



# EVALUATION POLICY

*December 2014*



United Nations  
Economic Commission for Africa





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# Abbreviations/acronyms

CAC	Consultative and Advisory Committee (on M&E)
ECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
IDEP	African Institute for Economic Development and Planning
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
PIKMD	Public Information & Knowledge Management Division
PPBME	Planning, Programming, Budgeting, Monitoring and Evaluation
QA	Quality Assurance
RB	Regular Budget
RBM	Results-Based Management
SPOQD	Strategic Planning and Operational Quality Division
SROs	Sub-Regional Offices of ECA
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNHQ	United Nations Headquarters
XB	Extra budgetary







## Summary

The present document sets out the evaluation policy of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), which enters into force in December 2014. It explains the objectives, roles and functions of evaluation within ECA, defines the institutional framework within which evaluation operates and outlines the general processes by which it is made operational. The policy governs ECA's evaluation function and applies to all initiatives supported and funded by ECA. It is aligned with the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), but tailored to ECA's unique mandate and role to promote policy research and knowledge delivery in supporting the social and economic transformation of Africa.

This policy lays out the purpose of evaluation in ECA, its specific definition of evaluation and the principles, norms and standards that guide its practice. While the main focus is on evaluation, the policy anticipates strong inter-linkages with two other key organizational functions, such as monitoring and knowledge management, as being essential for an effective overall evidence-based approach to organizational learning and accountability.

The policy presents the criteria to be applied in ECA evaluations and the process and parameters for selecting evaluations to ensure their adequate coverage. The present policy establishes the guiding principles and norms, and explains key evaluation concepts.

Given the nature of ECA's core research and knowledge sharing work for social and economic impact, the policy lays out an approach to the evaluation of impacts. It also covers the critical intermediate outcomes of influence, leverage and learning by aligning ECA's evaluation criteria to the result framework underpinning its Performance Management Dashboard.

The policy also acknowledges the need for a longer-term strategy to develop evaluation capacity excellence and a culture of evaluative learning throughout the organization.

### The Executive Secretary:

- Welcomes the development of the ECA evaluation policy consistent with General Assembly resolutions and UNEG norms and standards.
- Endorses the present document as the policy statement to ensure an impartial, credible and useful evaluation function at ECA.
- Requests the ECA Senior Management Team to ensure compliance with the evaluation policy by: a) establishing mechanisms for guiding and overseeing the implementation of its principles and commitments; b) supporting increased organizational and stakeholder capacities in the design, implementation and use of programme evaluation; and c) reporting on a regular basis on the outcomes of evaluation practices and processes that aim to enhance organizational learning and accountability.



# 1. Introduction

In the face of multiple emerging social and economic trends for Africa, ECA embarked on extensive consultative reflection in 2012-2013 and subsequently retooled itself to be relevant to the continent's transformative agenda. The Commission, which aims to reposition itself as a think tank of reference in the region, has adopted "Africa first" as its motto and will take bold positions on policy issues that are crucial to the continent. Accordingly, ECA programme activities have been realigned, with emphasis on: (a) strengthening the rigour and relevance of knowledge produced by the Commission; (b) making ECA the authoritative source of analytical insights into Africa's development; (c) generating knowledge underpinned by robust statistics; (d) improving the packaging and communication of ECA knowledge products to core policy constituents<sup>1</sup> and; (e) leveraging ECA's sub-regional presence to support the collection and collation of data in Member States and the production of country profiles.

The core mandate of ECA is to promote the economic and social development of its 54 Member States, foster intra-regional integration and promote international cooperation for Africa's development aspirations as outlined in Vision 2063, the Common Africa Position on the Post-2015 Agenda, the New Partnership for Africa's Development and related (sub) region-wide programming instruments.

ECA's core work programme around Africa's transformation consists of nine sub-programmes (Macroeconomic policy, Regional integration and trade, Innovations, technologies and management of Africa's resources, Statistics, Capacity development, Gender and women in development, Sub-regional activities for development, Development planning and administration and Social development policies), which are organized around two key pillars:

1. **policy research/knowledge generation based on a robust corporate research programme that will provide the required orientation on corporate policy research priorities to influence Africa's transformative development policies, and;**
2. **knowledge delivery through integrated, coherent and strategic capacity development services to support members States, Regional Economic Communities and the African Union Commission.**

ECA's new programme focus is also accompanied by new business standards aligned to the organizational goal of becoming a think tank of reference in support of Africa's transformation agenda. These core business strategies include a:

- i. Capacity Development Strategy;
- ii. Partnerships Strategy;
- iii. Knowledge Management Strategy;
- iv. IT Strategy;
- v. Communication Strategy;
- vi. Data Management Protocol; and
- vii. Concept Note on ECA Country Profiles.

Additional administrative instructions have also reorganized

- a. re-profiling and training;
- b. incentives for professional category staff involved in knowledge generation and delivery;
- c. rules of engagement for key ECA initiatives;
- d. gender parity targets; and
- e. the ECA green policy.

Furthermore, the new Capacity Development Strategy led to the creation of five thematic strategy teams: (i) Development planning and statistics; (ii) Economic and social development; (iii) Governance and human security; (iv) Regional integration and infrastructure; (v) Natural resources and sustain-

<sup>1</sup> ECA (2013) ECA new strategic directions for the transformative development of Africa: Note by the Executive Secretary. E/ECA/COE/32/10. [http://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/document\\_files/eca-new-strategic-directions-transformative-devlp-africa\\_en\\_1.pdf](http://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/document_files/eca-new-strategic-directions-transformative-devlp-africa_en_1.pdf)

able development. The thematic strategy teams will bring together policy research and knowledge delivery divisions, Sub-Regional Offices of ECA (SROs) and African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) around common agendas and instruments. The key priorities of the thematic strategy teams are to: (i) identify and respond to emerging capacity development opportunities; (ii) map and match expertise to ensure effective delivery of capacity development services; (iii) develop and plan the delivery of knowledge products; (iv) conceive and manage strategic capacity development initiatives; (v) foster institutional learning through analysis and post-action reviews; and (vi) develop partnerships to identify, articulate and promote policy options.

Evaluation has a critical role in determining as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of ECA's new programme focus as well as its new business model.

To this purpose, evaluation will provide information to help identify and adopt optimal programme implementation strategies, and will also sharpen the focus of its processes, products, services and tools.

## 2. Evaluation function and policy

The evaluation policy establishes a common institutional basis for the ECA evaluation function that applies across all sub-programmes. The policy seeks to increase organizational learning, support accountability and transparency, coherence and efficiency in generating and using evaluative knowledge for effective management for results. The policy will be subject to periodic independent review.

The policy responds to Resolution 59/250 of 2004, in which the General Assembly required the systematic evaluation of UN operational activities by assessing their impact on poverty eradication, economic growth and sustainable development. In so doing, the ECA evaluation policy aligns itself with UN evaluation norms and standards approved by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) in April 2005<sup>2</sup>.

Regarding evaluation in the UN system, UNEG states: "Each organization should develop an explicit policy statement on evaluation. The policy should provide a clear explanation of the concept, role and use of evaluation within the organization, including the institutional framework and definition of roles and responsibilities; an explanation of how the evaluation function and evaluations are planned, managed and budgeted; and a clear statement on disclosure and dissemination<sup>3</sup>." This policy is also aligned with the conceptual and methodological framework for evaluation provided by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)<sup>4</sup>.

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2 United Nations Evaluations Group, "Standards for Evaluation in the UN System", April 2005, <http://www.uneval.org>; and "Norms for Evaluation in the UN System", April 2005, <http://www.uneval.org>.

3 United Nations Evaluation Group (2005). Norms for Evaluation in the UN System. [http://www.uneval.org/documentdownload?doc\\_id=21&file\\_id=123](http://www.uneval.org/documentdownload?doc_id=21&file_id=123)

4 OIOS (2005) "A Guide to Using Evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat", [http://www.un.org/depts/oios/manage\\_results.pdf](http://www.un.org/depts/oios/manage_results.pdf); and OIOS (2005) "Proposals on the Strengthening and Monitoring of Programme Performance and Evaluation" (A/60/73). <http://www.un.org/Depts/oios/otheroiosreports.htm>

## 2.1 Definition of evaluation in ECA

Expectations are higher than ever regarding the knowledge, evidence and expertise that evaluation should deliver to support policy decision-making and resource allocation.

