

EVALUATION *matters*



NEWSLETTER OF THE WHO EVALUATION OFFICE

"Evaluation matters...the role of evaluation is understood as an opportunity for organizational and individual learning, to improve performance and accountability for results, and build our capacity for understanding why some programmes and initiatives work, and why others do not...Consistent and high quality evaluation of our work and Organization is essential, and is a tool that will guide programme planning and implementation."

WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan¹

Welcome to the first issue of **Evaluation matters**, the e-newsletter of the Evaluation Office, which will be a key avenue for us to provide updates on the work of the Evaluation Office to the broader stakeholder community.

Strengthening evaluation and organizational learning is a key outcome of the WHO reform process. There has been much recent progress in the evaluation work undertaken in WHO: critical milestones include approval of the Evaluation Policy in 2012; review and approval by the Executive Board of the biennial evaluation workplans for 2014-15 and 2016-17 (in May 2014 and January 2016 respectively); and release of the WHO Evaluation Practice Handbook. The Handbook is a tool to guide and harmonize evaluation work being conducted across the Organization and to support mainstreaming of high-quality evaluation work.

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To build on this and to further support the ongoing WHO reform process, in August 2014, the evaluation function was moved from within the Office of Internal Oversight Services and became an independent office, to support independent evaluation. Following a review that looked at both the situation within WHO and at best practices and models in other organizations, a framework for strengthening the evaluation function was developed. *The Framework for strengthening evaluation and organizational learning*² incorporates best practices and models that could be implemented within the WHO context, and will be the instrument to implement the WHO Evaluation Policy. The framework aims to contribute to establishing a culture of evaluation at all levels of the Organization, such that evaluation will play a critical role in improving performance, increasing accountability

¹ Foreword, WHO Evaluation Practice Handbook 2013

² A Framework for Strengthening Evaluation and Organizational Learning in WHO. Access [here](#).

Evaluation

The UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) defines evaluation as follows:

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

In simpler terms, evaluation is intended to provide **accountability** for achieving results from the use of resources, and **learning** from experience in ways that can be put into practical use. Furthermore, evaluation should influence policy and operational decisions.

for results, and promoting organizational learning. The framework has six key action areas: (i) establishing an enabling environment and governance; (ii) evaluation capacity and resources; (iii) evaluation work plan, scope and modalities; (iv) evaluation recommendations and management response; (v) organizational learning; and (vi) communicating evaluation work.

We see this regular quarterly e-newsletter as an important means to strengthen the culture of learning, and to increase transparency and stakeholder ownership by communicating evaluation work and findings effectively. It should further contribute towards transparency, and building confidence and trust in the work of the Organization. The e-newsletter complements our other communication instruments such as the annual reports to the Executive Board; Member States' briefings; in-house briefings and an up-to-date website.

In this first issue, you will find updates on key recent corporate evaluations, in particular the evaluation of WHO's presence in countries, including the recommendations issuing from it, and the report and follow-up to the Ebola Interim Assessment Panel. Findings from three supported decentralized and joint evaluations are provided, namely "Accelerating nutritional improvements in sub-Saharan Africa"; FAO/WHO Codex Trust Fund final project evaluation; and, the joint evaluation of Renewed Effort Against Child Hunger and Under-nutrition (REACH). An overview of ongoing and planned evaluations and their reporting schedules is given and the approved workplan for 2016-2017 is discussed. Finally, the section on organizational learning provides links to updates on 21 completed evaluations that have been reviewed and analysed by the Evaluation Office.

We hope you will find this first issue of **Evaluation matters** informative and useful, and look forward to your comments and thoughts on it.



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KEY RECENT WORK OF THE EVALUATION OFFICE

Evaluation of WHO's Presence in Countries

The World Health Organization has embarked on a major reform to enable the Organization to address the increasingly complex challenges of public health in the 21st century. The scope of the reform efforts cover programmatic and governance reforms, and it also includes a managerial reform component in pursuit of organizational excellence.

WHO's 12th General Programme of Work for 2014-2019 recognizes that WHO's action at country level is a critical element of the Organization's work. It also recognizes that WHO's leadership at country level is a particularly important element of the reform agenda, and encourages strengthening the effectiveness of WHO work at the country office level as well as its coordination with the other levels of the Organization. Thus, in this context, the evaluation of WHO's Presence in Countries was identified as one of the priority evaluations in 2015 for the Evaluation Office.

