Independent System-Wide Evaluation Mechanisms

Comprehensive Review of the Existing Institutional Framework for System-Wide Evaluation of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System Mandated in General Assembly Resolution 64/289

Final Report

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Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

Introduction

Over the past few years, strengthening the capacity for *system-wide evaluation* of the work of the United Nations (UN) system at country and global scales has been the subject of significant debate, both between governments on the international stage as well as among United Nations entities themselves.

Recent resolutions adopted by the General Assembly (GA) demonstrate that system-wide evaluation is becoming a growing concern for Member States. For instance, GA resolution 59/250 on the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR) of United Nations operational activities for development encouraged "the systematic use of monitoring and evaluation approaches at the system-wide level and the promotion of collaborative approaches to evaluation, including joint evaluations." Subsequently, GA resolution 62/208 requested "the UN development system to further develop guidance and oversight mechanism for the funding, planning and implementation of the monitoring and evaluation of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), with a view to assessing their contribution to national development and the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals (IADGs), including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)." More recently, GA resolution 64/289 requested the Secretary-General "in consultation with the United Nations Evaluation Group and the Joint Inspection Unit, to commission a comprehensive review of the existing institutional framework for the system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, and to submit a report, with recommendations, to the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session."

In June 2011, the Office of the Deputy Secretary-General (ODSG), in accordance with GA resolution 64/289, contracted two independent reviewers (one from South Africa and the other from Canada) to conduct a comprehensive review of the existing institutional framework for system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development at the United Nations. This review was expected to provide recommendations to Member States on how to further strengthen the system-wide evaluation (SWE) function in the work of the United Nations. The improvements proposed aim to fully utilize and reinforce the existing institutional framework and capacities.

Five questions guided this review (four were elaborated in the Terms of Reference and one was developed during the review team's inception mission):

1) What is the demand for independent system-wide evaluation (ISWE), and how would it be used?

2) What constitutes a good independent system-wide evaluation and what kind of mandates and capacities would be required to do one?

3) What capacity exists to manage, conduct and contribute to an independent system-wide evaluation (based on past experiences [validation through review and interview])?

4) How could the UN system address capacity gaps in independent system-wide evaluation in the future building on existing mechanisms?

5) What is the present institutional framework for system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development?

The scope of the review as set out in the Terms of Reference was to consider system-wide evaluation for operational activities for development. This was defined in the Terms of Reference as: *"… those activities of funds, programmes and agencies which have the specific objective of promoting development. A number of United Nations entities have specific mandates in this regard. Operational activities for*

development cover both longer-term development-related activities as well as activities with a humanitarian assistance focus."

Methodology

This review is not meant to assess the effectiveness or efficiency of ISWE in the UN system at the present. Instead, it follows the methodology of a "prospective evaluation", which is an uncommon type. Prospective evaluations utilize evaluative techniques to provide direction for the future. They generate useful information and recommendations that help those who govern and those who manage, to gain insight into what could solve a forward-looking question. In this review, the team perceived the basic future-oriented question being raised as the following:

> *How can the United Nations improve ISWE mechanism(s) in order to provide system-wide evaluations, which are independent, credible and useful, on priority strategic and operational questions or issues facing the UN system?*

A Reference Group was established and comprised of representatives from the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), the Department of Social and Economic Affairs (DESA) and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), as well as from the evaluation units of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The role of the Reference Group was to advise the ODSG and to facilitate the engagement of UN evaluation entities in the review process. It was also envisaged that UNEG as a member of the Reference Group would also keep its member organizations informed of progress with the review.

The review team employed a range of approaches to gather information. These included conducting an extensive review of documents suggested by the Reference Group and other informants, available on the United Nations websites, or found through a search of the academic and grey literature. The review team examined case study examples of UN system-wide evaluations conducted over the last five years to identify lessons regarding the process of conducting, managing or supporting system-wide evaluation activities. Previous analysis completed on the question of system-wide evaluation in the United Nations was also considered.

Additionally, data was collected from UNEG fact sheets, personal and group interviews, two stakeholder workshops held in October 2011, and from a questionnaire sent to evaluation offices in the United Nations (regarding their capacity and involvement in system-wide evaluation activities). Both quantitative and qualitative data analyses were used to answer the questions posed in the assessment framework and the various data were triangulated to verify the findings. The review team interviewed members of the United Nations evaluation community (UNEG, the UN Secretariat and agency evaluation offices and the JIU) as well as internal and external potential users of system-wide evaluations, namely, Member States, delegates from the 5th Committee and 2nd Committee, the Committee on Programmes and Coordination and the Chief Executives Board. Interviews were conducted in New York and Geneva. In addition, the review team sought the opinions of outside experts. A total of 66 face-to-face interviews were conducted and more than 10 telephone interviews held.

The draft report was distributed to Member States and the Reference Group and a workshop was held on 17 February 2012 to consider the findings and recommendations of the review. Written comments as well as comments from the workshop were considered and where appropriate, have been incorporated into the final report.

Structure of the report

The report is structured into the following chapters:

Chapter 1 provides the background, purpose and scope of the review and sets out the key questions to be answered by the review. It provides details on the methodology used by the review team.

Chapter 2 describes the context for system-wide evaluation in the United Nations. It briefly outlines the reform issues including system-wide coherence and the drive to strengthen accountability. The chapter discusses the key UN entities involved in managing, coordinating or conducting system-wide evaluations and outlines some of the definitional issues regarding system-wide evaluation.

Chapter 3 reviews the existing demand for system-wide evaluation in the UN system. This demand is broken down into four categories: country-focused, strategy/policy-focused, theme focused and management/administrative-focused. The paucity of data on ISWE demand and the value for money of engaging in system-wide evaluations are discussed.

Chapter 4 explores the institutional framework for ISWE in the United Nations. The lack of existing guidance for the ISWE function is demonstrated, and a case is made to more clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of actors involved in system-wide evaluation. Moreover, the value of independence for system-wide evaluations is discussed.

Chapter 5 reviews the existing capacity of central evaluation units in the United Nations for managing, conducting or contributing to independent system-wide evaluations. Attention is paid to the lack of guidance and capacity development for system-wide evaluations and to the need for better coordination mechanisms. The limited resources of evaluation units are also identified as a factor constraining participation in SWEs.

Chapter 6, based on the information gathered in this review, outlines the characteristics of a good system-wide evaluation as well as the kinds of mandates and capacities it requires. The chapter draws on lessons learned from past and current system-wide evaluations.

Chapter 7 synthesizes the findings presented in the previous chapters and provides six recommendations to strengthen ISWE in the United Nations.

Main Findings

The report contains 36 findings that are organized around the five areas of investigation, namely, the context, demand, institutional framework and existing capacity for ISWE, as well as the characteristics of good ISWE.

The Context

The current interest in ISWE is part of the broader context of reform in the UN system. There are increased demands for strengthened accountability and improving the impact of the Organization's operations. The context is characterized by a greater focus on results, a desire for better evaluative reporting and the desire to provide value for money invested in the UN system.

The review found that there is a wide variety of interpretations of what constitutes ISWE. Some view 'system-wide' to mean the entirety of the United Nations, covering the four pillars of the United Nations work (development, humanitarian, peace and security, and human rights). Others saw system-wide to mean evaluation of a theme that cuts across the UN system, for example, gender equality. System-wide in the humanitarian context covered not only UN entities but also external international relief organizations. Several evaluation units claimed to have participated in system-wide evaluations, mostly on an ad hoc basis. However, the JIU is the only entity with a substantive mandate to conduct or manage independent system-wide evaluations. Others such as UN Women and OCHA have system-wide mandates pertaining

to specific themes, for examples, gender equality and humanitarian activities, while the mandate of OIOS is confined to the UN Secretariat.

United Nations entities are increasingly aware of the need for an enabling environment for evaluation. UNEG, although it is a voluntary professional network and not a legislated body, plays an important role in promoting an enabling environment for evaluation and good evaluation practices. It has, on an ad hoc basis, filled the gap in managing system-wide evaluations (for example, the Joint South Africa-UNEG evaluation and the Delivering as One Evaluability Assessment). This gap has persisted, as over the past five years it has been difficult for the United Nations to reach consensus on the institutional and organizational approaches to ISWE.

Demand for ISWE

The demand for ISWE is varied and diverse. The different mandates of UN entities and the different interpretations of ISWE complicate the analysis of demand. The review found that demand for ISWE varied depending on how interviewees interpreted the concepts of "system-wide" and "independence". Some interviewees suggested that they were more interested in requesting ISWE work when system-wide truly meant the entire UN system. Other interviewees felt that evaluation at the UN system level was too cumbersome, while a third group questioned the idea and assumption that the UN should be considered as a system that can be evaluated.

Regardless of this definitional issue and of ambivalence on the part of senior managers and Member States towards ISWE, data suggest there is a growing interest and demand for a wide variety of evaluative work which has system-wide characteristics. Four types of demand for ISWE were identified and explored: evaluation studies that focus on UN work within a country; evaluation work that deals with the UN strategy and/or policies; evaluation work that explores UN themes implemented by multiple agencies; and evaluation studies of UN management practices. These categories can be further subdivided according to whether evaluations focus primarily on strategic or operational work.

There is a paucity of systematic data to assess the actual demand for ISWE, except for the data collected by the JIU through its needs assessment surveys. Data from the JIU suggests that demand for ISWE, though erratic, has increased over the past 10 years. Increasingly, the demand comes from UN organizations and oversight bodies, with emphasis on management/administrative studies. This focus is largely in response to the 2007 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR) which identified system-wide management issues and the need for harmonization of business practices within the UN system. There has been a steady demand for evaluations in the humanitarian sector that are of an inter-agency nature and most of these are country level operational evaluations. Managers of evaluation units that were surveyed perceive a need for system-wide evaluations that go beyond managerial efficiency issues. While they view the latter as important, they saw the need for system-wide evaluations that dealt with issues of results and impact.

Demand for ISWE at the country level is nascent and can be expected to grow. UNDAFs represent operational activities for development at the country level and evaluations of UNDAFs became mandatory in January 2010. Programming countries themselves are asking what the contribution of the UN system is to their national priorities.

It is not surprising that demand for ISWE is varied and diverse as the interests of Member States and UN organizations are diverse and complex. System-wide evaluations are resource intensive and diverse demands need to be prioritized and coordinated to ensure that the UN system derives maximum value for money from ISWE. Other than the coordination between the JIU and OIOS, the UN system as whole does not coordinate demand for ISWE. Prioritization of ISWE demand is not done across the UN system, nor can it be done as there is no overarching strategy to guide prioritization. The question of "demand for what purpose?" or "what does the United Nations want to achieve through ISWE?" has not been answered unambiguously by the UN system.

Institutional Framework

The institutional framework for ISWE in the UN system was explored in Chapter 4. The institutional framework (the formal and informal rules) for evaluation within the United Nations has become increasingly clear, with norms and standards, evaluation policies and structural arrangements to institutionalize the evaluation function. This is not the case for ISWE.

The review made use of the institutional criteria for evaluation developed by UNEG (with some minor adjustments for ISWE). In addition, the review examined institutional issues such as governance and operational institutions, including UN programming countries. In general, the review found that for ISWE, institutional components such as leadership, policies, structures, norms, and values were ad hoc and weak. Only the JIU has been given a strong mandate to engage in ISWE work. The study suggests that the role and function of ISWE is not clear, nor are expectations for this work. Furthermore, the review suggests that while Member States pay some attention to individual ISWE studies, there is virtually no oversight to the totality of evaluation work being done beyond a single organization (ISWE, various joint evaluations). Similarly, individual units engage in ISWE in areas of concern to them (e.g., OCHA in the humanitarian sector), but there is little coordination of this work at the system level. The dearth of mechanisms to coordinate work represents a major gap for ISWE in the United Nations.

Existing Evaluation Capacity

The existing evaluation capacity for ISWE is inadequate. The financial and human resources for most evaluation units in the UN system are limited for their day-to-day work, and participation in ISWE often means working without extra resources. Very few entities in the UN system have an evaluation expenditure that exceeds 1% of the total expenditure of the particular UN entity.

There is little doubt that the quality of evaluation practitioners in the UN system continues to improve, in large part due to the work of UNEG. However, there is a gap in developing capacity for ISWE. No specific competencies have been identified for evaluation managers and evaluation practitioners for ISWE, and it is assumed that no special competencies are required beyond the normal evaluation competencies. Lessons from existing ISWE show that this is not the case.

Evaluation capacity at the country level is essential for effective ISWE but, based on an assessment of UNDAF evaluations, capacity at this level is not adequate for ISWE. There are pockets of good capacity in the UN system, but other than UNEG, there is no structure that has an overview of existing capacity. Furthermore, UNEG is a voluntary organization and does not have the resources or the mandate to coordinate existing capacity.

The review was unable to determine accurately the number of evaluations produced in the UN system each year as there is no single place in the UN system that has responsibility for collecting this information. From the data available through UNEG, evaluation units complete on average 10 evaluation reports annually and there are over 300 evaluations reports completed each year in the UN system. Information gathered through the interviews and the annual reports of the JIU reports suggest that the UN system may not have the necessary capacity to engage effectively with the recommendations of so many evaluations. Member States have varying capacities to respond to the volume of documentation generated by the UN system. The quality of reports produced and the willingness of senior management to act on recommendations are also factors that affect the use of reports.

Characteristics of Good ISWE

The review identified 10 characteristics of good ISWE:

1. Good system-wide evaluation mechanisms are independent and credible, and SWE outputs or products are used. Independence is a necessary but not sufficient condition for good system-wide evaluation. While independence is a requirement for credible evaluation, the credibility of an

evaluation also depends on the quality and integrity of analysis, the degree of transparency of the evaluation process and the competence and credibility of the evaluators.

2. Good system-wide evaluation focuses on the key questions that governors want answered to improve the strategic and operational functioning of the organization. Increasingly, Member States are asking where and how the United Nations should invest; what should be the balance between country level investments and investment in global issues? The questions cut across the four pillars of the UN system, are normative in many instances and present dilemmas that need articulating and negotiating.

3. ISWE must be mandated by those who govern the organization. Governors ensure that there is an environment for independent, credible and useful evaluation. Mandate plays a critical role as who mandates ISWE has implications for how results are fed back into the UN system, and for who is responsible for acting on the recommendations of ISWE.

4. Financial and human resources for ISWE should be commensurate with the scope of delivery expected from ISWE by those who govern and senior management. ISWE requires a significant investment of resources to produce quality evaluations that can be used.

5. Member States should have the requisite capacity to play their role in engaging in the strategic evaluations that ISWE is expected to produce. In practice this means that Member States should have the capacity to articulate the strategic questions they want answered by ISWE. It also means that the role of Member States should be set out unambiguously in the governance framework for ISWE. Member States also need capacity (time and resources) to engage with the results of ISWE.

