



Orientation on oversight functions and independent offices: Key features of the UNICEF Evaluation Function

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11 January 2024

Background and overview of the evaluation function

- Historically **one of oldest and best-established evaluation functions** in the United Nations system
- **Evolution of the function** from heavy accountability focus to more integrated accountability-learning focus
- **Fundamental role** is to provide UNICEF and its key stakeholders (including, importantly, the Executive Board) an independent, impartial assessment of the organization's performance so as to enhance both learning and accountability – *and ultimately to help us all achieve better results for children*
- Fulfils this role by **providing independent evaluative assessments**
 - ... across **wide range of areas**
 - ... in **all phases of the programme cycle**
 - ... at **all levels of the organization**
 - ... increasingly **with evaluation partners**, including governments
- Provides a range of **other public goods**: national evaluation capacity development, methodological guidance, “big-picture” evaluation syntheses
- **Guided by established normative frameworks**: Revised United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards (2016), Revised UNICEF Evaluation Policy (2018), UNICEF Strategic Plan, UNICEF Accountability Framework
- **Intended impact of the function – better and more results for children** – is achieved through relevant, timely, high-quality, credible and useful evaluations whose recommendations lead to evidence-based decisions/actions by UNICEF and its key stakeholders (including the Executive Board)

Structure of the function: Highly decentralized

Global Level: Evaluation Office (New York)

Evaluation Portfolios			Cross-cutting Portfolios	
Thematic (based on UNICEF Goal Areas)	Humanitarian (L3s, global humanitarian themes)	Institutional Effectiveness (overall organizational performance, internal operations, global policy evaluations)	Methods, Innovation, Impact, Learning in support of the global evaluation practice and the wider evaluation community	Capacity Development (including National Evaluation Capacity Development)

Main responsibilities at global level

- Policy setting
- Management and conduct of global evaluations
- Management and conduct of joint/inter-agency/system-wide evaluations
- Management and conduct of L3 evaluations
- Overall planning, budgeting and reporting
- Fiduciary responsibility for Evaluation Pooled Fund
- Support to specific decentralized evaluations
- Methodological and strategic guidance
- Management of external quality assurance system
- Liaison with global-level partners
- Lead on coordination of national evaluation capacity development (NECD) and on specific NECD initiatives

Regional Level

Regional Evaluation Advisers (1 per region)						
EAPRO (Bangkok)	ECAR (Geneva)	ESARO (Nairobi)	LACRO (Panama City)	MENA (Amman)	SAR (Kathmandu)	WCARO (Dakar)

Main responsibilities at regional level

- Management and conduct of thematic multi-country evaluations
- Management and conduct of L2 evaluations
- Management and conduct of Country Programme Evaluations
- Management and conduct of joint/inter-agency/system-wide evaluations at regional level
- Support to specific global and decentralized evaluations
- Liaison with regional-level partners
- Contribution to strategic initiatives led by Evaluation Office
- Lead regional-level national evaluation capacity development (NECD) efforts

Country Level

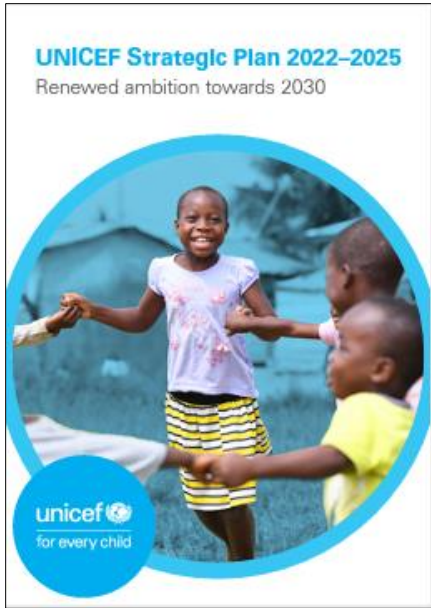
Country Evaluation Specialists and Multi-Country Evaluation Specialists
(large variations in capacity, size and programmatic focus)

