

OHCHR

EVALUATION POLICY

2023

Policy, Planning,
Monitoring and
Evaluation Service
(PPMES)



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The revised evaluation policy sets out the frame of reference for the Evaluation Function of OHCHR (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights). It details the evaluation purpose, definitions, governing norms and standards, organisational requirements, as well as quality standards for the management and conduct of the evaluation.
2. The policy reaffirms the importance OHCHR accords to evaluations as a key tool to ensure accountability for results and reinforce organisational learning. Evaluations further contribute to making OHCHR's interventions more relevant, coherent, efficient, effective, impact-oriented and sustainable, with the ultimate aim of promoting and protecting all human rights for all people. To this end, OHCHR leadership will foster a culture that values continuous learning and encourages its staff at all levels to actively engage in reflective learning exercises contributing to the organisation's knowledge base.
3. The policy applies to all divisions, sections and field presences of OHCHR. It enters into force on 01/12/2023 and replaces the previous OHCHR Evaluation Policy adopted in 2013.
4. The policy aligns with the UN Reform Agenda "Ensuring a Better Future for All," which articulates, among others, a commitment to strengthening the evaluation capacity of the UN Secretariat¹. It has been guided by the Administrative Instructions for Evaluation in the UN Secretariat (ST/AI/2021/3), the updated United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)² norms and standards (2016) and ethical principles (2020) for evaluation. The policy has been informed by international good practices and reflects over a decade of experience in conducting evaluations gained by OHCHR since the institutionalization of its evaluation function in 2013.
5. The policy should be read in conjunction with additional resources developed by OHCHR to operationalize the implementation of this policy, including evaluation plans that follow OHCHR's quadrennial programming, the evaluation management guidelines and guidelines on the follow-up on evaluations.

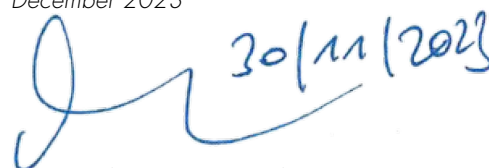
THIS POLICY AT A GLANCE

Scope

All OHCHR

Entry into Force

1 December 2023



Signature of HC and date of signature

Review Date

November 2027

The implementation of the policy shall be reviewed by PPMES at a minimum, every four years.

References

- [UN Reform Agenda](#) "Ensuring a Better Future for All"
- [Administrative instructions for Evaluation in the UN Secretariat \(ST/AI/2021/3\)](#), the updated United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) [norms and standards](#) (2016) and [ethical principles](#) (2020) for evaluation
- [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)
- [General Assembly resolution A/RES/69/237](#) on building capacity to evaluate development activities at the country level
- [Guidelines: Administrative instruction on Evaluation United Nations Secretariat](#)

History

Update of the 2013 Evaluation Policy

OHCHR will strengthen the use of evaluation to protect and promote all human rights for all people.

1. <http://reform.un.org/>

2. UNEG is an interagency professional network bringing together the evaluation units of the UN System. <http://www.unevaluation.org/>

II. DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF EVALUATION WITHIN OHCHR

6. OHCHR adheres to the UNEG definition of evaluation as:

“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, coherence, 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 organisations and stakeholders”³.

7. In OHCHR, evaluations are conducted for three overall purposes:

- **Evidence-based decision-making** for planning, programming, budgeting, implementation and reporting contributing to organisational effectiveness.
- **Learning** by generating information about what works well in OHCHR’s interventions (and conversely what does not), in what context, and why. Such learning is expected to catalyse innovation, adaptability and continuous improvement.
- **Promoting accountability** of OHCHR to stakeholders by objectively verifying programme performance, resources used, and results achieved.