6. Good ISWE has evaluators and evaluation managers who are technically competent to deal with methodological complexities, have good strategic sense, and possess political astuteness to negotiate across the institutional, organizational, geographic and other boundaries involved in system-wide work. Technical evaluation skills by themselves are insufficient as ISWE takes place in a political context where stakeholders often have very divergent interests. Evaluation managers in particular require an ability to navigate internal and external politics and excel in advocating the use of the evaluation results.

7. A central quality of a good ISWE is to manage a balance between supporting the governors of the organization in their oversight responsibilities and being useful to senior management. There are also different interests within these respective groups which need balancing. This balance is not easy to manage.

8. Good ISWE takes time to develop and institutionalize. The complexity of the United Nations environment suggests that experimentation be used as a means of testing new structures and processes. Given the present resources, technologies, capacities, context, and institutions, the best ISWE approaches are the ones that are able to identify their strengths and weaknesses and create the conditions for change. Good ISWE thus needs to be flexible and adaptive to the changing UN system circumstances.

9. ISWE is one part of a larger system. If it is strengthened, the other components of the larger system need strengthening as well to keep the system in balance. Other components of the system that need to be strengthen include evaluation capacity of the UN system at country level and strengthening national statistical systems. Good ISWE does not operate at the expense of evaluation functions of individual agencies. In fact, good ISWE requires well-capacitated and functioning individual evaluation units that can support and contribute to ISWE.

10. Good ISWE pays attention to the human rights and gender equality dimensions of the programmes and activities being evaluated. It also integrates human rights and gender equality into the design, implementation and reporting of ISWE. Good ISWE should respond to questions

that go to the heart of the United Nations mandate: how well are human rights and gender equality incorporated into UN policies, programmes and practices?

Conclusions

In conclusion, ISWE is occurring in the UN system in a wide variety of forms and in a wide variety of ways. Some ISWE reports have been identified as helpful, but others have been considered less helpful. At an operational level, ISWE has suffered from a lack of coordination. This is not surprising, considering there is little policy guidance and no clear leadership or strategy for ISWE within the system.

There is also little data on the demand for ISWE and little data indicating that trade-offs are being made in choosing which ISWE activities to do from a system perspective. While the available data suggest that there continues to be a demand for ISWE, there is also reluctance from senior managers and Member States to move ahead in addressing this demand because of concerns related to current ISWE use.

Furthermore, clear analysis of financial requirements for doing ISWE has not been made and quality controls have been ad hoc. In this context, there has been very little consciously invested in building the institutional and organizational capacity to improve the system-wide evaluation function in the United Nations. In fact, when the United Nations has tried to tackle the issues confronting ISWE, it has approached the problem as a structural rather than a functional one –functional referring to the role ISWE plays and should play within the UN. By addressing ISWE from a structural standpoint (i.e., creating units or establishing an accountable group), ISWE became politicized with different groups in the United Nations supporting different structural approaches. The interviews confirm that the politicization of ISWE remains a significant concern even today. Hence, moving the issues which pose problem to ISWE ahead will not be easy. However, the experience the review team has had in doing this review suggests that there is willingness in the UN system to have substantive discussions and dialogue on ISWE. Interviewees see that continuing the ad hoc approach to ISWE is inefficient and sometimes ineffective, and therefore not sustainable.

The review found a wide assortment of gaps that deviated from the ideal of ISWE. The issue is which gaps can be addressed to obtain the most gain with the least institutional disruption and resource use. This is congruent with the intent of the Terms of Reference. This is the focus of the review's recommendations.

Recommendations

Our approach to formulating recommendations was shaped by the need for ISWE to get out of the politicization rut. We considered what actions are in the realm of the possible and the importance of dialogue in moving the issue forward. Our recommendations are structured into actions that can be accomplished in the short-term (within the first two years) and the medium-to-long term (what can be done in the three to five year horizon). Responsibility for implementing these recommendations should fall under the purview of the General Assembly.

Recommendation 1: **The President of the General Assembly should set up a working group to explore the specific function it wants ISWE to play within the United Nations system.**

Independent system-wide evaluation is going on within the United Nations and will continue. This review recommends that it needs a firmer institutional footing (rules, standards, mandates) as well as mechanisms to coordinate activity and provide legitimacy for the work undertaken. In addition, we suggest that system-wide evaluations are not adequately being carried out in the policy and strategic areas and propose a way forward.

While this review was able to explore some operational questions, it was unable to put in place a process that would allow for a more complete discussion of some of the underlying value issues that are linked to ISWE, for example, on such questions as:

- What role should ISWE play within the United Nations? What is its function?

- What are its goals?

- How should ISWE be governed? How should priorities be set?

- What should ISWE include? Exclude?

- What do UN members want to accomplish with ISWE?

- What resources should the system invest in this function?

- What structures and mechanisms should be put in place to support the coherence of the function?

- What should their mandates be?

- What are the expectations of ISWE and how should they be reported on and reviewed?

A review of fundamental values is the role of Member States and senior officials of the United Nations. This review can point the way but it cannot presuppose the values of the Organization. Discussions at the consultative workshop in October 2011 suggested that continuing dialogue on some of the most difficult value questions associated with ISWE is the only way to move this agenda forward in the long term. We agree with this position and thus recommend that the President of the General Assembly sets up a working group composed of Member States to discuss these issues. The exact form and participation should be determined by the General Assembly. We suggest that those intergovernmental structures that have a particular interest in ISWE, for example ECOSOC, the 2nd Committee and 5th Committee, be part of the working group.

Finally, we suggest that the working group take up an issue that has been central to the United Nations ISWE discussion but which has not yet been solved: what role should the JIU play in the emerging ISWE function and how does this role affect the current JIU mandate and style of work?

Recommendation 2: **The Secretary-General should establish a process for strengthening coordination of the existing ISWE activities in the UN system. An interim coordination mechanism in the form of a Steering Group should be tasked with managing the process.**

Many different types of collaborations are emerging around interagency and system-wide evaluations. The UN system regularly collaborates within countries (Delivering as One, Haiti Emergency Relief), engages in multi-agency projects (Iraq Fund, Sudan Fund), shares administrative procedures (medical insurance), works together on cross cutting themes (AIDS, gender), operationalizes system-wide policy directives (decentralization), and so forth. These require coordination and collaboration among and between agencies in order for an ISWE to take place. All require some type of coordinating mechanism to carry out an ISWE.

The existing system-wide evaluations will continue because an authorizing group (for example, from a fund, programme, IASC or the General Assembly) requests that they be carried out. In such an ad hoc system, an interim Steering Group should be formed and tasked with managing the process of improving coordination, until such time when there is agreement on the form and mandate of a permanent coordinating mechanism (s).

The Steering Group could be mandated to inform senior management and Member States in the UN system about annual ISWE activities, and to advise on planning and resourcing of ISWE. In addition, this

group could be tasked with helping the General Assembly better understand the totality of all planned and reported ISWE work, the limits of existing human and financial resource capacity, and the development of norms and standards for ISWE, as well as with providing technical guidance for evaluation units participating, managing or conducting ISWE.

One of the first tasks of the Steering Group could be to define what type of work qualifies as ISWE. The Terms of Reference for this review suggest that "system-wide" should be limited to development activities. Our suggestion is for the General Assembly to consider a broader definition, since an increasing amount of UN activities do not fall within development and humanitarian work.

We propose the following as a starting point for developing the mandate of the Steering Group:

1) To maintain a database on all internal and external ISWE activities.

2) To work with the various evaluation units to develop a yearly overall list of planned SWEs.

3) To respond to requests from the General Assembly and the CEB regarding the best way to conduct ISWE using the existing institutional framework and capacities.

4) To provide the General Assembly support for engaging in evaluation work related to the United Nations' role in international agreements.

5) To identify institutional and capacity issues related to the conduct of ISWE. Special attention should be given to the capacity requirements of Member States who are asked to lead and or participate in such evaluations.

6) To provide an assessment of the resources being expended by ISWE activities to the General Assembly.

7) To make suggestions, where appropriate, on potential topics to guide a work programme for ISWE.

8) To do an annual demand analysis based on data that exists in the system and to make recommendations with respect to ways the United Nations can improve its understanding of ISWE demand.

9) To provide an annual report on the state of ISWE in the United Nations.

The composition of the Steering Group should ultimately be determined by the United Nations. We suggest that the Reference Group for the ISWE review be retained to serve as the Steering Group, with additional members to be added.

Recommendation 3:   **The JIU should be supported in its on-going efforts to improve its effectiveness and relevance as an ISWE mechanism. This support should include providing the JIU with the opportunity to test its ability to coordinate operational work of ISWE**.

Over the last 40 years the JIU has played a role in ISWE in the United Nations. Its statute, written in 1978, identified a set of practices and principles that guide its work. The primary modus operandi of the JIU is for an inspector (sometimes two) aided by JIU staff to conduct an evaluation. We call this the "inspector approach". In this approach, each inspector carries out their own evaluation (subject to peer review), and does so within the budget constraints of the unit. Conversations with several inspectors from the JIU and its Executive Secretary indicate that there is an openness to explore other approaches and methodologies which can utilize the JIU's experience but not necessarily its "inspector approach".

To date, many changes have been suggested to the JIU and the unit itself has made many suggestions for change. Some suggestions have been implemented, others not. Some require a change in the JIU statute, for which there is a great deal of reluctance. The JIU is contemplating a self-evaluation and has put this

into their Strategic Framework. We propose that the JIU takes this a step further and commissions an independent review.

Discussions we have had indicate that both JIU and UN staff have thought about improvement and are interested in figuring out new and innovative ways for engaging the JIU in ISWE. An example which was casually discussed concerns how the JIU could have played a more substantive role in DaO evaluations. Conversations with JIU and DESA officials suggest there is a new willingness to explore the use of the JIU as an implementer of ISWEs such as DaO. Interviews with those involved in the DaO evaluation suggested that it would have been more efficient to utilize the JIU as a mechanism for the DaO evaluation than to set up a separate ad hoc unit in DESA. The issue is that changes in longstanding practices need to be planned and discussed before situations arise. However, respectful dialogue, time and resources are required.

Recommendation 4: **The UN system should take action to improve the quality of system-wide, policy-focused evaluations such as the QCPR. As a starting point, the Secretary-General should commission an independent evaluation of the QCPR purpose, approach, credibility and usefulness.**

Strategic/policy evaluations are one of the tools required for the governance of the UN system and, given the issues confronting the United Nations as an organization, there is an emerging demand for more strategic or policy evaluations on a system-wide level. DESA has the mandate to support policy development in the United Nations through its work on policy analysis. In addition, DESA engages in the evaluation of the strategic foci (QCPR evaluation) of the United Nations.

Throughout our interviews, it became clear that there is ambivalence with respect to the QCPR process and report. Should DESA do this evaluation, even though it does not have an evaluation unit? What type of strategic or policy evaluation is warranted? Many questions were raised as part of this review. As we discussed this issue along with the more general issue of who should engage in United Nations policy evaluations, we came to the conclusion that the Member States should request the Secretary-General to commission a study exploring the methods being used to evaluate the implementation and results of policy decisions made by the General Assembly and ECOSOC. Within this request, the General Assembly should ask for a special review of the process for assessing the operational activities of the UN system and its contribution to development. Such a review would explore the purpose, approach, credibility and usefulness of the QCPR as a case study. The lessons generated through the evaluation of the QCPR can inform the UN system on what might be done to improve strategic/policy level evaluations.

Recommendation 5: **The Secretary-General should request UNEG to work with its members in developing specific standards, guidance and competencies associated with system-wide evaluation. The Secretary-General should ensure that the necessary resources are made available to UNEG to facilitate this work.**

UNEG has been a strong supporter in the United Nations' endeavour to improve its evaluation capacity. UNEG's efforts have led to a variety of guidelines and standards that have been adopted in various forms by its member groups. While its work to date has primarily dealt with individual evaluation units, it should be noted that SWEs are different. They are inherently larger, more complex and often very costly. Ownership and utilization has been a problem, as has, in some instances, the credibility of the work. While independence is often discussed as a necessary condition for engaging in SWE, independence as discussed in this report is an elusive idea and sometimes trade-offs need to be made. In this context, a body such as UNEG is in a good position to make suggestions to the United Nations about the standards, guidelines and competencies required for ISWE work.

To facilitate this work, we recommend that dedicated resources be made available through the Secretary-General for UNEG to carry out this task. The work of UNEG would be fed into the General Assembly by

the Secretary-General, for approval of the General Assembly. This would be a complement to Recommendation 6.

Recommendation 6: **The Secretary-General should update the evaluation guidelines for the United Nations and include special directives related to ISWE in these guidelines.**

The Secretary-General's bulletin (ST/SGB 2000/8) provides the regulations and rules for programme planning, monitoring and evaluation. This is the principal evaluation guidance provided to the system by the Secretary-General and it does not include any reference to system-wide activities or joint activities. Many things have changed since this bulletin came out in the year 2000, including the role and function of ISWE in the UN system. Clarifying definitions, processes and activities for evaluation that include ISWE would provide a rule-based mechanism within which ISWE can operate.

Acronyms

ACABQ	Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions
CEB	Chief Executives Board
CPC	Committee for Programmes and Coordination
CTBTO	Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
DaO	Delivering as One
DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GA	General Assembly
IAAC	Independent Audit Advisory Committee
IADG	Internationally agreed development goal
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IED	Inspection and Evaluation Division
IFAD	International Fund for Agriculture Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISWE	Independent system-wide evaluation
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OCHA	Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODSG	Office of the Deputy Secretary-General
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
SWE	System-wide evaluation
TCPR	Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review
TOR	Terms of Reference

Acronyms

UN	United Nations
UN WOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNBOA	United Nations Board of Auditors
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDPI	United Nations Department of Public Information
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization

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1. Introduction

Strengthening capacity for system-wide evaluation of the work of the United Nations (UN) system at country and global scales has been the subject of significant debate at the intergovernmental level as well as among United Nations entities themselves in the past few years.

The General Assembly (GA), in resolution 59/250 on the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR)[1] of United Nations operational activities for development, encouraged "the systematic use of monitoring and evaluation approaches at the system-wide level and the promotion of collaborative approaches to evaluation, including joint evaluations."[2] In resolution 62/208, the General Assembly also requested "the UN development system to further develop guidance and oversight mechanism for the funding, planning and implementation of the monitoring and evaluation of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), with a view to assessing their contribution to national development and the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals (IADGs), including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)."[3] More recently, GA resolution 64/289 requested the Secretary-General "in consultation with the United Nations Evaluation Group and the Joint Inspection Unit, to commission a comprehensive review of the existing institutional framework for the system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, and to submit a report, with recommendations, to the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session."[4]

In June 2011, the Office of the Deputy Secretary-General (ODSG) contracted two independent reviewers, one from South Africa and the other from Canada, to conduct a comprehensive review of the existing institutional framework for system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development at the United Nations. This review is expected to provide recommendations to Member States on how to further strengthen the system-wide evaluation (SWE) function in the work of the United Nations. The proposed improvements should aim at fully utilizing and strengthening the existing institutional framework and capacities.