Evaluation in the ECA context is defined as per UNEG:

*“(Evaluation is) ...an assessment, as systematic and impartial as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area, institutional performance, etc. It focuses on expected and achieved accomplishments, examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality, in order to understand achievements or the lack thereof. It aims at determining the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the interventions and contributions of the organizations of the United Nations system. An evaluation should provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful, enabling the timely incorporation of findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of the organizations of the United Nations system and its members”.*

ECA subscribes to this UNEG definition of evaluation, but also makes provisions for unintended outcomes. These may be positive or negative, but are often overlooked, especially in monitoring and evaluation that focuses on quantifying desired results.

Evaluations therefore provide the basis for assessing the relevance, sustainability, quality and usefulness of outcomes of ECA programme and project activities. Evaluation addresses what works and why, as well as what does not work. As such, evaluations are a key element of results-based management and pose three fundamental questions:

- Are we doing the right thing? Are we doing it right? Are there better ways of achieving the expected results?

Evaluation in ECA will provide an impartial, objective assessment of contributions to development results, by assessing ECA programmes and operations, including its research, capacity development services, advisory services, knowledge management, technical assistance, coordination and partnerships.

A process in itself, evaluation also incorporates participatory evaluation approaches, methods, processes and application as a means of enhancing the empowerment of other stakeholders. This makes evaluation an important measure of social change, as well as a driver of the change because it empowers the stakeholders to get involved.

## 2.2 Purpose of evaluation in ECA

Most evaluation policies consider learning and accountability as the main objectives of an organization's evaluation function, with variations in the relative priority of each purpose<sup>6</sup>. As with many UN and other development agencies, the evaluation function of ECA is growing directly from a project evaluation model aimed at internal management and accountability towards a complex model of regional/sub-regional partnership-led policy evaluation aimed at organizational learning. This requires new skills, roles and organizational arrangements.

In ECA, evaluation is conducted for three important purposes that together support the overall delivery of results:

- First, evaluation contributes important lessons and organizational learning to the existing knowledge base, including knowledge on the effective implementation of ECA's business model;
- Secondly, it provides credible and reliable

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Evaluations Group, “Standards for Evaluation in the UN System”, April 2005, <http://www.uneval.org>; and “Norms for Evaluation in the UN System”, April 2005, <http://www.uneval.org>.

<sup>6</sup> Foresti, M. et al (2007) A Comparative Study of Evaluation Policies and Practices in Development Agencies. Overseas Development Institute & Agence Française de Développement. <http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/4343.pdf>

evidence for decision-making in order to improve programme (or better still, development) results;

- Thirdly, it helps demonstrate accountability to stakeholders in managing for results (for instance, in the context of governing bodies, development partners and Member States, sister UN agencies ECA beneficiaries).

Evaluation serves these purposes by providing reliable and credible evaluative evidence, analyses and information to Member States, intergovernmental bodies, the Executive Secretary, programme managers, staff, and other stakeholders, on the outcomes and impacts of ECA's initiatives.

Evaluation processes also provide stakeholders with feedback on results and lessons learned; inform regional, sub-regional and national policies and programmes; help improve indicators to track progress; and provide strategic guidance to policy makers and programme implementers for scaling-up. However, it is evident an evaluation does not always fulfil all these goals on its own.

As such, evaluations of programmes and projects in ECA first and foremost seek to:

- enable programme managers to demonstrate and measure performance;
- identify where improvements can be made to design or delivery methods;
- identify good practices and lessons for the future;
- assess the impact of ECA activities on Africa's transformational agenda at national, sub-regional and regional levels;
- provide disclosure as a means of achieving accountability and transparency in the way ECA implements its programme activities and uses its resources.

In addition to the foregoing 'supply-side' description of purposes of evaluation, it is expected that greater attention will be paid to evaluation advocacy. The aim is to influence the demand side of the equation, in other words, to spur ECA's sub-programmes and Member States to conduct evaluations and

use evaluation-generated knowledge. In this way the evaluation policy will help strengthen knowledge-management systems, learning groups and communities of practice. This will in turn increase access to evaluation-generated knowledge and enhance knowledge sharing, integration and innovation. Work in this area will be developed in collaboration with the ECA Public Information and Knowledge Management Division.

The international development community is converging around the need for greater investments in impact and evidence-based evaluations. It will be especially important to identify programme approaches that are likely to demonstrate emerging impacts within a three to five-year time frame, in other words a period longer than one UN funding cycle. Coupled with strong knowledge-management and knowledge-sharing strategies, including the use of information and communication technologies, evaluation findings and recommended approaches will be disseminated to policy makers and programmers promptly as they become available.

The mobilization of adequate resources for significant investments in evaluation poses a major challenge. In the most recent OIOS Evaluation Scorecard, ECA did not score highly on its financial commitment to evaluation<sup>7</sup>. Impact evaluations – those that can rigorously test and prove the effectiveness of approaches for achieving the highest-level results – tend to incur high costs. For this reason, while they are vital to generating significant evidence for charting the way forward, such evaluations need to be done selectively.

<sup>7</sup> OIOS (2013) United Nations Secretariat Evaluation Scorecards 2010-2011. [http://www.unevaluation.org/documentdownload?doc\\_id=1473&file\\_id=1931](http://www.unevaluation.org/documentdownload?doc_id=1473&file_id=1931)

## 3. Guiding principles and norms for evaluation

### 3.1 Evaluation principles at ECA

The following are the key evaluation principles for ECA:

- a. **Managing for results** - Evaluation supports ECA to manage for results by assessing the extent to which ECA products, services and processes contribute effectively to development results. This requires that evaluation plans be factored into programme designs with clear and measurable intended results that can be tracked, documented and assessed. The evaluation function of ECA generates and reflects on evidence to ensure more informed and result-oriented management and strategic decision-making.
- b. **Organization learning** - Institutional learning from evaluations is a primary principle upon which evaluation activities are based in ECA. Lessons will be identified from past experience, accepted and incorporated into future programmes, projects and work practices. This involves the: timely dissemination of lessons learnt from programme and project implementation; implementation of relevant recommendations based on evaluation findings to improve operational efficiency, and; promoting the incorporation of evaluation findings and lessons into future programme design and implementation of programmes.
- c. **Accountability** - is a principle that forms the basis for evaluations. Accountability is the obligation to explain (and report on) efforts made and results achieved, using planned objectives/targets as benchmarks for assessing performance. Evaluative evidence will therefore provide substantive accountability for the resources provided to ECA to implement its programmes. Results-based management

requires that the organization evaluate its performance against its expected accomplishments. To provide accountability through evaluation, there is need to equip the ECA evaluation function with: professional capacity; institutional and management arrangements that allow for objective and unbiased evaluation and reporting; sufficient resources to conduct rigorous analysis of policies, programmes and projects, and; self-critical assessment of the achievement of the results and impact of ECA's programmes. Additionally it is vital for evaluation findings to be reported to the appropriate levels of decision-making within ECA, to Member States and partners, and to be disclosed fully to the public.