8. Evaluation supports OHCHR in delivering its mandate⁴ by:

- Fostering an organisational culture of evidence decision making, adaptability and learning to promote and protect more effectively the enjoyment and full realisation, by all people, of all human rights.
- Enhancing accountability of OHCHR towards rights-holders, duty-bearers and Member States by providing credible evidence of achieving the goals of the mandated tasks, normative work, and programmatic interventions.
- Building knowledge and institutional memory by identifying and disseminating good and emerging practices as well as lessons learned.
- Contributing to organisational efficiency and effectiveness by demonstrating to what extent OHCHR’s organisational and performance management plans and strategies have been achieved.
- Strengthening partnerships and promoting inter-agency cooperation, including through joint evaluations, to streamline the human-rights-based approach in the United Nations System.

Evaluation supports OHCHR in delivering its mandate across six pillars.

³. UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016). The criterion of coherence was added subsequent to the UNEG Norms and Standards
⁴. Mandate of UN Human Rights - OHCHR

III. EVALUATION NORMS, STANDARDS AND PRINCIPLES

Figure 1: UNEG Norms, standards and principles

General Norms for Evaluation:	Principles of Ethics in Evaluation:	Institutional Norms for Evaluation:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internationally agreed principles, goals and targets • Utility • Credibility • Independence • Impartiality • Ethics • Transparency • Human rights and gender equality • National evaluation capacities • Professionalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity • Accountability • Respect • Beneficence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling environment • Evaluation policy • Responsibility for the evaluation function • Evaluation use and follow-up

9. OHCHR is committed to upholding UNEG norms, standards and ethical principles:

a. Internationally agreed principles, goals and targets

All evaluations shall uphold and promote the principles and values to which the UN is committed. In particular, OHCHR's evaluations will promote the normative framework of the UN's commitments to human rights, encompassing civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights and the right to development. Concurrently, evaluations will also promote the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, emphasising its three principles of the human-rights-based approach, Leaving no one behind and equality and non-discrimination⁵.

b. Utility

OHCHR is committed to ensuring that evaluations are relevant and useful, maximising the likelihood that the resulting analysis, conclusions and recommendations will inform decisions and actions. In line with its consultative approach, OHCHR's independent evaluation function will engage with OHCHR Units and field presences to determine evaluation priorities and ensure timely contributions of evaluations to organisational learning needs. The evaluation findings shall be clear, concise, and actionable, providing concrete recommendations for decision-making by intended users.

c. Credibility

OHCHR will ground the credibility of evaluations on independence, impartiality, rigorous methodology, transparent evaluation processes, inclusive approaches involving setting up Reference Groups, and robust quality assurance. Evaluation findings and recommendations will be derived from the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of the best available, objective, reliable and valid data and by accurate quantitative and qualitative analysis of evidence. Evaluations will be ethically conducted and managed by evaluators who exhibit professional and cultural competencies.

5. <https://unsdg.un.org/2030agenda/universal-values>

d. Independence

OHCHR will ensure its evaluations are free from undue influence through organisational and behavioural independence.

- **Organisational independence:** The evaluation function is located independently from management functions and operates freely to set up an evaluation agenda with resources to perform the work. The evaluation function has the authority to select topics for evaluation and their timing and shall have access to the information required to perform its work.
- **Behavioural independence:** Evaluators will be independent, not have been directly responsible for the policy-setting, design, or overall management of the subject of evaluation, nor expect to be in the near future. Evaluators will be free to express assessments without undue pressure.

e. Impartiality

OHCHR recognises that impartiality in evaluation is critical for ensuring fairness, objectivity, and accuracy in any evaluation process. OHCHR will ensure that evaluators are not in conflict of interest, such as personal relationships, financial incentives or professional or political affiliations. By applying research rigour, evaluators will base their assessments on objective criteria and evidence. Potential biases will be mitigated through data triangulation and seeking inputs and feedback from a wide range of stakeholders. Evaluation findings will be communicated based on validated facts and evidence.

