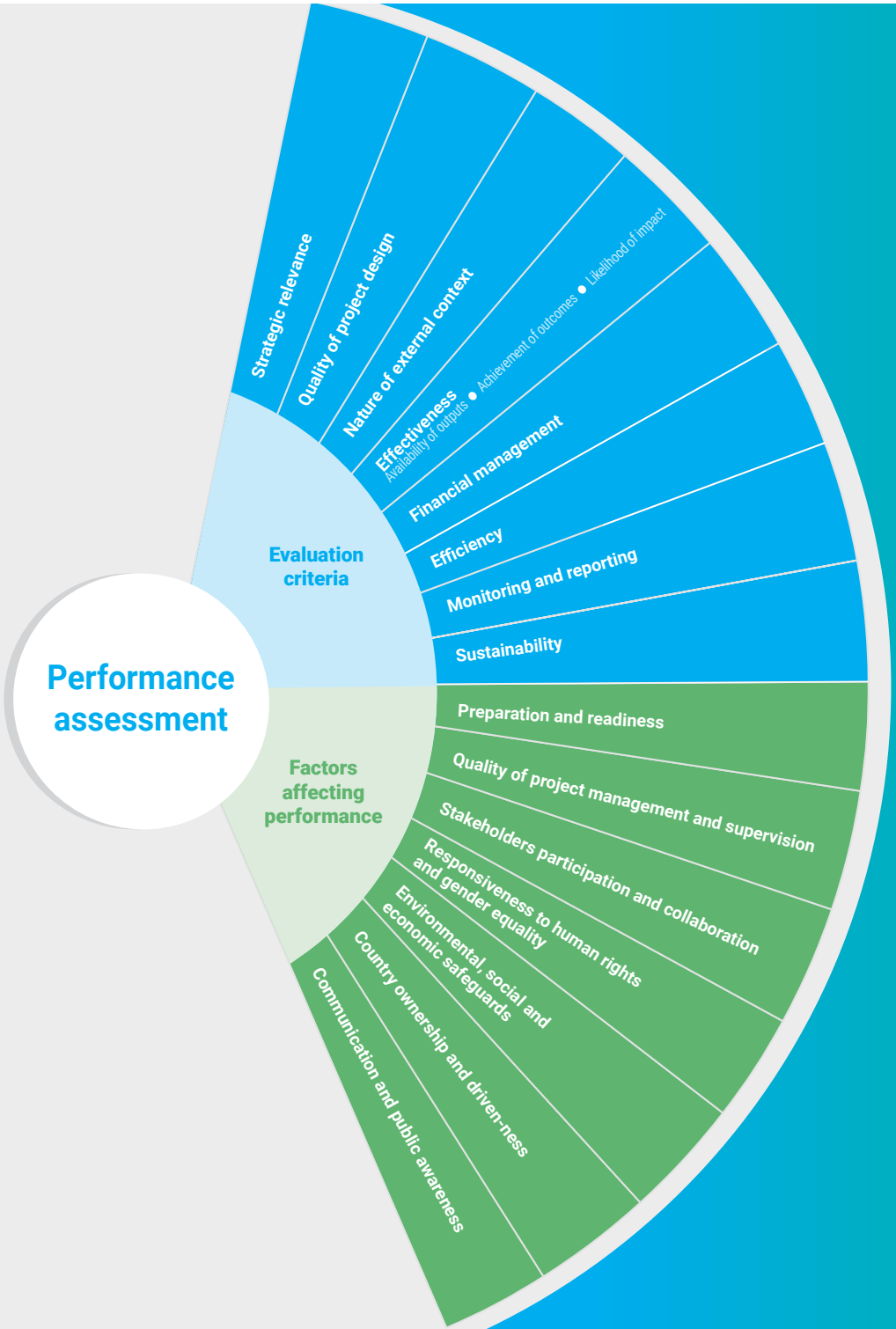
Evaluation Office
UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

UN environment programme

Evaluation Manual



Revised June 2022

This manual is a product of the Evaluation Office of UNEP.
It is managed and regularly updated by the Evaluation Office.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CPR	Committee of Permanent Representatives
CSD	Corporate Services Division
DED	Deputy Executive Director
DSA	Daily Subsistence Allowance
ED	Executive Director
EOU	Evaluation Office of UNEP
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
IPMR	Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting (UN)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTR	Mid Term Review
MTS	Medium-Term Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PIMS	Programme Information and Management System (UNEP)
PoW	Programme of Work
PPD	Policy and Programme Division
PPMM	Programme and Project Management Manual
PRC	Project Review Committee (internal UNEP committee that approves new projects)
ProDoc	Project Document (must be reviewed by PRC before any project can be undertaken, with the approval of the managing Division Director)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SMT	Senior Management Team
SPC	Sub-Programme Coordinator
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEG	United Nations Evaluations Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNDA	United Nations Development Account
XB	Extra-budgetary

Glossary of Terms

Audit	An official inspection, typically by an independent body that will review and appraise the use of financial resources to ascertain the compliance of managers with the financial and administrative regulations and rules.
Evaluand	The subject/unit of analysis for an evaluation, usually a project, programme, portfolio, strategy or policy.
Evaluation	An assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of a project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. In UNEP, only the Evaluation Office has a mandate to conduct evaluation.
Management-led Review	An assessment, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or strategy that is undertaken by management.
Monitoring	Monitoring is a continuous function providing managers and key stakeholders with regular feedback on the consistency or discrepancy between planned and actual activities and project/programme performance and on the internal and external factors affecting results.
Operational Completion	This is the time when all project activities cease and no further expenditure on project activities occurs, other than evaluation/review process expenditure.
Performance Assessment	In the context of this manual a project performance assessment can take the form on an evaluation overseen by the Evaluation Office or a review undertaken by project or programme managers.
Project Closure	This the point at which a project is formally closed. All financial accounting, and expenditure on audit and evaluation processes must be complete before closure.
Reporting	Written statements in a specific format that capture project/programme implementation progress to meet corporate or funding partner requirements

1. Introduction

Evaluation in UNEP

Evaluation in UNEP promotes learning and accountability and is a key source of credible, timely, evidence-based information for decision-making.

UNEP is held accountable for the quality and delivery of its work through evaluations and other performance assessments. The Evaluation Office conducts complementary evaluations at various levels that examine the different projects, programmes, policies, strategies and themes within UNEP's Programme of Work.

Who is the Manual for?

This manual is intended for use by all UNEP staff involved in the delivery of the Programme of Work. It especially targets staff designing projects, Project/Task Managers (referred to hereinafter as Project Managers), and Portfolio Managers/Branch and Unit Heads. It also provides guidance to Evaluation Office staff and evaluation consultants and serves to inform external partners and stakeholders (e.g. auditors, funding partners etc).

Why an Evaluation Manual?

This manual serves to articulate guidelines, rules, requirements and processes for operationalising *UNEP's Evaluation Policy*, 2022.

Evaluation in UNEP operates independently of operational management arrangements; it is important for the impartiality and credibility of its work that the Evaluation Office is not dependent on UNEP Management to specify evaluation rules, requirements and processes in official documentation.

This Evaluation Manual supercedes all previous versions and is consistent with the UNEP Evaluation Policy approved in October 2022. This manual is intended to complement and inform the Programme and Project Management Manual (PPMM).

How to Use the Manual

The Evaluation Manual is complemented by a suite of interactive guidance material that provides detailed information on selected topics. This material is available in the form of guidance notes, templates and tools.

When a document is cited as "internal" or "intranet", it can only be accessed by UNEP officials. Non-UNEP officials may request a copy of such documents by sending an email to unep-evaluation-director@un.org

Summary of Contents

The manual is organised into five Sections.

- Section 1 this section, provides a brief introduction and an overview of the manual contents.
- Section 2 provides an overview of the principles and rationale guiding evaluations in UNEP and aims to clarify basic concepts. It serves as an introduction to explain the added value of evaluation to the organization and its staff in the context of results-based management.
- Section 3 provides guidance on evaluation-related issues throughout the project cycle from project design, inception and implementation. The section aims to inform Project Managers of performance assessment (evaluation or review) responsibilities and requirements in their daily work.
- Section 4 describes evaluation processes from their design and inception through to their completion and the associated evaluation follow-up, dissemination and reporting processes. The section aims to inform evaluation/review consultant experts and Evaluation Office staff.
- Section 5 provides a summary of evaluation roles and responsibilities across UNEP.

Reminder on Guidance and Templates: *For direct access to online resources, guidelines and templates that are useful when carrying out evaluations or management-led reviews in UNEP, hover your cursor over items highlighted in italics in this manual.*

2. The UNEP Evaluation Function

UNEP Evaluation Function

The Evaluation Office is the central coordinating unit of the UNEP evaluation function. Independently, it plans, conducts and follows up on evaluations that report on UNEP's performance in implementing the Medium-Term Strategy and Programme of Work. In addition to project-level evaluations, the Evaluation Office carries out strategic and cross-cutting thematic evaluations including sub-programme evaluations, impact evaluations/studies, programme/portfolio evaluations and joint evaluations.

What is Evaluation?

UNEP ascribes to the definition of evaluations set out by the *United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)* "an evaluation is an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders."

Evaluation in UNEP

Evaluations in UNEP are conducted solely by the Evaluation Office. Evaluations are undertaken independently of UNEP Management and comply with UNEG Norms and Standards.

Definition of Management-led Review

Assessments of projects, programmes, strategies, policies, topics, themes or sectors that are commissioned and overseen by UNEP staff outside of the Evaluation Office are termed management-led reviews.

In UNEP these are most commonly either Mid-Term Management-led Reviews or *Terminal Management-led Reviews* of projects.

Why Evaluate?

Evaluation serves three main purposes.

- Evidence-based decision-making: Evaluation supports better decision-making. It should inform planning, programming, budgeting, project design, implementation and reporting and contribute to evidence-based policymaking and organizational effectiveness. Evaluation and feedback are critical to effective results-based management.
- Learning: A strong culture of evaluation is a prerequisite for a learning organization. Evaluation helps UNEP to learn from experience and better understand why – and to what extent – intended and unintended results were achieved and to analyse the implications of the results. This learning can be the driver for innovation and continuous improvement.
- Accountability: Evaluation is an integral part of the accountability framework and constitutes an important source of evidence for understanding organizational performance. The transparent reporting of evaluation results enhances Member States' confidence in UNEP's ability to deliver on the mandates entrusted to it.

Evaluation Principles, Norms, Standards and Criteria

Evaluations in UNEP are guided by principles and practices at the core of international evaluation good practice for high-quality evaluation as set out in the *UNEG Norms and Standards, UNEG Ethical Guidelines* and the *UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation*. UNEP conforms to these norms, standards, codes and guidance in the design, management and conduct of evaluations, and throughout the structures and operations of the evaluation function.

The UNEG norms for evaluation are: **utility, credibility, independence, impartiality, professionalism, ethics, transparency, human rights and gender equality.** These norms and standards are set out in the Evaluation Policy.

Evaluation Criteria

As specified in the Evaluation Policy, evaluations of UNEP projects and programmes assess performance by applying a consistent set of commonly applied evaluation criteria and a set of factors affecting performance as listed in Table 1. Detailed description of the scope and focus of these criteria are specified in *Tool 01*.

Table 1: Evaluation criteria and factors affecting performance

Evaluation criteria	Factors affecting performance
Strategic relevance **Quality of project design** **Nature of external context** **Effectiveness – incorporating** • availability of outputs • achievement of outcomes • likelihood of impact **Financial management** **Efficiency** **Monitoring and reporting** **Sustainability**	**Preparation and readiness** **Quality of project management and supervision** **Stakeholders participation and collaboration** **Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality** **Environmental, social and economic safeguards** **Country ownership and driven-ness** **Communication and public awareness**

Most evaluation criteria are rated on a six-point scale as follows: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact are rated from Highly Likely (HL) down to Highly Unlikely (HU) and Nature of External Context[1] is rated from Highly Favourable (HF) to Highly Unfavourable (HU). The ratings against each criterion are 'weighted' to derive the Overall Project Performance Rating. The greatest weight is placed on the achievement of outcomes, followed by dimensions of sustainability.

