

EVALUATION *matters*



NEWSLETTER OF THE WHO EVALUATION OFFICE

"Evaluation is critical for promoting accountability and for understanding what we are doing right and what we may be getting wrong. As Member States shape a new sustainable development agenda for the post-2015 period, evaluation will only grow in importance.... Evaluation everywhere, and at every level, will play a key role in implementing the new development agenda."

Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations¹

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

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Organizational learning is an important avenue to build on lessons learnt to improve the performance of an organization. Effective feedback loops need to be established between processes and activities that generate findings and recommendations to improve performance and policy, planning and decision making, in order to influence operations.

Organizational learning is therefore a basis for the identification and implementation of activities to improve performance.

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 can affect policy and operational decisions. Thus, learning and performance improvement is a key outcome of evaluation work. Learning should also contribute towards a culture where evaluation is integral to the planning, design and implementation of policies and programmes.

In this regard, key guiding questions to understand organizational learning include: *How are the evaluations and recommendations used for policy- and decision-making? Do evaluations and their findings contribute to mid-course corrections/adjustments? Is there a follow-up mechanism to track recommendations and their implementation?*

¹ Speech delivered at the United Nations Evaluation Group High-level event : "Bridge to a Better world: Evaluation at the service of the Post-2015 Agenda", New York, 9 March 2015

Organizational learning continues to be a challenging dimension of the broader evaluation function, not only for WHO but also for other UN agencies and evaluation units at national level. There are a number of ways within WHO, both formal and informal, to promote and ensure organizational learning. Feedback into senior-level decision making and action is promoted through the engagement of the Global Policy Group, Assistant Directors-General and other senior staff in various stages of the evaluation process. These include consultation to develop the biennial evaluation work plan, commissioning of decentralized evaluations, and the ownership of the management response for evaluations.

During the programme budget development process, evaluation findings can inform the development of planned programmatic outputs and deliverables. Other strategy and policy documents, including resolutions, to be reviewed by the governing bodies could also highlight how they were informed by any relevant evaluation findings. In some cases, evaluation findings could also help to sunset or pause implementation of specific projects or activities or, in other cases, better define scale-up or follow-up activities. In other instances, evaluation findings could be the reason to undertake necessary mid-course corrections or to initiate new activities and programmes.

Various other avenues exist to promote learning during the evaluation process and these are highlighted later. Furthermore, findings and evidence generated through evaluation should be part of the Organization's broader knowledge management efforts. Currently, the WHO Evaluation Office reports on organizational learning in its annual reports to the Executive Board and also provides further detailed information on its [website](#).

During recent governing body meetings, Member States expressed their expectations that organizational learning be further enhanced in

WHO and be expanded beyond the topic of learning from evaluations. Several elements of organizational learning are already in place in WHO but are not addressed in a comprehensive manner. These include activities such as audits, evaluations, performance assessments, reviews (programmatic and administrative), "lessons learnt" exercises and sharing of best practices through a variety of mechanisms. However, these activities tend to be undertaken independently and are not done in a harmonized and consistent manner. As a result, many of the solutions designed to address identified problems are often developed as stand-alone solutions.

It is, therefore, timely to take a broader approach to organizational learning in WHO with the objective to develop a systematic approach to organizational learning that: defines and aligns all its elements and interfaces; is evidence-based; and informs policies and decisions that result in measurable changes. The Organizational Learning and Change Network, chaired by the Executive Director of the Director-General's Office and comprising Directors of Programme Management and of Administration and Finance from the regions and senior staff from headquarters, provides a mechanism to take this work forward and to ensure that the different activities are aligned and add value to the Organization.

Avenues for organizational learning during the evaluation process are given in the following diagram:

Dr Elil Renganathan
DG Representative for Evaluation and
Organizational Learning
WHO Evaluation Office



Avenues for Organizational Learning during the Evaluation Process

Policy/ decision making and strategic/ operational planning

- Findings inform decision making, including strategic and operational planning, and offer possibilities of mid-point correction
- Sunset or pause programmes based on evaluation findings
- Learning that results from the evaluation exercise should be documented and fed into the design of new programmes and projects or the definition of future outcomes
- Discussion at governing body meetings promotes learning across the three levels of the Organization as well as with various stakeholders

Evaluation Work Plan

- Consultation process facilitates senior level discussion on issues that merit evaluation
- Prioritization based on organizational requirement, significance and utility

Individual evaluation ToRs/Evaluation management group/ Reference group

Learning through involvement in developing evaluation questions, methods and thus taking ownership of the process

