and other external stakeholders to be identified during the review.
- **Stakeholder survey:** the Peer Review Panel will administer a survey to key users of UNESCO Evaluation Office products and services. The survey will aim to collect data from a cross section of evaluation users from over the past several years on the relevance, quality and usefulness of the Evaluation Office's work.

#### IV. Peer Review Questions

17. The Peer Review will answer the key overarching questions contained in Annex B. The questions will be further refined in consultation with the Peer Review Panel. The questions are organized around the following key dimensions / criteria:

- UNESCO evaluation function (including evaluation policy and strategy)
- Governance
- Management of the Evaluation Office
- Evaluation Planning
- Evaluation Quality
- Evaluation Resources
- Evaluation Follow Up and Use
- Decentralized evaluation system
- Partnerships

#### V. Panel Membership

18. The Peer Review Panel membership comprises:

- Dr. Elil Renganathan, Peer Review Chair, Director-General's Representative for Evaluation and Organizational Learning, World Health Organization (WHO)

- Ms. Rachel Sauvinet-Bedouin, Deputy Director, Evaluation Office, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- Mr. Paul de Nooijer, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Policy and Operations Evaluation Department

19. The Panel will be assisted by an experienced evaluation consultant who will be reporting to the Panel Chair.

## VI. Schedule

20. The Panel is expected to have an initial meeting in June to review the draft terms of reference. On 19 June, the draft ToR will be discussed by the OAC of UNESCO. The ToR should then be finalized by the end of June.
21. This peer review exercise will commence with a self-evaluation against the UNEG Norms and Standards, undertaken by the Evaluation Office in July (see attached table).
22. The data collection phase by the Panel may begin at any point in time but is expected to commence no later than September 2019 depending on the Panel's availability. The consultant may visit Paris prior to the Panel's visit.
23. An inception report is to be submitted by the consultant to the Panel at least 2 weeks prior to the Panel's visit to Paris.
24. Proposed dates for the Panel's visit to Paris are a) 16 – 20 September, b) 30 September – 4 October, or c) 7 – 11 October. The Panel will make a final decision based on their availability.
25. During the data collection phase, the UNESCO Evaluation Office will complete a comprehensive self-assessment, the results of which will be shared with the Panel. The Peer Review Panel and external consultant will review key documentation, hold consultations with various stakeholders via interviews at Paris Headquarters and skype, and administer a survey to key users of UNESCO evaluation products and services.
26. The Peer Review Panel will analyze and synthesize all of the information to produce a first draft of the report. In the final stage, the Peer Review Panel will convene for one week in Paris to hold a final set of meeting with the Evaluation Office and UNESCO senior management. The final report of the Peer Review is expected to be issued no later than end December 2019.
27. The tentative schedule is as follows:

Milestone	Date
Preparation ---Establishment of the Peer Review Panel ---Approval of the Terms of Reference ---UNESCO Evaluation Office undertakes self-assessment (planned 4 July) ---Engage external consultant	June / July 2019
Fact-finding / data collection ---External consultant undertakes document review ---External consultant develops and administers survey of key stakeholders ---External consultant interviews key stakeholders	September – October 2019
Report Writing	October 2019



---deliver first draft of the Peer Review report	
Peer Exchange ---Peer Review Panel visit to Paris Headquarters ---preparation of the final report	--November 2019 (tentatively) --November- December 2019

## **VII. Reference Documents**

28. An extensive set of documents will be provided to the Peer Review Panel and to the external consultant assisting the Panel. The reference documents will serve as the basis for the desk review. Annex A contains the full list of reference documents.

## **VIII. Funding**

29. UNESCO's Executive Board has agreed to set aside USD 20,000 for this exercise to fund the consultant supporting the Panel. The Panel members are expected to pay for their own travel. Should they not be able to travel a request will be made to UNEG to pay for their travel costs should this exceed the budget set aside for the exercise.