The purpose of this evaluation was to provide evidence on progress towards the contribution of WHO to country-level goals and Organization-wide outcomes. The evaluation addressed the following high-level questions: (i) What does WHO presence in countries mean, and does it respond to Member States' and other relevant partners' expectations?; (ii) What is the contribution of WHO's presence in countries towards addressing global, regional, and individual countries' health priorities and needs?; (iii) What is WHO's added value at country level in light of its level of investment?; (iv) What are the modalities for strengthening or reducing WHO's presence in countries, based on the health status and needs of individual countries?; (v) To what extent does WHO exert effective leadership and convening capacity at country level to mobilize different stakeholders and act as a broker of partnerships in support of the national health and development agenda? The evaluation was conducted by an external independent evaluation team, and undertaken between July 2015 and January 2016. While this evaluation was conducted by an independent evaluator, senior staff were engaged at different stages of the evaluation. In particular, an *ad hoc* Evaluation

Management Group comprising senior staff from across the three levels of WHO worked with the Evaluation Office. The final evaluation report highlights key findings, makes recommendations for WHO and suggests some action areas. It is envisaged that the findings will inform the ongoing reform efforts, in particular, in relation to WHO's role at country level. The key recommendations arising from the evaluation are:

Recommendation 1: WHO should review and clarify its role and purpose at country level to ensure a common understanding within WHO and externally.

Recommendation 2: WHO should develop and implement a methodology to assess performance at country level that is integrated with the Country Cooperation Strategy/Biennial Cooperation Agreement and WHO global results framework for purposes of learning and accountability.

Recommendation 3: WHO should review and map how the different levels of WHO add value to each other and to the Organization as a whole, to understand better what WHO invests in country level work, and tackle the risks to its capacity to add value.

Recommendation 4: WHO should ensure that the level of WHO country presence and capacity is appropriate to country needs, consistent with the WHO global strategy and WHO country purpose.

Recommendation 5: WHO should ensure that Heads of WHO Offices in Countries, Territories and Areas and country staff have the necessary leadership skills to be effective at country level, and that they are supported in this by the systems and processes of the wider Organization, and should strengthen partnership engagement to support the delivery of country level health and development objectives.

Recommendation 6: WHO leadership should develop standard management processes to implement and follow up agreed recommendations from evaluations and identify organizational barriers to their implementation.

The full report is available [here](#).

KEY RECENT WORK OF THE EVALUATION OFFICE

Report and Follow-up of the Ebola Interim Assessment Panel

In 2015, a major focus of the work of the Evaluation Office was to support the work of the Ebola Interim Assessment Panel established in response to the resolution adopted during the special session of the Executive Board in January 2015. The Panel, established in early March 2015 and composed of outside independent experts, submitted its first report to the Sixty-eighth World Health Assembly, with the final report delivered in July 2015. The report and recommendations fall under three headings: the International Health Regulations (2005); WHO's health emergency response capacity; and WHO's role and cooperation with the wider health and humanitarian systems. To read the full report, click [here](#).

The WHO Secretariat issued its response to the Panel's report in August 2015 (click [here](#) to see response). The Panel's recommendations further informed the work of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on the Global Response to Health Crises, the deliberations of the Review Committee on the Role of the International Health Regulations (2005) in the Ebola Outbreak and Response and the Director-General's Advisory Group on Reform of WHO's work in Outbreaks and Emergencies with Health and Humanitarian Consequences. The Evaluation Office also consolidated the lessons learnt and recommendations arising from the various other assessments and reviews of the response to the outbreak of Ebola virus disease. An information session on studies undertaken in response to the Ebola Outbreak was organized on 24 January 2016 ahead of the 138th session of the Executive Board and was open to Member States and other key partners.

Ebola lessons learned

Extended list of Ebola reviews. To access, click [here](#)

Selected reviews

- Strengthening the global health architecture: implementation of the recommendations of the High-Level Panel on the Global response to Health Crises. United Nations General Assembly, Report of the Secretary-General. Access [here](#).
- Ebola Interim Assessment Panel Access [here](#)
- Director-General's Advisory Group on Reform of WHO's Work in Outbreaks and Emergencies with Health and Humanitarian Consequences. Access [here](#)
- Review Committee on the Role of the International Health Regulations (2005) in the Ebola Outbreak and Response (WHO) Access [here](#)
- EU preparedness and response-learning lessons from the Ebola outbreak (European Union) Access [here](#)
- HGHI-LSHTM Independent Panel on the Global Response to Ebola (Harvard Global Health Institute-London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine) Access [here](#)
- Commission on a global health risk framework for the future (The National Academy of Medicine). Access [here](#)
- The Ebola Lessons Reader (International Rescue Committee) Access [here](#).