Main responsibilities at country level

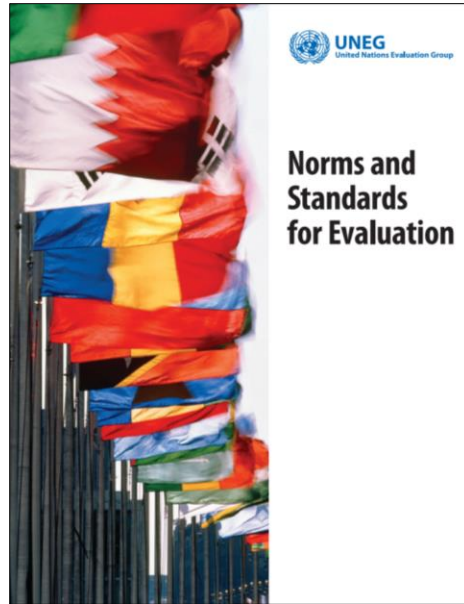
- Management and conduct of thematic evaluations, impact evaluations, and other evaluative exercises
- Management and conduct of L1 evaluations
- Management and conduct of joint/inter-agency/system-wide evaluations at country level
- Liaison with country-level partners (government, CSOs, NGOs, UNCT members)
- Contribution to strategic initiatives led by Evaluation Office
- Conduct of non-evaluation analytical exercises (e.g., reviews, studies, research)
- Lead country-level national evaluation capacity development (NECD) efforts

Normative foundations of the evaluation function

Revised in 2023, took effect 1 Jan 2024

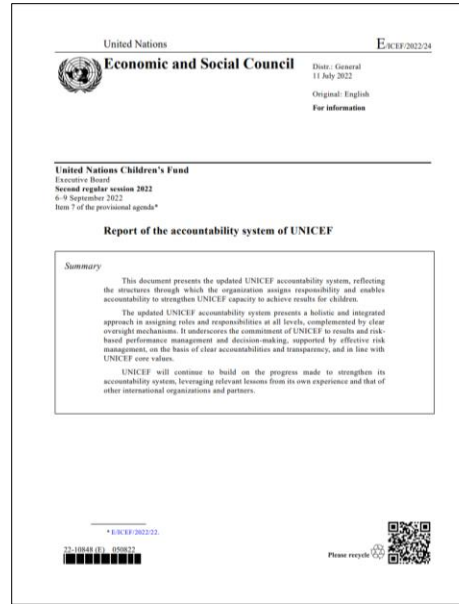


Sets the overall strategic direction for the wider organization, pointing us to the areas we will cover in our evaluations in a given quadrennium – the programmatic priorities, the overall strategic direction, and the specific strategies envisioned