## **IX. Reporting & Dissemination**

30. The Panel will submit its final report to the Director of IOS, to the Oversight Advisory Committee and to the Director-General of UNESCO. The final report will be on the agenda of the OAC in late January 2020 and the OAC may wish to make relevant recommendations to the Director-General of UNESCO based on the Panel's findings and recommendations and the draft management response by IOS. The Panel's report will be uploaded both on UNEG's website and IOS' website. The full peer review report will be referenced in the IOS Annual Report for 2019 with a hyperlink to the report and a one-page annex will summarize key findings and recommendations.

## Annex A – Key Reference Documents

### Previous reviews / assessments of the UNESCO Evaluation Function:

- [Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network report, \(MOPAN\) 2017 – 2018 Assessments](#), UNESCO, published March 2019.
- [Review of UNESCO’s Evaluation System](#), Baseline for a UNEG Review. October 2017.
- [Analysis of the Evaluation Function in the United Nations System](#), UN Joint Inspection Unit. (JIU/REP/2014/6). Published 2014.
- [The Evaluation Function at UNESCO, Independent Expert Report](#). Osvaldo Feinstein, January 2009.

### Evaluation Policy, Strategy and Annual Reports

- [UNESCO Evaluation Policy](#). Published 2015.
- [UNESCO Evaluation Strategy, 2016-2018, \(IOS/EVS/PI/147\)](#)
- [UNESCO Internal Oversight Service Annual Report 2018](#)
- [UNESCO Internal Oversight Service Annual Report 2017](#)
- [UNESCO Internal Oversight Service Annual Report 2016](#)
- [UNESCO Internal Oversight Service Annual Report 2015](#)
- [UNESCO Internal Oversight Service Annual Report 2014](#)
- [OAC Annual Report 2018](#)
- [OAC Annual Report 2017](#)
- [OAC Annual Report 2016](#) (Summary report)
- [OAC Annual Report 2015](#) (Summary report)
- [OAC Annual Report 2014](#) (Summary report - see Annex III)

### Corporate Evaluations completed during the period 2014-2019:

#### 2019 Corporate Evaluations

1. [ICT in Education](#)
2. [Networks of Mediterranean \(NET MED\) Youth project](#)
3. [International Hydrological Programme \(IHP\) Phase VIII](#)
4. [Evaluation of UNESCO’s standard-setting work of the Culture Sector, part VI – 2001 Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage](#)
5. [Mid-term review of the UNESCO SIDS Action Plan 2016-2021](#)

#### 2018 Corporate Evaluations

1. [UNESCO Institute for Statistics \(UIS\)](#)
2. [Evaluation of UNESCO’s association with the celebration of Anniversaries](#)
3. [Evaluation of the International Programme for the Development of Communication \(IPDC\)](#)
4. [Mid-term review of the UNESCO Operational Strategy on Youth \(2014-2021\)](#)
5. [Evaluation of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict](#)

#### 2017 Corporate Evaluations

1. [Evaluation of UNESCO’s programme interventions on girls’ and women’s education](#)
2. [Evaluation of UNESCO's work in capacity building in the basic sciences and engineering](#)
3. [Evaluation of the UNESCO science report: towards 2030](#)
4. [Evaluation of UNESCO's International Convention against Doping in Sport](#)
5. [Evaluation of UNESCO's Bioethics and Ethics of Science and Technology Programme](#)

## 2016 Corporate Evaluations

1. [Evaluation of UNESCO's role in education in emergencies and protracted crises](#)
2. [Evaluation of the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network \(ASPnet\)](#)
3. [Evaluation of UNESCO Institute for Water Education \(UNESCO-IHE\)](#)
4. [Evaluation of the Education for All \(EFA\) global and regional coordination mechanisms](#)
5. [Evaluation of UNESCO's regional conventions on the recognition of qualifications in higher education](#)
6. [Synthetic review of evaluations in the UNESCO system](#)
7. [A Review of evaluative evidence on teacher policy](#)

## 2015 Corporate Evaluations

1. [UNESCO's work on culture and sustainable development: evaluation of a policy theme](#)
2. [The Evaluation of the UNESCO thematic area, TVET, \(technical and vocational education and training\)](#)
3. [Lessons learned from UNESCO's field reform in Africa](#)
4. [Evaluation of the World Water Assessment Programme](#)
5. [External evaluation: programme of university cooperation Masters Programme on Social Sciences and Humanitarian Affairs](#)