f. Ethics

Evaluations will be conducted with the highest standard of professional integrity, accountability, and respect for those involved in a way that honours their dignity, well-being and personal agency while being responsive to their sex, gender, race, language, country of origin, LGBTQ status, age, background, religion, ethnicity and ability and to cultural, economic and physical environments. The principle of “Do Not Harm” will underpin all the evaluation processes with due consideration to obtaining informed consent for data collection, respecting the rights of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence and anonymity, and ensuring that sensitive data cannot be traced to its sources.

g. Transparency

OHCHR considers transparency in the evaluation as essential for promoting accountability and building trust in the validity and reliability of evaluation results. OHCHR will promote transparency by involving stakeholders at the early stages of the evaluation and communicating with them regularly throughout the process. This shall include providing clear information about the purpose of the evaluation, the methods used, and the expected outcomes. OHCHR will communicate any limitations or challenges that may impact the evaluation findings. Unless determined otherwise, reports will be made available to the public, as detailed in point 22.

OHCHR will ground the credibility of evaluations on independence, impartiality, rigorous methodology, transparent evaluation processes and inclusive approaches.

The principle of “Do Not Harm” will underpin all the evaluation processes.

h. Human Rights (HR), Gender Equality (GE), Disability Inclusion (DI) and Leaving No One Behind (LNOB)

OHCHR considers that the effective conduct and use of evaluations provide valuable contributions to accountability and learning that, in turn, help promote and protect human rights more effectively. Evaluation results provide credible and reliable findings on whether OHCHR's interventions result in the increased capacities of right holders and duty bearers, ultimately translating into enhanced human rights promotion and protection.

OHCHR will ensure that all evaluations are gender and disability mainstreamed in their design, data collection and analysis, processes, and learning and reporting. Further, in line with the UN commitment to Leaving No One Behind, OHCHR will apply an intersectional lens in evaluation to capture if its interventions reach the most marginalised and vulnerable and if the interventions contribute to reducing their exclusion.

HR, GE, DI & LNOB are central to OHCHR's evaluations.

All evaluations should be gender and disability mainstreamed in their design, data collection and analysis processes, and learning and reporting.

i. National Evaluation Capacities

OHCHR has been supporting Member States in establishing human rights indicators to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of public programs and human rights plans to assess and report progress in implementing human rights and compliance with the normative framework. In line with General Assembly resolution [A/RES/69/237](#) on building capacity to evaluate development activities at the country level, OHCHR stands ready to support national evaluation capacities within its mandate upon the request of Member States.

j. Professionalism

All evaluations shall be conducted with professionalism and integrity, contributing towards the credibility of evaluators, evaluation managers, as well as the evaluation function. Key aspects shall include access to knowledge, education and training; adherence to ethics and these norms and standards; utilisation of evaluation competencies; and recognition of knowledge, skills and experience. This shall be supported by an enabling environment, institutional structures and adequate resources as outlined below.



OHCHR is monitoring the human rights situation of migrants crossing the Darien jungle in Panama. © OHCHR

IV. INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE GOVERNING THE INDEPENDENT EVALUATION FUNCTION

10. The following institutions govern the evaluation function with distinct roles and responsibilities as follows:

a. [Senior Management Team \(SMT\)](#) is the custodian of OHCHR's evaluation policy that:

- Ensures an enabling environment to enhance the evaluation and learning culture in OHCHR,
- Draws on the results of evaluations for its approval of OHCHR policies and other interventions,
- Ensures the independence of the evaluation function,
- Endorses the evaluation policy and its subsequent revisions.

b. [Programme and Budget Review Board \(PBRB\)](#) acts as an oversight body that:

- Oversees the implementation of the evaluation policy,
- Reviews and endorses (for HC's approval) evaluation plans,
- Approves budgets, ensuring adequate resources are available to support evaluations as established under points 11-14,
- Uses and draws on the findings and recommendations of evaluations for quality control oversight and approval of quadrennial planning (as reflected in the Organization's Management Plan, strategies, programmes and other interventions submitted for its reviews),
- Reviews management responses to evaluations and their action plans,
- Ensures follow-up to evaluations by relevant Sections/Units/ Field Presences.