Evaluation Process

Participation in the evaluation process promotes evaluative thinking and better understanding of unfamiliar subject matter

Evaluation report/ recommendations

Evaluation reports/recommendations promote organizational learning by engaging the key stakeholders involved and improving ownership

Management response/actions/follow-up give opportunities for management to:

- Engage all key evaluation stakeholders in reflection on the key issues, findings and recommendations
- Respond to the findings and recommendations
- Identify key actions that are necessary to achieve results/ improve performance

Dissemination of evaluation findings

Internally and externally: annual reports, synthesis reports, meta-analysis, lessons learnt documentation, newsletters, webinars, lunchtime seminars to promote organizational learning

SELECTED DECENTRALIZED AND JOINT EVALUATIONS

Evaluation of WHO's contribution to maternal health in the South-East Asia Region

This evaluation describes WHO's contribution to the Maternal Health Programme in the South-East Asia Region. It was an independent evaluation conducted in 2015 by Amaltas, a Delhi-based organization in collaboration with consultants in the respective countries. The evaluation had the following objectives:

- i) understand the scope and diversity in maternal health responses by WHO;
- ii) study the contribution of WHO to the policies, projects and practices in maternal health;
- iii) ascertain strategies that yield good uptake by governments and local partners; and
- iv) identify learning that can be applied to strengthen WHO's programme in the Region.

The report is the result of a strengths-based evaluation approach, studying the effectiveness of WHO's contributions in the Region and ascertaining the extent to which government policies/plans were influenced by the Organization. The evaluation highlights progress in five countries, namely Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka and provides specific recommendations for organizational learning and development.

Findings and recommendations fall under the following headings: setting norms and standards; providing technical support and building institutional capacity; shaping the research agenda; articulating policy options; monitoring the health situation and trends; providing leadership on health; and facilitators and challenges.

To read the full report, click [here](#).

Review of bilateral consultations between WHO and contributors as part of the Financing Dialogue 2015

WHO's Financing Dialogue was launched in 2013 to ensure a fully-funded programme budget in a rapidly evolving global health landscape. The almost 80% of the programme budget funded by voluntary contributions is 93% specified, constraining WHO's ability to align funding with programme budget priorities and address underfunded programme areas.

The Financing Dialogue process forms a key component of an ambitious reform agenda to address this situation. Its main objectives are to secure at least 70% of programme budget financing before the start of a biennium, to reflect and promote the principles of alignment and flexibility, predictability, transparency, and to reduce funding vulnerability. As a means of strengthening the foundations of the Financing Dialogue and WHO's resource mobilization more broadly, the Director-General's Task Force on Resource Mobilization and Management Strategies in 2013 further recommended that WHO hold bilateral consultations with major contributors.

An independent review of WHO's bilateral consultations with contributors held before and after the Financing Dialogue 2015 was commissioned. The main objective of the review was to extract lessons learnt from these consultations with a view to providing practical recommendations on i) strengthening the implementation of the individual Financing Dialogue bilateral consultations to help influence contributors' adoption of Financing Dialogue principles, and ii) optimizing WHO's approach to donor engagement and dialogue more broadly, going forward.

The [review report](#) has now been submitted and management is taking action to implement the recommendations contained therein.

ONGOING AND PLANNED EVALUATIONS

Leadership and management at WHO: evaluation of WHO reform, third stage

WHO has embarked upon an ambitious project of reform. The reform was initiated to overcome the difficulties arising from unpredictable financing of WHO's priorities, but was expanded to include other areas of governance to improve efficiency and effectiveness of WHO operations. In all, there are three key areas of WHO reform: 1) programmatic reform, 2) governance reform, and 3) management reform.

The reform process has three overall objectives:

- (i) Improved health outcomes, with WHO meeting the expectations of its Member States and partners in addressing agreed global health priorities, focused on the actions and areas where WHO has a unique function or comparative advantage, and financed in a way that facilitates this focus.
- (ii) Greater coherence in global health, with WHO playing a leading role in enabling the many different actors to play an active and effective role in contributing to the health of the people.
- (iii) An Organization that pursues excellence; one that is effective, efficient, responsive, objective, transparent and accountable.

As part of the WHO reform process, the Executive Board in its special session in November 2011, requested a two-stage independent evaluation of WHO reform. Stage one of the evaluation focused on whether the WHO reform proposals had identified a sufficient range of issues that needed to be dealt with in the reform process; and made recommendations on the roadmap for stage two of the evaluation (click [here](#) to see the report). Those recommendations have informed the work of the Secretariat concerning the coherence between and functioning of the three levels of the Organization.