## 2014 Corporate Evaluations

1. [Evaluation of phase VII \(2008-2013\) of the International Hydrological Programme](#)
  2. [Final evaluation of the Madrid Action Plan for Biosphere Reserves](#)
  3. [Formative evaluation of UNESCO's results-reporting](#)
  4. [Evaluation of UNESCO's association with the celebration of anniversaries](#)
  5. [Evaluation of UNESCO's standard-setting work of the Culture Sector, part IV: 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions](#)
  6. [Evaluation of UNESCO's standard-setting work of the Culture Sector, Part II: 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property](#)
  7. [Evaluation of UNESCO's Standard-setting Work of the Culture Sector, Part III: 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage](#)
- List of all Decentralized Evaluations completed during the period 2014 – 2019: See Excel Document « Decentralized Evaluations »

### Other:

- [UNESCO Strategic Results Report \(SRR\) 2015](#) – results report published every 4 years.
- [UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation, 2016.](#)

## Annex B - Peer Review Question Matrix

Dimensions / Criteria	Peer Review Questions
UNESCO evaluation function (including evaluation policy and strategy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. (Evaluation Policy) To what extent is the policy relevant for improving the UNESCO's organizational performance?</li> <li>ii. (Evaluation Policy) To what extent have the UNESCO Evaluation Policy and evaluation practices delivered effectively on expectations for learning and accountability, thereby leading to improved organizational performance?</li> <li>iii. (Evaluation Policy) To what extent does the policy meet recognized international standards for an evaluation policy for agencies similar to UNESCO?</li> <li>iv. Does the policy adequately take into account relevant contextual changes and requirements (e.g. delivering on Agenda 2030); and in what respect might the policy need to be updated?</li> <li>v. (Evaluation Strategy) To what extent has the Evaluation Strategy met its objective 'to position evaluation as a critical management tool for enhancing accountability, promoting organizational learning and knowledge management, and informing decision-making processes'.</li> <li>vi. Is the ToC developed by the EO relevant and are the assumptions holding?</li> <li>vii. What is the overall assessment of key stakeholders (i.e. users of Evaluation Office services and deliverables) regarding the credibility and utility of evaluation in UNESCO?</li> <li>viii. (or under a separate criterion Independence) Is the UNESCO Evaluation Office located independently from other management functions so that it is free from undue influence? Are there any risks or threats to the independent functioning of the Office?</li> </ul>
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ix. How effective are the organizational and functional relationships of the Evaluation Office with UNESCO Senior Management, the Oversight Advisory Committee and the UNESCO Executive Board?</li> <li>x. To what extent did the following entities fulfill the responsibilities ascribed to them in the UNESCO Evaluation Policy (in chapter 2): UNESCO Executive Board, the Director-General, Senior Management and the Oversight Advisory Committee (OAC)?</li> <li>xi. To what extent are effective mechanisms in place to protect financial and human resources for evaluation from undue influence that might potentially undermine the independence and impartiality of the evaluation function?</li> <li>xii. To what extent are adequate mechanisms and systems in place to safeguard the independence and impartiality of the evaluation function?</li> </ul>
Management of the Evaluation Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>xiii. How effectively does the internal organization of the Office and its working procedures support the achievement of the objectives of the Evaluation Policy and Strategy?</li> <li>xiv. What approaches are used to plan, manage and follow-up on evaluations so as to ensure a high-quality evaluation process?</li> <li>xv. What steps have been taken by the Evaluation Office to develop evaluation guidance material, methods and tools that strengthen the management of both corporate and decentralized evaluations?</li> <li>xvi. Given the fact that the EO is in a combined oversight function, what are the working relationships and arrangements with other parts of IOS?</li> </ul>
Evaluation Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>xvii. Do Evaluation Office evaluations meet the quality criteria as stipulated in the UNEG Norms and Standards?</li> <li>xviii. Do decentralized evaluations meet the quality criteria as stipulated in the UNEG Norms and Standards?</li> <li>xix. To what extent are mechanisms in place to ensure the effectiveness of the evaluation process and the quality of evaluation deliverables?</li> <li>xx. To what extent do UNESCO evaluations integrate gender equality and human rights principles?</li> <li>xxi. (or under a criterion for Independence) To what extent are evaluation teams and evaluation team leaders independent?</li> </ul>