Four questions were posed to the reviewers to help guide their work:

1) What is the demand for independent system-wide evaluation, and how would it be used?

2) What constitutes a good independent system-wide evaluation and what kind of mandates and capacities would be required to do one?

3) What capacity exists to manage, conduct and contribute to an independent system-wide evaluation (based on past experiences [validation through review and interview])?

4) How could the UN system address capacity gaps in independent system-wide evaluation in the future building on existing mechanisms?

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[1] The TCPR has since become the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR).

[2] United Nations General Assembly, resolution 59/250, 22 December 2004, p.11.

[3] United Nations General Assembly, resolution 62/208, 19 December 2007, p.18.

[4] United Nations General Assembly, resolution 64/289, 2 July 2010, p.4.

A fifth question was added during the inception mission. It became apparent that GA resolution 64/289, which was the impetus for this study, also suggested that the report contain a review of the existing institutional framework for system-wide evaluation in the United Nations. We framed the question as:

5) What is the present institutional framework for system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development?[5]

This report addresses all five questions.

1.1 Methodological Approach

This review is not typical in that it attempts to utilize evaluative techniques to provide direction for the future. It is not meant to answer evaluative questions about how effective or efficient ISWE is currently. Rather, it follows the methodology of a "prospective evaluation". Prospective evaluations use evaluation methodologies to help generate useful information and recommendations that help those who govern and those who manage obtain insight into what could solve a forward-looking question.[6] The basic future-oriented question being raised by this review is:

> *How can the United Nations improve ISWE mechanism(s) in order to provide system-wide evaluations on priority strategic and operational questions or issues facing the UN system that are independent, credible and useful?*

Being familiar with the United Nations' history of unsuccessful attempts in addressing this question, our concern was to develop a methodological approach that could build interest and willingness to tackle this issue once more.

A Reference Group was established comprising of representatives from the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), the Department of Social and Economic Affairs (DESA), and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), as well as from the evaluation units of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The role of the Reference Group was to advise the ODSG and to facilitate the engagement of UN evaluation entities in the review process. It was also envisaged that UNEG as a member of the Reference Group would also keep its member organizations informed of progress with the review.

1.1.1 Data Sources and Data Collection Instruments

Our team collected data from the following sources:

Desk Review and Documented Material

We reviewed relevant documentation suggested by the Reference Group and other informants, as well as those documents available on the UN websites. In addition, we sought out other documentation through literature searches in both the academic and grey literature. The list of documents consulted is in Appendix I. These documents were read and themes developed. These themes were compared across readings and used to develop findings.

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[5] It is important to note that the TOR suggest that the consultants make recommendations regarding ISWE. However, some of the interviewees in New York contended that the resolution only requested a descriptive study, not one with recommendations.

[6] See 'Prospective Evaluation Methods: The Prospective Evaluation Synthesis' by the United States General Accounting Office (1990).

Use of Existing Case Studies

We reviewed system-wide evaluations undertaken in the past five years to identify lessons regarding the process of conducting, managing or supporting system-wide evaluation activities. The Reference group suggested that we include the following case studies: Tsunami Evaluation Coalition, Delivering-as-One, Joint South Africa-UNEG evaluation, South-South and Triangular Cooperation, and Real Time Evaluations for Pakistan and Haiti. No meta assessment was made of these case studies. However, using a content analysis methodology, we integrated the lessons learned from these experiences into the report.

Institutional Descriptions

Office of the Deputy Secretary-General (ODSG) developed a questionnaire (Appendix VII) to provide a preliminary map of the existing capacity and practice of evaluation offices in the UN system, with a specific focus on their ability to engage in system-wide evaluation activities. The ODSG invited us to provide comments on the questionnaire before it was sent out by the ODSG via the UNEG secretariat for distribution to 45 UNEG member organizations. Twenty-two questionnaires were completed and returned to the ODSG by 13 evaluation units in the UN system. The data from these completed questionnaires were shared with the consultants. We conducted an analysis of this data using descriptive statistics.

Fact Sheets

In addition, UNEG agreed to update its "fact sheets" on the evaluation departments and units in the United Nations. We received and analyzed fact sheets from 21 organizations.[7] These documents provided descriptive information about the structure, staffing, budgets and reports of UNEG members.

Interviews

We interviewed members of the United Nations' evaluation community (UNEG, UN Secretariat and agency evaluation offices, the JIU) as well as internal and external potential recipients and users of system-wide evaluations (e.g., Member States, the Committee on Programmes and Coordination, the Chief Executives Board, and the United Nations Development Group). In addition, we sought the opinions of outside experts. In total, nearly 60 face-to-face interviews and more than 10 telephone interviews were held. The list of interviewees is in Appendix III. The interview protocol used as a basis for the interviews is in Appendix VI. During each interview, notes were taken. From these, themes were developed and an analysis of themes across interviews was performed. These were used to support the findings of the study.

Stakeholder Workshops

We conducted two stakeholder workshops in New York in October 2011. The purpose of these workshops was:

- to update stakeholders on the progress of the review;
- to present a draft summary of major findings; and
- to engage participants in discussion around the types of recommendations that would be helpful to make progress on system-wide evaluation.

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[7] The UNEG fact sheets are a self-assessment tool. Though UNEG had 45 members at the time of distributing the questionnaire, only 21 evaluation units/departments had completed the form.. Numerous attempts by the UNEG Secretariat to obtain outstanding fact sheets were not successful.

The first workshop engaged members of the Reference Group as well as well as some relevant UN representatives. The second workshop engaged Member States who had been previously interviewed. The review team facilitated both workshops.

Review of Existing Analysis

Finally, we explored previous analysis done in relation to the question of system-wide evaluation in the United Nations. This included analysis of demand, costs of UN coordination, UN governance and oversight. Data from these analyses are used throughout the report.

1.1.2 Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative data analyses were used to answer the questions posed in the assessment framework. Most quantitative data were analyzed through various types of descriptive analysis. Content analysis was used to review qualitative data. In general, we used our interviews to generate themes for the content analysis. We used these themes to track data in documents and notes, which we then analyzed in order to answer the main questions of the study. Findings in the study emerged by triangulating the various data.

1.1.3 Limitations

The review experienced some limitations. UNEG Facts Sheets, which were one of the main sources of data on existing evaluation capacity, were available from approximately half of the evaluation units that are members of UNEG. In some instances, the information provided was not the most recent, i.e., not available for 2011. Similarly, the response rate to the institutional survey of the OSDG was about 50 percent. Furthermore, given the limitations on time and resources, the review team could not obtain comprehensive data on system-wide evaluations at the country level. It should be borne in mind that the review was not required to make an assessment of the quality of system-wide evaluations conducted by the various evaluation units within the UN system.

1.2 Definitions of key concepts

The key concepts for this review, namely, 'system-wide', 'independence' and 'operational activities for development' are defined in the Terms of Reference to provide guidance to the review. These concepts, as will be shown in the report, have different meanings to different people.

System-wide

"System-wide refers to all relevant member organisations of the UN system involved in a specific area, effort, issues or sector, at country/regional/global level. It usually implies a focus on how effectively the different parts of the system are working together."

Independence

"An evaluation function has to be located independently from other management functions so that it is free from undue influence and that unbiased and transparent reporting is ensured. It needs to have full discretion in submitting reports for consideration at the appropriate level of decision-making pertaining to the subject of the evaluation."

Operational activities for development

"Operational activities for development of the United Nations system are defined as those activities of funds, programmes and agencies which have the specific objective of promoting development. A number of United Nations entities have specific mandates in this regard. Operational activities for development

cover both longer-term development-related activities as well as activities with a humanitarian assistance focus.

1.3 Structure of the Report

The report comprises the following chapters:

Chapter 2 describes the context for system-wide evaluation in the United Nations. It briefly outlines the reform issues including system-wide coherence and the drive to strengthen accountability. The chapter discusses the key UN entities involved in managing, coordinating or conducting system-wide evaluations and outlines some of the definitional issues regarding system-wide evaluation..

Chapter 3 reviews the existing demand for system-wide evaluation in the UN system. This demand is broken down into four categories: country-focused, strategy/policy-focused, theme focused and management/administrative-focused. The paucity of data on ISWE demand and the value for money of engaging in system-wide evaluations are discussed.

Chapter 4 explores the institutional framework for ISWE in the United Nations. The lack of existing guidance for the ISWE function is demonstrated, and a case is made to more clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of actors involved in system-wide evaluation. Moreover, the value of independence for system-wide evaluations is discussed.

Chapter 5 reviews the existing capacity of central evaluation units in the United Nations for managing, conducting or contributing to independent system-wide evaluations. Attention is paid to the lack of guidance and capacity development for system-wide evaluations and to the need for better coordination mechanisms. The limited resources of evaluation units are also identified as a factor constraining participation in SWEs.

Chapter 6, based on the information gathered in this review, outlines the characteristics of a good system-wide evaluation as well as the kinds of mandates and capacities it requires. The chapter draws on lessons learned from past and current system-wide evaluations.

Chapter 7 synthesizes the findings presented in the previous chapters and provides six recommendations to strengthen ISWE in the United Nations.

2. Independent System-Wide Evaluation in the Context of the United Nations

The United Nations works on behalf of its Member States and their citizens for a better, secure world that lives up to the commitments expressed in the preamble to the United Nations founding charter. The four core pillars of the work of the United Nations, as mandated by its Member States, are:

1) To provide life-saving support to populations that have been hit by humanitarian crises;

2) To support peace-building and peace-keeping in conflict-ridden areas;

3) To support the efforts of governments and their citizens in fighting poverty and advancing development; and

4) To promote human rights worldwide.[8]

These pillars collectively represent the "United Nations system". Each of these pillars represents a sub-system of activities that require the United Nations to be continuously relevant to its Member States and other stakeholders. At times these pillars overlap. Bringing coherence to the UN system and the various sub-systems is a large, complex and difficult task. Over the past five years or so, the UN system has engaged in a range of reforms, many of which fall under the umbrella of system-wide coherence. But coherence in itself is insufficient. The United Nations is increasingly expected to provide a high level of value for the investments it makes. It must meet the objectives it sets for itself (be **effective**) and, in so doing, provide **efficient** service. In providing these services at appropriate cost, the United Nations must be able to demonstrate that its activities are **relevant** to the needs and priorities of the recipients of its services and explain how its resources contribute to the benefit (positive change in life conditions) of those in need (**impact**).

Evaluation is one of the tools that the United Nations uses to explain to the world the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and impact of its work. Most of the evaluative work comes in the form of self-assessments done by the various entities that constitute the United Nations. Sometimes entities come together and engage in joint evaluations that may involve one or more pillars of activities of the UN system, for example, humanitarian and development activities.

Given the complexity of the UN system, it is difficult to evaluate and report on the performance of the system as a whole. However, Member States and other stakeholders are asking for better information about how well the UN system is functioning. System-wide evaluations, particularly efficiency-oriented evaluations have been around for over 40 years,[9] but new questions related to cohesion, results and value for money of United Nations activities are emerging. Examples of such evaluations include the evaluation of South-South and Triangular Cooperation by the JIU, the Real Time Evaluations for Pakistan and Haiti managed/coordinated by OCHA, the Delivering as One Evaluability Assessments by UNEG, and the Joint South Africa-UNEG evaluation on the role and contribution of the UN system in South Africa.

It is this new context –characterized by a greater focus on results, a desire for better evaluative reporting, and a desire to provide more value for money invested- that is driving the interest in greater coherence and better evaluations. This interest has in turn led to a context in which a deeper investigation of independent system-wide evaluation (ISWE) is sought.

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[8] www.un.org/en/strengtheningtheun/results.shtml

[9] The JIU was established on an experimental basis in 1966 and formalized by statute in 1978 and empowered to provide "an independent view through inspection and evaluation aimed at improving management methods and at achieving greater coordination between organizations." United Nations Joint Inspection Unit, JIU: Statute of the Unit, Geneva, 1978, p.3.

Finding 1:   There are varying opinions and understanding of what "independent system-wide evaluation" means in the context of the United Nations. This is also true for the meaning of "organizational mechanism".

Despite the attempt made within the Terms of Reference to define key terms for this study, there remains a wide variety of opinions on the meaning and definition of these terms. The differences primarily concern the meaning of the terms 'system-wide' and 'independence'.

The Terms of Reference define 'system-wide' as "all relevant member organisations of the UN system involved in a specific area, effort, issues or sector, at country/regional/global level. It usually implies a focus on how effectively the different parts of the system work together."[10] While some view 'system-wide' to mean the entirety of the United Nations, covering the four pillars of the United Nation's work, others see it in a narrower sense, covering only the operational activities for development, that is, development and humanitarian assistance. It is in this sense that system-wide is used in GA resolution 64/289 on system-wide coherence. Others have an even narrower perspective, looking only at development activities. Another perspective of 'system-wide' is that offered by OCHA. OCHA's system-wide evaluations are not limited to the United Nations organizations involved in humanitarian efforts, but include the non-governmental sector as well. System-wide was also seen by some as an issue or theme that cuts across the UN system, for example, gender equality.

The Terms of Reference draw on the UNEG Norms for Evaluation[11] and state with regard to independence that:

> *An evaluation function has to be located independently from the other management functions so that it is free from undue influence and that unbiased and transparent reporting is ensured. It needs to have full discretion in submitting reports for consideration at the appropriate level of decision-making pertaining to the subject of the evaluation.[12]*

A number of interviewees subscribed to a view of 'independence' that focused on the structural autonomy of an evaluation unit, akin to the definition used in the Terms of Reference. Some interviewees felt that the line of accountability of the evaluation unit was an important indicator of independence and that for an evaluation unit to be independent it has to report directly to the governing body.[13] They therefore concluded that any entity that does not report directly to the governing body cannot be independent. Others highlighted the need for evaluation units to be free from undue influence and believed that being outside the direct reporting line of senior management in the UN system does not necessarily protect against undue influence.

UNEG's analysis in 2007 found that 24 percent of UN organizations have evaluation units which are located externally to operational management and other internal oversight functions, and which have a direct reporting line to the head or governing body. It further asserted that complete independence (i.e., financial and operational independence and direct line of accountability to the oversight body as in the case of evaluation units in international financial institutions) was found in fewer than 10 percent of United Nations organizations.[14]

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[10] Refer to Appendix XIII for the Terms of Reference.

[11] United Nations Evaluation Group, Norms for Evaluation in the UN System, April 2005.

[12] Ibid.

[13] The UNEG Standard states that in addition to being independent of the management function, the head of an evaluation unit should report to the governing body or head of the organization.

[14] United Nations Evaluation Group, 'Oversight and Evaluation in the UN system', UNEG/REF (2007)2.

The varying understanding of terms has implications for the demand-side of ISWE and is discussed further in Chapter 3 of the report.