SELECTED DECENTRALIZED AND JOINT EVALUATIONS

Accelerating Nutritional Improvements in Sub-Saharan Africa

The purpose of this evaluation, which was carried out by an independent external evaluation team, was to assess the relevance and performance of the Accelerating Nutritional Improvements in Sub-Saharan Africa Project, which ran from 2012 to 2015 and supported eleven African countries.

The evaluation concluded that the Project was successful, highly appreciated by all its stakeholders, and for some of its target countries, the only project dedicated to strengthening the country's nutrition surveillance system. While the Project duration had been too short to result in sustainable impact as yet, it had fostered partnerships to improve programming for nutrition surveillance, contributed to national buy-in and ownership of the nutrition agenda and to reinforced country capacities in this field.

Key recommendations related to the end-of-project strategy, audit and other transition arrangements. Key lessons derived from this exercise were the importance of continuous engagement with government authorities and partners and of a renewed focus on addressing the managerial challenges of implementing a project across the three levels of the Organization. To read the full report, click [here](#).

FAO/WHO Project and Fund for Enhanced Participation in Codex (Codex Trust Fund) Final Project Evaluation

A final project evaluation of the FAO/WHO Project and Fund for Enhanced Participation in Codex (Codex Trust Fund) was carried out between June 2014 and February 2015. The Codex Trust Fund (CTF) was launched in 2003 by the Directors-General of FAO and WHO to help developing countries and countries with economies in transition to enhance their level of effective participation in the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The purpose of the final project evaluation was to evaluate the functioning and results of the CTF after ten and a half years of its twelve-year lifespan. The evaluation concluded that the CTF has been very successful at fulfilling its primary mandate - widening participation of

developing countries. The CTF was able to take note of the changing needs of countries and introduce more activities related to the second outcome of the CTF, "strengthening participation", principally through the provision of regional workshops. The third CTF outcome relates to "increased availability of scientific evidence in Codex". There have been mixed results in this area, partially due to activities in this area starting as recently as 2012. Further conclusions and a list of recommendations were submitted for consideration. To view the full evaluation report, click [here](#).

Joint Evaluation of Renewed Effort Against Child Hunger and Under-nutrition (REACH): A Strategic Evaluation

This evaluation, covering 2011 to 2015, focused on the role of the REACH secretariat and its work in Bangladesh, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. Serving the dual purpose of accountability and learning, it assessed REACH's relevance and appropriateness, performance, the factors explaining results, and sustainability. The evaluation found that the design of REACH fitted well with the priorities of the international nutrition agenda and of partner agencies, including gender and equity objectives. However, its theory of change underestimated the importance of the level of political commitment from governments, the political economy of the United Nations, the importance of accountability, and incentives for support to the initiative within the United Nations.

Noting that REACH has become the coordinating body for the United Nations Network for Scaling Up Nutrition, the evaluation's recommendations centre on: (i) maintaining the initiative's focus as a neutral facilitator of nutrition governance at the country level; (ii) expanding timeframes for engagement; (iii) strengthening incentive structures within the United Nations to contribute to the initiative; (iv) redesigning the theory of change; (v) improving alignment with other technical support in nutrition; and (vi) strengthening support for issues related to gender and equity. The full report is available [here](#).

ONGOING AND PLANNED EVALUATIONS

Comprehensive evaluation of the global strategy and plan of action on public health, innovation and intellectual property

The overall purpose of this comprehensive evaluation is to assess the status of implementation of the eight elements of the global strategy: (a) prioritizing research and development needs; (b) promoting research and development; (c) building and improving innovative capacity; (d) transfer of technology; (e) application and management of intellectual property to contribute to innovation and promote public health; (f) improving delivery and access; (g) promoting sustainable financing mechanisms; and (h) establishing monitoring and reporting systems. It is currently in the data collection phase until mid-June 2016. Data analysis and preparation of the draft evaluation report will be completed by October 2016 and the final evaluation report should be available by end November 2016. For a progress update, click [here](#).

Evaluation workplan 2016-2017

The 2016-2017 biennial workplan was developed in consultation with senior WHO staff and was approved after review by the 138th session of the Executive Board.

It includes corporate/centralized evaluations to be managed, commissioned or conducted by the Evaluation Office. These evaluations will be linked to a leadership priority in the 12th General Programme of Work; specific programmes; horizontal themes of relevance to the core functions and strategies of WHO; and, office-specific evaluations.

The workplan also proposes decentralized evaluations to be managed, commissioned or conducted outside the central Evaluation Office, i.e. initiated by HQ clusters, regional offices or country offices. These mainly comprise programmatic and thematic evaluations for which the central Evaluation Office will provide quality assurance and technical backstopping. To view the complete workplan, click [here](#).