	<p>xxii. To what extent do Evaluation Office evaluation processes include open and transparent consultation with key stakeholders?</p> <p>xxiii. To what extent does the coverage and quality of the corporate and decentralized evaluation systems provide an adequate evidence base to assess organizational performance and to effectively inform other organizational policies or frameworks (e.g strategic planning and budgeting, results based management)?</p>
Evaluation Resources	<p>xxiv. Is the Evaluation Office adequately staffed and financed to allow for the conduct and commissioning of high-quality (i.e. credible, useful, timely) evaluations?</p> <p>xxv. Does UNESCO adequately invest the necessary human and financial resources to support the delivery of high-quality decentralized evaluations?</p> <p>xxvi. To what extent are the available evaluation resources aligned to meet the Organization's needs for credible evaluation evidence to guide strategic planning and decision-making?</p> <p>xxvii. To what extent is IOS able to determine the budget envelope for its planned evaluations? Does the organization's budgeting process for the regular budget affect the independence of the office?</p>
Evaluation Planning	<p>xxviii. What methods and criteria are used for planning and prioritizing the selection of evaluation topics for both corporate and decentralized evaluations?</p> <p>xxix. Are the subjects for evaluation selected independently and are evaluation processes (planning and conduct) independent and impartial?</p> <p>xxx. To what extent do the evaluation topics selected align with the needs and priorities of key stakeholders for both learning and accountability purposes?</p> <p>xxxi. To what extent do the evaluation topics selected also meet the needs of external stakeholders, such as the wider UN system?</p>
Evaluation Follow-up and Use	<p>xxxii. How effective are the current systems for tracking evaluation follow-up and for ensuring that evaluation findings and recommendations are used by Senior Management and Governing Bodies in the development of new policies and programmes as well as in terminating ineffective policies and programmes?</p> <p>xxxiii. Are management responses and action plans prepared in a systematic manner for all evaluations?</p> <p>xxxiv. What approaches, systems and / or tools are used to monitor progress in the follow up to evaluation recommendations? To what extent are evaluations followed-up in a timely and comprehensive manner?</p> <p>xxxv. To what extent does UNESCO Senior Management incorporate evaluation findings, lessons and recommendations in (re) orienting and terminating programmes and activities, and in developing new programmes?</p> <p>xxxvi. To what extent do UNESCO's various Governing Bodies, in particular the Executive Board, draw upon evaluation findings and recommendations for oversight purposes, for (re) orienting and terminating programs and for informing the development of organizational policies, strategies and new programmes?</p> <p>xxxvii. How effectively does the Evaluation Office communicate evaluation results and lessons both inside the Organization and with external partners (such as national authorities, UNESCO networks and constituencies, donors)?</p>
Decentralized evaluation system	<p>xxxviii. Does the Evaluation Policy sufficiently clarify the various roles and responsibilities for decentralized evaluations?</p> <p>xxxix. How effectively has the Evaluation Office provided the necessary support, guidance and oversight of the decentralized evaluation system?</p> <p>xl. To what extent does the planning, management and follow-up to decentralized evaluations meet quality criteria set out in the UNEG Norms and Standards?</p>
Partnerships	<p>xli. To what extent has the Evaluation Office effectively engaged in partnerships in evaluation e.g. by building national evaluation capacities, collaborating in joint, system-wide or country-led evaluation initiatives, or engaging in the work of the UN Evaluation Group?</p>

### **Annex C – Self-Assessment Matrix**

The Self-Assessment matrix is a customized version of the JIU Maturity Matrix. The UNEG Working Group on Peer Review, per its work plan for this year, is currently in the process of developing a Self-Assessment matrix for use by agencies with relatively small evaluation units. As IOS participates in the Working Group, the EO agreed to pilot the matrix as part of our self-assessment exercise. The EO has provided back to the group valuable insights and suggestions that will assist in finalizing the matrix.

Based upon the length and format of the matrix, it is made available as a separate attachment to these TOR.