The GA resolution that gave rise to this review suggested that the study explore the "establishment of an independent system-wide evaluation mechanism within the United Nations system (…) aimed at fully utilizing and strengthening the existing institutional framework and capacities."[15] Underlying this request is the notion that there is a common understanding of what is meant by an organizational mechanism. In the interviews, this was not found to be the case. Therefore, to avoid confusion, we thought it worthwhile to provide our understanding of the "organizational mechanism" concept which we used to inform our analysis. Essentially, organizational mechanisms are ways of arranging people and groups so that they work together and get things done. These mechanisms are required because all organizations have the tendency to specialize their activities and thus fragment their work. In the United Nations, more than 40 organizational units have been created, many of which have evaluation units. How can the work of all these units be coordinated? The answer is by creating organizational mechanisms.

Researchers[16] have identified a wide assortment of organizational mechanisms for coordinating work. Perhaps Henry Mintzberg's typology (1979) is the most famous. In general, it is understood that the mechanisms for organizational coordination include supervision, standardization, coordinating roles and units, communication, as well as a wide variety of ad hoc methods.

Finding 2:   Several evaluation units claim to have participated in system-wide evaluations, mostly on an ad hoc basis. Only a small number however have a substantive mandate to conduct or manage system-wide evaluations.

There is general agreement among organizations in the UN system and Member States that the *JIU* is currently the only entity that has a specific mandate to engage in **independent** system-wide evaluation. The statute that established the JIU confers on it "the broadest powers of investigation in all matters having a bearing on the efficiency of the services and proper use of funds" and states that the JIU "shall provide an independent view through inspection and evaluation aimed at improving management and methods and at achieving greater co-ordination between organizations."[17] The JIU is responsible to the General Assembly for the performance of its functions, and to the legislative organs of those specialized agencies and other international organizations within the UN system that accept the statute. However, the JIU is not held accountable, either as a group or as individuals. As of July 2011, a total of 28 organizations in the UN system have accepted the statute and are therefore subject to evaluation by the JIU. The focus of the JIU's mandate is on managerial efficiency issues, though it is not precluded from assisting intergovernmental bodies in carrying out external evaluations of programmes and activities, or from conducting ad hoc evaluations of programmes and activities.[18] The JIU is independent in the sense that its organizational location is external to the UN Secretariat, programmes and funds and specialized agencies. It determines its own programme of work and may consult various entities in the UN system in the process.

The *Inspection and Evaluation Division (IED)* of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) is mandated to assist intergovernmental bodies and programme managers in the assessment of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the UN Secretariat's programmes. While many of the IED

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[15] United Nations General Assembly, resolution 64/289, 2 July 2010.

[16] Tilly, Charles 2001 'Mechanisms in political processes'. *Annual Review of Political Science* 4: 21–41. Sawyer, R. Keith 2004 'The mechanisms of emergence'. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 34:260–282. Psillos, Stathis 2004 'A glimpse of the secret connexion: Harmonizing mechanisms with counterfactuals'. *Perspectives on Science* 12: 288–319.

[17] United Nations Joint Inspection Unit, JIU: Statute, Geneva, 1978, p 3.

[18] Ibid.

evaluations focus on a specific programme, the unit also conducts thematic evaluations that cut across the programmes and departments of the Secretariat. The OIOS exercises "operational independence under the authority of the Secretary-General in the conduct of its duties and (…) have the authority to initiate, carry out and report on any action which it considers necessary to fulfil its responsibilities with regard to monitoring, internal audit, inspection and evaluation and investigations".[19] Although transmission of OIOS reports is via the Secretary-General, the latter is not empowered to make revisions to the reports. The IED has the independence to select topics for evaluation and it operates independently from management.[20] The Division, along with the rest of OIOS is empowered to initiate, conduct and report on any action that it deems necessary in meeting its oversight responsibilities and has unrestricted access to Secretariat staff and documents. With the mandate of OIOS confined to the United Nations Secretariat, it omits the work of programmes, funds, and specialized agencies and therefore covers only a portion of the UN system.

Differing views on OIOS report on strengthening evaluation

Every two years since 1988, the OIOS has written a report on "Strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives". These reports respond to a regulation adopted by the General Assembly demanding that the Secretary-General's conclusions on all evaluation studies be summarized and submitted periodically (see Regulation 7.4 in document ST/SGB/2000/8). The report submitted in 2011 has five objectives: a) to review the current state of evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat; b) to provide a summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations of evaluation reports completed in the 2008-2009 biennium; c) to assess the quality of 2008-2009 self-evaluation reports that OIOS received from programmes; d) to examine the application of evaluation to programme design, delivery and policy directives in the United Nations Secretariat; and e) to present the evaluation work plan for OIOS for 2012-2013. Only the 31 programmes within the mandate of the OIOS are covered in the report.

While some people regard the OIOS report as an example of ISWE, others do not as they do not consider it to be 'system-wide'; these people argue that the OIOS, by virtue of its mandate, only covers the Secretariat of the United Nations. Though OIOS recognizes that its mandate covers only the UN Secretariat, it opens up the discussion about its system-wide role by highlighting past collaborations with the JIU as well as work it has conducted that has implications for the whole system.

OCHA manages and coordinates evaluations of the UN system response to humanitarian crises and these are mandated either externally by the General Assembly, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (established through resolution of the General Assembly) or the Emergency Relief Coordinator, or internally by OCHA. Evaluations managed or coordinated by OCHA may cover a particular theme or country specific performance of the humanitarian system that includes not only relevant UN entities, but also national and international non-governmental organizations such as the International Red Cross..[21] OCHA's mandate is confined to humanitarian affairs, which, according to the definition of system-wide in the Terms of Reference, constitutes a sub-system. OCHA is not an independent unit as it is located within the UN Secretariat. Moreover, some people question whether OCHA has sufficient independence to evaluate a system in which it is an actor. OCHA does however strive to ensure credibility of its evaluations through the appointment of independent external experts and meta-evaluations of its evaluations.

The UN *Department of Economic and Social Affairs* (DESA) is primarily responsible for supporting intergovernmental processes on development issues in the General Assembly and in the Economic and

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[19] See United Nations General Assembly resolution 48/218B, 29 July 1994, on the establishment of the Office of Internal Oversight.

[20] See 'Peer Review Report of the Evaluation Function of the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the United Nations', Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, 2009.

[21] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, '2009-2010 Report of the Evaluation and Guidance Section', OCHA, July 2010.

Social Council of the United Nations. DESA is responsible for preparing the Triennial/Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development. The main purpose of the QCPR is to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of United Nations' support to countries in achieving their national development goals. As the title suggests, this is a review that draws on secondary data from evaluations conducted by evaluation units in the Secretariat or in programmes, funds and specialized agencies in addition to commissioning its own analytical studies. It covers the sub-system of development and humanitarian affairs. Its mandate includes a review of processes to promote system-wide coherence in development.

Finding 3: **United Nations organizations are increasingly aware of the need to create an enabling environment for evaluation within themselves and UNEG has been playing an important role in raising this awareness.**

The enabling environment for evaluation is determined by a culture of learning and accountability, meaning the degree to which information is sought about past performance, and the extent to which there is a drive to continuously improve and to be responsible or accountable for actions taken, resources spent and results achieved. In such an environment, evaluation is understood to assist decision-makers and implementers achieve common goals efficiently and effectively. They are or should be codified in government legislation and or in an evaluation policy that expresses an organization's commitment to learning, accountability and evaluation principles. An enabling environment for evaluation is also supported or created through governance structures that demand independent evaluation.

UNEG is a voluntary professional network of evaluators that serves as a resource to evaluation professionals within the UN system. In 2011 thus far, UNEG has memberships from the evaluation units of 43 UN agencies, specialized organizations as well as units within the UN Secretariat.[22] In 2005, UNEG published norms and standards for evaluation. These norms and standards set the framework for creating an enabling environment for evaluation in the United Nations. The norms and standards deal with issues of independence, credibility and utilization of evaluations and the professional conduct of those charged with conducting or managing evaluations. As UNEG is not a legislated body, these norms and standards are voluntary, though UNEG members are expected to subscribe to them.

The General Assembly has commended the work of UNEG in developing norms and standards for evaluation and GA resolution 62/208 encourages "all United Nations organizations involved in operational activities for development that have not already done so to adopt as appropriate, monitoring and evaluation policies that are in line with system-wide norms and standards and to make the necessary financial and institutional arrangements for the creation and/or strengthening of independent, credible and useful evaluation functions within each organization." The resolution further encourages the United Nations development system "to continue efforts to strengthen evaluation across the system and to promote a culture of evaluation."[23]

In addition to its role of promoting good evaluation practices in the UN system, UNEG has managed or coordinated system-wide evaluations on an ad hoc basis. Examples include the Joint South Africa-UNEG Evaluation on the Role and Contribution of the UN system in South Africa, and the Evaluability Assessments for the country-led evaluations of Delivering as One. The lessons learned from these evaluations have been documented by the relevant UNEG Task Forces and have informed the management and approach to the independent evaluation of Delivering as One that was underway at the time of this review.

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[22] UNEG was established in 1984 as the Inter Agency Working Group on Evaluation. It became UNEG in 2003 and began to operate more formally with an annual work plan, task teams and a website to enhance knowledge sharing (www.uneg.org).

[23] United Nations General Assembly, resolution 62/208, 19 December 2007, p.18.

Finding 4:   ISWE for operational activities for development is part of a larger set of reforms to strengthen accountability and improve the impact of operations. As such it cannot be viewed in isolation from these reforms.

The United Nations, like many large organizations, has undergone a series of changes and reforms since its establishment, each marked by a particular precipitating event. The World Summit of 2005 put the need for major reforms to the UN system firmly on the agenda.[24] Globalization and its related impacts have placed new demands on the United Nations and require new and innovative ways for the United Nations system to respond.

(a) Strengthening Accountability in the United Nations System

The 2005 World Summit Outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1) requested the Secretary-General to take actions to, among other things, strengthen accountability and oversight, and improve management performance. The Secretary-General commissioned the 'Comprehensive review of governance and oversight within the United Nations and its funds, programmes and specialized agencies'. This review provided a comprehensive set of recommendations. Some were adopted, others modified and others not adopted at all. The General Assembly considered inputs from the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), the JIU, the Secretary-General and OIOS, and resolved that the Secretary-General take the necessary steps as recommended by the ACABQ to strengthen OIOS, the enterprise risk management and internal control framework, results based management, as well as the accountability framework.[25] It should be borne in mind that a number of reforms were already underway by the time the Steering Committee for the comprehensive review submitted its report to the General Assembly. Furthermore, the Secretary-General is engaged in an ongoing process of enhancing the accountability system in the United Nations Secretariat.

The reforms pertaining to accountability that are relevant to this review include:

- *Definition of accountability and roles and responsibilities*: The decision of the General Assembly on the definition of accountability represents a significant step in the United Nations' efforts to strengthen accountability. The General Assembly resolved that "Accountability is the obligation of the Secretariat and all its staff members to be answerable for all decisions made and actions taken by them, and to be responsible for honouring their commitments, without qualification or exception."[26] The resolution covered important elements of accountability, including truthful, objective, accurate and timely reporting of performance results, and the need to strengthen personal accountability as well as institutional accountability.

- *Strengthening the inspection and evaluation function of OIOS:* The strengthening of the inspection and evaluation function of OIOS is one of the substantial changes made to OIOS following GA resolution 61/245. The Inspection and Evaluation Division was formally established in 2008 and replaced the Monitoring, Evaluation and Consulting Division. Monitoring and consulting functions were transferred to the Department of Management of the United Nations Secretariat, leaving the IED to focus on conducting inspections and evaluations. Although IED is mandated to conduct investigations as well as evaluations, the latter forms the larger proportion of its work. OIOS has

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[24] United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/1 recognized, inter alia, the need for an efficient, effective and accountable Secretariat if the United Nations is to comply effectively with the principles and objectives of the Charter. The resolution also called for stronger system-wide coherence through the implementation of measures relating to policy, operational activities, humanitarian assistance and human rights.

[25] United Nations General Assembly, resolution 61/245, 22 December 2006. The General Assembly did not accept the recommendation of the Comprehensive Review that the Joint Inspection Unit be abolished.

[26] United Nations General Assembly, resolution 64/259, 29 March 2010, p 2.

expanded the staff capacity of the IED since its restructuring and the division currently has 24 professionals in its evaluation office.[27]

- *Establishment of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee:* The IAAC was established as a subsidiary body to the General Assembly to advise and support the General Assembly in its oversight role. The IAAC is also mandated to advise the General Assembly on measures for ensuring management's compliance with audit recommendations and other oversight recommendations.[28]

- *UN Management Committee*: The Management Committee has oversight responsibility for compliance with implementation of accepted recommendations of the UN Board of Auditors, OIOS and the Joint Inspection Unit. The Management Committee is responsible for ensuring that findings and recommendations are fed into the executive management processes, and for ensuring that accepted recommendations are followed up.

- *Results Based Management:* Although results based management has been in operation in the UN system for some time (including the Secretariat), a review by OIOS found that there were serious gaps in its implementation. The OIOS recommended development of a policy framework for results based management and strengthening the technical and methodological capacities within the Secretariat for effective results based management.[29]

- *Accountability Framework:* The Secretary-General reports annually on progress on enhancing accountability within the United Nations Secretariat and, as requested by GA resolution 63/276, submitted a comprehensive report on accountability, which outlined the existing system for accountability and provided recommendations for further strengthening this dimension.[30] This report sought to clarify and reinforce the reforms that were already underway, for example, in the area of results based management, and recommended the establishment of a unit in the Department of Management to support effective implementation of results based management.[31]

(b) Improving the Impact of Operations

The United Nations Development Group (UNDG), on behalf of its members, signed on as a participating organization to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in March 2005. The principles of the Paris Declaration commit participating organizations to, among other things, harmonize their efforts as donors, align their efforts with national development priorities, and strengthen national capacity so that countries can manage their own development. The principle of mutual accountability commits donors and partner countries to jointly assess mutual progress in implementing agreed commitments on aid effectiveness.[32]

Within the context of the UN development cooperation system, the implementation of the Paris Declaration requires the respective UN programmes, funds and specialized agencies to coordinate their work, and importantly to focus on their areas of comparative strength to avoid duplication (between UN entities, but

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[27] Interview with IED. UNEG Fact Sheet 2008 reported a total of 20 professional staff at the central evaluation office.

[28] United Nations, 'Towards an accountability system in the United Nations Secretariat: Report of the Secretary-General', A/64/640, 29 January 2010, p.10.

[29] United Nations General Assembly, 'Review of results-based management at the United Nations: Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services', A/63/268, 22 September 2008.

[30] United Nations, 'Towards an accountability system in the United Nations Secretariat: Report of the Secretary-General', A/64/640, 29 January 2010.

[31] Ibid., p.20.