The objective of stage two of the evaluation was to assess the implementation strategy of the

WHO reform and the Organization's preparedness to implement the reform process. In particular, this stage of the evaluation was designed to assess whether change management issues and barriers to implementation have been appropriately considered and addressed (click [here](#) for the report).

The planned stage three evaluation of WHO Reform will:

- (i) assess actions taken in response to the stage 1 and stage 2 evaluation recommendations;
- (ii) assess the effectiveness and impact of WHO reform since the start of its implementation; and
- (iii) provide recommendations on the way forward.

This evaluation will be carried out by independent external evaluators. An ad hoc Evaluation Management Group has been created and the evaluation is in the preparatory phase. It is expected to start in October 2016 and the final evaluation report should be available by April 2017.

Planned Evaluation of Brazil's *Mais Médicos* programme

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)/ WHO Regional Office for the Americas, and ABRASCO (the Brazilian Association of Schools of Public Health) are collaborating in a meta-evaluation of the *Mais Médicos* (*More Doctors*) Programme in Brazil. This innovative programme seeks to strengthen primary health care in Brazil through the provision of human resources, infrastructure improvements (for health facilities), as well as medical education and training. PAHO supports the *Mais Médicos project* (part of the national programme) through its technical cooperation and by supporting the introduction of Cuban doctors into the health system, especially in the country's neediest regions where it has been difficult to attract local doctors. Over 100 publications (available in English, Portuguese and Spanish) examining the *Mais Médicos* programme may be found [here](#).

ABRASCO's team of primary health care experts will evaluate the extent to which the *Mais Médicos* programme has reduced gaps in access to health services in Brazil's most impoverished regions.

FACILITATING THE WORK OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT (JIU)

2016 marks the 50th anniversary of the United Nations' JIU. The JIU is the only independent external oversight body of the UN system, mandated to conduct inspections, evaluations and investigations system-wide.

The JIU's mandate is to look at cross-cutting issues and to act as an agent for change across the UN system. It works to secure management and administrative efficiency and to promote greater coordination both between UN agencies and with other internal and external oversight bodies.

For the past 50 years, the JIU has been dedicated to assisting the legislative bodies of numerous UN organizations and agencies in meeting their governance responsibilities. The JIU provides support in the context of these agencies' oversight function regarding human, financial and other resources. In its reports and notes, the JIU identifies best practices, proposes benchmarks and facilitates information-sharing throughout all the organizations of the UN system that have adopted its statute. The WHO Evaluation Office is the Organizational focal point for the JIU and facilitates JIU reviews relevant to the Organization.

Recently completed JIU reviews:

(i) **Fraud prevention, detection and response in United Nations system organizations:** The report offers a comprehensive review of a broad range of fraud-related activities (e.g. anti-fraud governance frameworks, fraud risk assessments, fraud prevention and detection controls and response mechanisms) with a view to assessing the effectiveness of these activities. It identifies areas of strengths and weaknesses, and makes 16 recommendations to executive heads and legislative bodies. Click [here](#) to read the report.

(ii) **Succession planning in United Nations system organizations:** The report seeks to identify the challenges and good practices inherent in this crucial component of workforce planning. The report proposes solutions and identifies good practices and benchmarks. The four recommendations, directed at legislative bodies, executive heads and the UN Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of the CEB, seek to enhance the control, compliance and accountability of executive heads, as well as to strengthen coordination and enhance the effectiveness of human resource succession planning activities. Click [here](#) to read more.

(iii) **Review of the organizational ombudsman services across the United Nations system:** This [report](#) examines the role of the ombudsman service in organizations that implement this function, and proposes eight recommendations intended to clarify the activities and functions of the ombudsman position.

(iv) **Review of activities and resources devoted to address climate change in the United Nations system organizations:** This [report](#) provides an overview of existing resources and activities devoted to addressing climate change across the organizations of the UN system, considering also the role of the environmental conventions. It puts forward six recommendations.

(v) **Public information and communications policies and practices in the United Nations system:** The report assesses the public information and communication function of individual agencies, as well as existing coordination mechanisms, and proposes nine benchmarks and six recommendations intended to foster good practices and the application of lessons learnt. To read the report, click [here](#).