In accordance with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, UNEP evaluations consider the human rights dimensions, including non-discrimination, inclusion and equality issues as appropriate, across all evaluation criteria. In particular, the Evaluation Office recognizes the importance of gender equality, both as a human right and as a fundamental dimension of development.[2]

Types of Evaluation in UNEP

Strategic and Thematic Evaluations

Evaluations of the PoW and MTS design and implementation

The Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) can be evaluated at three stages during its four-year cycle: formative stage, mid-term and end of cycle. A formative evaluation may be used to inform planning processes and to enhance the quality of MTS-related planning documents, a mid-term evaluation may provide operational feedback on progress during MTS implementation whilst a final evaluation can provide an assessment of results against the expected achievements. These evaluations will be undertaken periodically taking into account the demand for them from senior management and member states.

Meta-evaluation—Biennial Evaluation Synthesis Report

At the end of each biennium the Evaluation Office prepares a Biennial Evaluation Synthesis Report. This report summarises the performance of the organization through trends and patterns observed during the biennium from completed evaluations at all levels. The patterns and trends are used to identify recommendations and lessons that are brought to the attention of, and discussed with, UNEP Senior Management Team (SMT). The report constitutes an intercessional document for the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and is disseminated to Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) members, national governments and UNEP staff.

1 The rating of the criterion Nature of External Context is used, during the Evaluation Inception period, to determine whether there is sound reason to adjust the level of ambition of the project following an unanticipated crisis during project implementation (e.g. conflict, natural disasters and/or political upheaval). The rating against this criterion is not included in the overall project performance rating.

2 UNEP Evaluations also recognise the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

Sub-Programme Evaluations

The Evaluation Office aims to evaluate all sub-programmes over a six-year period. Sub-programme evaluations examine the relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and efficiency of the delivery of a sub-programme. These evaluations make use of relevant strategic, portfolio, programme and project level evaluations and validated management-led reviews to help assess the overall performance and results of a sub-programme. As UNEP's sub-programmes cut across organisational management structures, the coordination and cooperation among and between UNEP divisions and regional offices is examined. The evaluations also assess the efficiency and utility of collaborative and partnership arrangements with UN bodies, intergovernmental organizations, international, regional and national non-governmental organizations, scientific and environmental centres, private sector organizations, networks and groups.

Thematic Evaluations

Thematic evaluations are carried out for cross-cutting issues to: support the strategic development of the organization as a whole and to enhance synergies across divisions and offices; strengthen UNEP's comparative advantage; and to ensure that UNEP remains at the forefront of environmental and development issues. The Evaluation Office also undertakes strategic evaluations at corporate level of cross-cutting themes in response to stakeholder demand.

Project, Programmatic and Portfolio Evaluations

Project Evaluations

Project-level performance assessments are usually performed at the mid-point and at the end of project implementation. Such assessments, when independently commissioned and managed by the UNEP Evaluation Office are termed **evaluations**. When project-level performance assessments are conducted within Divisions and Regional Offices, they are referred to as **management-led reviews.**

Project evaluations in UNEP take Project Review Committee (PRC) approved projects, which include UNEP, GEF, GCF and Adaptation Fund projects, as the unit of analysis. Project evaluations occur at mid-point (Mid-Term) and at operational completion (Terminal). Project-level evaluations aim to assess project relevance and performance and determine the outcomes/results stemming from the project. They provide judgments on actual and potential results, their sustainability and the operational efficiency of implementation and factors that affected performance. Project-level evaluations issue recommendations that are tracked for compliance. They also identify lessons of operational relevance for future project design and implementation. Project level evaluations feed into evaluations of programmes, portfolios and sub-programmes.

Terminal Evaluations of projects are undertaken at/after operational completion by external evaluators that are contracted by the Evaluation Office. They assess the overall performance of the project with respect to its agreed intent.

Mid-Term Evaluations are undertaken approximately half-way through the implementation of projects that have a duration greater than four years.[3] These evaluations analyse whether a project is on track, what problems and challenges the project is encountering and identify any corrective actions that may be required.

Terminal and Mid-Term project evaluations may be conducted by the Evaluation Office if it elects to do so, and projects are selected on an annual basis by the Evaluation Office. Where a project performance assessment is required according to internal UNEP or external donor requirements, and the project has not been selected for evaluation by the Evaluation Office, a **management-led review** will be conducted. The responsibility for reviews rests with Project/Programme Managers. All projects and programmes must include a budgetary provision from secured resources to support the costs of independent evaluations/management-led reviews.

Portfolio and Programmatic Evaluations

When a cluster of thematically related projects require evaluation the Evaluation Office may, in the interests of cost efficiency, conduct a portfolio/programme evaluation where the performance of the cluster of projects is evaluated in a single exercise. Portfolio/programme evaluations may offer additional learning opportunities from the differing operational contexts or intervention strategies that often occur across projects. In addition to assessing and rating performance of the individual projects in the portfolio/programme, the evaluation will also assess whether opportunities for collaboration,

3 Some funding partners, such as the GEF, GCF and Adaptation Fund, have different guidance for which projects are required to carry out mid-point performance assessments.

complementarity and synergy have been fully exploited and whether duplication of effort has been avoided among the projects.

Impact Studies and Impact Evaluations

Impact evaluations attempt to determine the entire range of effects[4] of the programme/project activity on the environment and human living conditions, including unforeseen and longer-term effects as well as effects beyond the immediate target group/area. They attempt to establish the amount of such change that is attributable to the intervention. The focus is on evaluating progress towards high-level goals and providing estimates of development impact. They are particularly useful in assessing the overall performance of a project/programme in achieving long-term improvement in the quality of the environment and human living conditions and for assessing the sustainability of the impact against stated objectives. Impact evaluations are often expensive due to the resources required to conduct them and usually require robust baselines, special monitoring/design provisions and dedicated resources to be included at the time of the design of the project in the Project Document or Programme.

Impact studies are carried out where the causal link between the results at project outcome level and long-lasting impact has already been well-established in peer-reviewed science (e.g. levels of greenhouse gas emissions caused by different fuel types). In such a study the evaluation attempts to find evidence that there is a causal relationship between the intervention (project/programme etc.) and the outcome. Once the contribution to the outcome(s) has been established, the study relies on the relationship between the outcome and the impact metric (that has been established by peer reviewed science) to estimate the overall effect (impact). The approach to both impact evaluations and impact studies will be selective, initiatives where the magnitude of the effect and the attributive ease are both high being an obvious first priority.

Post-project impact evaluations/impact studies are conducted on a selective basis with the objective of learning lessons or demonstrating significant benefits in line with UNEP's strategic objectives.

Joint and External Project/Portfolio Evaluations

Where UNEP is involved in the joint implementation of a project or programme, a joint evaluation may be undertaken in collaboration with the evaluation function of the agency, donor or partner. When UNEP does not play a lead role in a joint evaluation, the Evaluation Office makes every feasible effort to ensure UNEP's minimum evaluation requirements[5] and quality standards with regards to performance criteria and use of ratings are met.

Evaluation Report Quality Assurance

The Evaluation Office is responsible for the quality of all UNEP evaluation reports, their findings and recommendations. The Evaluation Office implements rigorous quality assurance processes to ensure: i) the quality of, and adherence to, the terms of reference[6], ii) that the evaluation process is in-line with UNEG Norms and Standards and follows *UNEP guidance*, iii) that the quality of an evaluation report meets UN system, and internationally agreed, evaluation standards, and iv) meets UNEP's evaluation quality standards.

Evaluation quality assurance includes: Opportunities for key stakeholders to comment on the evaluation approach, theory of change and methods in the draft inception report, highlight any factual inaccuracies in draft evaluation reports, an internal peer review process among evaluation professionals within the Evaluation Office, and, for larger more complex or strategic evaluations, may also utilise an Evaluation Reference Group of internal and external stakeholders/experts as an added quality assurance measure. Formal assessments of *evaluation report quality (Tool 19)* are recorded by evaluation managers for draft and final evaluation reports.

The Evaluation Office continues to refine methods for evaluations, set standards and guidelines for evaluations, and to ensure that these are followed within the organization. In addition, UNEP evaluation reports are, periodically, subject to external independent expert assessments of report quality.

Validation of Management-led Terminal Reviews

The Evaluation Office undertakes a **validation** exercise for all final performance assessments/reports conducted through management-led terminal reviews (MLTR) of

4 There are often significant time lags for long term effects to become evident. Therefore, impact evaluations often analyse interventions with causal effects that occur beyond the duration of a PoW.

5 Minimum requirements require assessments of; Strategic Relevance, Effectiveness (including outcomes and impact), Efficiency and Sustainability)

6 Contact the Evaluation Office for Evaluation Terms of References

projects and programmes. Terminal Review validations undertaken by the Evaluation Office examine the evidence presented within a review report and assess whether it is consistent with the *standards of evidence for performance ratings (Tool 02)* presented in Evaluation Office published guidance. The Evaluation Office assesses whether the review report complies with Evaluation Office *guidance, formats and requirements* and arrives at its own judgment regarding the *quality of the review report*.

Evaluation Coverage Planning and Selection

Evaluation Plan Preparation and Approval

The selection of evaluations is driven by the need to assess UNEP's performance in implementing the Programme of Work and to represent its key features in terms of; themes, sub-programmes, operational divisions/offices, geographic distribution of efforts and funding sources. All work carried out under the Programme of Work is subject to evaluation irrespective of the source of funding.

The annual evaluation plan is prepared by the Director of Evaluation that identifies specific strategic and thematic evaluations to be conducted and provides an indicative list of project-level evaluations. However, the list of project-level evaluations to be undertaken may be subject to revision due to unforeseen operational changes to project implementation timelines (e.g. no cost extensions). The annual evaluation plan is endorsed by the Executive Director.

Sub-programme, Strategic and Thematic Evaluations Planning and Selection

The Evaluation Office selects evaluation subjects after consideration of the strategic relevance/significance, internal and external demand, required timeliness for decision-making, risks, knowledge gaps and evaluability/ feasibility of each potential evaluand.

Sub-programme evaluations are conducted such that all are evaluated within a six-year period. The sub-programmes with the longest elapsed time since the preceding sub-programme evaluation take priority. The order for evaluation of sub-programmes is set in the PoW. Thematic evaluations are identified and selected on the basis of issues highlighted by Senior Management or identified by the Evaluation Office from its evaluative work. The number and scope of thematic evaluations in the annual evaluation plan is dependent on the available staff of the Evaluation Office and budgetary resources.

Project and Portfolio Evaluation Planning and Selection

Project-level evaluations managed by the Evaluation Office are selected purposively to reflect UNEP's strategic intentions and results' commitments.

In preparing its annual evaluation plan the Evaluation Office sends a request in the fourth quarter of the preceding year, for information on upcoming project completions. The request is sent/copied to Project Performance Assessment Focal Points *(see Focal Points TOR)* and all relevant staff across UNEP Divisions, Regions and Offices. The Evaluation Office collates the information received from the Project Performance Assessment Focal Points and requests verification of the final lists from Divisional and Regional Directors.

Selection criteria for independent project evaluations

Once the Evaluation Office has a complete list of the projects scheduled to reach operational completion in the coming year, a selection is made as to which projects will be independently evaluated and which will require management-led reviews.

Selection of a project for evaluation by the Evaluation Office is more likely where:

- Projects make a large contribution to the UNEP PoW results framework.
- Projects contribute to parts of the UNEP PoW that have had less evaluative attention in the recent past.
- Projects that, together with others, form a coherent portfolio/cluster evaluation.
- Projects that represent an area of work of strategic importance to UNEP, (either perceived to have contributed to past strategic achievements or anticipated to play a strategic role in the near future).
- Among Global Environment Facility (GEF) projects, when UNEP acts as both the Implementing and Executing Agency; or projects that coordinate a GEF programme.
- Projects that are implemented in geographic regions that have previously been less evaluated and/or projects managed by Regional Offices.
- Projects that fall under the scope of upcoming strategic evaluations (e.g. Sub-programme evaluations).