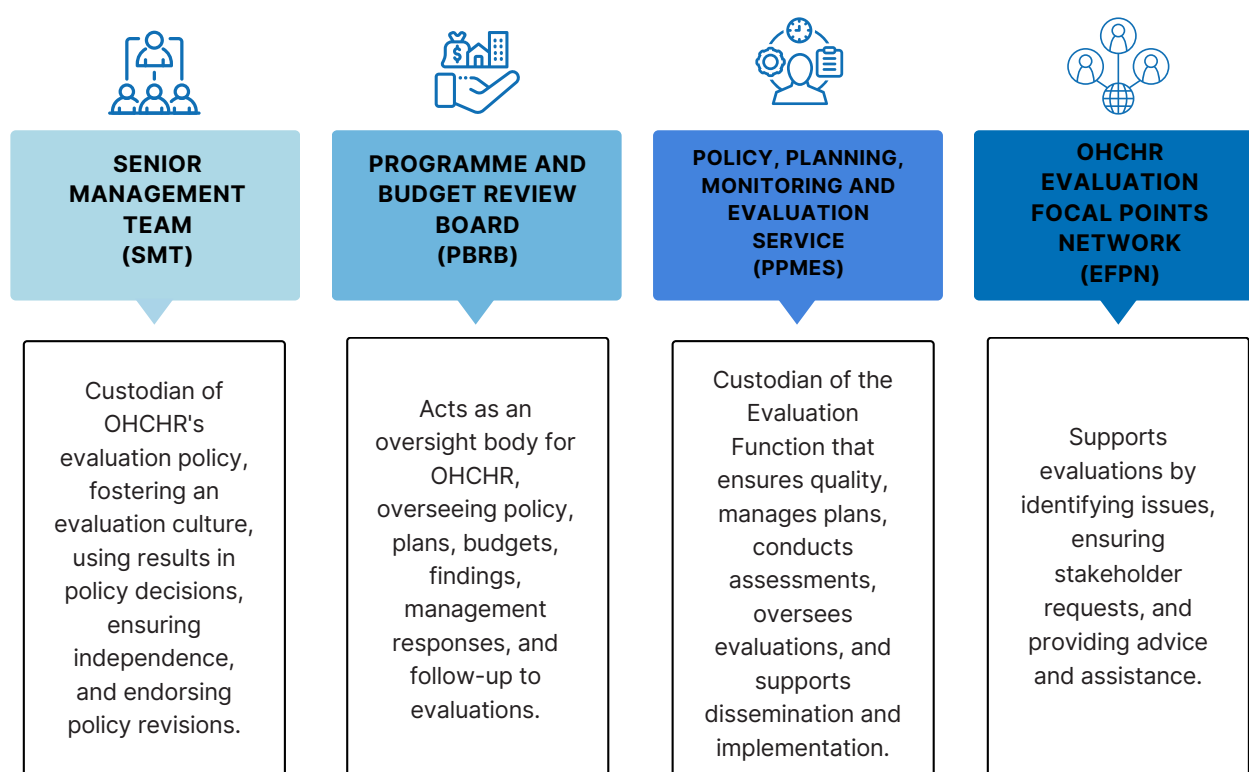
c. [The Policy, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Service \(PPMES\)](#), placed within the headquarters-based Executive Direction and Management (EDM) and reporting to the Deputy High Commissioner (DHC), is the custodian of the Evaluation Function that:

- Provides quality assurance and quality assessments, ensuring all the norms, standards and principles are upheld in evaluation processes,
- Develops Office-wide evaluation plans based on inputs from and consultation with relevant stakeholders,
- Conducts evaluability assessments,
- Commissions, manages and undertakes internal evaluations and evaluative exercises,
- Supports external evaluations,
- Presents the results of evaluations to its intended users,
- Builds and maintains an electronic database of evaluations,
- Supports the dissemination of evaluation results,
- Supports the preparation of the management response and its review,
- Builds and maintains a system to record management responses to all evaluations and monitors their implementation,
- Develops and improves methods of evaluation and evaluation guidelines,
- Works with other entities in OHCHR to broaden the sense of ownership and involvement in the evaluation function,
- Reviews the Evaluation Policy, as needed,
- Helps to develop evaluation capacity and learning culture across the Office,
- Participates in external groups on evaluation, and
- Acts as the focal point for OHCHR in inter-agency evaluation initiatives and at inter-agency evaluation fora, including UNEG.