[32] 'Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness', High Level Forum, Paris, February 28 to March 2, 2005.

also with other donors). The UNDG commissioned a first phase evaluation of its contribution to the implementation of the Paris Declaration. This was conducted as an independent joint evaluation with the agreement and involvement of partner countries and donors. The evaluation, which was completed in 2008, made 10 recommendations to address the gaps and variable progress made by UNDG in implementing the Paris Declaration. For purposes of the ISWE review, a pertinent recommendation made was that UNDG encourage "governments of partner countries to initiate and conduct joint and country-led evaluations that assess the contribution of the United Nations development system to national development plans and strategies, and to systematize and disseminate lessons learned from these exercises as mechanisms of mutual accountability."[33]

The Secretary-General's "High Level Panel Report on UN System-wide Coherence" is a significant, though contested input, to the reform agenda of the United Nations. The report argued for a coherent and strong multilateral framework in which the United Nations occupies a central role to meet the challenges of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment in the context of globalization.[34] The central message from the High Level Panel was the need for the United Nations to **deliver as one** in these three areas and to have a **greater impact** at the country, regional and global levels. The report recommended a comprehensive set of reforms of the UN system at country level and at headquarters, accelerating or deepening reforms that were already underway, and introducing new reforms. On the humanitarian and environmental fronts, there was a series of reform proposals to strengthen capacity in these areas and to overcome fragmentation within the UN system and between the UN system and its external partners, including national governments.

The impact of operational activities for development is felt most acutely at the country level and the United Nations' reform agenda for several years has sought to improve impact at this level. Better coordination at country level through initiatives such as the Resident Coordinator System and the introduction of the UNDAF has been a key message of General Assembly resolutions on past Triennial Comprehensive Policy Reviews. The High Level Panel called for the United Nations entities to deliver as one at the country level –one leader, one budgetary framework and one office. The recommendations of the High Level Panel have been the subject of robust debate among Member States and within the UN system. The "Delivering as One" (DaO) approach has been adopted on a voluntary basis by eight pilot countries. Its outcome will provide an important input into the larger questions about the efficacy of moving toward a coherent UN system.

(c) System-Wide Coherence on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women

The establishment of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (referred to as UN Women) represents an important milestone in the United Nations' reform agenda for system-wide coherence. UN Women, created through the consolidation of several entities responsible for some aspect of gender equality, became operational in January 2011. UN Women functions are:

- to support inter-governmental processes on gender equality and women's empowerment;

- to support national efforts to promote and enhance gender equality and women's empowerment through country-driven programming working with the entire United Nations country team; and

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[33] United Nations Development Group, 'Joint Evaluation of the UNDG Contribution to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness', UNDP, New York, 2008.

[34] United Nations, 'Delivering as One: Report of the Secretary-General's High Level Panel', United Nations, New York, November 2006.

- to promote UN system coordination and accountability on gender equality.[35]

It is envisaged that the establishment of a single entity to deal with issues of gender equality and women's empowerment system-wide will bring about effective coordination and coherence, and improve the impact of operational activities in the UN system.

> *In the specific case of UN Women, there is a simple, and I believe undeniable, proposition that arises from the principle of Delivering as One. We were established in the belief that if the entire UN system delivers as one in support of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, the world will, for example, be more likely to achieve the MDGs and other international targets and goals, and everyone will benefit. Surely there could be few things more obvious or straightforward than that?*[36]

It should be noted that while various agencies, programmes and funds do consider gender equality as a dimension to be evaluated, this is done on a voluntary basis. Furthermore, there is no framework for integrating gender equality into system-wide evaluations. Given its role to promote UN system coordination and accountability on gender equality, UN Women can be expected to actively promote the integration of gender equality into system-wide evaluation.

Finding 5:   Over the past five years, it has been difficult to reach consensus on institutional and organizational approaches to ISWE.

GA resolution 64/289, which mandated the current review, is not the first attempt at resolving the issue of ISWE in the UN system. It is preceded by several unsuccessful attempts at conceptualising a framework for ISWE that could satisfy the demands and interests of the different stakeholders in the United Nations.

As far back as March 2007, the Chief Executives Board (CEB) requested UNEG to develop a detailed proposal on the potential scope, governance and funding of a system-wide evaluation unit, in cooperation with the CEB secretariat. UNEG proposed a system comprising of a new independent unit, the evaluation units of the respective organizations of the UN system, and UNEG, which was to serve as a professional network. Further development of this proposal did not progress the matter. A proposal that the unit should report to the CEB was not favoured on the grounds that it would compromise the unit's independence. An alternative proposal that UNEG become the new unit was also rejected as UNEG is a professional network.[37] UNEG has managed system-wide evaluation on an ad hoc basis. These include the Delivery as One Evaluability Assessments and the Joint South Africa-UNEG evaluation. While UNEG was willing to undertake these evaluations on an ad hoc basis, it is not a legislated body of the United Nations, nor does it have its own resources to do system-wide evaluations.

In 2009, GA resolution 63/311 on system-wide coherence requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the CEB, to propose modalities for the establishment of an independent system-wide evaluation mechanism to assess system-wide efficiency, effectiveness and performance, taking into consideration the evaluation functions of the respective UN organizations, the JIU and UNEG. The CEB invited UNEG to give its professional perspective on the matter. The CEB prepared an initial draft in December 2009 and a second draft in April 2010, presenting three options, namely:

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[35] The new entity consolidated the mandates and functions of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. UN Women was established by GA resolution 64/289 on July 2, 2010.

[36] Remarks of Michelle Bachelet, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women at the Plenary Session on "Sustainability of Delivering as One in the framework of a new modality for international cooperation for development". Montevideo, Uruguay, 8 November 2011.

[37] Background information gathered from the Terms of Reference and interviews with UNEG and the CEB secretariat.

1) Reviewing the mandate, operations, approach and resources of the JIU to ensure that it has the necessary senior professional evaluation capacity and carries out its work in line with norms and standards;

2) Establishing a small unit to conduct system-wide evaluations and with a reporting line independent of UN system organizations; and

3) Establishing ad hoc evaluation management groups of professional evaluators that could conduct system-wide evaluations as the need arises.[38]

The CEB proposals were the subject of intense debate among UNEG members and Member States. A concern voiced by a number of those we interviewed was that the CEB paper focused on the establishment of a **unit** and did not adequately respond to the GA resolution's call for a system-wide **approach.** Other shortcomings raised by critics of the CEB paper was that the establishment of a new unit would add pressure on already constrained budgets and that it was premature to establish a unit without a clearly established demand for system-wide evaluation. The JIU raised concerns about the potential duplication of its work by the proposed unit. It was firmly of the view that strengthening existing evaluation units, including its own, would be a better alternative.[39]

Though the JIU is acknowledged as the only unit with a specific mandate for system-wide evaluation, its attempts at reform have not been supported universally. Following a review of its statute and methods in 2003, the JIU presented proposals for reforms to the General Assembly, some of which required changes to the JIU statute. No decisions were taken on those reforms that required amendment to the JIU's statute.[40] The JIU has continued work on those reforms that are within its power and resources to implement. Meanwhile, the 'Comprehensive review of governance and oversight within the United Nations and its funds, programmes and specialized agencies' in 2006 made wide-ranging recommendations to strengthen governance and accountability in the United Nations, including the strengthening of evaluation. The report included a recommendation that the oversight mandate of the JIU be discontinued as there would be no need for it if other bodies were strengthened and performed their functions effectively.[41] Following deliberations by the ACABQ who noted the ongoing reforms to the JIU and a comprehensive response from the JIU, the General Assembly did not endorse the recommendation to abolish the JIU.[42]

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[38] CEB Secretariat, 'Issues note on the Establishment of an Independent System-wide Evaluation Mechanism', New York, 3 May 2010.

[39] Joint Inspection Unit, 'Proposed Modalities for the Establishment of an Independent System-wide Evaluation Mechanism: Comments by the Joint Inspection Unit', Informal Conference Paper, Geneva, 29 April 2010.

[40] United Nations General Assembly, 'Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the in-depth review of its statute and working methods', A/58/343/Add1, 18 November 2003.

[41] 'Report of the Independent Steering Committee for the Comprehensive Review of Governance and Oversight in the United Nations', p.9, transmitted by the Report of the Secretary General A/60/883 Addendum 2, 28 August 2006.

[42] United Nations General Assembly, resolution 61/245, 22 December 2006.

3. Demand for Independent System-Wide Evaluation

Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of an organization or system is a major task of those who manage and those who govern the organization or system. Evaluations are tools that are used by organizational stakeholders to obtain information (evidence) about what is working well and what is not. Managers and those who govern make requests for information (a major source of demand) and evaluation units negotiate what it is possible for them to do. For both those who request and those who engage in evaluation, the credibility of the work is important, as too is the need for it to address the issues that are most important and useful.

There is always a need for better information and evidence to help stakeholders carry out their designated tasks. This is constrained, however, by the limitation of available resources. Historically, the formal demand for ISWE in the United Nations has focused on administrative efficiency in common activities across agencies, such as travel, purchasing and human resources. More recently, however, there have been new demands in the UN system for closer scrutiny of and accountability for targeted services being provided across agencies. Questions have also arisen on the effectiveness of gender equality mainstreaming, the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations' work in-country or as a whole (Delivering as One, TCPR), the effectiveness and efficiency of decentralization, and the United Nations' coordination capacity during country disasters (Tsunami evaluation). Similarly, there has been increased interest in the changes made by the UN system to adapt to the Paris Declaration, as well as to other international agreements. These topics are the areas of demand that we have explored in the current analysis.

Demand is not static. As the United Nations produces more system-wide evaluations that are credible and useful, organizational stakeholders, including managers, will be willing to make financial trade-offs for more evaluations of this type. Indeed, supplier-induced demand is quite common, given that demand is responsive to evidence that products actually work. Furthermore, the system itself is informed by stakeholders' perceptions of their specific "needs". OCHA, the JIU and OIOS, along with other United Nations agencies, annually assess the needs and interests of their stakeholders for diverse evaluations, including joint and system-wide evaluations. It should be noted though that only DESA and the JIU have evaluation mandates that are broader than those of development agencies.[43] In addition, while only the JIU and DESA[44] claim to have developed system-wide mandates, OCHA's mandate extends throughout the humanitarian sector and includes the not-for-profit sector. These different mandates and targets for possible evaluations complicate the analysis of demand. Another complication highlighted in Chapter 2 is that there is no consensus among stakeholders on the definitions of ISWE terms.

Finding 6: **The demand for independent system-wide evaluation for development and humanitarian work is in part a function of the definition of key terms. In general, interviewees view demand differently depending on their interpretation of these terms.**

The TOR for this study provided definitions of the terms system-wide, evaluation, independence, and development services for use as a guide (see Appendix II). However, we were also asked to explore stakeholder interpretation of these terms. In Finding 1, we observed that stakeholders provided multiple definitions for these terms. The issue raised here is how these wide-ranging definitions affect the demand

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[43] Please refer to JIU's 1978 Statute and to the original UN General Assembly resolution on DESA's comprehensive policy review of operational activities (resolution 33/201) which uses evaluative language.

[44] Note from Nikhil Seth to Adnan Z. Amin, April 2010.

for ISWE. We discuss demand in relation to different interpretations of independence, system-wide and development services.

In reviewing the different responses given by stakeholders with regard to the meaning of "evaluation independence", one concludes that independence is a variable that moves along a continuum. The variation from high to low independence is related to at least three factors: (i) structural independence, (ii) behavioural independence, and (iii) the appearance of independence. In our interviews, different stakeholders placed differing importance on each of these factors. Which factors these interviewees identified as most important determined their willingness to support different evaluations. For example, one interviewee called into question whether DESA was independent enough to conduct the QCPR review and thus suggested alternatives for who should conduct this review. Another interviewee suggested that because of the selection process of inspectors in the JIU they did not perceive this unit as independent. A third interviewee argued that no external consultants could be independent if they obtain their pay from the United Nations. In each instance, the interviewees' definition of independence affected how they saw the demand for ISWE.

The term system-wide affects demand as well. Our first interview with OCHA staff involved a discussion about how their system includes non-governmental organizations (NGOs). To them, system-wide meant engaging in evaluations that include all key stakeholders involved in humanitarian efforts –even beyond the United Nations. Other interviewees suggested that system-wide in the United Nations could not and should not be limited to development activities; such a perspective significantly increases the potential demand for evaluations. Still other interviewees indicated that there was no agreement on what the United Nations system entails and that members were not supportive of thinking in system terms. One interviewee's reasoning was that since Member States are still unclear about their conception of "the system", it is premature to engage in activities that are "anything but ad hoc".

As highlighted in the previous paragraph, interviewees varied on whether or not the review should be limited to "development" activities. In general, the majority of interviewees suggested that if the United Nations needed better mechanisms to engage in system-wide evaluations, the mechanisms should truly be system-wide and not limited to a sub-system (development activities). They thus saw the demand for ISWE varying according to the degree to which such evaluations incorporate all United Nations activities.

Our analysis of key terms indicates that different understandings of terminology influence the demand for ISWE. Sometimes, interviewees talked about system-wide evaluations when they were really addressing evaluations of subsystems.[45] Other times, they argued that individuals or groups conducting system-wide evaluations were not independent. These examples demonstrate that different expectations and requirements (i.e., criteria) lead people to assign different definitions to the same concepts. In turn, differently defined concepts lead to different results with regard to ISWE demand. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that flexibility in a definition may be useful in a system such as the United Nations where entities differ substantially and where a one-size-fits-all approach may not work. Unfortunately, such flexibility, which comes at the expense of an agreement on a common definition, is harder to organize and manage.

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[45] A good example of this comes from our first meeting of the Reference Group, during which one of the members referred to OCHA's evaluations as system-wide, invoking the humanitarian system. Further discussion led members to add the precision that OCHA deals with the humanitarian system but that this is a sub-system of the United Nations.

Finding 7: The demand for ISWE is generally discussed in relationship to four types of evaluations: country-focused, strategy/policy-focused, theme-focused, and management/administrative-focused.

In discussing ISWE with members and staff of the United Nations, there was no shortage of opinions regarding its necessity and its content. Certainly, interviewees articulated a need for ISWE work in the United Nations. However, based on information from the interviews, on the range of system-wide studies that have been completed, and on our own perspective, it appears that demand for ISWE should not be lumped into a single category, as there are different types of ISWE that exist. Demand for ISWE can be broken down into four categories.

1) The first category, which was by far the most discussed during the interviews, concerns the evaluation of the United Nations' work within a country. The needs here differ from country to country. Also, the independent evaluation mechanisms required can differ from country to country. However, most interviewees suggested that independent mechanisms are vital to assess the United Nations' work in countries.[46]

2) The second area of demand relates to the evaluation of the management/administrative systems used by the United Nations. Historically, this has been the most visible of the ISWE work and has its institutional home in the JIU.[47]

3) The third category concerns the demand for independent evaluation of the policies and strategies of the United Nations as an organization. An example proposed by some for this type of evaluation is the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review, which "reviews the UN system policies and mechanisms that enable its operational activities to play their assigned role, and assesses how the system at the country level is positioned."[48] There is some controversy as to whether this review can truly be considered an evaluation, as opposed to a descriptive report that builds on evaluative evidence.