Selection of a project for evaluation by the Evaluation Office is less likely where:

- Organisational units and the work of Project/Task Managers have been exposed to frequent evaluation in the past.
- Projects have been evaluated frequently in previous phases.
- Projects have output-oriented designs.
- Projects have low levels of expenditure.
- A GEF Project is a 'Child Project' within a GEF Programme.

Notifying Project Managers/Task Managers

Once the Evaluation Office has completed the selection process, each Project Manager/Task Manager/Portfolio Manager is informed of the decision pertaining to each project under their management authority. The decisions are communicated to the relevant Branch/Unit Heads, Portfolio Managers, Sub-programme and GEF/GCF/UNDA Coordinating offices within UNEP.

Reporting—Internal and External

The Evaluation Office regularly reports on the implementation of its annual evaluation plan to the Executive Director.

Internal Feedback to Management

The Evaluation Office prepares a report for distribution to the Senior Management Team every six months (July and January as part of the Quarterly Business Review), the report covers findings, lessons and recommendations of broad strategic relevance from completed evaluations. The report also covers UNEP management's compliance with evaluation policy requirements especially those relating to preparation of evaluation management responses and associated recommendation implementation compliance levels.

Reporting to the Committee of Permanent Representatives

The Evaluation Office reports to the Annual Subcommittee of the Committee of Permanent Representatives through a regular agenda item to discuss evaluation issues. The Director of the Evaluation Office also briefs the UNEA/CPR on evaluation plans, specific evaluation findings and evaluation recommendation compliance at regular meetings of the CPR.

Dissemination and Public Disclosure

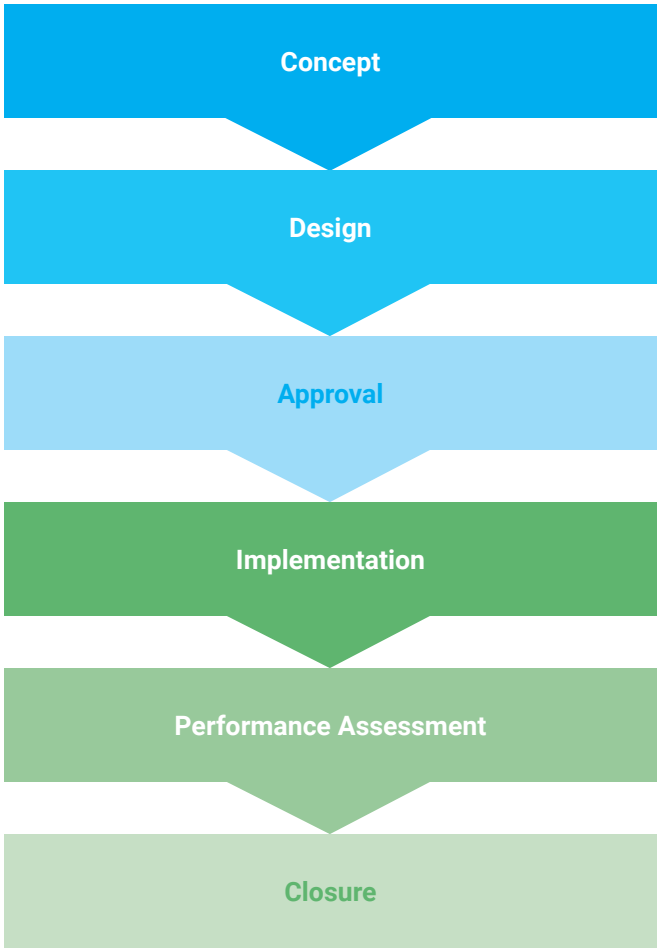
After the completion of evaluations, evaluation reports are disseminated to all evaluation stakeholders and made publicly available, with a formal management response, on the *Evaluation Office of UNEP website* and document repository. Management-led Mid-Term Review reports are internal to UNEP and published on the restricted access platforms of PIMS/ IPMR, whereas validated Management-led Terminal Review (MLTR) reports are available in UNEP's *Document Repository.*

3. Evaluation in the Project Cycle:
Concept, Design, Approval, Implementation, Performance Assessment and Closure

The project cycle in UNEP for most projects follows defined phases as shown in Figure 1. Evaluation is integral to the project cycle by:

- feeding valuable lessons from previous projects and programmes and input for the development of Theory of Change during **concept** development and **design**;
- ensuring evaluation requirements, including evaluation budgets, are met at the time of **approval**;
- assessing interim performance and suggesting corrective actions during **implementation**;
- assessing final performance and prescribing recommended action and identifying lessons at operational completion; and
- providing essential documentation in the form of evaluation reports with management responses to meet accountability requirements prior to **closure**.

Figure 1: Main phases in the project cycle



Project Concept, Design and Approval

Project Concept

Preliminary discussions and consultations at the concept stage regarding prospective project designs and development of Theory of Change should review *evaluation reports* from similar or related projects to provide additional insights and lessons. Evaluation briefs on common project issues and themes are available on the *Evaluation Office Website*. The *Biennial Evaluation Synthesis Report* also provides a useful and informative overview of recent evaluations.

Project Design

At the project design phase, the Project Document is developed. In the preparation of the Project Document, detailed information about the project's monitoring and evaluation plans is required, and on evaluation the Project Document should specify:

- the anticipated dates of mid-term and terminal evaluation/review
- the budget set aside from secured resources for mid-term and terminal evaluation/review
- arrangements for evaluation/review of the project at mid-point and at completion

These aspects and how to time evaluation/ review and estimate costs are further elaborated below.

Timing of Evaluation/Review

A mid-term review/evaluation is conducted immediately before the mid-point of the planned project duration. A mid-term performance assessment is a UNEP requirement for all projects under implementation for four years or more[7]. Where a project is formally revised or extended and the implementation period exceeds four years, a mid-term assessment must be included in the formal project revision including the commitment of secured funds to cover the direct costs of both the mid-term and terminal performance assessments (evaluation/review).

7 Some funding partners, such as the GEF, GCF and Adaptation Fund, have different guidance for which projects are required to carry out mid-point performance assessments.

Any UNEP PRC-approved project may be selected for a terminal evaluation. The Evaluation Office selects a set of projects for independent evaluation each year. All other projects prepare a management-led terminal review. Terminal Evaluations and Reviews commence after project operational completion. Terminal Evaluations/ Reviews cannot be launched earlier than three months prior to a project's operational completion. In cases where the launch of an evaluation or review has been prohibited by unavoidable circumstances for two years after the project's operational completion, the Evaluation Office may authorise the submission of a detailed Operational Completion Report to meet project performance assessment requirements.

Estimating Mid-Term and Terminal Evaluation/ Review costs in project budgets

At the time of project approval, all project documents must allocate sufficient secured resources to meet mid-point and terminal evaluation/review cost requirements. The evaluation/review budget should cover the direct costs (consultant fees, travel, subsistence, translation etc.) required to assess the performance of UNEP work—both at the mid-point, where appropriate, and at the time of operational completion *(see guidance note on setting an evaluation budget)*. In cases of jointly-implemented projects and where UNEP is to lead the evaluation, the entire (100%) the evaluation budget should be allocated to the UNEP budget.

Factors affecting evaluation/review costs

The costs associated with assessing the performance of a project are often affected more by the scope and complexity of work addressed by the project than the size of their secured funds (i.e. total project budget). The scope of work is assessed - in terms of:

- number/nature of technical sectors involved,
- range of outcomes and outputs,
- number/dispersal of implementing countries or sites, and
- the range of language bases covered etc.

These factors have the greatest effect on the composition of the Evaluation Team and, therefore, the required evaluation budget.

It is, however, often the case that as a project's secured funds increase during implementation, the scale of the project expands in a way that increases evaluation costs. There is, therefore, an expectation that projects with larger budgets will require larger evaluation budgets, but there is not a direct correlation between the two. As evaluations adopt a sampling approach to represent the implementation of a project's Theory of Change, there is a natural ceiling to evaluation budgets (e.g. only four countries might be visited for a project with eight implementing countries, thereby tending to limit the size of evaluation budgets).
At the project design phase, the evaluation/review budget is only an estimate.

The approximations used to reach a cost estimate are described below. Project revisions may affect the evaluation costs estimated in the original design documents. The actual costs of the evaluation/review are confirmed at the onset of the evaluation/review.

Consultant fees and travel

UNEP rates for consultant fees follow the *UN guidelines* and evaluation consultant roles as Principal Evaluator or Evaluation Specialist, typically fall into either category C (USD 390 – 560 per day) or category D (USD 620 – 720). The Evaluation Office make its estimates based on the top level of category C (i.e. USD 560 per day).

Where projects are implemented in a single country and focus on a single technical sector, it may be possible for a single consultant to undertake the evaluation with a single field visit of 5 -7 working days. This consultancy fees should be estimated at approximately 45-50 days.[8]

The cost of evaluation increases as the number of visits to implementing countries increases. For each additional country to be visited travel*/daily subsistence allowance (DSA)* costs are estimated at USD 5,000 for a 5 working day trip. The Evaluation Office does not expect evaluation consultants to visit every implementing country but rather, to visit a selection of countries that can represent the project's Theory of Change being implemented. For example, if 5 countries have been involved in a project, the evaluation consultant might visit 3 of them, each being a 'case' of the TOC being applied.

\+ Add USD 5,000 per country field visit.

Geographic spread/Specialism

Where implementing countries are widely dispersed and represent vastly different or highly specialised contexts and/or regions, it is likely that more than one evaluation

8 Note consultants bear any medical costs incurred during missions e.g. if a consultant catches COVID. Consultants should have an insurance in place that cover for such events.

consultant will be required in order for all the geographic knowledge to be represented. This wide geographic coverage may also impact on the language skills that need to be covered or could involve additional travel costs (e.g. Small Island Developing States are typically expensive to reach and travel within; large countries with dispersed field activities may also have additional in-country travel costs).

+ Add USD 15,000 for additional consultants who live and work within a country/region (i.e. with no international travel costs) and who will carry out a specific evaluation team role relevant to the specific country/region.

Languages/Translators

Language needs are linked to the geographic spread of the implementing area. Where there is a wide range of language bases in the countries involved in implementation (e.g. implementing countries are spread across West Africa, South America and Asia) then either additional evaluation consultants and/or translators must be hired. Translators may be hired in country and a week's translation and/or data collection work is estimated at USD 2,500 per working week.

+ Add USD 2,500 for each in-country translator

Technical sectors

The more technical areas that are covered or the greater the volume of components (outputs and complex outcomes) in a project, the more it becomes unrealistic for one consultant to manage the work in a reasonable timeframe. In those cases, teams of two or more consultants should be formed. This means that the more technical sectors covered by a project in its design (e.g. policy and finance; specialised health and community engagement; private sector, energy efficiency and national governments etc) the greater the likelihood that more than one evaluation consultant will be needed to cover all the relevant skills' sets. Some projects may cover several technical sectors in their overall change model while others may address a range of themes/sectors across their components (e.g. component on piloting an innovative approach at community level along with national policy making).

+ Add USD 23,000 for a second technically specialised consultant

Some technical areas of expertise are more difficult to recruit for than others (e.g. finance sector, some scientific areas of expertise, highly specialised environmental approaches etc). Consultants in these fields may be eligible for the higher fee band rate or require additional working days for more detailed data collection processes and/or highly specialised analysis.

Evaluation Plan Section of Project Documents

The Project Document contains a section for an Evaluation Plan, which sets out the expectations regarding mid-term and terminal performance assessment (evaluations/ reviews).

The section outlines the performance assessments required, states their purpose, summarises the evaluation criteria to be used and sets out the process for management response and recommendation compliance.

