Professional Peer Review of the Evaluation Function
UN-Habitat

Presentation of key findings
Nairobi, April 2012

Why professional peer reviews of evaluation functions in multilateral agencies

• Introduced in 2004, by OECD/DAC evaluation network and UNEG, to harmonize evaluation practice in the UN
• To establish credibility of evaluation functions/reports and decrease the need for external donor evaluations
• Enhance knowledge about, confidence in, and use of evaluations (governing bodies and senior management)
• Provide independent assessment
Background

• Conducted jointly by DAC/UNEG in line with the UNEG Framework for Professional Peer-Reviews of Evaluation Functions in UN Organizations (2011)
• Its approach reflects lessons learned from peer-reviews conducted since 2005 in UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, OIOS, GEF and UNIDO.
• UN Habitat volunteered to go through the peer-review in 2011.

Purpose

• Assess the evaluation function in UN Habitat against the UNEG Norms and Standards.
• Enhance the use of evaluations in the organization
• Improve the evaluation policy and practice, including stronger planning and resourcing of evaluation
• Support the efforts to ensure greater acceptance and integration of evaluations in the performance management system of the organization
The Peer Review team

- Margareta de Goys, Director, Evaluation Group, UNIDO (Chair)
- Dominique de Crombrugghe, Special Evaluator for Development Cooperation, MOFA, Belgium
- Oscar Garcia, Senior Evaluation Advisor, UNDP, Evaluation Office
- Roland Rodts, evaluation consultant, Advisor to the Peer Panel.

Core question

“Are the agency’s evaluation function and its products independent, credible and useful for learning and accountability purposes?”
## Framework

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<th>What is evaluated?</th>
<th>How are evaluations conducted?</th>
<th>How are evaluations communicated and used?</th>
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<td>INDEPENDENCE</td>
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<td>CREDIBILITY</td>
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### Peer-review process

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<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation of approach paper</td>
<td>July/August 2011</td>
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<td>Desk review of relevant documents</td>
<td>September 2011</td>
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<td>Self-assessment UN-Habitat</td>
<td>October 2011</td>
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<td>Mission to UN-Habitat for data collection and discussing preliminary findings</td>
<td>October 2011</td>
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<td>Survey and additional interviews</td>
<td>November 2011</td>
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<td>Report writing</td>
<td>November-December 2011</td>
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<td>Circulation for comments</td>
<td>January 2012</td>
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<td>Incorporation of comments</td>
<td>February/March 2012</td>
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<td>Issuance Final Report</td>
<td>April 2012</td>
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<td>Presentation of Final Report in Nairobi</td>
<td>April 2012</td>
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Main findings

• Evaluation is increasing in importance and the ongoing reform process with increased results-orientation and accountability expected to further strengthen its position
• MEU responsible for both M&E and reporting, with more time and resources dedicated to monitoring
• Not in line with best UN practice
• No transparent allocation of financial resources for evaluation
• Limited resources devoted to evaluations
• Commitment of senior management to strengthen function and separate M&E seen as positive

Main findings

• There is no Evaluation Policy in place and no clear roles and responsibilities for managing and conducting evaluations.
• The future location of evaluation of the evaluation uncertain-Office of Executive Director? Executive Office?
• Evaluations are indistinctly commissioned by MEU, programme units and donors.
• No clarity on total number of evaluations conducted during period under review.
• These have implications on independence, credibility and utility
Independence

• Reporting line to the Executive Director (separate from line management) which entails progress towards functional independence.
• Evaluation function does not have evaluation budget under its control
• The number of evaluation conducted is small and coverage limited
• Evaluations are conducted transparently without interference of management and seen as independent.
• Evaluation reports are available on the external website

Independence

• Evaluation programme of work is largely determined outside MEU (CPR, donors, senior and programme management).
• Independence is constrained by inadequate transparency in allocation of and control over human and financial resources for evaluation.
• The results of evaluations are not communicated by MEU directly to senior management and to governing bodies
Credibility

• Evaluations are perceived as credible, complete, transparent, balanced and of satisfactorily quality.
• Quantity and quality of evaluations conducted outside the MEU is not known.
• There are areas in UN Habitat that were not sufficiently evaluated, thus affecting institutional credibility.
• Gender issues are not systematically mainstreamed

Credibility

• Practice of recruiting evaluation staff externally is good
• Evaluators are competent, however the roster of evaluators is limited.
• A quality assurance system is in place
• Stakeholder consultations could be broader
• Concern about future staffing and funding of the Evaluation Office to credibly carry out its function.
Utility

- Evaluations are considered influential and useful.
- Findings feed into new projects and phases
- Little attention to strategic evaluations thus marginal influence on policy and strategy formulation
- Few synthesis reports or reports highlighting lessons learned
- Only a few evaluations were conducted at country level or of pilot initiatives.
- Coverage of evaluation is not fully representative of UN Habitat work (emergencies, country level, …)

Utility

- The management response system is in place but requires further clarification and designation of follow up responsibilities
- No systematic reporting on recurrent and strategic findings, lessons learned and implementation of recommendations
- Evaluations make insufficient contribution to knowledge management and to strategy and policy development
Conclusions

• The evaluation function is not fully independent.
• Evaluations are conducted in a credible manner in compliance with UNEG Norms and Standards.
• Scope and coverage is limited.
• Evaluations have been influential in promoting organizational change.
• The utility in terms of providing evaluative evidence for organizational learning and strategy formulation has been limited.
• The commitment of senior management and governing bodies to strengthen the evaluation function is an asset on which UN Habitat can rely.

Key Recommendations

• An Evaluation Policy, aligned to UNEG Norms and Standards should be approved and endorsed by the governing council
• The Policy should spell out guiding principles, types of evaluations covered, roles and responsibilities.
• The Evaluation Office should be under the direct authority of the Executive Director and have a direct reporting line to the CPR
• The human resource capacity should be strengthened and encompass a minimum of three professional staff
Specific recommendations

• Establish mechanisms to identify strategic priorities and independently determine the evaluation programme of work
• Ensure predictability and an adequate and transparent allocation of financial resources for evaluation and its independent management
• Budgeted annual work plans should be put in place
• There should be more evaluations in terms of volume and coverage

Next steps – how can we support the process

• Management response – report on progress
• Support the change process, including evaluation
• Empower the evaluation function - provision of resources and promoting the independence to determine its programme of work
• Review and endorse the Evaluation Policy
• Be the guardian of the Evaluation Policy
• Systematic briefings to governing bodies
Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the United Nations system

• www.uneval.org