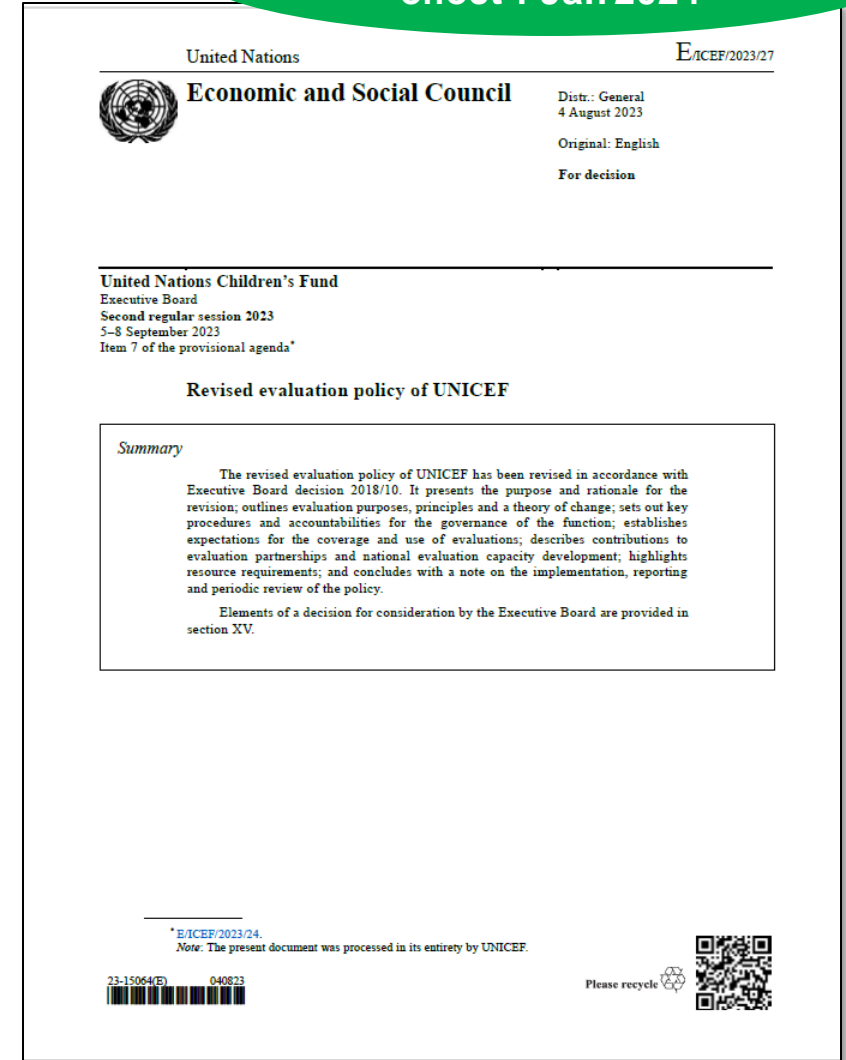


Applies internationally established principles to the unique context of the UN system, which we follow (and by which we are held to account): **Independence, Credibility, Utility**

Defines the specific evaluation criteria that are to be applied in our evaluations: **Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, Coherence, Sustainability, etc.** *



Describes the broader accountability system of UNICEF within which evaluation plays its accountability role, namely by promoting organizational accountability (for results, to children, before its partners – including the Executive Board)



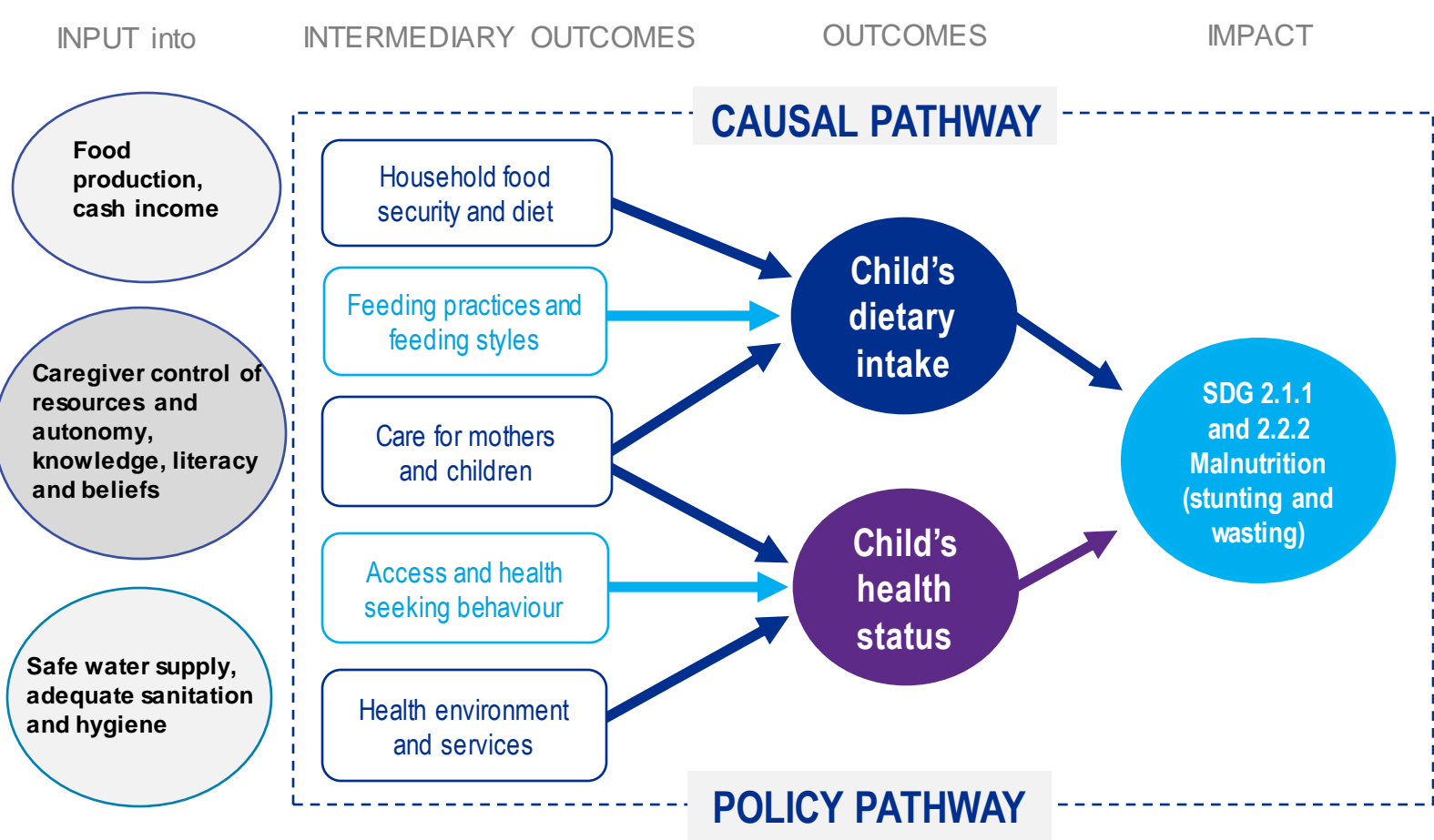
Sets the overall direction for how the function will fulfil its accountability and learning role in the most impactful way, and in line with the UNEG norms and standards, over a five-year period