The following standard texts can be tailored to the specific project context.[9]

- GEF project document
- Non-GEF project document
- Jointly implemented/executed project
- GEF project documents also require additional information on monitoring and evaluation:
- GEF Annex - Monitoring and Evaluation Budget and Workplan

Evaluation in project documents and grant agreements

UNEP is a project-based organisation and UNEP Project Review Committee (PRC) approved projects are the building blocks for delivery of the UNEP Medium-Term Strategy and Programme of Work and project evaluations are undertaken at this level. The Evaluation Office does not undertake evaluations for specific grants that may partially fund PRC-approved projects.

Grant agreements should adopt language consistent with the UNEP Evaluation Policy and indicate that the performance of work funded under the grant will be covered by the evaluation/review of the associated UNEP PRC-approved project.

Legal Officers preparing grant agreements should ensure that where a funding partner wishes to undertake their own performance assessment of the grant agreement, the language of the agreement includes a specific provision that specifies how UNEP's evaluation requirements will be met. The Project Manager with the Legal Officer should liaise with the Evaluation Office in order that UNEP Evaluation Policy requirements are adhered to and duplication of effort is avoided.

9 The latest standard text is available from the Evaluation Office on request.

Securing financial resources for evaluation

The Evaluation Office provides input to the PRC on the adequacy of proposed evaluation budgets. It also provides similar inputs for formal project revisions.

All PRC-Approved projects including GEF and GCF projects must incorporate a budget line to cover the direct costs of hiring evaluation/review consultants and their associated travel and subsistence for independent evaluation or management-led review (Mid-Term and Terminal).

When the Evaluation Office selects a project for independent evaluation (Mid-Term or Terminal), the resources held in the project budget for that evaluation may be transferred to the Evaluation Office cost centre/service order catalogue. Costs to be used for management-led reviews remain in the project budget and are used directly by the Project Managers. Alternatively, the evaluation funds remain within the project budget and are expended on the authority of the Director of Evaluation.

Project approval

Approval of the Project Document by the PRC entails review by various sections of UNEP, including the Evaluation Office on plans for evaluation/ review and compliance with evaluation budget requirements.

Project Implementation and Performance Assessment

Planning Mid-Term Assessment

All UNEP projects with a planned and approved implementation period of four years or more are required to undertake a formal Mid-Term performance assessment. Unless the Evaluation Office selects the project and elects to undertake an independent Mid-Term Evaluation, the Project Manager is responsible for ensuring a Mid-Term Review is completed.



Reminder on terminology: In the UNEP project cycle, performance assessment refers to evaluation/ review, and it covers mid-term evaluation, terminal evaluation, and management-led mid-term review and management-led terminal review.

Mid-Term Evaluations

In-line with the Evaluation Policy, the Evaluation Office may select any ongoing project for a Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE). A project is more likely to be selected for an MTE in situations where there are:

- actual, potential or perceived strategic significance or institutional risk
- requests from funding partners for performance assessments of projects implemented jointly with other agencies.



Reminder on Terminology: In UNEP, the Evaluation Office has the sole prerogative to issue Evaluations. All other assessments overseen by UNEP Managers are considered to be Management-Led Reviews. Official UNEP documentation should reflect this distinction. Mid-term Review is a management-led process undertaken mid way through project implementation. A Management-Led Terminal Review is a summative assessment of an operationally complete project that will be validated by the Evaluation Office.

If a project is selected for a Mid-Term Evaluation, the resources required are transferred from the project budget to the Evaluation Office cost centre.

The process followed by the Evaluation Office to conduct an MTE is described in Section 4.

Management-led Mid-Term Reviews

A Mid-Term Review (MTR) is a management-led process and may take a variety of forms. Project Managers may choose to follow a more formal approach using an external consultant. Should a formal MTR be chosen or required, the Evaluation Office has a *full set of tools and guidance* to support in-depth, more formal, review processes utilising external consultants.

Alternatively, the Project Manager may choose to prepare an MTR report that captures the proceedings and decisions of a project workshop that has reflected on the strengths and weaknesses of the project's implementation to date and identified a series of agreed action points or separate implementation plan to guide adaptive management and improvement. Both forms of MTR may lead to a formal revision of the project document.

Reminder on terminology: Project Operational Completion:This is the time when all project activities cease and no further expenditure on project activities occurs, other than evaluation/ review process expenditure. Project Closure: This is the point at which a project is formally closed. All financial accounting and expenditure on audit and evaluation processes must be complete before closure.

Planning Performance Assessment at Project Completion

Project Operational Completion Reports[10]

UNEP Projects should prepare an Operational Completion Report on completion of all project activities. The Project Manager, in collaboration with the project team, and with information from relevant stakeholders and implementing partners, prepares the final report. The Operational Completion Report summarizes the project's performance in terms of results achieved, challenges encountered, best practices and lessons learned. Collaboration with the Fund Management Officer is required concerning reporting on financial and administrative issues.

In exceptional circumstances and where total project expenditure is less than $1 million, the Evaluation Office may deem an Operational Completion Report to be sufficient to meet the project's accountability requirements.

Terminal Evaluations

When the Evaluation Office has taken the decision to select a project for Terminal Evaluation (TE), the Project Manager and other relevant Divisional or Regional Office staff are informed. The project's FMO may be requested to arrange for the financial resources to support the direct costs of the TE (i.e. consultant fees, travel etc.), that are held in the project budget, to be transferred to the Evaluation Office cost centre or be requested to hold those resources until all evaluation costs have been paid.

The process followed by the Evaluation Office to complete the TE is outlined in Section 4.

10 Also referred to as a Final Report, Final Project Report or term used by funding partners etc.

Management-led Terminal Reviews (MLTRs)

A Project Manager will undertake a Terminal Review following the process outlined below:

- The Project Manager/Task Manager drafts Terms of Reference for the Review and selects and contracts the Review Consultant.[11] ToRs should follow the *template* provided by the Evaluation Office.
- For consultants new to UNEP's Review process, the Evaluation Office may hold a separate call with the contracted Review Consultant to discuss/clarify the *tools, guidance notes, and templates available* and confirm the review deliverables. Alternatively, a recorded overview may be provided.
- Project Manager/Task Manager manages the Review Process (i.e., provides documentation, arranges field visits, sets up meetings, oversees Review Consultant through Inception Report and Draft/*Final Review Report).*
- Evaluation Office may provide technical guidance on the Review process on a needs basis.
- The Project Manager/Task Manager reviews the Final Review report for completeness and accuracy *(a template is provided)* and requests any revisions from the consultant.
- Once the Review report has been approved within the relevant Branch/Unit, **the Project Manager/Task Manager shares the final Review Report with the Evaluation Office (in Word version)**. The Evaluation Office checks whether the Final Report is referred to as a Review and not as an Evaluation.
- **For Terminal Reviews only (i.e. not Mid-Term Reviews)**, the Evaluation Office performs a quality assessment of the final Review Report and appends it to the Final Report as an Annex. It also validates the Review's performance ratings based on a careful review of the evidence collated by the Review Consultant(s) and the internal consistency of the report. The Evaluation Office provides an assessment of the ratings in the final Review Report. **Where there are differences in the *performance ratings* presented in Review Report and those designated by the Evaluation Office review validation process** (Tool 03 and Tool 04), both viewpoints will

11 To avoid conflicts of interest, review consultant(s) must certify that they have not been associated with the design and implementation of the project in any way which may jeopardize their impartiality towards project achievements and project partner performance. Consultants should not have any future financial interests (for six months following the completion of the contract) with the project's managing (executing or implementing) unit. All consultants are required to sign the Code of Conduct Agreement Form.

Consultant selection: For the Terminal Review of a project, any consultant that undertook the Mid-Term Evaluation for the same project should not normally eligible/selected to undertake the Terminal Review to avoid possible confirmation bias.

be clearly presented. The Evaluation Office ratings are considered the final project performance ratings. The Evaluation Office returns the final Report in PDF format to the Project Manager/Task Manager. The report file name provided by the Evaluation Office should not be changed.

- The Project Manager/Task Manager is in charge of disseminating the Report and ensuring it is available in PIMS/ IPMR.

A full suite of tools, templates and guidance material is available to support this process. The majority of this material is for use by the Review Consultant. The Project Manager/Task Manager is responsible for providing the consultant with access to current versions of review guidance materials (available from the Evaluation Office).

Evaluation Follow-up and Recommendation Compliance

Recommendation Implementation plan preparation and submission

After the Evaluation Office has finalised an evaluation report, a formal management response to the evaluation is required.[12] This takes the form of a Recommendations Implementation Plan that is sent by the Evaluation Office to Management with a one-month deadline[13] to respond. Recommendations made in evaluation reports are presented in two parts:

- The issue or problem identified by the evaluation
- The prescription suggested to address the problem/issue

Recommendations are ascribed a level of priority: 'Critical', 'Important' or 'Opportunity for improvement' and are also characterised with regards to their scope as 'Project' level, 'Partner' or 'UNEP-wide'.

Whenever possible, the Evaluation Office will set up an appointment to discuss the evaluation recommendations with the individual responsible for the management response. Management may 'Accept', 'Partially Accept' or 'Reject' a recommendation. However, the only justification for rejecting a recommendation is that the issue/problem identified in the evaluation is based on faulty evidence. Such situations should be rare and normally be identified during the review process of a draft evaluation report.

If no management response is received, all recommendations in the plan are closed by the Evaluation Office and designated as 'Not compliant'. Such instances warrant senior management attention as they potentially reduce the 'value for money' of project resources spent on evaluation, and negatively affect a UNEP PoW performance measure. Preparation of a Recommendations Implementation Plan by the responsible staff member is a minimum requirement and UNEP's compliance level should be 100%.

A recommendation is 'Accepted' if management agrees with the prescription. A recommendation is 'Partially Accepted' if management partially agrees with the prescription or accepts the problem/issue but wishes to propose a different course of action to address it. The Evaluation Office tracks compliance of 'Accepted and 'Partially Accepted' recommendations with respect to the actions agreed with management.

Implementation plan updates

The recommendation compliance period runs for 12-months from the date that the implementation plan is finalised by management and the Evaluation Office. Implementation of the agreed actions must be feasible within this timeframe. The Evaluation Office tracks the implementation status of the agreed actions:

- At the time the implementation plan is agreed,
- After six months and,
- After 12 months.

Recommendation compliance assessment and plan closure

At each assessment point managers must provide the Evaluation Office with evidence of compliance for the agreed actions. The evidence is assessed and level of compliance for each recommendation is indicated by the Evaluation Office:

- Compliant
- Partially Compliant
- Not Compliant
- No further action required (superseded by events)
- Transferred to UNEP-Wide (to be addressed at a higher management level)

At the initial and six-month assessment points, recommendations that are 'Compliant', or 'No further action required', will be closed, and the remaining 'Not-compliant' or 'Partially Compliant' recommendations

12 **UN Evaluation Group Norms and Standards (2016). Norm 14:** Organizations should promote evaluation use and follow-up, using an interactive process that involves all stakeholders. Evaluation requires an explicit response by the governing authorities and/or management addressed by its recommendations that clearly states responsibilities and accountabilities. Management should integrate evaluation results and recommendations into its policies and programmes. The implementation of evaluation recommendations should be systematically followed up. A periodic report on the status of the implementation of the evaluation recommendations should be presented to the governing bodies and/or the head of the organization.

13 Compliance with this time period is monitored by the Evaluation Office and reported to Management on a regular basis.

will remain open for assessment at 6 and 12-months. At the final 12-month compliance assessment, all evaluation recommendations are closed and their state of compliance at this time is recorded.

Project Closure

Once a project has been operationally completed, and the evaluation/review has been finalised, the process of Project Closure can commence. The final financial reconciliation of accounts, including the recovery of unspent funds, the issuance of the final financial reports and processing of physical assets in accordance with legal instruments is undertaken and any unspent funds are returned to donors, unless otherwise specified in the donor agreement.