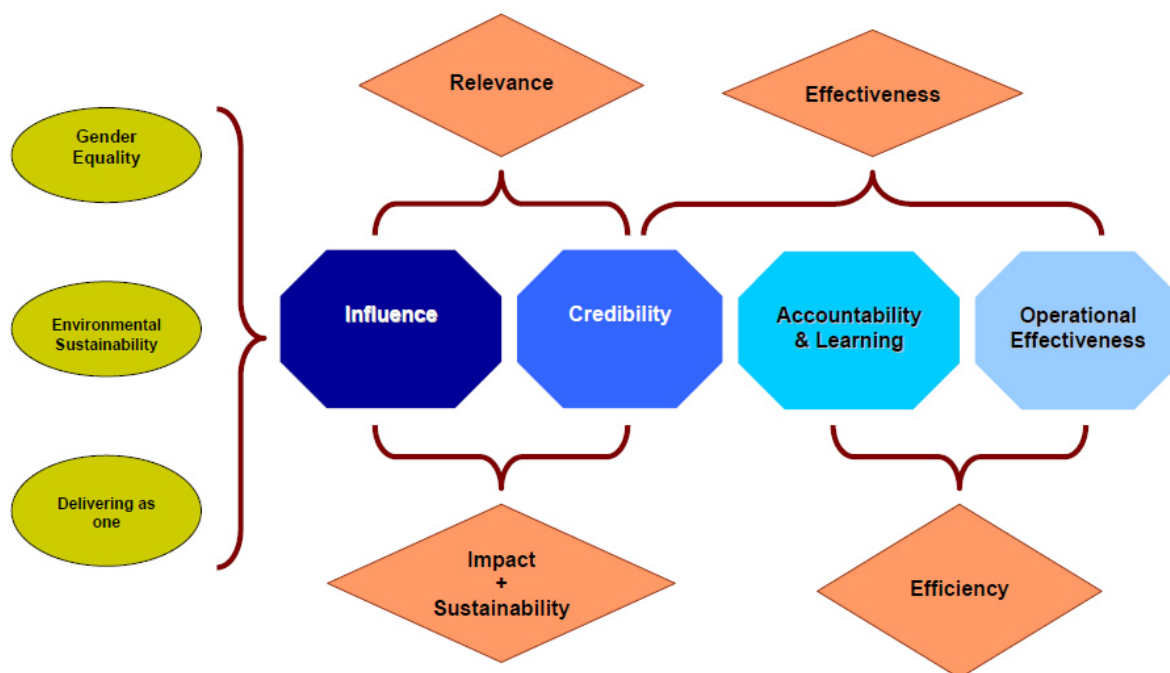
- d. **Innovation and reflection** - Evaluations will seek to identify and clarify innovations and unintended outcomes (positive or negative) in the work of ECA and its programmes. They will be linked to reflection processes that consider description (the what), interpretation (the why), implications (the what if) and dissemination (appropriate packaging of results for the various potential users). The evaluations will apply innovative approaches and mixed methods to capture the complex, non-linear processes of achieving long-term outcomes in ECA's programme areas and partnerships. Additionally, the evaluation function will carefully balance investments by promoting practical, cost-effective evaluation practices, and building on regional and national skills and resources. The technical complexity of measuring and tracking impacts, and accurately interpreting data on ECA's contributions to policies and social change will pose a major challenge.
- e. **Participation and inclusion** - Evaluation processes will ensure that stakeholders participate in a meaningful, relevant and inclusive manner. Participatory approaches will be used throughout to promote stakeholders' ownership, commitment and capacities, and to tailor evaluation designs to specific contexts and interventions. ECA evaluations will abide by universally shared values of equity, justice, gender equality and respect for diversity.

## 3.2 Evaluation criteria

In addition to the above principles, the design of ECA's evaluations will draw upon well-established evaluation criteria, such as relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of ECA programmes:

- **Relevance:** consistency of intended objectives/outcomes with the priorities of ECA, development strategies and priorities of governments and requirements of the target groups;
- **Efficiency:** the extent to which human and financial resources were used in the best possible way to deliver activities and outputs, and facilitate the achievement of results in coordination with other stakeholders;
- **Effectiveness:** extent to which the expected objectives and results have been achieved as planned in the results framework;
- **Impact:** fundamental and significant changes and effects, positive and negative, planned and unforeseen, that have resulted from the sub-programme or project with respect to the target groups and other affected stakeholders;
- **Sustainability:** the likelihood that the positive effects of the sub-programme, theme or project will continue in the future.

### Links between ECA evaluation criteria and the result framework of ECA's Performance Management Dashboard





Given the nature of ECA's core research, knowledge sharing and capacity development services for social and economic impact, in defining its approach to the evaluation of impacts, the policy aligns the above evaluation criteria to the result framework underpinning ECA's Performance Management Dashboard.

ECA's development efforts can be described as initiatives whose aim is to change systems. The initiatives use research and knowledge sharing to inform the policies and practices of governments and other stakeholders, and thereby achieve significant and lasting economic and social impacts in Africa. This kind of effort demands that we look at system outcomes from broad perspectives rather than as changes between individuals. ECA's ultimate goal is to help inform and shape policy choices and decisions for Africa's transformation. As such the evaluation framework acknowledges that the transformation process is collectively owned and promoted by a plethora of African stakeholders, and ECA does not own or control it.

While ECA aims for specific social and economic impacts, a range of intermediate changes will be instrumental to achieving the impacts. It is important to measure such changes, which include influence, leverage, and learning, as evidence of progress towards impacts<sup>8</sup>. Evaluating these intermediate outcomes will show the role of ECA's research in influencing supportive policy gains. Seeking evidence of change in influence, leverage and learning will enable evaluations to robustly describe ECA's progress toward durable economic and social impact.

It is possible to gauge the "influence" of the Commission's work through perception, reputation, increasing recognition of ECA in media and in scholarly publications. In applying evaluation criteria, ECA will consider evidence and advice, advocacy and campaigns, negotiation and soft power as the main types of influence that the Commission employs. ECA will apply different

methods of evaluation to each of these types of influence. Use of multiple methods<sup>9</sup> to critically analyze and triangulate finding on ECA's influence in the policy sphere will therefore be promoted. In assessing ECA's influence the evaluation policy will also rely on the above-mentioned criteria to respond to core questions such as: were there any changes in the policy issue that might be related to ECA's research knowledge and evidence, including: changes in attitudes and behaviour of policymakers and key stakeholders; changes in the policy decision-making process or structures, policy options and strategies considered, in policy implementation, or; changes in practice?

The evaluation framework will also take into account that to become an effective policy influencer ECA must maintain consistently credible and sustained efforts at several levels, the quality of which it can directly control. Aligning criteria such as relevance, impact, sustainability (potential for scaling up) and effectiveness to the core result areas of ECA's PMD (Programme management dashboard) theme of "**Credibility and trust**" will ensure that:

- ECA policy research and statistics are relevant, sound and evidence-based and will therefore help advance the political and technical discourse;
- policy initiatives, dialogue and advice are timely and a "good fit" to make a difference;
- ECA services in the development of skills and leveraging of knowledge play an effective role in promoting institutional change;
- institutional dynamics are promoted to make an integrated and coherent approach operational by optimizing knowledge production and delivery for optimal impact;
- synergies and complementarities are put in motion based on genuine substantive partnerships.

<sup>8</sup> ORS Impact (2014) Working Paper: Impact, Influence, Leverage, and Learning (I2L2) Outcomes Framework. <http://orsimpact.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/I2L2-Formatted-10-14-14.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Evaluation of research reports, policy briefs, websites, citation analysis, user surveys, most significant change, media tracking logs, focus groups, framing analysis, coverage, interviews etc....

Additionally ECA's evaluation framework acknowledges that the organization's performance in all the above areas depends on: corporate incentives underpinned by strong "accountability and learning" systems for the effective and efficient management of entrusted resources for results, and; on the organization's capacity to ensure improved performance based on continuous on staff development and organizational learning.

Finally, efficiency and effectiveness will be the core evaluation criteria to assess ECA's "operational effectiveness". The aim is to ensure that ECA's business processes are effective and able to support the timely generation and delivery of knowledge.

Several additional criteria reflect United Nations commitments: gender equality, rights-based approaches, environmental sustainability, and "Delivering as One". Where relevant, evaluations will determine the extent to which these commitments have been incorporated in the design and implementation of a sub-programme, theme or project. ECA's evaluation criteria will consider knowledge gaps, evidence needed for decision-making, and assessing the potential for replication and scaling up of innovative or catalytic approaches. Meanwhile, ECA will remain sufficiently flexible to recognize that not all criteria need to be applied to every evaluation.