The questions evaluation asks about UNICEF's performance

UNEG Evaluation Criterion	Overarching Evaluation Question
Relevance	To what extent are we doing the right things to address the problem or issue at hand?
Coherence	How well have we worked on the problem or issue in a well-integrated manner in relation to our partners, in relation to our other programmes and initiatives, and other aspects?
Effectiveness	To what extent have we achieved the positive outcomes we intended to achieve? What if any unintended outcomes have we realized, whether positive or negative?
Impact	To what extent have our contributions resulted in long-term material change in the lives of those we serve?
Efficiency	How well have we managed our financial, human and physical assets, as well as partnerships, in pursuit of results?
Sustainability	To what extent are the positive effects/impacts achieved likely to last, based on current and anticipated conditions, and especially when we stop providing the initiative at hand?
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How systematically and meaningfully have we integrated the lenses of gender, disability, and other sources of inequity into our work in this area?• The <i>Why?</i> Question – i.e., What factors (internal and external) were most influential on outcomes?

Example: The evaluation lens applied to child malnutrition

Theory of Change for UNICEF's contribution to ending child malnutrition (SDG 2.1.1, 2.2.2)



UNEG Evaluation Criterion	Overarching Evaluation Questions (Example Questions)
Relevance	To what extent are we doing the right things to address the issue based on, e.g., established international standards, the state of the knowledge of what works, the specific population context?
Coherence	How well have we worked on the issue in a well-integrated manner , e.g., in addressing the health- and nutrition-aspects of the problem, between the physiological and behavioural science spheres, in a well-coordinated way with government and our other partners?
Effectiveness	To what extent have our contributions actually helped increase children's dietary intake and improve their health status in the short to medium term?
Impact	To what extent have our contributions to improved health and nutrition actually helped reduce malnutrition in the longer term?
Efficiency	How well have we managed our financial, human and physical assets, as well as partnerships , in pursuit of results?
Sustainability	To what extent are the positive effects/impacts achieved likely to last , based on current and anticipated conditions?
Other: equity, coordination, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How systematically and meaningfully have we integrated the lenses of gender, disability, and other sources of inequity into our work in this area? What unintended results have resulted from our work (whether positive or negative)? The Why? Question—i.e., What factors (internal and external) were most influential on outcomes?