Evaluation of the normative function of WHO

This evaluation is being conducted in two phases by an independent external evaluation team. The first phase focused on defining normative work at WHO and proposed a framework for its evaluation. The second phase will draw on this framework to evaluate a selection of representative types of normative work and, based on these findings, will make recommendations to WHO. The final report will be available in the third quarter of 2016.

Impact of WHO publications

The evaluation, conducted by an independent external evaluation team, aims to examine: the extent to which WHO publications reach their intended audiences, their major gaps in reach, and why those gaps arose; the perceived usefulness of WHO publications; the extent to which WHO publications are used as references and as authoritative sources of information for decision-making in clinical, public health, and policy-making contexts; and the extent of implementation of WHO's publications policy and its influence on the impact of WHO publications. Having started in late 2015, it is expected to be finalized in June 2016.

Planned Evaluations

Three priority corporate evaluations have been identified for the 2016-2017 biennium: (i) the Secretariat's contribution to the health-related Millennium Development Goals; (ii) leadership and management at WHO: evaluation of WHO reform, third stage; and (iii) implementation of the WHO evaluation policy and the framework for strengthening evaluation and organizational learning (United Nations Evaluation Group peer review). In this regard, the Evaluation Office is currently in the process of defining terms of reference for (i) and (ii) before initiating the evaluation process. For more information about planned and ongoing evaluations, please see the Evaluation Office's annual report May 2016 to the 139th Executive Board session, available [here](#).

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING: FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, ACTIONS & LEARNING

Evaluation findings and resulting recommendations should contribute towards improved performance and increased accountability for results. Management responses should also inform key-decision making and future programme and project development, especially where the recommendations have been incorporated more broadly into wider policies and plans or have influenced departmental strategy. Evaluations conducted at all levels of the Organization that have been followed up and reported on by the Evaluation Office are given below. More detailed information can be found in the Evaluation Office annual reports and “Selected Evaluation Reports” available [here](#).

Evaluation updates presented to Executive Board 137th session EB137/7

1. Resource mobilization function at WHO (2010)
2. WHO financing dialogue (2014)
3. WHO reform, stage 1 (2011)
4. WHO reform, stage 2 (2013)
5. Global Health Workforce Alliance (2011)
6. Good Governance for Medicines programme (2004-2012)
7. Advancing sexual and reproductive health (2008-2012)
8. Global Learning Programme on National health Policies, Strategies and Plans (2014)

Resources

WHO Evaluation Practice Handbook. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2013. To view, click [here](#).

The WHO evaluation practice handbook is now available in iLearn, the global learning and management system, as an online tool for WHO staff across the three levels of the Organization for review and self-learning.

United Nations Evaluation Group Document Library. Access [here](#).

Evaluation updates presented to Executive Board 139th session EB139/9

1. Quick Start Programme of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management: progress and challenges towards the achievement of the goal for 2020 (2015).
2. International Classification of Diseases 11th Revision Review (2015)
3. “Piloting Climate Change Adaptation to Protect Human Health”, a joint UNDP/WHO project funded by the Global Environment Facility (2015)
4. WHO global strategy for surveillance and monitoring of HIV drug resistance (2014)
5. Immunization Practices Advisory Committee (2015)
6. Independent Monitoring Board of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (2015)
7. African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control (2015)
8. Keeping Countries at the Centre: Assessment of WHO's Performance of its Roles and Functions in the Pacific; and, Strengthening Country Support in the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific (2014)
9. Accelerating Nutritional Improvements in Sub-Saharan Africa (2015).
10. FAO/WHO Project and Fund for Enhanced Participation in the Codex Alimentarius (Codex Trust Fund) (2015)
11. Global Fund Concept Note Development (2015)
12. REACH Initiative (2011-2015)

News/Events

2016 UNEG Evaluation Week

The United Nations Evaluation Group EvalWeek was successfully conducted from April 25 to 29 with the participation of 100+ colleagues from 46 UN agencies, plus partners. Activities included: a two-day session on Evaluation Practice; a High-Level Event with two heads of UN agencies and invited panelists; and the 2016 AGM. Discussions were greatly informed by the role of evaluation within the framework of the SDG/2030 Agenda.

A key outcome of the week was endorsement by the AGM of the updated UNEG Norms & Standards that take into full consideration the evolving external and internal environment. UNEG will develop a dissemination strategy to ensure that the updated 2016 Norms & Standards will be influential beyond the UN system. In addition, the AGM discussed the priorities for 2016/2017. For more information, please click [here](#).



Participants at 2016 United Nations Evaluation Group EvalWeek April 25-29, Geneva, Switzerland

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