Overview of Evaluation Requirements and Review Requirements and How They Differ

All PRC-approved projects in UNEP require either a Terminal Evaluation or a Management-Led Terminal Review at operational completion of the project. The Terminal Evaluation and Management-Led Terminal Review are similar in terms of: Focus and scope of the assessment, use of evaluation criteria such as strategic relevance, quality of project design, effectiveness, etc. upon which the performance of the project is assessed and rated, and the budgetary requirements that must be adhered to at project approval to ensure adequate funds are available to carry out the evaluation or review.

Evaluations and Reviews differ in responsibility for carrying the assessment. Evaluations are managed by the Evaluation Office and Reviews are management-led by the Project Manager and this spills-over into important differences as to how the assessment is carried out in procedure, follow-up and disclosure. As the Evaluation Office does not manage the Management-Led Terminal Review, a validation process is put in place for quality assessment purposes and to enhance credibility of the review process. An overview of Mid-term Evaluation and Terminal Evaluation requirements are provided in Table 2 and requirements for Management-Led Mid-Term Review and Terminal Review in Table 3.

Table 2: Overview of Mid-Term Evaluation and Terminal Evaluation requirements

	Mid-Term Evaluation	**Terminal Evaluation**
Criteria for determining type of assessment	Projects of less than four years' duration are not required to undertake a mid-term assessment as part of standard UNEP requirements, although a mid-point reflection is considered good practice and a mid-term evaluation may be required by a donor. Projects with four or more years of implementation are required to undertake a mid-term assessment. The *Evaluation Office* may select projects for Mid - term Evaluation after consideration of: – Actual, potential or perceived strategic significance or institutional risk – Requests from funding partners for performance assessments of projects implemented jointly with other agencies.	The Evaluation Office undertakes Terminal Evaluations of a sample of completing projects. Terminal Evaluations selected at the discretion of the Evaluation Office based on defined criteria.
Assessment focus and scope	Focus on operational improvement and accountability, for example: Roles and responsibilities within the implementation structure; – Quality and accuracy of the results framework and Theory of Change; – Rate of delivery of activities against the workplan and rate of expenditure; – Quality and relevance of implementation activities; – Quality and completeness of monitoring plan and data; – Assessment of exit strategy/sustainability measures; – Main emerging challenges and early successes; – Any need for corrective action	Focus on accountability and institutional learning, for example: – Overall project performance – Actual and potential results – Outcomes' sustainability – Operational efficiency – Lessons of institutional learning for future project design

Responsibility	Evaluation Office	Evaluation Office
Procedure	Evaluation procedure	Evaluation Procedure & Recommendation Compliance Procedure
Budget	**The budgets, for both mid-term and terminal evaluations, must be established at Project Design phase from within secured funds and reviewed and approved during Project Approval phase.** The budget for evaluation must remain available until all project assessments have been completed and fully paid for. When the Evaluation Office notifies the Project Managers that a project has been selected for either a Mid-Term or Terminal Evaluation, the Fund Management Officer may be requested to transfer the financial resources held in the project budget for that evaluation to the Evaluation Office cost centre/ service order catalogue. Alternatively, the FMO will be required to commit those resources until all evaluation costs have been paid.	
Timeframe	Where possible, immediately before mid-point of the planned and approved project implementation period. Any project revision that extends the implementation of the project **to four or more years will require a commitment to undertake a mid-term review / evaluation before the extension is cleared.**	After project operational completion and prior to the project's financial closure. In no case does the Evaluation Policy allow a Terminal Evaluation to be launched more than three months before a project's operational completion.
Follow up	Evaluation recommendations are implemented by the project team under responsibility of the Project Manager with compliance monitored by the Evaluation Office.	Evaluation recommendations are implemented by the project team under responsibility of the Project Manager, or Head of Branch/Unit in the absence of a Project Manager. Compliance is monitored by the Evaluation Office.
Disclosure	Evaluation reports and their management response are publicly disclosed on the Evaluation Office official website and included in UNEP's knowledge repository.	Evaluation reports and associated management responses are publicly disclosed on the Evaluation Office official website and included in UNEP's knowledge repository.
External Evaluations	In the event of evaluations being led by donors or external parties the Project Manager should inform the Evaluation Office of the evaluation as early as possible. The Evaluation Office reviews the external Terms of Reference and considers whether UNEP evaluation requirements can be addressed under the same Terms of Reference. Where possible, revisions/ additions to the Terms of Reference may be requested. In all cases, a copy of the final external evaluation/review report should be sent to the Evaluation Office.	

Table 3: Overview of Management-Led Mid-Term Review and Management-Led Terminal Review requirements

	Management-Led Mid-Term Review	Management-Led Terminal Review
Criteria for determining type of assessment	Projects of less than four years' duration are not required to undertake a mid-term assessment as part of standard UNEP requirements, although a mid-point reflection is considered good practice and a mid-term assessment (evaluation / review) may be required by a donor. Projects with four or more years' implementation undertake a mid-term assessment (evaluation/ review)	Projects not selected for Terminal Evaluation will conduct a management-led Terminal Review.
	All projects undertake a management-led mid-term review, except if selected for evaluation	
Assessment focus and scope	Focus on operational improvement and accountability, for example: – Roles and responsibilities within the implementation structure; – Quality and accuracy of the results framework and Theory of Change; – Rate of delivery of activities against the workplan and rate of expenditure; – Quality and relevance of implementation activities; – Quality and completeness of monitoring plan and data; – Assessment of exit strategy/sustainability measures; – Main emerging challenges and early successes; – Any need for corrective action.	Focus on accountability and institutional learning, for example: – Overall project performance – Actual and potential results – Outcomes' sustainability – Operational efficiency – Lessons of institutional learning for future project design
Responsibility	**Project Manager**	**Project Manager**
Procedure	Project Manager supervises the review process. The Management-Led Mid-Term Review can be undertaken as an internal process or by a contracted consultant. In the latter case, sample Terms of Reference and a suite of tools/guidelines are available from the Evaluation Office or on its *Communities Platform*.	Project Manager supervises the review process The Terminal Review is a management-led process. Consultants are contracted, sample Terms of Reference and a suite of tools/guidelines are available from the Evaluation Office or on its or on its *Communities Platform*. Evaluation Office may provide technical guidance during the process on a needs basis. As terminal reviews fundamentally assess the achievement of results, the Evaluation Office assesses the quality of completed terminal review reports and validates the performance ratings. Consultant(s) that undertook the Mid-Term Review for the same project should not normally eligible/selected to undertake the Terminal Review to avoid possible confirmation bias
Budget	**The budgets, for both mid-term and terminal reviews, must be established at Project Design phase from within secured funds and reviewed and approved during Project Approval phase. The budget for review must remain available until all project assessments have been completed and fully paid for.**	

Timeframe	Where possible, immediately before mid-point of the planned and approved project implementation period. Any project revision that extends the implementation of the project to four or more years will require a commitment to undertake a mid-term review before the extension is cleared.	After project operational completion and prior to the project's financial closure. In no case does the Evaluation Policy allow a Terminal Review to be launched more than three months before a project's operational completion.
Follow up	Review recommendations are implemented by the project team under responsibility of the Project Manager with compliance assured by the Head of Branch/Unit.	Review recommendations are implemented by the project team under responsibility of the Project Manager, or Head of Branch/Unit in the absence of a Project Manager. Compliance is assured by the Head of Branch/Unit.
Disclosure	Review reports are regarded as internal documents and are uploaded in the IPMR.[14] All review reports should be shared with Evaluation Office on completion and prior to disclosure.	Terminal Review reports are uploaded in the IPMR[2]. All review reports should be shared with Evaluation Office on completion. Once validated by the Evaluation Office they are released for public disclosure.
External Evaluations	In the event of evaluations or reviews being led by donors or external parties the Project Manager should inform the Evaluation Office of the review as early as possible. The Evaluation Office reviews the external Terms of Reference and considers whether UNEP evaluation requirements can be addressed under the same Terms of Reference. Where possible, revisions/ additions to the Terms of Reference may be requested. In all cases, a copy of the final external review report should be sent to the Evaluation Office.	

14 Or PIMS until IPMR becomes operational.

4. Evaluation Process Management and Quality Assurance

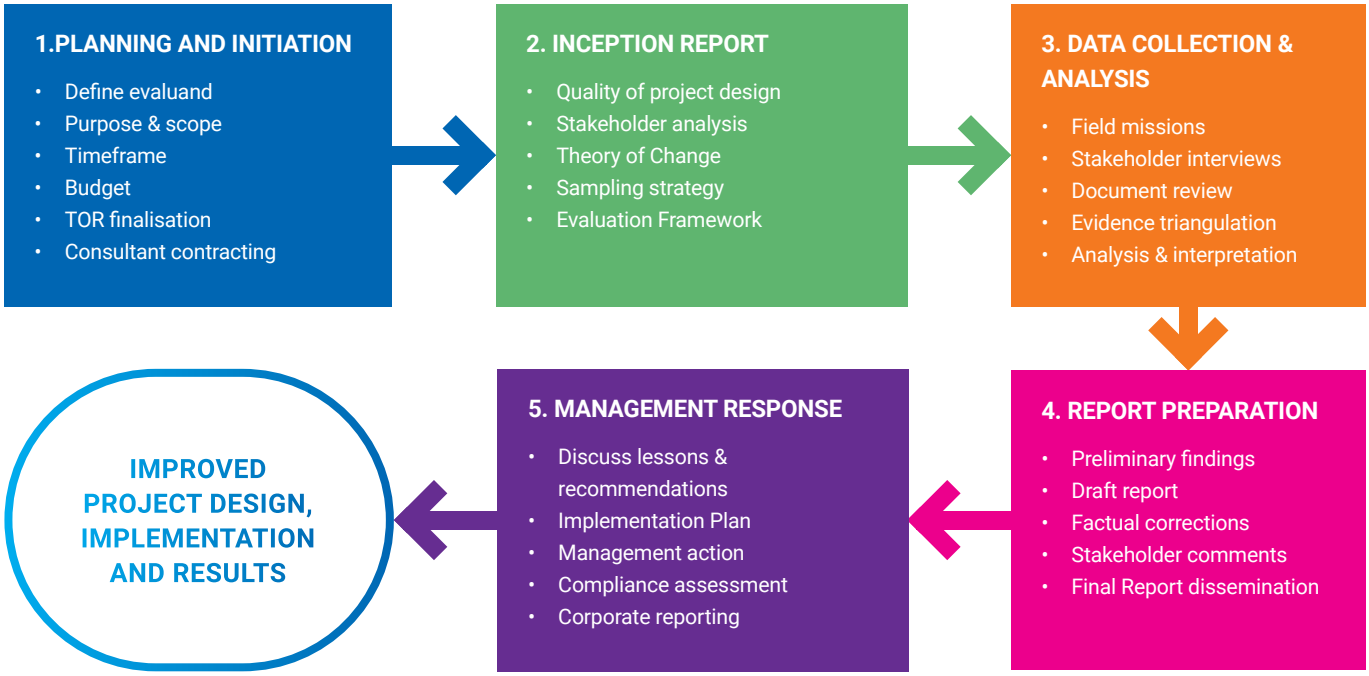


Figure 2. Evaluation process flow chart

The Evaluation Office conducts all evaluations in UNEP in-line with the Evaluation Policy with the aim of assuring full respect and compliance with the general principles, norms and standards for evaluation and evaluation functions in the UN.

The below procedures for planning and initiation, evaluation inception, data collection and analysis, reporting and management response shown in Figure 1 apply to:

- Project mid-term and terminal evaluations
- Portfolio evaluations
- Strategic evaluations

Some general principles to which the Evaluation Office ascribes are to:

- Work in as participatory manner as possible;
- Provide opportunities for relevant people to pose strategic questions when preparing the evaluation TOR;
- Alert those people who will be responsible for acting on the evaluation's findings and recommendations that the evaluation is going to take place and encourage their participation;
- *Ethical conduct in evaluation.*[15]
- Reflect a commitment to gender equity, human rights and disability inclusion considerations

1. Planning and Initiation

Define the Evaluand

The entity being evaluated (the evaluand), usually a project, programme or policy, needs to be clearly defined for an evaluation to be possible and meaningful. The following aspects of the evaluand need to be clearly identifiable from formally approved UNEP documents (project, sub-programme or other). The project level is used below as an example. Where there is insufficient clarity on one or more of the aspects mentioned below, a formal evaluation may not be possible.

