

UNEG Task Force on Impact Evaluation

Terms of reference for the preparation of a guidance document on impact evaluation in the UN system

1 Background

In April 2012, the UNEG Task Force on Impact Evaluation (IETF) submitted to UNEG members three guidance notes on Impact Evaluation: Guidance Note 1 focused on the role of impact evaluation in the UN monitoring and evaluation systems; Guidance Note 2 focused on impact evaluations of normative work; and Guidance Note 3, still in draft form, focused on impact evaluation of multi-agent interventions (MAI). These guidance notes had been prepared by the IETF with the support of consultants and originated from a decision by the UNEG Annual General Meeting (AGM) in 2010, to develop separate guidance notes on different aspects of impact evaluation.

The impact evaluation topics were selected based on earlier work by the IETF, in particular a concept note based on a two-year process of consultation and stock-taking of the work by UNEG members on Impact Evaluation, including an assessment of capacity development and guidance needs and expectations from UNEG members.

The 2012 AGM asked the IETF to:

- consolidate the existing guidance notes in one single document;
- ‘hand over’ the guidance note on impact evaluation of Normative Work to the TF mandate to provide overall guidance on Normative Work for the UN;
- develop a proposal for a UN impact evaluation series.

2 Purpose of the assignment and tasks

These terms of reference (TOR) have been developed for the purpose of hiring a consultant to prepare, discuss and finalize a guidance note on impact evaluation in the UN system. The guidance note will consolidate and further develop existing documents on conceptual and operational aspects of impact evaluation in the UN System and will be designed to help UNEG members and the evaluation community at large to conceptualize, design, plan and conduct impact evaluations of UN work.

The guidance note will be a stand-alone document, in the format of a user-friendly handbook, for reference and use by evaluation managers and evaluators. The Guidance Note should also be flexible to accommodate further additional sections or chapters in the future. The target audience is primarily UNEG members, although the evaluation community at large may also benefit.

In order to accomplish his/her mandate, the consultant will:

- take stock of the material produced by the IETF since 2009, including Guidance Notes 1, 2 and 3 and the consolidated and annotated GN produced by the TF in October 2012;

- submit to the IETF suggestions for improving the outline that will be made available to the consultant upon recruitment; Annex 1 of this ToR contains an indicative draft version of the outline;
- prepare a draft guidance note and submit it to the IETF for comments and suggestions;
- finalize the guidance note taking into account the IETF feedback and suggestions.

The IETF will be closely involved in the process. Consultation with IETF members will be possible by email at any time during the drafting process. Face to face meetings or teleconferences can be organized as needed. The IETF may consider setting-up a peer-review process involving non TF members to review the draft guidance document.

3 Timing, logistics, deliverables and payment

The consultant will work from his/her home base and will interact with the TF members primarily by teleconference and through email exchange.

The consultancy will be conducted during the period November 2012-January 2013.

The consultant will submit to the IETF co-chairs the following deliverables:

- A proposal for improving the (attached) Outline within one week from the start of the contract;
- the draft guidance material within two weeks from receiving feedback from the TF on the proposed changes to the outline;
- the final guidance material within 1 week from receipt of the feed-back from the TF and the peer-review, if applicable.

The assignment is 'deliverable-based', and payment will be finalized upon approval by the IE TF co-chairs of the final version of the Guidance material and related communication to the UNEG secretariat.

4 Qualifications of the consultant

The consultant must have in-depth knowledge and experience on impact evaluations issues; and experience in the evaluation of normative and institutional support work within the UN. Practical experience in the conduct of impact evaluation is required. Good writing skills in English are essential.

The consultant must possess a post-graduate degree in development related disciplines; and at least 15 years in the area of evaluation of international development initiatives, in particular in the UN system.

Annex 1

Outline for a Guidance Note on Impact Evaluation in the UN

A. Background

NOTE: This section will explain briefly (max 400 words) what has been the evolution of the work of the IE TF.

B. Purpose of the Guidance Note

1. TOPICS to cover: Awareness of the importance of impact evaluation has increased markedly within international community; many existing documents focus on impact evaluation methodology; this Guidance Note provides overarching perspective on IE within institutional and contextual parameters that characterize UN interventions

C. Definition of Impact Evaluation

NOTE: The ‘working definition for IE’ proposed by the IE TF has been one of the debated issues at the last AGM. The core argument against it was ‘it challenges the OECD/DAC definition of impact’.

Possibilities for the way forward include: a) more explanation in the text on the rationale for this definition; b) a different, less visible graphic presentation of the definition; c) discussions within respective evaluation units, on the usefulness of the proposed definition and feedback to the TF.

D. Role of Impact Evaluation in UN overall performance management systems

TOPICS to cover: Role of Monitoring / Evaluation functions in UN organisations; demand for IE in UN organisations; examples from UN Agencies

E. Issues to consider when planning Impact Evaluations

TOPICS to cover: Role of IE for accountability; Role of IE for learning/ strategic guidance; Timing of IE

F. Planning and Implementing Impact Evaluations

TOPICS to cover:

- Assessing ‘Evaluability’ including conduciveness of the context, characteristics of the intervention e.g. design and logic, evaluation design and costs

- Planning IE including articulating the Theory of Change. NOTE: The GN on IE of NW contains a long and detailed description (para 35 to para 127) of how to articulate the ToC for normative work, which could be revised and integrated here as ToC for IE.
- IE Design and choice of methods. NOTE: The TF has to decide whether we need to provide more detailed guidance on design, methods and tools; focus should be on those that are more specific/frequently used in IE, e.g. set up of a counterfactual, ‘invention’ of a baseline, etc. Annex 2 of the GN2 on NW could be used as reference.
- Implementing IE including requirements for evaluators/ evaluation managers etc.

G. Quality control for Impact Evaluations

TOPICS to cover: Criteria for assessing the quality of IE, independence associated with an IE

NOTE: This is the section the AGM requested to expand. How is a matter for decision: indicators, scoring systems with descriptors, etc.

H. Utilization, uptake and disclosure of Impact Evaluations

TOPICS to cover: there is little existing literature analysis of how IEs are used in the field of international development, which is indicative of a wider phenomenon of limited evidence on the use of evaluations in general; best practice examples demonstrate that a central factor facilitating uptake of IEs is stakeholder involvement;

Also include discussion on institutionalizing M&E and IE within UN organisations/ examples how IEs are disclosed in UN organizations

NOTE: these sections could refer to other UNEG guidance/ norms and standards on the subject and should focus on what is specific to IE. Also, some good examples should be added.

I. Specific Types of Impact Evaluations in the UN context

TOPICS to cover: IE of normative and institutional support work, IE of multi-agency interventions: specific issues to consider when planning and implementing such types of IE