4) A fourth category of demand is suggested in a wide assortment of themes that cut across the system. These include system-wide reviews of issues such as maternal health, AIDS, and gender equality, as well as system concerns related to decentralization and to the transition from security to development or from disaster relief to development. When these types of evaluations are undertaken they are often called reviews and like other ISWE work are managed in an ad hoc fashion.

For each of the four types of ISWE, evaluations can be further classified according to whether their focus is primarily strategic or operational. A strategic evaluation focuses on the relevance and coherence of the high-level plans guiding the system. In contrast, an operational evaluation looks at how well programmes, services and approaches are implemented and delivered. It should be stated that these are not strict categories and that the line between them can be blurred. Their main use is to serve an illustrative purpose: strategic evaluations tend to find their key audience in those who govern the system, while operational evaluations tend to find their principal audience in senior managers.

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[46] Interviewees were sceptical of the quality and independence of UNDAF evaluations. It should be noted that UNDAF's do not capture the totality of the UN system's work at country level and until January 2010, UNDAF evaluations were not mandatory

[47] JIU's mandate has a broader focus than just evaluation of management/administrative systems. However, in reviewing JIU documents, this area was found to be a consistent topic of concern and a central theme in the unit's history and mandate.

[48] United Nations Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/tcpr.htm, consulted 15 October 2011.

Exhibit 3.1 below demonstrates how certain system-wide evaluations valued by interviewees fit into the classification scheme proposed. The table highlights that demand for ISWE can be broken down into many categories and that there are multiple organizations involved in conducting system-wide assessments. Again, the point is that there are not one but many types of ISWE, which serve different purposes and which require different types of expertise and methodologies. It may not be feasible for one single unit to tackle the range of demand for ISWE services in the UN system.

Exhibit 3.1   Examples of ISWE Demand

Demand	Strategic Evaluation	Operational Evaluation
Country focus	Joint South Africa-UNEG Evaluation (UNEG)	DaO country evaluations (country-managed)
Strategy and policy focus	QCPR/TCPR (DESA)	DaO independent evaluation (DESA)
Thematic focus	Cluster Approach evaluation (OCHA) Mine Action (JIU)	Real-time evaluations (OCHA) Haiti, Tsunami (OCHA)
Managerial focus	South-South and Triangular Cooperation (JIU)	Review of travel arrangements in UN system (JIU)

Source: UN ISWE reports

The table also shows the wide assortment of supply required to meet this demand. The evaluators involved in these evaluations come from a wide assortment of units and include internal and external evaluators. In some cases the evaluations were carried out by UN staff, while in other cases, the UN staff managed a team of evaluators.

One final point should be discussed within this finding. Several interviewees indicated to us that key system-wide issues related to the values espoused by the United Nations or the policies supported by the United Nations should be subject to system-wide evaluation. Gender equality was the value and policy most frequently mentioned in these discussions. The questions raised were:

> *How well is gender equality incorporated into UN policies, programmes and practices? Are UN policies, programmes and practices contributing to gender equality and thereby contributing to results?*

We conclude that the demand is quite varied and diverse, and that based on the United Nations' past experiences the supply is equally diverse.

Finding 8:   There is relatively little systematic data available to assess the actual demand for ISWE except for needs assessment data collected by the JIU. Despite the paucity of data, there are reasons to suggest the demand for ISWE is growing.

A key player in conducting ISWE and in tracking demand for ISWE is the JIU. Over the past decade the demand for the JIU's system-wide evaluations has increased. This conclusion is reached by observing the data collected by the JIU through its needs assessment survey. Exhibit 3.2 presents a graph on changes in the overall number of proposals submitted to the JIU in its needs assessment survey for the 2002-2012 period. Though the trend is erratic, the demand for JIU work by UN organizations and oversight bodies (i.e., the external proposals) seems to be augmenting.[49]

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[49] It should be noted however that there has been relatively little change on the supply side during this period: there has been no change in the number of JIU inspectors who provide reports.

Exhibit 3.2   Changes in the overall number of proposals made to JIU for evaluation topics

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
External proposals	10	11	17	18	12	3	36	60	38	17	40
Internal proposals	4	5	3	15	21	21	10	11	3	3	5
Total proposals	14	16	20	33	33	24	46	71	41	20	45
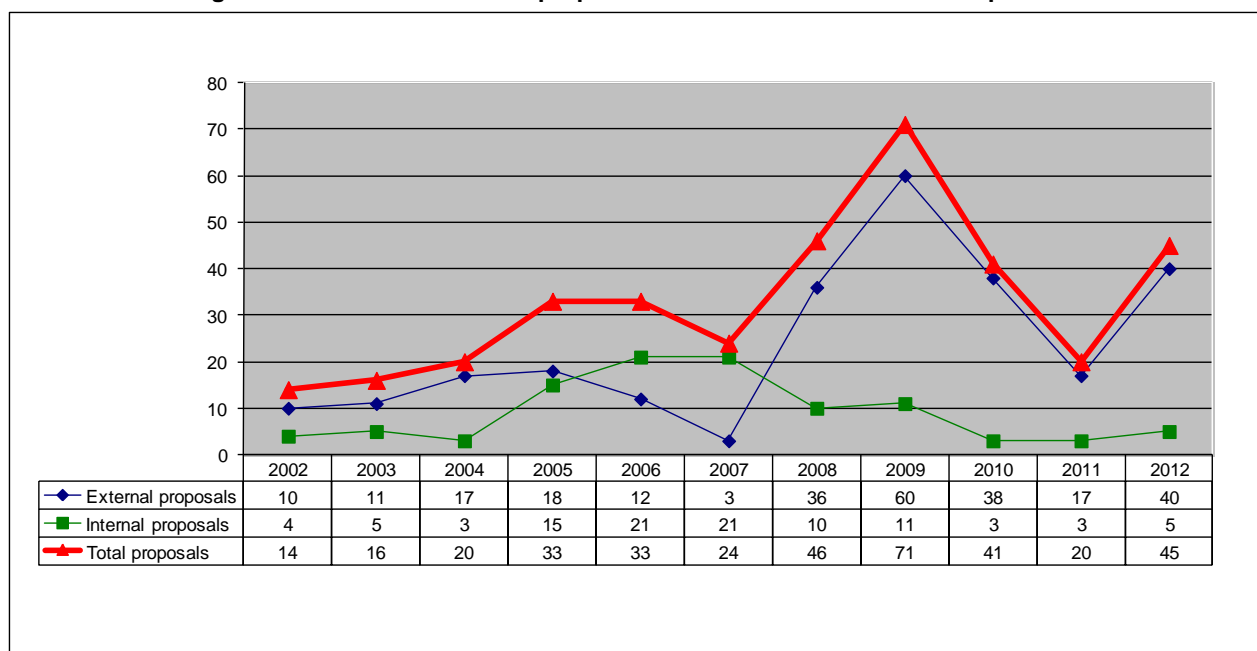
Source: JIU Correspondence

An analysis performed by the JIU on the need for its evaluation services in 2010 indicates that about 80 % of the demand pertained to system-wide issues. Most of these are managerial or administrative in nature. Not only is this demand considerable but it appears to be growing: a similar analysis which we performed on the proposals submitted to the JIU for its 2012 Programme of Work suggests demand for system-wide issues is increasing.

To determine the recent trend in the demand for system-wide evaluations, we also conducted a content analysis of the reports produced by the JIU over the 2007-2011 period.[50] In general, the review of JIU report titles suggests that the JIU's demand continues to focus on evaluating administrative practices in the United Nations (see Exhibit 3.3). Over the course of 2007 to 2011, this topic has represented on average nearly 70% of all system-wide evaluations produced by the JIU. In 2010, this figure reached 85% and in 2011, 77%. The demand for management/administrative studies at the system level has been reinforced by the United Nations 2007 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review, which identified a series of management issues such as business practices and human resources as requiring more harmonized approaches. Reviews on these topics are present in the demand for services and are the choice work of the JIU.

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[50] In the absence of direct data, the reports produced by the JIU serve as a proxy for demand.

Exhibit 3.3   Focus of the system-wide evaluations completed by JIU over the 2007-2011 period

Focus	Number of system-wide evaluations					
	2007	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**	**Total**
Country	-	1	-	-	-	1
Strategy and policy	-	-	1	2	-	3
Thematic	2	1	1	-	2	6
Managerial	5	3	1	6	7	22
Total	7	5	3	8	9	32

Source: JIU reports 2007-2011

In line with the previous data, the interviews indicate that the efficiency of administrative practices within the UN system remains a key area of concern for both internal and external evaluation stakeholders: both donors and managers are keen on improving efficiency. Over the past couple of years, however, new demands for system-wide evaluations have emerged and have not been taken up by the JIU. Member States and managers interviewed suggested there was a growing need to explore the results (outcomes and impacts) of the various United Nations programmes that involve the system at a country level, and to assess the system on global thematic objectives such as gender equality mainstreaming, human rights, etc. A survey conducted with 22 evaluation units revealed that evaluation managers also perceive a need for system-wide evaluations beyond management issues (see Exhibit 3.4). While the survey data suggest a continued need for the evaluation of administrative practices (e.g., harmonization, coordination and human resources), issues such as results, impacts, Delivery as One and thematic evaluations were also identified as needing to be addressed through a system-wide evaluation mechanism.

Exhibit 3.4   Important issues needing to be addressed by a system-wide evaluation mechanism according to 22 UN evaluation units

Source: ODSG Survey

OIOS is another unit in the United Nations that has a multi-organization mandate that is limited to evaluating the departments and offices within the UN Secretariat. We looked at their 'system-wide' work within the UN Secretariat (as opposed to their work that focuses on single organizations) over the last five years (Exhibit 3.5). In general we found a spread of activity across two of the four areas of demand for system-wide evaluation (i.e., thematic and strategy/policy).
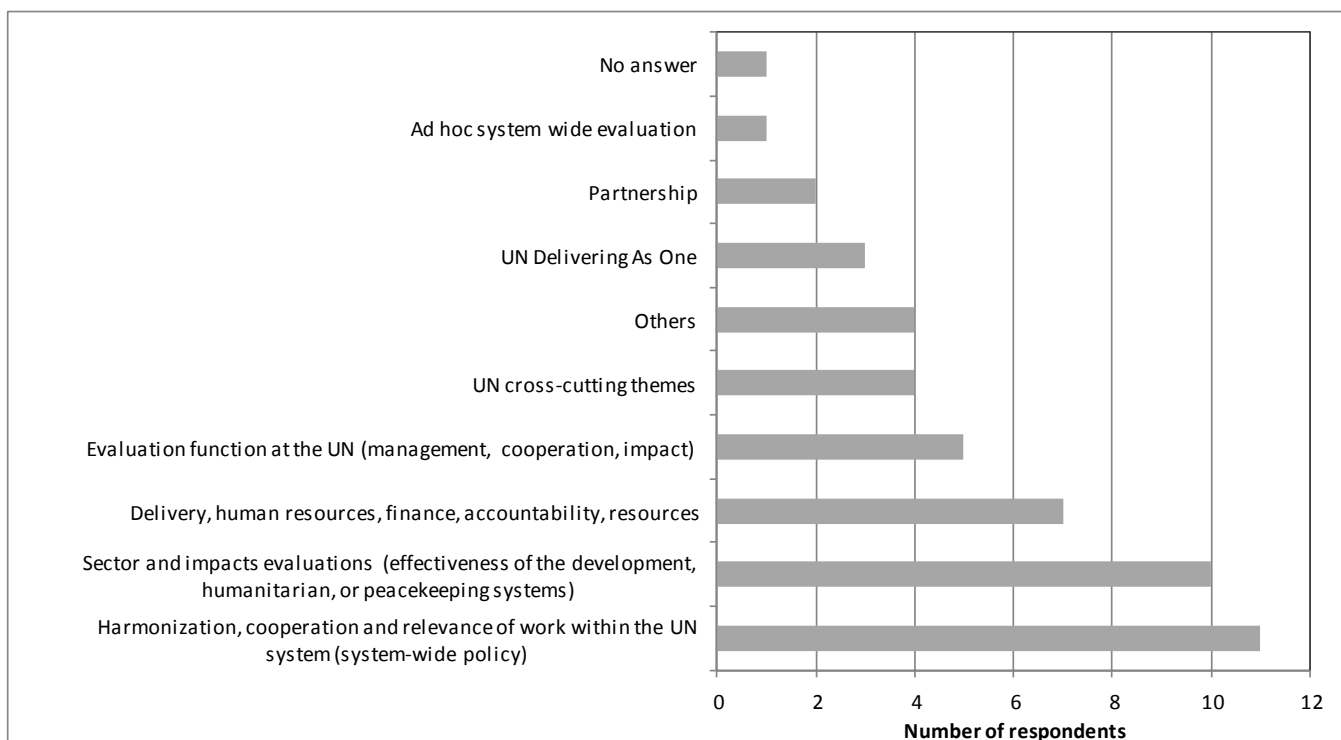
Exhibit 3.5   Focus of the system-wide Secretariat evaluations completed by OIOS over the 2007-2011 period

Focus	Number of system-wide evaluations					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
Country	-	-	-	-	-	-
Strategy and policy	-	1	2	-	2	5
Thematic	-	2	1	1	1	5
Managerial	-	1	-	-	-	1
Total	-	4	3	1	3	11

Source: OIOS reports 2007-2011

Finding 9:   Country-focused evaluations present significant operational and strategic evaluation challenges for the United Nations and for those engaged in ISWE. The demand for this work will grow –from both countries who want better service from the United Nations and donors who want improved use of their financial contributions.

For the past 5 or 6 years, the United Nations has engaged in a variety of country-focused and UNDAF evaluations. In the case of South Africa, the demand for a country-focused, independent, system-wide

evaluation started with an interest to improve the functioning of the United Nations within the country. This interest led to the realization that the South African government's concern was with the UN system operating in its country, whereas the initial United Nations' concern was only with some system components. The Government of South Africa wanted a system-wide evaluation to address the whole system of the United Nations, namely development, humanitarian, environment, as well as peace and security. Other middle-income countries will slowly seek similar assessments, so long as benefits can be derived.