15 See UNEG (2020) Ethical guidelines for evaluation: Principles of Ethics in Evaluation: Integrity, accountability, respect, and beneficence.

- Timeframe. The approved start and end date. This should be a duration of time (from signed approval to operational completion date i.e. 'start and end dates') that is realistic for the achievement of the ambition of the project, programme or policy, [e.g. project outcome(s)].
- Funding envelope: The secured financial resources for project, programme or policy implementation.
- Geographic scope. The geographic locations where project, programme or policy implementation occurs and the geographic locations where effects will be/are manifested.
- Results framework: The results that are committed to in the approved UNEP project, programme or policy document and any contributing funding agreement(s). **For projects,** all funding agreements/components of the approved PRC-approved project must have been conceived strategically as part of the same comprehensive Theory of Change (TOC) or intervention strategy. In accordance with the definition of a project, project funding agreements/components should be interlinked/interdependent to achieve the project outcome(s). The defined outcomes and targets will be regarded as achievable with the secured resource envelope.
- Project, programme or policy management accountability: This is held by the Directly Responsible Individual for the approved project, programme or policy (e.g. Project Manager). **For projects** an approved project must have a single manager who is directly responsible for all project components and contributing funding agreements.

Purpose, Scope & Timeline

Evaluation has three primary purposes to: (i) Provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements; (ii) Promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned and (iii) Inform evidence-based decision-making.

Evaluations of UNEP's projects, programmes and policies assess performance against a *standard set of criteria (Tool 01)* in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, and determine actual and potential outcomes and impacts, including the sustainability of their effects. Guidance on the evidence required for *judging different levels of performance against the evaluation criteria (Tool 02)* has also been specified.

The scope of the evaluation is informed by the specifics of how the evaluand is defined (see section above). For example, a particular project or programme may have been active in a large number of geographic locations, but the evaluation may limit the scope of the work to consider a set of geographic locations that are considered to be representative of the Theory of Change of the broader evaluand.

The purpose, scope and time required to complete an evaluation are clearly specified in the evaluation's Terms of Reference. The timeline for the evaluation includes the design, planning, commissioning, oversight, stakeholder feedback, quality assurance, and dissemination phases.

Evaluation Manager, Peer Reviewer and Evaluation Assistant

All evaluations that have been included in the Evaluation Office annual evaluation plan will be assigned an Evaluation Manager. The Evaluation Manager is directly responsible for the planning, design, oversight and quality assurance and dissemination processes for the assigned evaluation. In addition, all evaluations are assigned a Peer Reviewer and an Evaluation Assistant from within the Evaluation Office. The Peer Reviewer provides feedback at specific points in the process; draft final ToRs, Inception Report and the Draft Evaluation Report whilst the Evaluation Assistant is responsible for the administrative and contractual arrangements with the Evaluation Consultant(s).

Evaluation Budget

As a part of evaluation planning and design, a cost estimate/budget that reflects the anticipated expenditure to successfully complete the evaluation is prepared by the Evaluation Manager. The budget includes consultant fees, international and in-country travel, subsistence, translation, communication and any other miscellaneous costs. See section 4. The Evaluation Manager will ensure there are sufficient financial resources available to the Evaluation Office before the evaluation process begins.

For project evaluations, the funds to support the evaluation (Mid-Term or Terminal) are held with the project from secured resources. The Evaluation Manager informs the Project Manager and Fund Management Officer that an evaluation is to be initiated and they may be requested to transfer the funds from the project budget to the Evaluation Office cost centre. Alternatively, the FMO should ensure that the evaluation funds are held until all evaluation costs have been paid.

Funding Mechanisms

Direct evaluation costs (consultant fees, travel, etc.)

Project level evaluations of UNEP PRC-approved projects should have a budget line from secured resources to support the direct costs of evaluation (consultant fees, travel subsistence etc.).

Portfolio and Programme-level evaluations may be funded either from dedicated project/programme level resources held within their budget or from separately held Extra-budgetary sources.

Sub-programme evaluations are funded from Environment Fund resources held in the Evaluation Office central budget.

Evaluations of strategic cross-cutting and thematic evaluations may be funded from Extra-budgetary sources or from Environment Fund resources held in the Evaluation Office central budget.

Evaluation Management Costs

Evaluation management costs (mainly staff time) for evaluands supported by the Environment Fund are covered from regular Evaluation Office staff resources (EF and RB funded)

Evaluation management costs for extra-budgetary (XB) funded evaluands are covered by a percentage of extra-budgetary (XB) funds.[16] Staff time of the Evaluation Office is supported from these allocations.

Documentation Gathering

The Evaluation Manager requests for a comprehensive set of information relating to the evaluand. Some of the required information is critical to identify the scope of the evaluation and for the initial planning and design of the evaluation (e.g. formal project document, revisions, expenditure statements), whereas other information may be required to indicate the implementation of the evaluand (e.g. progress reports, minutes of steering committees etc.).

A comprehensive list of the standard documentation often requested for evaluation processes is given *here (Tool 00b)*.

The responsible UNEP manager, with the support of the Fund Management Officer for financial information, is required to provide all available documentation to the Evaluation Team. Documents should, where relevant, be the final/approved/submitted versions. This documentation informs, along with other sources of information, the assessment of performance. The documents should be uploaded to a shared online folder to support the evaluation. Failure to provide the required documentation in a timely manner may affect the evaluative judgements of performance or may significantly prolong the evaluation process and, as a result, delay the project closure. Additional material may be requested by the Evaluation Team/Evaluation Manager during the process.

Stakeholder Contact Details, including Staff and Others

The Evaluation Manager contacts the UNEP managers responsible for the evaluand and request details for the key stakeholders that are associated with project, programme or policy. These are UNEP staff, executing partners, funding partners, user groups and direct beneficiaries.

The Evaluation Manager ensures that stakeholders are properly informed about the upcoming evaluation process and a formal letter is sent from the Director of the Evaluation Office.

TOR Development, Finalisation and Strategic Evaluation Questions

The Terms of Reference for the evaluation are drafted by the Evaluation Manager. Standard TOR templates[17] are available for the following project-level evaluations:

- Non-GEF Mid-Term Evaluation
- GEF Mid-Term Evaluation
- Non-GEF Terminal Evaluation
- GEF Terminal Evaluation

The Terms of Reference for the evaluation define the evaluand (usually a project programme or policy), state the purpose of the evaluation and define its scope. The main evaluation principles, criteria and performance ratings to be used are specified. The ToRs also present the evaluation approach, methods, deliverables, review procedure, the consultant expertise to be recruited and the associated contractual arrangements.

16 The 2022 Evaluation Policy states "In addition to UN Regular Budget and Environment Fund resources allocated to the Evaluation Office the practice of applying a cost recovery of 0.6% of annual extra-budgetary project-related expenditure to support the oversight and quality assurance of evaluation-related work relating to projects and programmes funded from extra-budgetary sources is also approved as part of the policy."

17 Contact the Evaluation Office for evaluation Terms of References.

The Terms of Reference for the evaluation are discussed with UNEP managers and other important stakeholders before they are finalised. An opportunity is provided for them to propose strategic evaluation questions that focus on key challenges or issues.

The Peer Reviewer provides feedback to the Evaluation Manager on the ToRs. The finalised ToRs are then shared with the main evaluation stakeholders.

Selecting and Contracting of Evaluators

The Evaluation Manager is responsible for identifying suitable consultant evaluators to fulfil the requirements of the Terms of Reference. The Evaluation Manager will ensure that the required consulting fees and the costs of any mission travel from the home country of the evaluation consultant to field locations, and related subsistence costs, are feasible within the evaluation budget.

The Evaluation Manager checks the performance of potential evaluation consultants if they have worked as an evaluation consultant for UNEP before. Shortlisted consultants are interviewed by video conference and their most recent work is checked through references. Consultant eligibility is assessed in-line with UN rules and regulations.[18] The selection process is fully documented. Evaluation Teams with more than one consultant should have a gender mix where possible, and every effort is made to select consultants from the geographic region(s) relevant for the evaluand.

Evaluation consultants certify that they have not been associated with the design and implementation of the project, programme or policy[19] in any way which may jeopardize their independence and, in addition, they will not have any future interests (within six months after completion of the contract) with the project, programme or policy's executing or implementing units. All consultants are required to sign a Code of Conduct Agreement Form.

The Evaluation Assistant takes the lead on the administrative process to hire the consultant in line with UN rules and requirements.

2. Evaluation Inception Report

The preparation of the evaluation inception report precedes the main data-gathering phase of the evaluation and any associated field-missions. The inception report is the first deliverable prepared by the Evaluation Team and is largely a desk-based exercise involving initial discussions with the main staff responsible for the project, policy or programme to form a good understanding of the evaluand and to identify the stakeholders (including their roles and responsibilities). The Evaluation Team, Evaluation Manager and responsible staff should reach a common understanding of the project's TOC. The report provides a clear plan of how the evaluation will be carried out including any field visits and travel, the planned interactions with management, beneficiaries and other stakeholders as well as how the evaluation findings will be communicated. The evaluation inception report presents factual information and should not present any evaluation findings.

The report is subject to review and feedback from the Evaluation Manager and a Peer Reviewer from within the Evaluation Office. In the spirit of openness and transparency the Evaluation Manager will usually share the inception report with the main manager of the evaluand (e.g. Project Manager) who should respond with any observations or factual corrections. The inception report should, as far as possible, follow a *standard structure (Tool 06)* covering pre-determined elements. Project evaluations should include a standardised Project Identification Table. The template to use is tool *(Tool 05)*.

Quality of Design

The inception report will include the evaluator's assessment of the quality of the project/programme design, which summarises the strengths and weaknesses of the approved design.

The purpose of this assessment is to stimulate thinking, based on a review of design documentation, that will strengthen the development of: a) Useful and insightful evaluation questions, and b) Robust causal pathway(s), assumptions and drivers in the *reconstructed Theory of Change*. Where substantive and/or significant weaknesses are apparent at the design stage, these may either be potential areas for further questioning and analysis, as they may have stimulated adaptive management or may have limited the overall effectiveness of the project, programme, or policy.

18 For example, a consultant may only work for the UN Secretariat for a period of 24 months in a 36 month period

19 Or earlier related phases, including the evaluation or review at mid-point.

Key sources of information for completing this assessment include the approved project/programme document (ProDoc), the Project Review Committee (PRC) review sheet, the project logical framework or Theory of Change (TOC) at project design stage and, where appropriate, any approved formal revisions. The assessment will also consider whether the consideration of environmental and social safeguards was appropriately incorporated into the design.

The assessment of the quality of the project design should make use of the *template (Tool 09, Tool 09a).*

For the assessment of the planning and management of environmental and social safeguards and the assessment of human rights and gender use the available tool *(Tool 12).*

Stakeholder Analysis

UNEP's work is guided by the principles of United Nations human rights-based approach to development (HRBA) and gender equality and women's empowerment. This means that policies, programmes and projects must be centred on human beings as the rights-holders and aimed at their benefit and the constant improvement of their well-being.

Based on this, a distinction is made between rights-holders and fulfilment of these rights and duty-bearers in meeting their duties and obligations towards the rights-holders. Individuals, however, can be both rights-holders and duty-bearers at the same time. Hence a thorough analysis of power relations, the roles of all the relevant actors regarding the rights in question, potential alliances and conflicts among different types of stakeholders need to be understood in order to design (and evaluate) interventions that focus on empowering the rights-holders and strengthening the capacities of duty-bearers. UNEP identifies stakeholders broadly as all those who are affected by, or who could affect (positively or negatively) the intended results. The evaluation inception report should include a thorough stakeholder analysis, use the guidance tool *(Tool 10)* for evaluation consultants in preparing this.