### 3.3 Evaluation norms in ECA

Within the scope of UN rules and procedures, ECA will strive to uphold the UNEG norms for evaluation in the United Nations system<sup>10</sup>. The main UNEG norms are summarized below and, where appropriate, placed in an ECA context.

- a. **Intentionality, utility and knowledge building:** The rationale for an evaluation and the decisions it will influence should be clear from the outset. Evaluation designs should clearly show the intended use of findings to improve ECA's work. The scope, design and plan-

ning of evaluations should contribute to the generation of relevant, timely findings and knowledge that meet the needs of stakeholders. The evaluation findings and recommendations will be easily accessible, understood and target audiences will be able to implement them. This requires proper timing of evaluations, as well as dissemination plans, management responses and follow-up plans that directly reflect the original intent.

- b. **Impartiality:** Removing bias and maximizing objectivity are critical to the credibility of the evaluation and its contribution to knowledge and evidence. Evaluations will be reviewed for objectivity in the planning, design, team selection, implementation, as well as the formulation of findings and recommendations, taking into account the views of the relevant stakeholders.
- c. **Transparency:** Meaningful consultation with stakeholders is also essential for the credibility and utility of the evaluation. Full information on the evaluation design and methodology will be shared throughout the process to build confidence in the findings and understanding of their limitations in decision-making. Evaluation plans, terms of reference and reports will be public, accessible and readable. Evaluation recommendations, accepted by management, will be followed up systematically and the status of follow-up will be reviewed periodically.
- d. **Quality:** Proper design, planning, implementation, and the preparation of a complete and balanced report will ensure the quality of the findings. All evaluations will be conducted in a systematic manner<sup>11</sup>, and will apply standards to ensure the quality and credibility of findings, recommendations and lessons generated. A quality assurance mechanism will support evaluators and evaluation managers in this regard.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Evaluations Group (UNEG), "Norms for Evaluation in the UN System", April 2005 (available online at <http://www.uneval.org>).

<sup>11</sup> In accordance with the UNEG norms and standards, the UNEG code of conduct and applicable ethical standards.

- e. **Ethics:** Evaluators must have personal and professional integrity. They must allow institutions and individuals to provide information confidentially and should verify the statements they receive<sup>12</sup>. They must be sensitive to the beliefs, manners and customs prevailing in a particular social and cultural environment. Additionally, they should be sensitive to discrimination and gender inequality and discreetly report wrongdoings if appropriate.

To complement the norms described above, ECA's core evaluation standards will ensure that key evaluation questions and areas are clear, coherent and realistic. The evaluation plan will be practical and cost effective. The evaluation design, data collection and analysis will reflect professional standards, with due regard for any special circumstances or limitations associated with the context of the evaluation. Finally, evaluation reports will be complete and balanced; findings and recommendations will be presented in a manner that will be readily understood by target audiences.

## 4. Key concepts

This section further sets out ECA's conceptual understanding of evaluation, and the major types of evaluations to be carried out in pursuing ECA's goal and objectives. Importantly, it also clarifies ECA's perceptions of what is not an evaluation and therefore not governed by this policy.

### 4.1 Evaluation – scope

Evaluation in ECA is a process of judging the design, performance, results and sustainability of ECA's development efforts. It involves a rigorous, systematic and impartial process in the design, analysis and interpretation of information to answer specific questions.

Well-designed and implemented evaluations will provide information on<sup>13</sup>: a) Strategy: are the right things being done? (for instance, links to a clear theory of change); b) Operations: are things being done right? (for instance, effectiveness, and efficiency); and c) Learning: are there better ways? (for instance, alternatives, promising practices, unexpected outcomes (positive or negative), and lessons learned).

### 4.2 Focus of evaluation activities

In line with trends among many major development agencies<sup>14</sup>, the Evaluation Section of ECA will gradually be shifting its focus over the next four years away from project evaluation toward more strategic, policy and thematic evaluations. These newer forms of evaluation are becoming increasingly critical for evidence-based efforts to influence policy development and organizational choices. For this transition to happen, it is vital to choose policies or themes for evaluation in consultation with the relevant staff

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<sup>12</sup> See the UNEG ethical guidelines for evaluation and the UNEG code of conduct for evaluation in the United Nations system

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<sup>13</sup> Adapted from: Kusek, J.K. and Rist, R.C. (2004). *Ten Steps to a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

<sup>14</sup> Foresti, M. et al (2007) *A Comparative Study of Evaluation Policies and Practices in Development Agencies*. Overseas Development Institute & Agence Française de Développement. <http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/4343.pdf>

in research, capacity development and operational divisions. Additionally mechanisms must be in place to ensure the involvement of and regular feedback from the relevant staff and partners.

For now, the Evaluation Section will continue to oversee project-level evaluations, but in future they will be progressively devolved from the Evaluation Section to the relevant divisions, SROs and IDEP.

### 4.3 Types of evaluative processes

In ECA, the categorization of evaluation types will follow the lead of OIOS<sup>15</sup> and be divided into two broad categories: external and internal. **This distinction is based on who conducts the evaluation.**

- a. **External evaluations:** are evaluations that ensure impartiality and assess the value of programmes based on the extent to which they have discharged their objectives and contributed to higher-level outcomes and impacts. According to OIOS<sup>16</sup>, the term “external evaluation” should be used strictly for evaluations that are managed and conducted by independent entities, such as OIOS or the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), which have no stake in ECA. This supports the main purpose of external evaluations, which is external accountability to development partners, Member States or other external stakeholders. These evaluations produce reports that are intended for use by intergovernmental bodies as well as by programme managers; and they often help to identify ‘best practices’ and lessons learned. These are evaluations performed by external entities, free of control or influence by those responsible for the design and implementation

of the programmes and projects. There are two main types of external evaluations, in addition to peer reviews.

- **Mandatory external evaluations** are requested by member countries or other stakeholders, and undertaken by independent UN oversight bodies, such as OIOS or JIU, which have no stake in ECA. These evaluations tend to be broad, commonly analyse strengths and weaknesses and make recommendations to improve effectiveness, efficiency, impact and relevance.
  - **Discretionary external evaluation:** This type of evaluation is proposed by the programme manager who requests an external entity, such as OIOS or JIU, to design and conduct the evaluation, with the manager playing the role of “evaluee”. Discretionary evaluations may take a wide scope and look at impact and effectiveness and often help in identifying lessons learned and best practices, for instance through comparison with non-UN programmes engaged in similar activities.
  - **External peer review:** UNEG has established a peer review process by which organizations can voluntarily seek an objective assessment of their evaluation policy processes against the UNEG norms and standards. The peer review would consist of a panel of experienced evaluators (at the P5 level and above) from UNEG member organizations. The peer review function is also expected to serve in a range of thematic work areas in the future.
- b. **Internal evaluations:** are evaluations performed internally within ECA and can be managed or conducted internally.
- **Mandatory internal evaluations/mandatory self-assessments:** Compulsory assessments are performed once every two years. These assessments are required for all United Nations Secretariat programmes and governed by the Programme Budget result framework. They are reported on through the biennial Programme performance report. The evaluations focus on

15 OIOS (2005) *Managing for Results: A Guide to Using Evaluation in United Nations Secretariat*. [http://www.un.org/Depts/oios/pages/manage\\_results.pdf](http://www.un.org/Depts/oios/pages/manage_results.pdf)

16 OIOS (2005) *Managing for Results: A Guide to Using Evaluation in United Nations Secretariat*. [http://www.un.org/Depts/oios/pages/manage\\_results.pdf](http://www.un.org/Depts/oios/pages/manage_results.pdf)

collecting indicators on achievements and on the use of the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System tool as a means of recording progress and reporting results and accomplishments. The aim is to measure the extent to which expected results were achieved.

Divisions, SROs and IDEP are responsible for undertaking programme self-assessment at 18 and 24 month intervals of any given biennium. The Strategic Planning and Operational Quality Division (SPOQD) evaluation section provides support and technical assistance in the form of guidance, tools and quality checks of programme self-assessments.