d. The OHCHR Evaluation Focal Points Network (EFPN) is composed of representatives of the three substantive divisions of OHCHR: the Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division (FOTCD), the Human Rights Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division (CTMD) and the Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development Division (TESPRDD) as well as the Executive Direction and Management (EDM), Programme Support and Management Services (PSMS) and the New York Office (NYO)⁶. PPMES acts as chair and secretariat. The EFPN supports evaluation work by:

- Identifying possible evaluation issues and bringing them for discussion,
- Ensuring evaluations requested by stakeholders are included in the evaluation forecasts and annual plans,
- Liaising with the respective Divisions, Units, and Services on evaluation-related work to ensure consultation and participation,
- Providing advice on evaluation-related issues and contributing with substantive knowledge and inputs to evaluation products,
- Supporting the conduct and/or management of evaluations upon request.

Figure 2: Institutions that govern the evaluation function in OHCHR



⁶. Hereafter defined as "Divisions/ Units and Services" for ease of reference.

V. TYPES OF EVALUATIONS

11. OHCHR distinguishes two types of evaluations:

Internal Evaluations

Internal evaluations are commissioned by OHCHR and may be carried out by OHCHR evaluation specialists or external consultants managed by OHCHR evaluation managers or in mixed teams.

Internal evaluations may be:

- Centralized, commissioned by the Evaluation Function
- Decentralized, commissioned by a Division, Unit, Services, or Field Presence responsible for the assessed intervention.

The Evaluation Function approves decentralized evaluation terms of reference⁷.

External Evaluations

OHCHR is subject to externally commissioned evaluations:

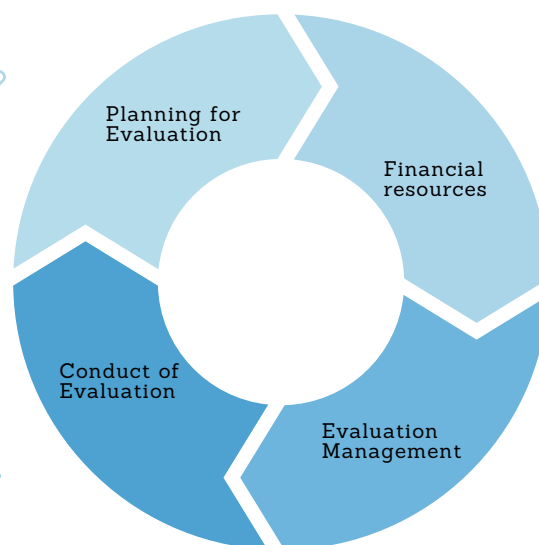
- Donor-conducted evaluations of its programmes, projects and interventions,
- Evaluations and assessments by other external stakeholders, such as the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN),
- Evaluations and assessments by independent UN oversight bodies, such as the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS),
- The system-wide Evaluation Unit in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG) and,
- The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU).

12. OHCHR also conducts other evaluative exercises such as strategic vision exercises, synthesis and meta-analyses of evaluations, lessons learned exercises and research studies. These are short and focused assessments conducted internally by OHCHR specialists or with support from a consultant in mixed teams.

VI. EVALUATION PROCEDURES

Figure 3: Evaluation Procedures

OHCHR plans for evaluations in a 4-year cycle. Based on the quadrennial plan, annual plans reflect emerging priorities.



OHCHR commits to meeting the 0.5% evaluation expenditure benchmark through extrabudgetary resources and regular budget.

Evaluations are conducted by PPMES independent evaluation specialists and/or external evaluation consultants selected through an open and transparent process.