Theory of Change

Theory of Change (TOC) analysis is used in UNEP evaluations to describe an intervention's intended and actual causality. It also provides a framework to help inform the assessment of an intervention's effectiveness, and likelihood of impact. It can also help inform the assessment of other evaluation criteria, for example, it can be used to help verify the alignment of the project with the SDGs as well as the organization's and funders' strategic priorities. The TOC analysis can help in assessing the extent to which the project intervention responds to stakeholder priorities and needs, thus assisting the evaluation of strategic relevance. In addition, TOC analysis can support the assessment of sustainability and up-scaling by providing a better understanding of the relative importance of outputs, outcomes, drivers and assumptions, along with the roles of stakeholders, in sustaining and scaling up higher-level results. TOC analysis is also useful to assess project efforts to promote higher-level results (inter alia by promoting drivers), and/or responding to changes in context and dealing with any necessary conditions that did not hold (assumptions). The TOC should always identify results, assumptions or drivers that relate to gender and vulnerable/marginalised groups.

In the preparation of the evaluation inception report, the approved project document and any formally approved revisions are used to prepare a 'reconstructed' TOC of the intended causality. The TOC is presented as a one-page diagram, explained with a narrative, including a discussion of the assumptions and drivers. Further guidance in the use of TOC in the evaluation process is available in the tool *(Tool 13).*

Evaluation Methods and Sampling Strategy

The inception report sets out the proposed methodological approach and, as part of this, the sampling strategy for the evaluation.

UNEP evaluations adopt a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders are kept informed and consulted throughout the process. Both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods are used, as appropriate, to determine project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts.

The inception report sets out how information will be collected from various data sources and usually includes a combination of:

- **Desk review** of documentary materials (e.g. Annual Work Plans and Budgets, Project reports, project deliverables, monitoring information)
- **Interviews, surveys and field visits** to collate information from individuals and groups that are representative of the most important rights holders and duty bearers identified in the stakeholder analysis (e.g. Project Manager, Executing Partners, FMO, intended users and beneficiaries).

The inception report will present a sampling strategy for how it will cover the different stakeholder groups identified in the stakeholder analysis. Methods to ensure that potentially excluded groups (excluded by gender, vulnerability, disability or marginalisation) are reached

and their experiences captured effectively, should be made explicit.

Further guidance on designing a robust evaluation methodology approach is available in tool *(Tool 20)*.

Evaluation Framework/Matrix

The inception report presents an evaluation framework in the form of a table that includes detailed evaluation questions relevant to the evaluation criteria, linked to data sources and highlighting the different stakeholder groups to be consulted *(see matrix template)*. The table will include any new questions raised by review of Project Design Quality and TOC analysis.

Timeline

The inception report also specifies the planned timeline for the evaluations listing the activities to be undertaken and their anticipated timing.

The inception report is peer-reviewed within the Evaluation Office and, once accepted by the Evaluation Manager, is usually shared with the Project Manager/ Implementing Partner.

Payment for the inception report is cleared by the Evaluation Manager, authorised by the Director of the Evaluation Office and processed by the Evaluation Assistant.

3. Data Collection and Analysis

Following the completion of the inception report, and its approval by the Evaluation Office, the main data gathering phase of the evaluation begins.

Field Missions

Field missions and stakeholder engagement activities are undertaken in-line with the evaluation plan set forth in the Evaluation Inception Report. Field missions are selected to gather information that will be representative of the scope of the project, programme or policy.

If the Project Team is still in situ, they are expected to provide full support in terms of evaluation mission logistics. This includes providing contact details and introducing relevant stakeholders in-country, setting up meetings and organising field trips, identifying an interpreter etc. In cases where the project is closed and the project team has been disbanded and support from the Project Management Unit/Executing Agency is not possible, the Evaluation Office will request assistance from Government partners or a sister UN agency present in-country to help support the mission. However, this takes time and needs to be planned well in advance.

Field visits provide an important opportunity to discuss the reconstructed Theory of Change of the project with country-level project stakeholders. It is an excellent opportunity to obtain the views of stakeholders on the project's intervention logic, drivers and assumptions, and the role played by stakeholders in bringing about (or not) desired changes. At the end of each country visit, it is good practice to discuss any emerging findings from the visit with key project stakeholders if there is an opportunity to do so.

Photographs or other media evidence should be collated during the mission. These can then be used to help communicate the evaluation findings.

Further guidance for evaluation consultants on the administrative requirements related to field mission (travel, subsistence, etc.) is available in tool *(Tool 1)*. [20]

Stakeholder Involvement

The Evaluation Team schedules and conducts interactions across the full range of stakeholders relevant to the evaluand. Stakeholders may include, staff of UNEP and partners, intended users of any outputs, beneficiaries and funding partners. The means of engaging with these individuals and groups may include: in-person and online interviews, focus groups, surveys, phone-calls, formal correspondence etc. The evaluation team should aim to solicit information from a representative sample of individuals, including by gender, from the various stakeholder groups concerned and may include:

- The responsible UNEP Manager; for the project, policy or programme;
- The management team, where appropriate;
- UNEP Fund Management Officer (FMO);
- Implementing/executing partners;
- UNEP Sub-Programme Coordinator(s);
- Regional/national Focal Points/Coordinating Officers;
- Representatives from civil society and specialist groups (such as women's groups, farmers and trade associations etc.).

20 For GEF projects the Country Operational Focal Point should be informed of the visit and, if possible, a courtesy call arranged

Stakeholders will be informed of their right to anonymity in making comments and sharing information with the evaluation team.

Document Review

Documentary information should be made available by the staff managing the project, programme or policy (e.g. Project Manager) and provided to the evaluation team in a timely manner in-line with guidance (Tool 00b) on *standard information requests*. A large proportion of the documentation should have been made available during the inception stage. The types of document to be shared include:

- Formally approved design documents, and any formally approved revisions; Annual Work Plans and Budgets or equivalent,
- Reporting documentation e.g. Project Steering Committee minutes, six-monthly progress and financial reports, progress reports from collaborating partners, procurement records, relevant correspondence etc.;
- Deliverables and outputs;
- Mid-Term Review or Mid-Term Evaluation of the project;
- Evaluations/reviews of similar/related projects.

During the data collection and analysis phase, information gaps may be identified and further requests for documents can be made by the evaluation team. Incomplete documentation may lead to less favourable rating against evaluation criteria due to a lack of evidence to support more favourable judgments.

Evidence Triangulation

The Evaluation Team examines data and information derived from different sources, (e.g. different documents, multiple respondent interviews across different stakeholder groups etc.) to ensure that evidence is credible and robust. Findings should always be supported by evidence that has been triangulated from multiple sources.

Analysis and Interpretation

The Evaluation Team interprets and analyses all the data, information and evidence to develop its findings and inform its evaluative judgements against the required evaluation criteria and to respond to the requirements set out in the evaluation Terms of Reference. The awarding of performance ratings for evaluation criteria is guided by a *tool (Tool 02)* that helps to standardise the different types of evidence associated with each level of performance.

The Evaluation Team presents findings and analysis in an engaging, clear and concise manner, and makes effective use, where possible, of graphs and 'infographics' in the evaluation report.

4. Evaluation Report Preparation

The steps to prepare the evaluation report consist of identifying preliminary findings and preparing drafts and final report. The draft report is subject to consecutive rounds of review involving (but not limited to) the Evaluation Manager and Peer Reviewer of the Evaluation Office, Project Team and Financial Management Officer, and wider group of stakeholders such as UNEP managers, executing partners, recipients, funding partners and interviewees.

Preliminary Findings

Following the data collection and analysis phase, the Evaluation Team may prepare a set of preliminary findings usually to be shared with the Project Team responsible for the project, or team responsible for the programme or policy, and any key stakeholders. The preliminary findings may take the form of a presentation made to the project team to prompt discussion and further sharing of stakeholder views and information with the Evaluation Team.

Draft Report

The draft report submitted by the Evaluation Team should follow UNEP Evaluation Office requirements regarding its *structure and content (Tool 07)*. The draft report should be as complete as possible and should include a stand-alone Executive Summary and all the necessary Annexes. The Evaluation Manager will review the draft report and, prepare a *formal quality assessment (Tool 19)*. The Evaluation Consultant(s) will make any necessary corrections.

Based on a careful review of the evidence collated by the Evaluation Consultant(s) and the internal consistency of the report, the Evaluation Manager will provide an assessment of the ratings in the final Main Evaluation Report. Where there are differences of opinion between the Evaluation Team and the Evaluation Manager on *performance ratings (Tool 03, Tool 04)*, both viewpoints will be clearly presented in the final report. The Evaluation Office ratings will be considered the final ratings.

Once a draft report of adequate quality has been peer-reviewed within the Evaluation Office and accepted, the Evaluation Manager will share the cleared draft report with the Project Manager/Executing Partner.

Payment for the draft report is cleared by the Evaluation Manager, authorised by the Director of the Evaluation Office and processed by the Evaluation Assistant.

Factual Corrections and Stakeholder Comments

The Evaluation Manager initially shares the draft report in pdf format with key internal stakeholders, notably the UNEP Manager directly responsible for the project, programme or policy. The UNEP Manager is asked to provide feedback on any errors of fact and may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions as well as providing feedback on the proposed recommendations and lessons.

Comments should be made on substantive issues and should be consolidated in table format referencing the relevant paragraphs/sections of the report for each comment made.[21] As per the Evaluation Policy ***"…where the comments provided are deemed to be excessively lengthy, the Evaluation Office reserves the right to set limits either on the number of issues raised, or the number of pages of comments that will be considered."*** The directly responsible UNEP Manager for the project, programme or policy is advised of the duration of the commenting period - usually ten working days.

Any comments or responses to the draft report are sent to the Evaluation Manager. The Evaluation Manager will provide all comments to the Evaluation Consultant(s) for consideration along with guidance on areas of contradiction/contention or on issues requiring an institutional response.

Once the first round of commenting is complete and the draft report has been revised by the evaluation consultant(s) and accepted by the Evaluation Manager, the report is shared with the main stakeholders that contributed to the evaluation process. The second round of comments is managed similarly to the first with any comments or responses to the draft report being sent to the Evaluation Manager for consolidation. The Evaluation Manager will provide all comments to the Evaluation Consultant(s) for consideration along with any required guidance.

Findings and Conclusions

Evaluation findings and conclusions will be based on clearly documented evidence and analysis. Evaluation findings have a 'frame of reference' that is linked to an individual evaluation criterion or a strategic question (i.e. clearly linked to the evaluation TOR) Evaluation findings 'unpack' the 'how' and 'why' change has, or has not, taken place.

Evaluation conclusions are grounded in the analysis of the findings. They are statements at a strategic level made in relation to evaluation criteria or cross cutting issues. They add value to the evaluation findings.

Lessons and Recommendations

In UNEP, *recommendations in evaluation reports (Tool 16)* are valued to improve organizational performance, effectiveness and learning. Recommendations, however, only achieve the change intended, if they are formulated in a concise and actionable way and can be implemented within the required 12-month period. UNEP makes use of UNEG's Improved Quality of Evaluation Recommendations Checklist.[22] Recommendations should: be properly formulated and discussed during the evaluation process, address relevant issues, be well-structured and actionable. Recommendations are presented in a *standard format (Tool 16a)* where the problem/issue to be addressed is clearly articulated and separated from the suggested prescription. Recommendations are categorised into three priority levels – 'Critical', 'Important' and 'Opportunity for improvement'. They are also ascribed a type depending on the context of their intended implementation; 'Project-level' 'Partner' and 'UNEP-wide'.

UNEP ascribes to the view that evaluation Lessons and Recommendations both serve a learning and improvement objective and are closely related. The main difference between a recommendation and a lesson is that the latter is of a more general nature and is not associated with an implementation compliance process. A good lesson will define the problem/issue that is the locus for the learning and will articulate the prescription/course of action that is relevant in the given context.