- **Discretionary internal evaluations:** These are optional, non-mandatory evaluations conducted by organizations for their own use. They tend to focus on efficiency, effectiveness and relevance. To ensure impartiality of the evaluative process, external consultants and specialists are contracted to carry out the exercise. The evaluations are particularly useful to programme managers in testing their theories of change, identifying unintended outcomes, and assessing cross-cutting issues.

Discretionary internal evaluations, in which the Evaluation Section assumes the role of evaluation manager, will include:

- i. strategic evaluations focus on the implementation of and/or compliance with a strategy or policy; they analyse the design, coherence and long-term impact of a set of programmes within a particular framework;
- ii. thematic evaluations focus on a cross-cutting theme, fund, business model or service;
- iii. sub-programme evaluations (including ECA Policy Centres), concentrate on entire sub-programmes or major components

thereof, including the work of divisions, sections, specialist centres, or SROs;

- iv. project evaluations (including development account projects) aim to provide programme managers with feedback on a specific project or cluster of projects, and to improve future projects;
- v. the evaluation of organizational performance evaluates ECA's capacity for innovation and change, and efficient management of its assets to achieve results; it involves examining its decision-making processes, business model and organizational structures and institutional capacities;
- vi. other evaluations, which could be planned on an ad hoc basis and for that reason would not necessarily be included in the ECA evaluation plan, but could focus on subjects of emerging interest or concern.

**Table 1: Evaluation coordination and management - roles and responsibilities**

Type of evaluations	Scope of evaluation	Division, SROs and IDEP responsibility	SPOQD responsibility
Mandatory external evaluation	Requested by member countries or other stakeholders, and undertaken by independent UN oversight bodies, such as OIOS or JIU.  Evaluations are broad in scope and commonly analyse strengths and weaknesses and make recommendations for improving effectiveness, efficiency, impact and relevance.	To provide external evaluators with relevant information, data, input to inception report, data, repository of clients, stakeholders, partners...  To provide input to corporate management response	Evaluation Section prepares formal "management response" for inclusion in the published evaluation report  The Evaluation Section monitors follow-up actions stemming from the evaluation and its management response.
Mandatory self assessment  (Self-evaluations)	Mandatory assessments performed once every two years.  Required for all UN Secretariat programmes and are framed by the Programme Budget result framework.  Reported on through the biennial Programme Performance Report.  The self evaluations focus on measuring the extent to which expected accomplishments were achieved, using the collection of indicator of achievements and based on data collection methodology and means of verification as defined in the PPB.	Divisions, SROs and IDEP are responsible for carrying out programme self-assessment at 18- and 24-month intervals of any given biennium.	Provide support and technical assistance in the form of guidance, tools for programme self-assessments.  Provide guidance in the selection of data, collection methodology, evaluation approach, means of verification, self-evaluation criteria etc.
Discretionary internal evaluations	Internal evaluations managed as per criteria defined in the evaluation policy:  are particularly useful to programme managers to test their theories of change, identify unintended outcomes, and assess cross-cutting issues;  focus on relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of programmes and business strategies;  serve the primary purpose of organizational learning  are particularly useful to programme managers in testing their theories of change, identifying unintended outcomes, and assessing cross-cutting issues;  Types of evaluation that fall under this category are:  Strategic evaluations <sup>18</sup> , thematic evaluations <sup>19</sup> , sub-programme evaluations <sup>20</sup> (including those of ECA Policy Centres, Project evaluations <sup>21</sup> (including those of Development Account projects), Evaluation of organizational performance <sup>22</sup> and other evaluations <sup>23</sup> ;	Based on programme performance reports of previous bienniums, provide input to corporate evaluation plans:  to ensure that the required budget <sup>17</sup> is secured during the preparation of programme budgets and extra budgetary (XB);  to provide external evaluators with relevant information, data, input to inception report etc...;  to ensure the use of findings, recommendations and lessons learned from evaluations;  to use evaluations for improving performance and as a key element in performance appraisals.	The Evaluation Section is the evaluation manager  External consultants and specialists will be contracted for the exercise to ensure the impartiality of the evaluation process.  To coordinate and manage evaluation processes  To alert the Senior Management Team about significant process- or outcome-related issues arising from evaluations  Maintain a public repository of evaluation resources to facilitate the sharing of ECA's evaluative knowledge of policy influence and social change

17 The recommended minimum level of investment in evaluation is at least 3-5% of the total plan/programme budget.

18 Will focus on the implementation of and/or compliance with a strategy or policy. It analyses the design, coherence and long-term impact of a set of programmes within a particular framework.

19 Which focus on a cross-cutting theme, fund, business model, or service.

20 Which focus on entire sub-programmes or major components thereof, i.e. the work of divisions, sections, specialist centres, SROs, IDEP.

21 Which aim to provide programme managers with feedback on a specific project or cluster of projects, and to improve future projects; Programme divisions, SROs and IDEP will take over on project evaluations from 2016 on once project evaluation systems and tools have been established by the Evaluation Section.

22 Will evaluate ECA's capacity to efficiently manage its assets for the achievements of results and its capacity for innovation and change. It involves examining its decision-making processes, business model and organizational structures and institutional capacities.

23 Which could be planned on an ad hoc basis and would thus not necessarily, be included in the evaluation plan of ECA, and which could focus on subjects of emerging interest or concern.

**Table 1 (Cont'd): Evaluation coordination and management - roles and responsibilities**

Type of evaluations	Scope of evaluation	Division, SROs and IDEP responsibility	SPOQD responsibility
Other type of evaluations	Global evaluations managed by an external funding partner. This type of evaluation applies to XB-funded programmes with ECA as one of the recipients of the project/programme alongside other implementing agencies.	to provide external evaluators with relevant information, data, input to inception report, data, repository of clients, stakeholders, partners...	Coordinates corporate input to inception report, data collection, evaluation methodology, selection of evaluation criteria  The Evaluation Section prepares the formal "management response" for inclusion in the "external" evaluation report
After-action reviews	Corporate after-action reviews based on feedback surveys  Programme-based after-action reviews using feedback surveys	Divisions, SROs and IDEP for programme-based events	SPOQD for corporate events, such as COM and ADF

**Table 2: Comparison between types of evaluative processes at ECA<sup>24</sup>**

	External evaluations	Internal evaluations
OIOS terminology <sup>25</sup>	Mandatory external evaluation Discretionary external evaluation	Mandatory self-assessment Discretionary self-evaluation
Primary purpose / use of findings	External accountability to Member States & development partners Organizational learning	External accountability to Member States & development partners Internal accountability Organizational learning
Evaluation manager	OIOS, JIU, Member States, other external parties	Evaluation Section Relevant divisions
Evaluation team	External consultants	External consultants Evaluation Section staff
Quality assurance	OIOS	OIOS, accountability sounding board, internal peers
Quality support	n/a	OIOS, Evaluation Section
Management response	Executive Secretary with inputs from the Evaluation Section	Executive Secretary with inputs from the Evaluation Section, relevant heads of divisions, SROs & IDEP
Share evaluation findings with stakeholders	United Nations Secretariat OIOS, JIU External stakeholders	ECA secretariat United Nations Secretariat & external stakeholders
Follow up on actions	OIOS JIU ECA	Executive Secretary with inputs from Evaluation Section, relevant heads of divisions, SPOQD, SROs, IDEP

24 Adapted from: OIOS (2005) Managing for Results: A Guide to Using Evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat. [http://www.un.org/Depts/oios/pages/manage\\_results.pdf](http://www.un.org/Depts/oios/pages/manage_results.pdf);

25 OIOS (2005) Managing for Results: A Guide to Using Evaluation in United Nations Secretariat. [http://www.un.org/Depts/oios/pages/manage\\_results.pdf](http://www.un.org/Depts/oios/pages/manage_results.pdf)

## 4.4 What is not covered under evaluation

Evaluation is related to, but distinct from, four other organizational functions carried out in ECA:

- a. **Monitoring:** Monitoring is a continuous programme management function aimed at providing regular information about progress (or the lack thereof) toward the achievement of intended results, as well as tracking changes in the contextual factors that may affect results. Information from systematic monitoring serves as critical input to ECA's evaluation function. Monitoring will be the responsibility of the Programme Planning and Budgeting Section of SPOQD.
- b. **Knowledge management:** This is the systematic and integrated process of creating, analysing, storing and disseminating knowledge resources. Evaluation findings and lessons are inputs to organizational learning and therefore feed into ECA's knowledge management systems. The Public Information and Knowledge Management Division (PIKMD) is in charge of the knowledge management function.
- c. **Audit:** Audit is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organization's operations. It mainly concerns compliance with management controls regarding resource use, asset handling, risk management, and the adequacy of organizational structures, systems and processes. Audits can provide evaluations with information about programme efficiency. The SPOQD Evaluation Section is responsible for facilitating audits conducted by OIOS.