OHCHR forms the following groups for each evaluation to ensure a comprehensive evaluation process:

- Management group
- Focal points
- Reference groups

7. At the time of the evaluation policy's revision, the Evaluation Function carries out most evaluations centrally. With the strengthening of the programme management capacity of OHCHR's regional offices, it is expected that the evaluation of interventions under 1 million USD (small and medium projects) will increasingly be carried decentralized with the support of the Evaluation Function.

a. Planning for Evaluations

13. OHCHR plans for evaluations through a quadrennial process that includes a costed forecast of all evaluations to be carried out in the upcoming four-year Organization Management Plan (OMP) cycle. This forecast document is developed and consulted with the EFPN and endorsed by the PBRB using the following criteria:
- Relevance to the OHCHR Management Plans and Strategic Frameworks,
 - Demand by stakeholders,
 - Strategic importance and risks to implementation,
 - Potential for the generation of relevant knowledge (a clear intent regarding the purpose and use of findings to improve the work of OHCHR),
 - Size of investment or coverage,
 - Visibility of interventions or strategies (Flagship programmes),
 - Evaluability (Implementation maturity, programme logic, timing, data availability, utility),
 - Evaluation coverage (Representative mix of evaluations, programme, geographical, conduct of previous evaluations).
14. Based on the quadrennial evaluation forecast document, annual plans are developed and presented for PBRB approval to reflect emerging priorities and needs.

b. Financial Resources

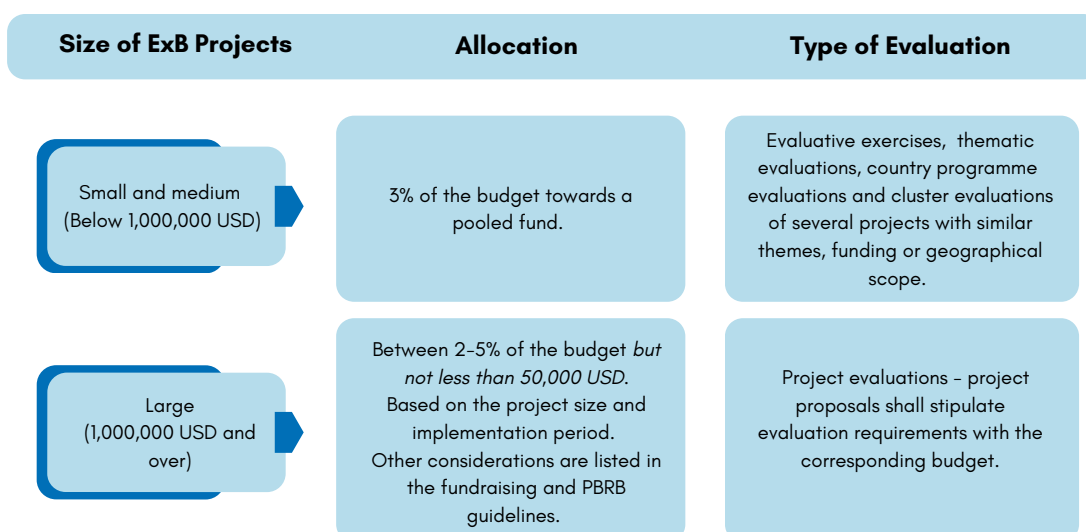
15. OHCHR is committed to meeting the minimum organisational benchmark for evaluation expenditure of 0.5% of the organisational expenditure as recommended by OIOS and JIU⁸ through the following:

1) In relation to earmarked extrabudgetary (ExB) funding sources,

OHCHR will establish a pooled Evaluation Fund, which will receive 3% of each project budget below 1,000,000 USD⁹. For larger projects of 1,000,000 USD and over, funding agreements and their respective project proposals shall stipulate evaluation requirements with the corresponding budget.

PPMES is available for consultation to determine a suitable budget for evaluation, especially if the recommended provisions are considered excessive. Further guidelines are provided in Table 1 and the fundraising and PBRB proposals guidance.