Key evaluation stakeholders

Internal evaluation users

Office of the Executive Director

Staff and management of evaluation programmes, projects and policies, and their stakeholders

Knowledge management function

Other knowledge functions

Evaluation governance

Audit Advisory Committee

Executive Board

External evaluation partners

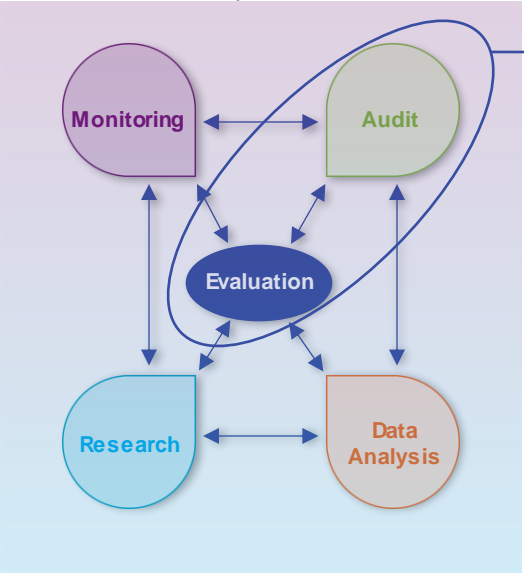
UN agency counterparts

National governments

Civil society organizations

Non-governmental Organizations

Affected populations – including, and especially, children



- **The Director of Evaluation presents to the Executive Board:** (a) the results of specific evaluations, (b) the Annual Report on the Evaluation Function, and (c) other documents and updates on request (e.g., the quadrennial Plan for Global Evaluations every 4 years and the Revised Evaluation Policy every 5 years) for its discussion and decision.
- **The Director of Evaluation consults the Executive Board** on various matters (e.g., policy revision) and **Executive Board members can seek ad hoc discussions with the Director of Evaluation** on any matters.
- **The Executive Board is consulted** on the appointment of a new Director of Evaluation.

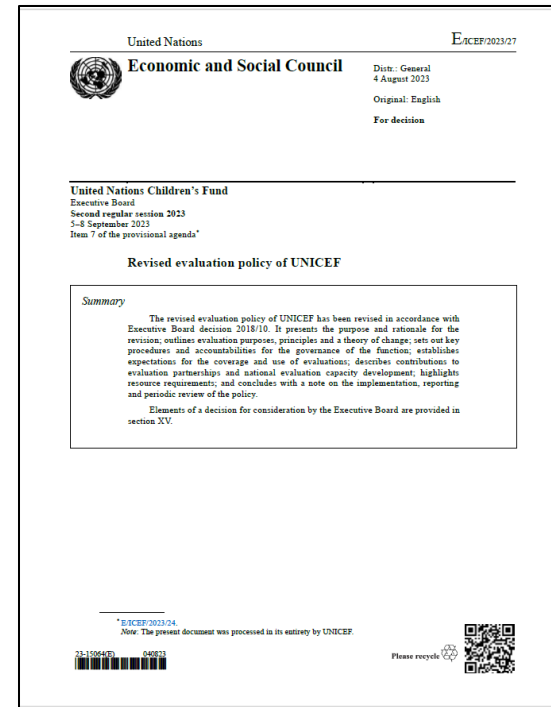
Revised evaluation policy of UNICEF (2023)

Six main policy shifts

For particular
Executive Board
attention



- Continued progress toward the 1% evaluation expenditure target
- Strengthen the independence of the evaluation function: Independent midterm evaluation of independence-strengthening measures in 2025
- Board role in appointment and termination of the Director of Evaluation



1

MORE EXPLICIT FRAMING OF THE POLICY
in terms of principles rather than SOPs

2

SHARPENED FOCUS ON PRIORITIZING THE MOST STRATEGICALLY RELEVANT EVALUATIONS
while demarcating evaluation from other exercises

3

STRENGTHENED INDEPENDENCE
within the decentralized model and the many benefits this model entails

4

GREATER NUANCE ON THE RESOURCING ISSUE
while the institutional commitment to evaluation remains firmly intact

5

HEIGHTENED EMPHASIS ON INTERNAL & EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIP
To more effectively and efficiently “move the needle” for children through evaluation

6

MORE AMBITIOUS COMMITMENTS in two new areas for UNICEF: national evaluation capacity development and impact evaluation

Thank you.

unicef 
for every child