Final Evaluation Report

Once the Evaluation Team has responded to the final round of comments and has provided a revised final draft evaluation report the Evaluation Manager will finalise the evaluation report. The Evaluation Manager prepares a formal assessment of the final evaluation report and clears the final payment to the Evaluation Consultant(s). Payment is authorised by the Director of the Evaluation Office and processed by the Evaluation Assistant.

21 A rule of thumb is that the maximum number of pages of comments should not exceed 10% of the total number of report pages (excluding annexes).

22 http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2124

The report is formatted to comply with Evaluation Office requirements, and the document is stored with the required file name format.

Presentation, Dissemination, and Public Disclosure

Learning from evaluations is most effectively promoted through interactive exchanges between those involved in preparing the evaluation report and those responsible for managing the project, policy or programme under evaluation. Evaluation Consultant(s) and/or staff of the Evaluation Office may make a presentation, in person or through an online 'webinar', that describes the evaluation, presents the main findings and promotes discussion of lessons and recommendations.

Strategic and other high-profile evaluations should, as a part of their TORs, have a communication plan for dissemination of the evaluation report. The communication plan should target both UNEP audiences and external audiences and may include presentation of evaluation findings through webinars, workshops, training sessions, UNEP 'brown bag' lunch meetings and conferences.

The Evaluation Office may selectively prepare a short 'Evaluation Brief' as a summary knowledge product derived from the Evaluation report to further help raise awareness of evaluation findings and further promote the uptake of lessons-learned and recommendations.

The final evaluation report is disseminated to all stakeholders that participated in the evaluation process and is publicly disclosed with the associated management response (see below). The evaluation report is also shared with funding partners.[23] The report is uploaded to the *UNEP document repository* and made available online from that web location. The report is also uploaded to the *United Nations Evaluation Group evaluation* database.

23 For GEF Projects, the report is shared with the national Operational Focal Points

5. Management Response

After the Evaluation Office has finalised an evaluation report, a formal management response to the evaluation is required.[24] This takes the form of a Recommendations Implementation Plan that is sent by the Evaluation Office to management with a one-month deadline to respond.

The recommendation compliance period runs for 12 months from the date that the implementation plan is finalised by the responsible manager and the Evaluation Office. Implementation of the agreed actions must be feasible within this timeframe. The Evaluation Office tracks the implementation status of the agreed actions.

A detailed description of the management response process is given in Section 3 .

Overview of Evaluation Guidance, Tools and Templates to be used during the Evaluation Process

The Evaluation Office has developed, and actively maintains, a full set of guidance, tools, and templates to support evaluation processes. The suite of documents helps to enhance the quality of evaluation processes and products, and the consistency of evaluative judgments against standard evaluation criteria.

24 **UN Evaluation Group Norms and Standards (2016). Norm 14:** Organizations should promote evaluation use and follow-up, using an interactive process that involves all stakeholders. Evaluation requires an explicit response by the governing authorities and/or management addressed by its recommendations that clearly states responsibilities and accountabilities. Management should integrate evaluation results and recommendations into its policies and programmes. The implementation of evaluation recommendations should be systematically followed up. A periodic report on the status of the implementation of the evaluation recommendations should be presented to the governing bodies and/or the head of the organization.

Table 4: Evaluation tools for each evaluation stage

Evaluation Stage	*Evaluation Office Documents*	Notes
Overarching	00a_UNEP Glossary of Results Definitions 00b_List of Documents needed for Evaluation 01_Evaluation_Criteria 02_Criterion_rating_descriptions_matrix 03_Evaluation_Project Performance Ratings_Table_ONLY 04_Weighted Ratings Table 20_Evaluation Methodology_Structure	For use and reference throughout the Evaluation process. These documents set out how UNEP interprets results terminology and defines, assesses and weights evaluation criteria.
Inception Report	05_Project_Identification_Table_ONLY 06_Inception Report_Structure_and_Contents 08_TOC Reformulation Justification Table ONLY – use this table for when/if you reconstruct the TOC for evaluation 09 and 09a_Quality_of_Project_Design_Assessment 10_Stakeholder_Analysis_Guidance_Note 11_Gender_methods_note 12_Safeguards Methods Note for Consultants	These are living documents, feedback is welcome and can be provided via the Evaluation Manager.
Main Evaluation Report	17_TE-MTE_GEF_Cover Page Prelims and Style Sheet Main Eval Report (template), or 18_TE-MTE_NonGEF_Cover Page Prelims and Style Sheet Main Eval Report 07_Main_Evaluation_Report_Structure_and_Contents 13_Use_of_Theory_of_Change_in_Project_Evaluation 15_Likelihood of impact – a decision tree to get the rating for likelihood of impact sub criteria under Effectiveness 15a_Likelihood of impact Test Case 14_Financial Tables – these go into the main evaluation report and will guide you on the evidence to look for under Financial Management Criteria. 16_Recommendations Quality Guidance Note 16a_In Report Template_Presenting_Recs and LL – use these to formulate the recommendations and lessons learned.	These two tools are also critical when assessing performance ratings: 02_Criterion_rating-descriptions_matrix 04_Weightings for Ratings – to get the overall rating for the project 20_Quality_Of_Eval_Report_Assess_FINAL ONLY (what EOU uses to assess the quality of draft and final reports)

5. Summary of Evaluation Roles and Responsibilities

All organizational units of UNEP have distinct roles and responsibilities in ensuring that evaluation supports accountability, evidence-based decision-making and learning. Working together with the governance function, the constituent parts contribute to a coherent and effective evaluation function. The *UNEP Evaluation Policy, approved in 2022*, sets out the roles and responsibilities with regards to evaluation and management-led review.

Member States

United Nations Environment Assembly/ Committee of Permanent Representatives (UNEA/CPR) receives regular briefings on evaluation plans, activities, findings, results and management responses to evaluation through recommendation compliance. The CPR comments on evaluation matters through an agenda item on evaluation at the Annual Subcommittee Meeting. The UNEA/CPR provides feedback and comments on the Biennial Evaluation Synthesis Report encompassing the findings of all UNEP evaluations.

UNEP Executive Director

The Executive Director is the guardian of the evaluation function and responsible for ensuring that the evaluation policy is implemented on behalf of the Secretary-General and Member States. The Executive Director oversees the overall evaluation function and ensures the function is adequately resourced and ensures that an annual segment is created within the UNEA/CPR Annual Subcommittee Meeting

UNEP Deputy Executive Director and Senior Management Team

The Deputy Executive Director (DED) is responsible for overseeing the use of evaluation findings and recommendations in future programming, budget planning and management through the work of Divisional and Regional Directors.

The Senior Management Team (SMT) discusses and comments on strategic evaluations, approves management responses to such evaluations, ensures compliance with strategic recommendations and that findings are incorporated in the design and implementation of programme activities. The SMT may suggest areas for evaluation as an input into Evaluation Office planning and its annual evaluation plan.

Divisional/Regional Directors and Branch Heads

Division Directors, Regional Directors and Heads of Branches are responsible for ensuring that their staff provide accurate information to the Evaluation Office regarding projects and programmes nearing operational completion, that their staff cooperate with requests for information, participate in evaluation processes and prepare evaluation management responses in a timely manner. They also ensure that accepted evaluation recommendations are implemented at the appropriate levels of management and that lessons and recommendations from evaluation are integrated into programme and project budgeting, design and implementation.

Evaluation Office

The Evaluation Office of UNEP is an independent entity reporting directly to the Executive Director and is responsible for implementing the annual evaluation plan by conducting and managing all independent evaluations at Medium-Term Strategy (MTS)/Programme of Work (PoW), sub-programme, portfolio and project levels and of cross-cutting issues. It ensures quality in evaluations conducted, provides analysis of findings and lessons for management, prepares the Biennial Evaluation Synthesis Report and disseminates evaluation findings and results to UNEP, Member States and stakeholders. The Evaluation Office promotes the uptake of lessons and tracks compliance with evaluation recommendations. The Director of the Evaluation Office briefs UNEA/CPR on all evaluation activities, findings and recommendation compliance.

Policy and Programme Division/ Corporate Services Division

The Policy and Programme Division (PPD) receives Evaluation Office inputs to project design documents submitted to the PRC and receives updates of evaluation implementation to help meet UNEP's corporate reporting responsibilities. The staff of the PPD may be interviewed during evaluation processes to provide perspectives on UNEP's strategic plans and future programmatic interests. The PPD is responsible for ensuring that strategic findings,

lessons, and recommendations from evaluations inform corporate management and strategic planning processes. The Corporate Services Division (CSD) provides services for the management of the Evaluation Office budget.

Sub-Programme Coordinators

Sub-Programme Coordinators (SPC) review relevant evaluation reports and provide comments. They coordinate the collation of comments on draft reports and the preparation of management responses for sub-programme evaluations. They are responsible for ensuring that project and sub-programme level evaluation findings inform strategic planning processes.

Branch/Unit Heads /GEF Portfolio Managers

Branch/Unit Heads /GEF Portfolio Managers ensure that they provide the Evaluation Office with an annual list of projects by operational completion date. They are invited to propose strategic questions for incorporation into the ToRs for project and portfolio evaluations and are invited to comment on draft evaluation reports. The Evaluation Office provides Branch/Unit Heads /GEF Portfolio Managers with a Recommendations Implementation Plan for all project/portfolio evaluations falling under their management responsibility. They ensure that project, portfolio, and sub-programme-level evaluation findings inform relevant strategic/and programmatic planning processes.

Project Managers/Task Managers

Project Managers[25] are responsible for providing up-to-date information on project implementation to PIMS/IPMR and for keeping the Project Performance Assessment Focal Points/the Evaluation Office informed of impending project operational completions. When a project is selected for evaluation they comply with the requirements and processes set out in the Evaluation Policy, Operational Strategy and Manual including inter alia timely; access to detailed project-related documentation; input to evaluation Terms of Reference, providing comments on the evaluation inception report, commenting on draft evaluation reports and preparing a comprehensive evaluation management response. Project Managers are responsible for providing evidence pertaining to the implementation of evaluation recommendations. For projects where a performance assessment is required according to internal UNEP or external donor requirements, and the project has not been selected for independent evaluation by the Evaluation Office, a management-led review will be conducted. The responsibility for management-led reviews rests with Project Managers.

Fund Management Officers and Legal Officers

Legal Officers will ensure that legally binding grants and funding agreements with UNEP contain evaluation-related provisions that are in-line with UNEP's Evaluation Policy. Where provisions for evaluation must vary from agreed standard texts, Legal Officers will liaise with the Evaluation Office to prepare the agreed text.

Fund Management Officers ensure that the approved financial provision for all performance assessments (mid-term and terminal evaluation/review) is held within project budgets until any evaluation/review processes have been completed. Where there is a shortfall in the resources required for evaluation, the FMO will address the issues under the direction of the Head of Branch/ Division Director.

The FMO assists in the transfer of project-level evaluation resources to the Evaluation Office cost centre or clears project-level evaluation expenditure (fees and travel) that has been authorised by the Director of the Evaluation Office. FMOs are expected to contribute to evaluation processes by providing financial information, participating in interviews and providing comments on draft project evaluation reports.

Performance Assessment Focal Points

Project Performance Assessment Focal Points are appointed by Divisional/Regional Directors at the appropriate level (Division, Branch or Unit) to respond to Evaluation Office calls for information regarding projects reaching operational completion and to ensure colleagues provide complete and reliable data.

The Project Performance Assessment Focal Points will monitor the progress of, and keep records for, upcoming, ongoing and completed management-led Mid-Term and Terminal Reviews in their Division/Office/Branch/Unit and ensure that completed project-level Final Review Reports are provided to the Evaluation Office for validation. Project Performance Assessment Focal Points serve as an initial point of contact regarding the response to, and implementation of recommendations, made in Mid-Term and Terminal Review Reports.

25 The same roles and requirements apply to Task Manager roles for GEF/ GCF projects.

UN environment programme

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