On the other hand, programming countries face system reviews of UNDAFs. These reviews will also increase as attention continues to focus on programming country results. In fact, evaluation of UNDAFs has been made mandatory (January 2010).[51] As indicated by Member State interviewees, countries want to know the contribution being made by the United Nations and its agencies to their national development. This preoccupation is increasingly being recognized by UN staff, as highlighted by a senior UN official:

> *The recent DFID review of multilateral organizations as well as the MOPAN is pushing us to provide better evidence of our work. We need to have good evaluations of the results we are providing at the country level.*

Interviewees suggest that country-focused evaluations are one of the most important new system-wide evaluation activities in the United Nations. They are seen as an important new demand because they focus on many strategic and operational issues and represent an opportunity for improved efficiency, coordination and learning across UN agencies at the country level. From an operational perspective, they can potentially review (depending on the Terms of Reference) system level coordination, management practices and transaction costs. Similarly, they can look at country issues related to harmonization, cooperation, coordination and so forth. Strategically, they can explore issues on UN funding and the extent to which the UN system contributes to the country's development agenda. However, country-focused evaluations do pose certain challenges. In particular, they require the harmonization of systems that allow for aggregation of data and strategies across all UN agencies.

While interviewees suggest that country-focused evaluations are an area of growth for ISWE, they also posit a note of caution. Though they see demand increasing, they see it as episodic rather than continuous.

Finding 10: OCHA's evaluation unit is attempting to fulfil the demand for both operational and strategic ISWE. It sees itself as an independent system-wide evaluation mechanism for the humanitarian sector, a sub-system of the United Nations.

The goal of evaluation for OCHA is seen as enhanced impact and effectiveness for itself and the international humanitarian community as a whole. There are two basic types of evaluation undertaken by OCHA at the corporate level. The first concerns internally-mandated evaluations. Undertaken at the request of the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), these focus on internal performance issues and contribute to the improved management of OCHA.[52] The second concerns externally-mandated evaluations. These are commissioned by bodies external to OCHA such as the UN General Assembly or the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and are managed by OCHA's central evaluation function. They are often of an interagency nature and focus on policy and performance issues related to the humanitarian system as a whole.

OCHA reports that demand exceeds its ability to supply evaluations and that over the past four years it has conducted almost 30 evaluations, more than half of which are interagency evaluations. Exhibit 3.6 demonstrates that these interagency evaluations have delved into country, strategy and thematic issues, as

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[51] UNDOCO (January 2010), 'How to Prepare an UNDAF - Guidelines for UN Country Teams', UNDOCO, New York. Available at: http://www.undg.org/docs/11096/How-to-Prepare-an-UNDAF-(Part-I).pdf

[52] Management comprises all aspects of service delivery, including programmatic and administrative activity.

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opposed to managerial. These evaluations have been both of a strategic and operational nature. Interviews with OCHA suggest that the demand for interagency evaluations that are system-wide remains strong.

Exhibit 3.6   Focus of the interagency evaluations completed by OCHA over the 2007-2011 period

Focus	Strategic evaluation	Operational evaluation	Total
Country	-	9	9
Strategy and policy	3	1	4
Thematic	1	1	2
Managerial	-	-	-
Total	4	11	15

Source: OCHA reports 2007-2011

OCHA's role in interagency evaluations in the humanitarian sub-sector has principally been to manage and coordinate. There is no such equivalent in the development sub-sector and the lessons this organization has learnt in its coordinating capacity might be helpful for the UN system.

Finding 11: The value for money in engaging in ISWE is a concern of both managers and donors. At the system level, little analysis of the costs of ISWE is made before engaging in these evaluations, nor has there been a review of the benefits of these studies. This lack of information also affects demand.

The term "system-wide" implies multiple UN agencies and multiple governing structures. In an interview with a senior UN official, an issue was raised that warrants some thought: "Who are the UN actors who "own" ISWE work? To what extent are those who articulate the need for ISWE (commissioners) willing to take the responsibility for the results of the work?" The official pursued: "ISWE touches the work of many agencies. However, it is often unclear to me who and where the authority rests for ISWE work. Similarly, we know the "system" pays for these studies but who is really responsible for obtaining value for money?" The point being made is that it is unclear who, other than the people conducting the evaluation, are responsible for ensuring the value for money of this activity. The interviewee went on to say that their government was reluctant to invest in ISWE when they are unsure of the benefits of the investment. As such, their demand for this activity has been considerably reduced.

It is unclear to us how many ISWE activities link with UN decision-making at either the managerial or governance level. While the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Chief Executives Board (CEB) engage in needs assessment activities, it is unclear in many instances who (an organizational or governance unit) is ultimately accountable for the authorization (making value for money tradeoffs) or the utilization (making recommendation implementation tradeoffs) of ISWEs.[53] Interviewees tell us that demand is generated from these three bodies as a whole, without any sub unit of these bodies independently providing advice on whether the ISWE provides value for money. As a result, the real clients of system-wide evaluations are ambiguous. We experienced this ambiguity in our own study. When we asked who were our clients, the response we were given was the General Assembly. We wonder whether a group of over 190 delegates can really be a client.. Interviewees suggest that organizations do not feel strongly committed to many ISWE evaluations, as there are not many interactions or participatory work with the evaluators during the evaluation process. They suggest there is some passing interest but not a real ownership. A danger of there being no buy-in at the start, is there being no buy-in at the end. For example, the chair of the JIU has recently voiced a concern:

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[53] It is much clearer for OCHA.

> *(…) an increasing number of legislative organs do not fully table, consider and discuss Joint Inspection Unit reports, and thus fail to act upon recommendations addressed to them. In particular, at the United Nations, including the General Assembly its main Committees, and the Economic and Social Council, few reports have been acted upon and the majority of them are merely taken note of, which contradicts the reiterated calls for establishing an effective follow-up system. The situation is not much better in some of the participating organizations, where only a brief time slot is allocated on the agenda for the discussion of several reports, which does not allow for any in-depth discussion or decision-making.*[54]

Low utilization rates undermine the value of evaluations, making their value for money go down.[55] Consequently, those who invest in these evaluations (the donors) are concerned that they are not worthwhile. For an evaluation to be cost-effective, it is not only necessary for the resources (e.g., time, money, etc.) that go into it to be reasonable, but for the evaluative product to benefit end users also. Hence, requests for ISWE need to be linked to an accountability system before major investments are made.

Despite the general trend observed, OCHA reports that they have some good examples of ISWE use and that usage is therefore not always consistently bad.

Finding 12: Demand is associated with the expected value of ISWE.

System-wide evaluations are resource intensive, as reported by the JIU: "The JIU programme of work for 2010 fully complied with the required focus on system-wide issues, with eight system-wide topics out of 10 projects, the strongest proportion ever decided, implying a much more demanding programme in terms of resources."[56] As highlighted in the previous finding, if people don't take on the responsibility to use these studies, they become expensive. Laments are made with regard to JIU reports that many of the recommendations are not being used –and not without reason. Between 2008 and 2010, less than 60% of JIU reports and notes regarding system-wide issues were given due consideration by participating organizations, with the rate of implementation of accepted recommendations reaching at 53% (the median rate for the 2006-2010 period is 50%).[57] These statistics suggest that the expected value of SWEs completed by the JIU is not high amongst concerned UN entities. However, the reasons for this are not being considered or differentiated by many in the UN system. It could be that: i) there is a lack of political will or available time to specifically discuss and agree to recommendations; ii) achieving universal agreement on an issue is lengthy; iii) there is a lack of ownership of JIU reports and recommendations; iv) some reports are poorly timed; v) the evaluative process is not adequate (i.e., there is no authorizing system); vi) some reports are not useful (e.g., recommendations are not time-bound and specific enough); and or vii) there is no process to support use.

Finding 13: ISWE is handled ad hoc as opposed to strategically.

In exploring demand in its entirety, we recognized that perhaps the biggest drawback in the system is the lack of systemic thinking, innovation and learning to inform engagement in SWE work. What is the UN context within which ISWE occurring? What are the UN system objectives and strategy for ISWE? How should ISWE be organized in the United Nations? Should it be organized? What have we learned about the questions that are important to ask? What have we learned about setting up governance structures that can

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[54] Joint Inspection Unit, 'Report of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2010 and programme of work for 2011', p.viii.

[55] It should be noted that the level of use is equally low in other evaluations that are not system wide, as reported in the annual reports of most UN organizations to their governing bodies.

[56] Ibid., p.vii.

[57] Joint Inspection Unit, 'Draft Report of the Joint Inspection Unit for 2011 and programme of work for 2012', January 2012, p.12 and Annex III.

implement findings and guide ISWE work? What have we learned about doing horizontal programme evaluation, when concepts are not used in standard ways or data sets are asymmetrical and thus cannot be aggregated nor mathematically manipulated?

Essentially, although the UN system has conducted many SWEs and has debated the institutional structure for ISWE, it is unclear to us what the system's strategic interests in ISWE are besides that of becoming a more efficient organization. Our perspective after reading the mandate and articles written about the JIU is that its original mandate was to help the UN system become more efficient. It continues to carry out this mandate. However, times have changed since the 1960s and 70s, and the strategic interests that dominated that time are not the ones that dominate today. From our analysis of demand, the interests of members are much more diverse, complex and results-focused. The demand question raised in the Terms of Reference can more broadly be asked as "demand for what purpose?" As of today, understanding and responding to demand is done in the absence of a strategy. This further complicates the task of trying to understand system-wide demand. This finding was corroborated by the following observation made by an interviewee to the evaluation team:

> *In the same way that there are new types of content demands (results, themes), there is an equal need for the transference of learnings, and for the improvement of ISWE methodologies and processes (governance, operational). All of this needs to be put within a strategic context.*

4. Institutional Framework for ISWE

As understood by Nobel Laureate Douglas North, an institution is a system of formal laws, regulations, rules and procedures, as well as informal conventions, customs, and norms that broaden, mold, and restrain socio-economic activity and behaviour. In a sense, it is a "collective intentionality" (Searle 2005). Over the past 50 years, the field of evaluation has developed a set of generally accepted rules, norms, conventions and customs, which define the types of actions that are considered "evaluative" and which translate into structures and mechanisms that frame the evaluation institution. Unlike audit, evaluation rules are not generally sanctioned by an accreditation system or governing body. Thus, the institution of evaluation is less formal, though this is changing.

While this report is not an evaluation of the institution of evaluation in the United Nations, the Terms of Reference suggest that we describe the current institutional framework for ISWE in this system. Indeed, it is important to understand the rules that guide ISWE as well as the units which were intentionally constructed to engage in this activity. Hence, we will look at the criteria used to assess the institution of evaluation, and from these criteria try to better understand the formal and informal rules that are being put in place for ISWE. Similarly, the organizational functions that support ISWE need to be reviewed. This will generate a better understanding and appreciation of the institutional framework of ISWE.

Finding 14: While the evaluation function within the UN system is reasonably understood, this is not the case for ISWE.

Over the past 30 or 40 years, the function of evaluation within organizations in the United Nations has become increasingly clear: mandates have been written and approved by governing bodies and policies have been developed to guide various evaluation units. Moreover, standards and norms have been identified and effort has been expended to enforce these rules. Efforts have also been made to define the professional qualities evaluators must embody. In addition, a set of structural arrangements have been created to help institutionalize the evaluation function within the various UN entities. With regard to ISWE, fewer of these developments have taken place.

From an institutional perspective, ISWE should be understood as a set of formal and informal rules that serve a purpose within the context of the UN system. The function, or *raison d'être*, of ISWE helps set the stage for understanding what are appropriate ways of acting and behaving when engaging in this type of evaluation. However, relatively little attention has been paid to the function of ISWE within the UN system. Many questions have not been adequately addressed, for instance: what is the role of ISWE? Should this function exist? What rules should guide this United Nations function? What structural configuration makes sense for the UN system? In fact, interviewees suggest that part of the difficulty we have encountered in conducting this review is due to the absence of a clear answer to many of these fundamental institutional questions.

In carrying out our research on the institutional framework for ISWE, we found there is little –other than the original work done in establishing the JIU and formulating its mandate- written about system-wide evaluation within the United Nations. By contrast, in our interviews we were exposed to a wide range of opinions about what ISWE means, what function it should play within the UN system, who should engage in it, and what are appropriated rules and regulations to guide ISWE work. While these opinions are interesting, they have not coalesced into a clear understanding of what is meant by an independent system-wide evaluation.

Finding 15: UNEG's criteria, articulated in its booklet on evaluation standards, provide a useful point of departure for assessing the institutional framework for ISWE.

UNEG's "Standards for Evaluation in the UN System" (April 2005) identifies a number of institutional and management criteria that provide a point of departure for assessing the institutional framework for ISWE. We have commented on the extent to which ISWE in the UN has met these criteria.

Exhibit 4.1 Extent to which ISWE in the United Nations has met UNEG criteria for evaluation

UNEG criteria[58]	Our comments related to ISWE
Provide institutional and high-level management understanding of and support for the ISWE's key role in contributing to the effectiveness of the Organization.	There is no high level management or governance entity that has an overview of the ISWE function in the UN system. ISWE is carried out by a variety of entities but not coordinated at the institutional level.
Ensure that ISWE is part of the Organization's governance and management functions. ISWE makes an essential contribution to managing for results.	ISWE is seen as a unit responsibility and not as a system responsibility. Therefore, it is not regarded as part of the UN's governance or management structure. JIU, OIOS, OCHA, DESA, UNEG and various evaluation units in the UN have played important roles in exploring issues of implementing managing for results processes but have not done so for the system as a whole. Of interest is that many people question whether the UN should be judged as "a system" or as a convenient "umbrella" for a variety of independent global organizations. .
Promote a culture that values ISWE as a basis for learning.	UNEG, JIU, OIOS and OCHA have supported the development of a culture of evaluation in the United Nations. However, such a culture has not extended to issues related to ISWE.[59] Besides efforts by OCHA and a recent paper by UNEG on its lessons learned from supporting the country-led evaluation of the DaO pilot initiative, relatively little learning on ISWE is systematically occurring.
Facilitate an independent and impartial ISWE process by ensuring that the evaluation function is independent of other management functions.	JIU is an independent group engaged in ISWE. Other evaluation units have considerably improved their independence. Interviewees raise the issue though as to whether independence is linked to credibility and usefulness, two qualities stakeholders want from ISWE.
The Head of evaluation should report directly to the Governing Body of the organization or the Head of the Organization.	There is a wide assortment of reporting relationships for the evaluation units involved in ISWE. JIU's reporting relationship however is unique: it reports to the General Assembly and other intergovernmental groups, but is not held accountable to these groups in a formal institutional sense.
Ensure adequate financial and human resources for ISWE in order to allow efficient and effective delivery of services by a competent evaluation function and enable evaluation capacity strengthening.	In general, neither adequate thought nor resource capacity has been directed towards ISWE. It is not driven by any resource analysis.

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[58] We have slightly adapted the UNEG criteria so that they are applicable to ISWE.

[59] We recognize the boldness of this statement. However, we are struck by the lack of institutional tools available to respond to SWE issues. In general, most system-wide evaluations (even though they bear system-wide implications) have difficulty finding appropriate governance and management forums to test assumptions of credibility and utility.