## 5. Evaluation planning and budgeting

### 5.1 Strategic evaluation planning

In contrast to the standard strategic framework, which establishes the direction of UN departments, including ECA, for a given biennium (two-year work programme period), the ECA strategic evaluation plan will cover four years (two bienniums) and be updated every biennium for submission with the programme budget to the UN Headquarters. The evaluation plan identifies and budgets for evaluations in a transparent and consistent way; it also provides an overview of planned evaluations so that all stakeholders can prepare adequately. The plan will propose all of the larger evaluations to be carried out during two consecutive biennial programme cycles, including external and internal evaluations. It will also include the proposed strategic strengthening of the evaluation section and progressively refocusing the work of the section away from project performance evaluations to more strategic evaluations, including policy impact, thematic evaluations and the evaluation of business strategies.

This policy established as a principle, that:

- All programmes /projects that have received funding of more than USD 1 million (non-post resources) will be systematically evaluated.
- All programmes/projects that have received funding of less than USD 1 million (non-post resources) will be evaluated at least once during their life cycle.

### 5.2 Evaluation process

Evaluations will include three interrelated stages: planning/budgeting, implementation, and the use of findings.



## *Planning*

The evaluation processes<sup>26</sup> will include “evaluability” assessments (looking at preparation for and commitment to the evaluation, and accessibility of useful data), ex ante evaluations (based on prospective evaluation design and outcome of ECA’s research outcome), midterm evaluations (which are generally formative, in that they look at performance and project ways to improve), final evaluations (which tend to be summative or ex-post, reviewing achievements and looking for outcomes) as well as meta-evaluations (looking across multiple evaluations for common trends, lessons, and organizational responses).

Evaluation planning criteria will be:

- based on outcome of risk assessment/ programme performance assessment
- balanced mix of different types of evaluations

In addition:

- all programmes /projects that have received a funding of + USD 1 million (non-post resources) will be systematically evaluated
- all programmes/projects that have received a funding of - USD 1 million (non-post resources) will be evaluated at least once during their life cycle

## *Budgeting for evaluation*

Evaluations can be funded through various sources, but as a general rule:

- External evaluations - mandatory evaluations are budgeted by external entities implementing the evaluation, such as OIOS or JIU. Discretionary evaluations may have various funding arrangements (for instance development partners, Member States, other Secretariat entities, ECA, etc.). If ECA provides the funding, then extra-budgetary or regular budget funds need to be allocated accordingly;

- Internal evaluations – will be budgeted centrally by ECA, using appropriate XB and/or regular budget resources.

**Resource allocation for meeting these evaluation requirements will be integrated into the overall planning and budgeting process. The recommended minimum level of investment in evaluation is at least 3-5% of the total plan/programme budget.**

**It is the responsibility of programme divisions, SROs and IDEP programme managers to ensure that the required budget is secured during the preparation of programme budgets and XB budgeting.**

<sup>26</sup> For more details on these terms, see annex 2: Glossary.

## 6. Engaging with evaluation findings

- Evaluations can only contribute to organizational learning and enhanced accountability if related findings and recommendations are disseminated, discussed and acted upon. ECA management plays an important role in this. ECA policy on the use of evaluation and review findings is explained below.

### 6.1 Management response and action plans

- ECA management is represented by the Executive Secretary of ECA in the case of external evaluations or evaluations managed by the Evaluation Section. The role of management is to sign off on evaluations and, in coordination with the Evaluation Section and other key stakeholders, such as heads of divisions, SPOQD, SROs and IDEP, prepare a formal "management response" for inclusion in the published evaluation report. The Evaluation Section will monitor the corresponding follow-up actions stemming from the evaluation and the related management response.

"Management responses" will include:

- an overall response from management's perspective on the evaluation and its results, for instance, regarding the relevance or usefulness of the results. It may also highlight any differences of opinion with the evaluators while maintaining the independence of the evaluation findings;
- a response to each individual recommendation, resulting in either acceptance (full or partial) or rejection of the recommendation. Additional comments may relate to broader implications for ECA, for instance regarding programme and project planning and implementation;
- evaluation follow-up actions listed for each accepted recommendation, with completion deadlines and implementing responsibility, including for divisions, SPOQ, Evaluation Section, or SROs. In addition to immediate actions based on the

evaluation, additional longer-term, strategic or institutional-level actions may also be included.

ECA management and the evaluators will sign off on the report after the management response and follow-up actions have been incorporated. In the case of evaluations managed by the Evaluation Section, the Evaluation Section will issue the final evaluation report containing the management response.

### 6.2 Follow-up of recommendations and action plans

Firstly, SPOQD, Heads of Divisions, Sub-regional offices and IDEP are responsible for ensuring that actions are implemented on time. To this purpose they will:

- incorporate actions for which they are responsible in their annual work plans and/or project work and monitoring plans;
- include general or specific requirements in the performance appraisal of the relevant staff to ensure that they implement the assigned evaluation follow-up actions in a timely manner;
- update the status of the evaluation follow-up actions and associated documentary evidences in a central intranet-based log.

Secondly, the Evaluation Section plays a key role in coordinating and monitoring the implementation of actions in response to evaluations by:

- entering the follow-up actions into a central intranet-based log to record and track the status of the implementation of actions;
- preparing quarterly updates on the status of follow-up action implementation through ECA's Performance Management Dashboard.

## 6.3 Links with knowledge management

Its recent knowledge management strategy<sup>27</sup> clarifies how ECA will acquire, share and apply knowledge. As a knowledge organization, ECA will ensure that its constituents draw lessons from evaluations and internalize evaluative knowledge in programming and knowledge-sharing efforts.

The Evaluation Section will organize and/or contribute to consultative and information sharing events, such as the annual Senior Management Team “retreat” to bring the past year’s learning into focus and produce insights and recommendations to take forward in ECA’s think-tank role. Among other sources of information, the retreat would be able to examine and reflect on findings from ECA evaluations conducted in the preceding year. The relevant divisions would then incorporate lessons learnt into practice for the year ahead.

## 6.4 Dissemination and disclosure of evaluations

### *Dissemination*

To promote organizational learning and ensure accountability, evaluation findings will be disseminated in accordance with the following principles:

- making all evaluation reports (including the management response) fully available internally, including on the ECA intranet;
- conducting internal briefings for ECA management and staff to highlight important evaluation findings and recommendations, particularly where they are of strategic importance;
- ensuring that evaluation reports are circulated to parties that requested and/or funded the evaluation, such as project or programme partners.

The status of implementation of evaluation recommendations will be tracked quarterly through the ECA’s Performance Management Dashboard. All evaluation reports will be posted in the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System, and later UMOJA, as evidence of accomplishment accounts, in e-TC if they are project-related, and on the ECA intranet and public internet website within a month after the evaluators have signed off on them. In principle evaluation reports focusing on organizational learning will be shared exclusively within the ECA secretariat.

### *Communication, dissemination and follow up*

The communication, dissemination and follow-up of evaluations will go beyond passive the delivery of evaluation findings to a comprehensive and wide sharing of evaluation initiatives (reports, synthesis papers, policy briefs, events, tools, etc.) within and beyond ECA. The executive summary of all independent evaluations will be translated into English and French. The aim is to facilitate wide use of evaluation findings and address concerns about insufficient sharing of data. This, along with the recently developed ECA Communication Strategy, will help consolidate ECA’s image as a world-class think tank<sup>28</sup>.