Ongoing JIU reviews:

(i) **System-wide review of RBM in the United Nations system (Phase II):** The review is expected to establish a comprehensive benchmarking framework for a high impact RBM system that can be used for assessing and monitoring the implementation of RBM in the UN system based on a common set of indicators and a standardized method. It will also analyse for UN system organizations the level of development of a high quality/high impact RBM based on the updated JIU benchmarking framework, and identify the key issues and constraints affecting quality, coherence, alignments, capacities, internalization, and change management processes.

FACILITATING THE WORK OF THE JIU (continued)

(ii) **State of the internal audit function in the United Nations system organizations:** The review is intended to provide stakeholders with an update of the current status of the internal audit function in the UN system organizations. The review covers the internal audit functions roles and services, governance structures, follow up on recommendations, public disclosure of reports and coordination of audit work.

(iii) **Administrative support services: The role of service centres in the redesign of administrative support service delivery:** The objective of the review is to provide a comparative analysis of methods and practices used by UN system organizations in redesigning their operating models for administrative support service delivery with a view to identify good practices and/or lessons learnt and explore areas for further improvement.

(iv) **Knowledge management in the United Nations system:** The review will assess to what extent the UN system organizations have implemented the JIU recommendations on knowledge management issued in 2007 (JIU/REP/2007/6) and, in particular, which have been the reasons for non-compliance.

(v) **Donor-led accountability and oversight reviews in United Nations system organizations:** This review will map and assess: the types and defining characteristics of donor-based reviews; the extent of the reviews; the reasons they are required; the degree to which donor requirements are different or could be satisfied from existing oversight processes; and how additional requirements by donors could be more effectively planned, coordinated and budgeted to achieve the objectives of all stakeholders.

(vi) **Comprehensive review of United Nations system support for small island developing States: Final findings:** The review will make an assessment of the overall effectiveness of the UN system support and the institutional set-up for sustainable development of SIDS in order to make recommendations to foster the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway (resolution 69/15) and related global mandates.

(vii) **Review of travel policies in the United Nations system:** a comprehensive review of all aspects of air travel, inter alia, the review and evaluation of existing travel policies, procedures, rules and regulations and guidelines and their implementation for the different types of air travel financed by UN system organizations.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING: FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, ACTIONS & LEARNING

Piloting Climate Change Adaptation to Protect Human Health, a joint UNDP/WHO project funded by the Global Environment Facility

The Pilot Programme on Climate Change Adaptation to Protect Human Health was funded by the Global Environment Facility, whose statutes require both a mid-term and a terminal external evaluation for all projects funded. This global project was designed to increase the adaptive capacity of national health system institutions to prepare for and respond to the health risks of climate variability and change. It was developed in collaboration with UNDP and WHO, with the former being the implementing agency and the latter the executing agency. This evaluation was commissioned by WHO,

following a mid-term evaluation in May 2013, and carried out by an external evaluator. Click [here](#).

African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control

A [final evaluation](#) of the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control was carried out with the following objectives: (i) to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme; (ii) to analyse the Programme's wider impact and application of lessons learnt; (iii) to identify best practice and lessons learnt; and (iv) to make available to all its stakeholders appropriate and relevant data, conclusions and recommendations in order to provide a basis for the next project and/or programme focusing on neglected tropical diseases as there has been a fundamental change in approach from control to elimination of onchocerciasis.

Updated UNEG Norms & Standards available

The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation document was first adopted in 2005. Since then, it has been the guiding document for the UN evaluation community and has been recognized by Member States and the global evaluation community. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development raises the bar for global development. In response, in 2016, UNEG updated and adopted [Norms and Standards for Evaluation \(2016\)](#). These are forward-looking, providing an aspirational and progressive framework to contribute to the improvement of all UN evaluation functions. The new version puts a stronger emphasis on the utility and use of evaluation and provides basic principles and best practices in managing, conducting and using evaluations.

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](#).

Meet the Evaluation Team



From L to R: Simon Bettighofer, Evaluation Officer; Marthe Jaquet, Secretary; Anand Sivasankara-Kurup, Evaluation Officer; Carol Drayton, Programme Officer; Anne-Claire Luzot, Chief Evaluation Officer; Iciar Larizgoitia Jauregui, Senior Evaluation Officer; Olwen Wilson, Intern; Elil Renganathan, DG Representative for Evaluation and Organizational Learning.

CONTACT

Evaluation Office, World Health Organization, CH-1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland

Email: evaluation@who.int

News/Events

12th European Evaluation Society (EES) Biennial Conference: Evaluation Futures in Europe and beyond. Connectivity, Innovation and Use
26-30 September 2016 Maastricht, the Netherlands. More information [here](#).