Figure 4: Budget allocations towards evaluation based on the project size.



8. <https://undocs.org/JIU/REP/2014/6>

9. Dedicated guidance will elaborate on the implementation of the Evaluation Fund.

II) In relation to the regular budget

OHCHR will continue requesting the necessary resources in all programme plan submissions to support organisational learning, innovation in evaluation (see points 24 and 25), evaluation capacity development, professionalisation throughout the organisation and especially at the field level (see points 30 and 31) and to conduct evaluations of OHCHR's work not covered by project funds. Such evaluations may cover the work of any Division and Unit at the Headquarters level, regional and country level programmes, policy organs, Funds Trust and/ or support services. If needed, regular budget funds may be complemented by unearmarked extrabudgetary funds to reach the aforementioned minimum organizational benchmark.

c. Evaluation Management

16. To ensure an effective, inclusive and transparent evaluation process that fosters ownership and the use of evaluation among stakeholders, OHCHR constitutes the following groups for each evaluation:

I) Management group

Composed of an Evaluation Manager from PPMES, a designated focal point from a field presence or unit being evaluated, the respective FOTCD Desk Officers for evaluations concerning field presences and in the case of evaluations requested by a donor, a DEXREL Donor and External Relations Officers. The Management Group makes key decisions about the evaluation design and processes.

II) Focal point(s)

Composed of representatives from the field presence(s) or unit(s) under evaluation who are responsible for providing access to relevant data, reports, and stakeholders and coordinating inputs of their entity(ies) to evaluation products.

III) Reference group

Composed of representatives of the thematic and geographical units in Headquarters and the field relevant to the intervention being evaluated. To foster a participatory approach, the membership of a reference group can be extended to relevant external stakeholders. The reference group serves in an advisory capacity to strengthen the evaluation's substantive grounding and relevance to the Office's work.

d. Conduct of Evaluation

17. Evaluations are conducted by PPMES independent evaluation specialists and/or external evaluation consultants selected through an open and transparent process. These consider the required competencies, gender balance, geographical diversity, and accessibility to the local population.
18. Evaluators, as well as consultants recruited to conduct evaluations under the management of OHCHR staff, are expected to adhere to the provisions of this policy, all UNEG norms and standards, and ethical principles, including professional integrity and ethical behaviour in line with the UN Secretariat Values and Behaviours.¹⁰
19. PPMES develops and updates detailed evaluation guidelines aligned with good international evaluation practice.

10. https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/sg_message-en_0.pdf

VII. USE OF EVALUATION

a. Evaluation Management Responses, Follow-up and Closure

20. Following the submission of the final evaluation report, the evaluated unit, with support from PPMEs, prepares a "Management Response" to the evaluation report, including an action plan for implementing the evaluation recommendations. The management response clearly states whether the recommendation is accepted, partially accepted or rejected. Where a recommendation is rejected, a detailed justification is provided. The management response also describes what action is being taken to implement each accepted recommendation, including the completion date and unit responsible for each action.
21. Management responses are submitted to the PBRB for its endorsement. Once endorsed, PPMEs tracks the implementation of the evaluation recommendations, requesting updates from the programme managers on the implementation status every six months. These updates are submitted to the PBRB.
22. An evaluation is considered closed once all the recommendations have been implemented. This should typically be the case within two years after the endorsement of the management response by the PBRB.