27 PIKMD (2014) The ECA Knowledge Management Strategy: Managing the Knowledge of a Knowledge Organization. [internal ECA document]

28 PIKMD (2014) ECA Communications Strategy: how communications and media relations will project and help bring about the “new” ECA.

## 7. Evaluation quality assurance

In close collaboration with the SPOQD Operational Quality Section, the Evaluation Section will create quality assurance processes to address the full range of the evaluation functions, from design to implementation, documentation, analysis, sharing and application. For the Evaluation Section, areas of specific interest under this policy will be validity, reliability and consistency of systems for reflecting on and rating projects and programmes.

**Internal quality assurance:** The SPOQD Operational Quality Section will guide the quality assurance of evaluation reports and products. In addition to corporate quality criteria, UNEG norms and standards, the UNEG ethical guidelines for evaluation, and the UNEG code of conduct for evaluation in the UN system, other UNEG and OIOS guidance documents will be used to continuously improve and enhance the quality and credibility of ECA's evaluation function.

**External quality assurance:** The biennial Evaluation Scorecard conducted by OIOS provides a comparison of ECA's evaluation performance against its plans and UN standards. Additional quality assurance support will be sourced from OIOS, as and when they have the resources available, particularly for larger and more complex evaluations addressing cross-cutting themes and impact studies.

## 8. Strengthening capacities in evaluation

ECA staff will get opportunities to receive guidance and build skills in key evaluation-related areas as a result of efforts to enable programme managers to fully integrate evaluation processes and knowledge in their overall programming. More specifically, ECA will carry out various activities in collaboration with expert partners, consultants and technical advisors to support capacity development in evaluation.

The Evaluation Section will regularly produce evaluation guidelines, laying out the methods, techniques and tools for carrying out evaluation activities at ECA. This will provide practical guidance to Divisions, SROs, IDEP and external consultants on planning/designing, implementing, using and disseminating evaluations. The guidelines will draw on available leading guidelines and tools and selected from online sources.

### *Learning processes*

As part of its contribution to regional knowledge sharing and capacity development, ECA will work in collaboration with the Public Information and Knowledge Management Division to support learning mechanisms for partners and other practitioners (such as selected consultants). This may include:

- participating in *Communities of Practice* focused on common programming challenges among ECA partners and beyond;
- utilizing existing *sub-regional meetings and networking* for evaluation reflections and knowledge sharing with relevant stakeholders.

## 9. Roles and responsibilities

### 9.1 Roles and responsibilities of leadership

#### *Executive Secretary*

The Executive Secretary is accountable for ECA results and is the main champion of evaluation within ECA. She or he will provide the political will and enabling environment for enhancing the evaluation culture. She or he is responsible for safeguarding the impartiality of the Evaluation Section by appointing a competent head of the Section and ensuring that it is adequately staffed and resourced to fulfil its role. She or he approves the corporate evaluation plan and is responsible for: ensuring the development and implementation of management responses and action plans corresponding to corporate evaluations, and; presenting the responses and action plans to relevant inter-governmental bodies. Through the Deputy Executive Secretary, she or he is ultimately accountable for the implementation of all evaluations and the utilization of evaluation findings, recommendations and lessons through management responses and action plans.

#### *The Strategic Planning and Operational Quality Division (SPOQD)*

The SPOQD supports and advises the Executive Secretary on the overall strategic direction, priorities and policies in strategic planning and budgeting, monitoring, evaluation and operational quality assurance. The SPOQD coordinates reporting on the implementation of all ECA sub-programmes, using a results-oriented framework to ensure organizational effectiveness.

#### *The Accountability and Operational Quality Sounding Board*

To ensure smooth institutionalization of evaluation at ECA, the Accountability and Operational Quality Sounding Board will act

as an advisory forum for the Executive Secretary and the SPOQD to continuously improve principles, norms, standards and the application of criteria to ECA evaluations. The Sounding Board will regularly review the corporate evaluation plan, corporate evaluation reports and the corresponding management responses and action plans, as well as the annual evaluation report, and to consider any other significant evaluation-related issue.

#### *The Senior Management Team*

The Senior Management Team (Deputy Executive Directors, Division Directors, SRO and IDEP Directors) will champion the use of all evaluations within ECA and ensure that adequate financial and human capacity is made available for a fully effective and efficient evaluation function. They are responsible for creating an enabling environment for the strengthening of the evaluation culture in the area under their oversight. It is the responsibility of programme divisions, SROs and IDEP programme managers to ensure that the required budget is secured during the preparation of programme budgets and XB budgeting.

The Senior Management Team is ultimately responsible for the use of findings, recommendations and lessons learned from the evaluations commissioned by their respective offices and from other corporate or relevant evaluations. The use of evaluations to improve performance will be included as a key element in the performance appraisals of senior managers.

### 9.2 Roles and responsibilities of technical specialists

#### *The Evaluation Section*

Under the recently restructured ECA, the evaluation function is the responsibility of the newly created Evaluation Section of SPOQD. The Head of the Evaluation Section reports directly to the Director of SPOQD who is accountable to the ECA Executive Secretary.

The Evaluation Section's mandate includes:

- a. **a normative function**—setting minimum requirements by developing and improving ECA's specific evaluation policy, strategy, guidelines, frameworks and tools;
- b. **an oversight function**—ensuring oversight of ECA evaluations by maintaining the adequacy, accuracy and credibility of the evaluation system. The Evaluation Section will provide support to Programme Divisions, SROs and IDEP in developing evaluation plans and carrying out self-evaluations. It also ensures that external evaluations respect the norms and standards mentioned above.

The main responsibilities of the Evaluation Section include:

- a. establishing effective corporate evaluation systems and helping develop an evaluation policy and appropriate guidelines;
- b. developing a corporate evaluation plan and conducting internal evaluations;
- c. providing technical support to Divisions, SROs and IDEP to conduct self evaluations;
- d. providing technical advice on programme "evaluability";
- e. developing an annual evaluation report and presenting strategic evaluation results to the Executive Secretary;
- f. alerting senior management to significant process or outcome issues arising from evaluations;
- g. developing key supporting elements for the evaluation function, including guidance for planning, analysis and reflection, disclosure, management responses and action plans and knowledge management;
- h. promoting the use of evaluations and stimulating commitment to evaluation and demand for high quality, signifi-

cant and useful evaluative knowledge products;

- i. using evaluation outcomes to promote innovation, knowledge generation, and knowledge sharing on what works in facilitating Africa's transformational agenda;
- j. building and maintaining a public repository of evaluation resources to facilitate sharing of ECA's evaluative knowledge of policy influence and social change;
- k. developing and maintaining a roster of evaluation expertise in the region.

The specific roles and responsibilities of the Evaluation Section staff include: staff involvement in evaluations, consultations with other divisions on specific evaluations, tendering processes (including preparing terms of reference and vetting consultants) and evaluation management, training and capacity building.

## 9.3 External stakeholders

### *Member States*

In addition to the secretariat, Member States have a number of critical evaluation functions, including:

- requesting ECA evaluation reports for specific ad hoc evaluations;
- approving the ECA strategic framework and budget, Member States and thereby approving the results framework that forms the basis for ECA's evaluation function and plan;
- responding to evaluation reports by introducing changes to the ECA work programme in substantive and procedural terms;
- responsibility for evaluating commitments they made for instance in the context of ECA intergovernmental fora, including Commission resolutions.

## External consultants

The Evaluation Section will compile a roster of well-qualified evaluation consultants in the region. Over time, the Section is expected to include selected consultants as technical advisors/resource persons and as learning participants in its activities designed to build evaluation capacity. During the mobilization of consultants for an evaluation, interested candidates will be referred to an ECA website for access to the evaluation guidance document, key UNEG references and other standard resource documents. At the point of hiring, the Human Resources Division will ensure that all ECA contracts with external evaluators include signed copies of the UNEG code of conduct for evaluation in the United Nations system. Evaluation guidelines to be developed by the Evaluation Section will include recommendations on how to conduct after-action reviews of consultants' performance and share them with the consultants for their learning value.

# Annex 1: Key reference materials

## ECA publications

- ECA (2009) Monitoring & Evaluation: Quality assurance guidelines. ECA/OPM/MES/QA Guidelines/Rev. 2. [from archives, not on web]
- ECA (2009) Monitoring & Evaluation: Reference framework. ECA/OPM/MES/M&E Framework/Rev. 2 [from archives, not on web]
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- UNEG (2005) Norms for Evaluation in the UN System. UNEG/FN/Norms (2005). [http://www.unevaluation.org/documentdownload?doc\\_id=21&file\\_id=562](http://www.unevaluation.org/documentdownload?doc_id=21&file_id=562)
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- UNEG (2007) Evaluation in the UN System. UNEG/REF (2007)3. [http://www.unevaluation.org/documentdownload?doc\\_id=89&file\\_id=549](http://www.unevaluation.org/documentdownload?doc_id=89&file_id=549)
- UNEG (2007) Oversight and Evaluation in the UN System. UNEG/REF (2007)2. [http://www.unevaluation.org/documentdownload?doc\\_id=88&file\\_id=551](http://www.unevaluation.org/documentdownload?doc_id=88&file_id=551)
- UNEG (2007) The Role of Evaluation in Results-Based Management. UNEG/REF (2007)1. [http://www.unevaluation.org/documentdownload?doc\\_id=87&file\\_id=552](http://www.unevaluation.org/documentdownload?doc_id=87&file_id=552)
- UNEG (2012) Proposed UNEG Working Definition: Knowledge Management for Evaluation. [http://www.unevaluation.org/documentdownload?doc\\_id=1239&file\\_id=1621](http://www.unevaluation.org/documentdownload?doc_id=1239&file_id=1621)

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## Annex 2: Evaluation-related glossary

### *Development results include:*

**Outputs:** Tangible product (including services) of an intervention that is directly attributable to an initiative. Outputs relate to the completion (rather than the conduct) of activities and are the type of results over which managers have the most influence.

**Outcomes:** Changes in development conditions that an intervention(s) seeks to support. The contribution of several partners is usually required to achieve an outcome, which may be intended (planned in a results framework) or unintended/unexpected. Unintended outcomes may be positive (contributing to desired changes) or negative (causing harm or preventing positive outcomes).

**Impacts:** Actual or intended changes in human development consequent to sustained changes in human or institutional behaviour, and measured in terms of people's wellbeing. Impacts generally require considerable time to be reached and sustained, i.e., more than one biennium.

**Influence:** includes multiple kinds of systems-level changes occurring among or within organizations, institutions, networks, and partnerships, for instance in response to evidence-based knowledge management and advocacy. These changes may be seen in relation to policies and organizational practices, alignment of groups and political will.

**Leverage:** refers to changes in the commitment of resources, which can include commitments of funding to implement a policy or the allocation of non-monetary resources, such as staffing dedicated to a particular thematic issue.

**Learning:** is about advancing knowledge, which is a critical part of any effort to achieve social impact. Learning helps identify and share knowledge, which can serve to influence decisions and implementation.

### *Causal relations include:*

**Attribution:** The precise causal link to changes in development results issuing from an individual intervention. This is possible in terms of outputs, but difficult to prove definitively in terms of outcomes and impacts.

**Contribution:** The changes in development results that can be credibly and plausibly linked to an intervention. Contribution implies a logical cause-and-effect relationship that points to the meaningful input of an intervention to the development result(s). Outcomes and impacts may result from the interventions of multiple actors working with interventions that contribute collectively, e.g., to improving policies and their implementation.

### *System issues*

**Evaluation systems** - refers to the procedural, institutional and policy arrangements shaping the evaluation function and its relationship to its internal and external environment. This includes the evaluation function's degree of independence, the resources it relies upon and, not least, organizational attitudes to evaluation. Evaluation systems influence the demand for evaluation as well as its use, including particularly the dissemination, feedback and integration of evaluation findings by operations and policy departments. While they not only affect the quality of evaluation, they are vital to the impact of evaluation products and results. (See "Evaluation Systems in DAC Members Agencies", a study based on DAC Peer Reviews, presented at the Second Meeting of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation, Paris, 9 October 2004, p.4).

**Monitoring** - is a *continuous* function that aims primarily to systematically assess the progress of an existing sub-programme or project towards the achievement of its intended results.

**Advocacy** – may be defined broadly as interventions intended to catalyse, stimulate or otherwise influence some social change through different forms of persuasion<sup>29</sup>.

29 Adapted from: Tsui, J.; Hearn, S.; & Young, J. (2014) Monitoring and evaluation of policy influence and advocacy. Working paper. ODI. [http://www.dmeforpeace.org/sites/default/files/050814\\_MonitoringAndEvaluationofPolicyInfluence\\_ODI.pdf](http://www.dmeforpeace.org/sites/default/files/050814_MonitoringAndEvaluationofPolicyInfluence_ODI.pdf)

## *Evaluation types by levels*

Evaluation is undertaken at the following levels:

**Strategy/policy evaluation** is an assessment of the implementation of and/or compliance with a strategy or policy. It analyses the design, coherence and long-term impact of a set of programmes within a particular framework.

**Normative support evaluation** is an assessment of the work carried out by ECA to support the development of norms and standards in conventions, declarations, resolutions, regulatory frameworks, agreements, guidelines, codes of practice and other standard-setting instruments, at the regional, sub-regional and national levels. ECA's normative work also includes support for the implementation of these instruments at the policy level, i.e., their integration into legislation, policies and development plans, and for their implementation at the programme level.

**Evaluation of organizational performance** is an evaluation of an organization's capacity to efficiently manage its assets for the achievements of results, and its capacity for innovation and change. It involves examining its decision-making processes and organizational structures and institutional capacities.

**Thematic evaluation** is an assessment of a thematic area of work, including specific types of policies, business models and programme approaches. It analyses multiple programmes addressing a theme with a view to understanding the combined results in an area and better understanding the opportunities, challenges and gaps in programming and results. It helps assess ECA performance in ensuring sustained contributions to development results in the shifting context of emerging development issues and changing priorities globally and regionally.

**Sub-regional evaluation** is an assessment of the work of ECA in a specific geographic area. It involves assessing the contributions made by ECA to results in a selected sub-region by either analysing multiple programmes

across the area on a specific theme or focusing on other programming elements, such as capacity development, innovation, partnership strategies and sub-regional-level results.

**Programme evaluation** is an assessment of an individual ECA programme and its outcomes, both intended and unintended. These evaluations aim to reinforce the substantive internal and external accountability of ECA, and will be timed to contribute to the preparation and approval of the next programme.

## *Evaluation types by timing in the life of a programme*

The evaluation of an intervention at any level can be undertaken at different points in time:

**Evaluability assessment** is a systematic process that helps to identify whether an intervention is in a condition to be evaluated and whether an evaluation is justified, feasible and likely to provide useful information. Its purpose is not only to determine whether the evaluation is to be undertaken, but also to prepare the programme to put in place all the conditions necessary for an evaluation.

**A midterm evaluation** is conducted at the midpoint of an intervention's life cycle. It is primarily formative, with a focus on the process. It can also provide an early indication of the achievement of output-level results. It is useful as a more in-depth and credible study than a midterm review to make adjustments to an intervention.

**A final evaluation** is conducted at the end of an intervention's life cycle. It is usually summative in nature, focusing on the assessment of outcome-level results, but final evaluations also capture lessons learned from the implementation of the intervention.

**A meta-evaluation** is the evaluation of an evaluation. It is an assessment of multiple completed evaluation reports, i.e., reviewing all available evaluations on specific themes, all evaluations in a specific time period, or all evaluations from a particular organizational

level. This process allows the assessment of consistent strengths, weaknesses, lessons, recommendations—and what has happened for follow up. It is often used to assess the overall quality of evaluations against certain established standards or criteria. It can be combined with meta-analyses to synthesise information about discernible patterns and trends in evaluations.