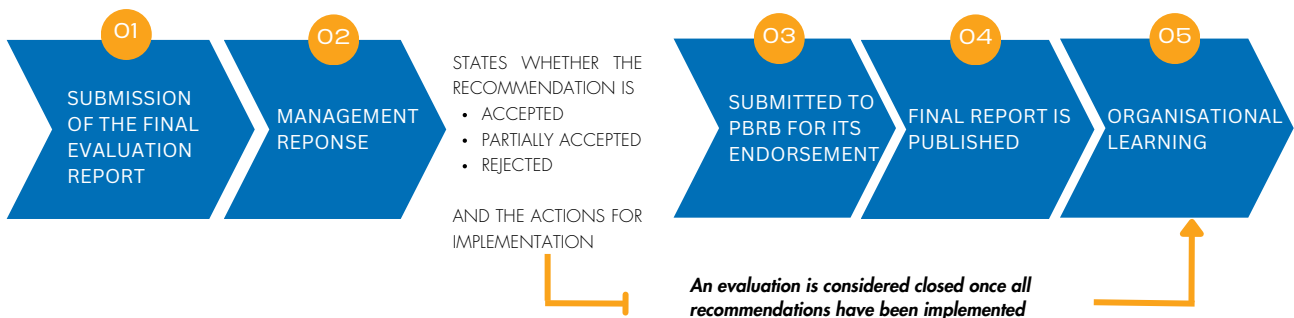
b. Dissemination and Disclosure

23. Final evaluation reports, together with their management responses, are published on OHCHR's intranet, external website and the UNEG portal. Evaluation reports are made available to major stakeholders and are considered public documents unless decided otherwise due to information confidentiality and sensitivity. All reporting shall comply with the Do Not Harm principle and should consider if they may endanger stakeholders – particularly victims of human rights violations and/or human rights defenders. Discretion to issue evaluation reports lies with the Chief of PPMEs.

c. Organisational Learning

24. As a learning organisation, OHCHR shall reflect learning from evaluation in ongoing interventions as well as when designing new ones.
25. To maintain institutional knowledge, PPMEs should produce executive summaries, meta-analyses of conducted evaluations, lessons learned and other evaluation findings. These should be presented to PBRB and disseminated to other sections and units to inform OHCHR's development of Office-wide policies, strategies, programme planning and budgeting.

Figure 5: Use of Evaluation



VIII. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ASSESSMENT

26. To ensure the highest possible quality and credibility, PPMES undertakes quality assurance. A dedicated Evaluation Manager, within PPMES, is responsible for ensuring all evaluation processes and products meet all the UNEG norms, standards and principles and the provisions of this policy.
27. The validity and reliability of evaluation data and findings are further assured by the involvement of a reference group and stakeholders commenting on the evaluation products (terms of references, inception paper and final evaluation report). PPMES ensures that recommendations emanating from evaluations are firmly based on evidence and analysis and are clear, results-oriented and realistic in implementation.
28. PPMES undertakes a quality evaluation assessment by applying a checklist guided by the guidelines to the Administrative Instructions for Evaluation in the UN Secretariat.¹¹
29. In addition to the OIOS biennial United Nations Evaluation Dashboard, OHCHR provides its self-assessment for the United Nations System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (GEEW), assessing the extent to which the evaluation reports of OHCHR meet the gender-related UNEG Norms and Standards and demonstrating effective use of the UNEG Guidance on integrating human rights and gender equality during all phases of the evaluation. OHCHR also assesses its evaluation reports following the UNEG Guidance on Integrating Disability Inclusion in Evaluations and Reporting on the UNDIS Entity Accountability Framework Evaluation Indicator.

IX. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

30. OHCHR is committed to developing evaluation capacity so that the evaluation function is well developed and utilised as a component of results-based management. OHCHR strives to strengthen the linkages between results monitoring, results reporting and evaluation. To this end, it will support evaluation capacity development across OHCHR through training, provision of guidance, setting up communities of practice and other tools.
31. OHCHR aims to establish a network of programme management officers at the regional level with a clear evaluation function to support the conduct and managing of evaluations, as well as to promote the evaluation culture throughout the organisation.

X. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW OF POLICY

32. The Chief of PPMES will report to PBRB on the policy implementation and evaluation plan annually.
33. A review of the implementation of the evaluation policy will be conducted on an as needed basis, and at a minimum every four years, to address relevant changes in the evaluation practice and organizational context.

¹¹. See the Evaluation Administrative Instructions, p.8-10

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