UNEG criteria[58]	Our comments related to ISWE
Encourage partnerships and cooperation on ISWE within the UN system, as well as with other relevant institutions.	Support from UNEG members has led to cooperation and partnership among the various technical units, often through what are called joint evaluations. However, securing cooperation at the governance and operational levels has proved to be difficult and costly (e.g. DaO). The OIOS "Thematic Evaluation on United Nations Coordinating Bodies" provides evidence of the difficulties the United Nations has experienced in coordinating activities. Coordination is an important element in ISWE.
UN Organizations should develop an evaluation policy (with reference to the role of organizations in ISWE) and regularly update it, taking into account the Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN system.	An increasing number of UN entities have developed evaluation policies and practices. However, we have not found guidance related to ISWE.
UN Organizations should ensure appropriate follow-up mechanisms and have an explicit disclosure policy.	An increasing number of UN entities have developed follow-up systems and disclosure policies. JIU has developed follow-up procedures for its ISWE. While JIU's follow-up processes indicate that use of its ISWE recommendations is relatively low, there is no comparator for such work. It very well might be that all ISWE work has poor use.
The Head of evaluation has a lead role in ensuring that the ISWE function is fully operational and that evaluation work is conducted according to the highest professional standards.	ISWE is managed in an ad hoc fashion. Professional standards are left to the governing board of each evaluation. In JIU's case, the unit has created its own approach to leadership and to ensuring standards.
The Head of evaluation should ensure that the ISWE is dynamic, adapting to new developments and changing needs both within and outside the organization.	ISWE is managed in an ad hoc fashion. The use of new and appropriate professional practices is left to those who lead each ISWE. JIU and DESA have no evaluation head in the traditional sense.
All those engaged in designing, conducting and managing ISWE activities should aspire to conduct high quality and ethical work guided by professional standards and ethical and moral principles.	ISWE is managed in an ad hoc fashion, thus ethical practices are similarly ad hoc.
Persons engaged in designing, conducting and managing ISWE activities should possess core evaluation competencies.	While evaluation competencies are part of UNEG's agenda, attention has not been paid to the special requirements needed to engage in managing complex system-wide evaluations.

Source: UNEG Standards for Evaluation in the UN System 2005

In general, our assessment of ISWE according to the UNEG standards for evaluation indicates that there is a very weak institutional framework for ISWE in the UN system. Rules and functions are not well developed. This is fully in line with the lack of clarity of the function itself.

Finding 16: Formal rules that help create the institutional framework for ISWE are presented in the mandates of DESA and the JIU as well as in the Secretary-General's bulletin on evaluation. However, these are not adequate to guide the ISWE function.

In general, ISWE is guided by the formal and informal evaluation norms and rules within the United Nations, few of which focus directly on ISWE. The most obvious starting point for exploring ISWE rules is the JIU.

Established in the 1960s, the JIU's statute as well as this unit's history point to the importance of improving the efficiency[60] of the United Nations as a whole. Other than in expressing a concern for system-wide efficiency, the JIU statute is relatively silent on what is meant by ISWE. From an institutional perspective, the JIU statute stresses the importance of independence for both the individual inspector and the organization. Hence, it is clear that at the time of the unit's creation independence was regarded as important. The formal version of the JIU statute was approved by the General Assembly in 1978 and has not been modified since. However, the unit has since put in place norms and standards for its work.

In addition to the JIU's statute and norms, the United Nations has a history of providing guidance for system-wide performance reports for development activity such as those presently undertaken by DESA. For over a decade, directives provided in General Assembly resolutions have instructed DESA in its mandate to engage in the TCPR/QCPR evaluations. While these resolutions offer some guidance, and while DESA itself provides some methodological direction, once again there is no direction for the basic functions associated with ISWE.

The Secretary-General in his or her role also has an opportunity to set direction and rules to govern evaluation work generally, and ISWE more specifically. In 2000, the Secretary-General's bulletin set forth the regulations and rules providing the legislative direction for "governing the planning, programming, monitoring and evaluation of all activities provided by the United Nations, irrespective of their source of financing."[61] This was another potential opportunity to clarify the function of ISWE in the United Nations. While this guidance provided direction to all individual agencies, it was silent with respect to the system as a whole.

In December 2004, as part of the development of the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of the United Nations system, GA resolution 59/250 was passed. This resolution linked evaluation to performance in the achievement of developmental goals and strengthened evaluation activities, notably by making systematic the use of evaluation approaches at the system-wide level. While the overall interest in SWE was re-established by the resolution, relatively little guidance on SWE was brought forth.

The 2004 GA resolution was also a milestone for UNEG. It encouraged UNEG to make further progress in encouraging system-wide collaboration on evaluation, in particular with regard to the harmonization and simplification of methodologies, norms, standards and cycles of evaluation. In other words, UNEG was encouraged to provide guidance –albeit informal- to the system. UNEG has provided this support, generating 8 different reference and guidance documents on evaluation over the past 7 years (see Exhibit 4.2). These documents act as informal rules of the game –that is, until units choose to formalize them. While some evaluation units have adopted the norms and standards set forth by UNEG, others have adapted them to their own circumstances. In addition to the 8 reference and guidance documents, UNEG has produced a frequently asked questions (FAQ) document which relates to the management of various aspects of UNDAF evaluations; this in fact is the only guidance which is directly related to operational concerns on SWE. As a counterpart to UNEG's work, it should be mentioned that OIOS has engaged in providing some guidance for evaluation as well. In conclusion, while guidance for evaluation is growing, there is still little work to guide ISWE.

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[60] This is as opposed to a concern for effectiveness or sustainability or other evaluative constructs that have a system-wide implication.

[61] United Nations Secretariat, 'Secretary-General's bulletin: Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation', ST/SGB/2000/8, 19 April 2000, p.iii.

Exhibit 4.2   Examples of guidance documents for evaluation

| Produced by	Title	Date
UNEG	Standards for Evaluation in the UN System	2005
UNEG	Norms for Evaluation in the UN System	2005; updated 2011
UNEG	UNEG Ethical Guidelines	2008
UNEG	UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN system	2008
UNEG	UNEG Good Practice Guidelines for Follow up to Evaluations	2010
UNEG	UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports	2010
UNEG	UNEG Quality Checklist for Terms of Reference and Inception Reports	2010
UNEG	Frequently Asked Questions for UNDAF Evaluations	2011
UNEG	UNEG Handbook on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations in the UN System	March 2011
OIOS	Guidance to Programmes for Developing an Evaluation Policy	Not specified

Source: UNEG and OIOS guidance documents 2005-2011

Finding 17: The JIU is the only entity within the United Nations that has a clear mandate to engage in ISWE. Despite this, there is a wide assortment of UN entities who see themselves taking part in ISWE activities.

Evaluation is conducted across diverse UN agencies or structures. The diversity between agencies, along with the accountability requirements of donors, has led to a wide variation in the institutional arrangements for management, coordination and conduct of evaluation in the system. The evaluation functions in these agencies range from dedicated evaluation units to ad hoc arrangements. While in some cases they are part of policy and planning units, they are sometimes embedded in other oversight units. Nevertheless, each UN agency has a mandate which is evaluated through the agency's institutional evaluation mechanism.

Interestingly, the JIU, which is a subsidiary body of the General Assembly and of the legislative bodies of its participating organizations, is the only UN entity that has the formal mandate to engage in ISWE. The JIU's mandate and procedures also provide it with a level of structural independence that is not found in other evaluation units in the UN system. Nevertheless, several of the UN agencies surveyed indicated that they have the institutional capability to manage and or coordinate SWE. (For additional information, please refer to Finding 21 in Chapter 5.) Interview findings suggest that most evaluation units believe they have adequate independence as well.

Exhibit 4.3   Perceptions of 22 respondents as to whether their evaluation unit's mandate allows it to conduct, manage and or contribute to ISWE
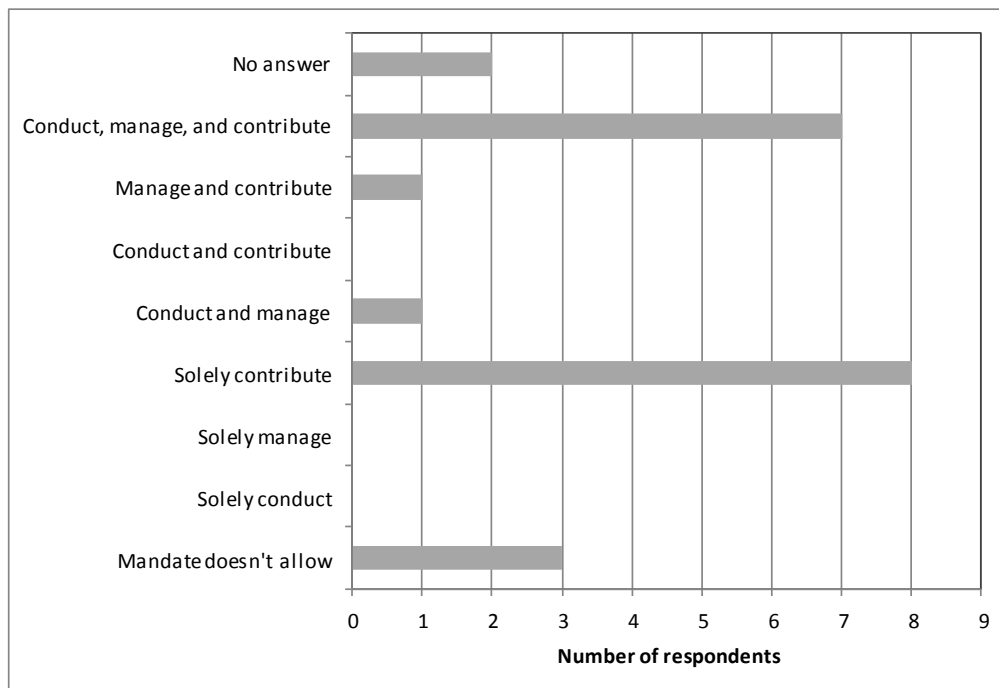
Source: ODSG Survey

Also of interest with respect to system-wide evaluation is the role DESA plays in ISWE. DESA is mandated to evaluate operational activities for development in support of the TCPR/QCPR process. DESA monitors the operational activities annually, and puts together an analysis of the work done by the United Nations in relationship to stated objectives and themes of interest every three or four years. While DESA draws on evaluations, collects primary data from countries and uses evaluation language, interviewees indicated that they did not "read" past TCPRs as an evaluation report, but rather as a joint descriptive exercise among UN agencies to report on their contribution to the Secretary-General's objectives.[62]

Finding 18: The institutional framework for ISWE is a multi-tiered system whose roles and responsibilities regarding ISWE are not clearly articulated.

The United Nations is a complex system. Its authorizing environment includes the General Assembly and ECOSOC[63] who are the groups that are accountable for the policies, strategies, financing and programming being undertaken by the United Nations[64]. These groups are responsible for setting forth the mandates, roles, responsibilities and resources in the UN system (i.e., the general institutional framework associated with the UN system, including ISWE). While there has been a great deal of interest in ISWE from the General Assembly and ECOSOC, they have provided little guidance on this issue.

A second set of entities related to ISWE are designated system or sub-system entities. In this category, the JIU stands alone in the clarity and explicitness of its system-wide mandate. DESA also has a system-wide mandate but it is limited to performance reporting. Moreover, as has previously been mentioned, DESA's

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[62] The first QCPR is in preparation and will be produced in 2012; as it has not yet been completed, it should not be assumed to be a descriptive report like the earlier TCPRs.

[63] The Security Council has an authorizing role but it has not been a central part of ISWE work.

[64] The General Assembly and ECOSOC share this responsibility with the boards of the funds and programmes.

evaluative role is not clear –at least to some. Other entities, namely OCHA and OIOS, have sub-system responsibilities that have strong system-wide components. OCHA's system-wide mandate extends beyond the United Nations; this is the only UN organization which has such a reach.

A third set of entities engaging in ISWE activities are the specific evaluation units of the various UN entities. As mentioned later in Finding 21, 13 out of 22 units indicate that they have either led or participated in activities they would characterize as system-wide. These units are also involved in joint evaluation. Presently, it is unclear where the line between joint evaluations and system-wide evaluations is drawn (i.e., where joint evaluations end and SWEs begin).

A fourth set of entities involved in ISWE are the United Nations member countries and their evaluation units. The UN system produces hundreds of evaluations.[65] Increasingly, countries' ownership of the evaluation process is critical for both credibility of ISWE and use of its products by the countries within which they occur. The capacity of these countries to engage in evaluation, absorb the information, and use the results is an institutional challenge to the United Nations and its desire to see evaluations as "country-led".

Finally, system-wide evaluations require a great deal of collaboration and coordination through what are called mechanisms. In the humanitarian system, OCHA is the mechanism used to coordinate system-wide evaluation work. It is mandated to do so and over the years has built its capacity to undertake this challenging role. However, in other areas of the United Nations, joint, cross-sectoral, sub-system or even system-wide evaluations are generally conducted through the use of a variety of ad hoc agreements and mechanisms entered into by UN agencies. The rules and mechanisms used to govern, manage, finance and coordinate these evaluations are not formalized and the resulting ad hoc arrangements are complex and costly to manage. A key player in this has been UNEG. However, UNEG does not have the resources to carry out this responsibility over the long term. Coordination mechanisms are costly but a necessary management activity, particularly when there are multiple entities involved. Finding solutions for the coordination of ISWE represents a major challenge for the United Nations.

Finding 19: Clarifying the purpose of ISWE and the value and role of independence is inextricably linked to its institutional framework.

The conceptual underpinning of this review is defined by the concepts related to independent system-wide evaluation. In this finding we want to challenge the importance placed on the term independence for the ISWE function. While we believe that independence is a key institutional variable, it is not the determining variable related to a "good" system-wide evaluation.

The main purpose of ISWE is to support the United Nations' ability to deliver relevant results within its resource constraints. Delivering results includes being accountable for results and supporting stakeholder learning. Accountability deals with the positive contributions being made to changes in institutions and the lives of people, whereas learning refers to the ability of stakeholders to use information and to make changes that would further their contribution to countries' development. The purpose of system-wide evaluations is to promote accountability and learning across the various entities of the United Nations.

The meaning of independence[66] has long been a subject of debate within the evaluation and audit communities. The audit community makes a distinction between independence of mind and independence in appearance. In both the audit and evaluation communities, independence is central to

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[65] In the fact sheets provided by UNEG, 16 agencies indicated that they either managed or conducted over 300 evaluations. Data is missing from over 25 agencies. In addition to the UN-sponsored evaluations, donors produce over 600 evaluations, according to the OECD-DAC..

[66] For a more complete analysis of independence, see Robert Picciotto's 'Evaluation Independence at DFID', September 2008.

credibility. Independence attempts to decrease bias, however, bias is hard to eliminate; there is in fact a continuum of bias. Evaluation credibility requires independence (to reduce bias), but it also requires evaluation competence. As evaluation becomes more institutionalized it is more clearly identifying the competencies needed to engage in a credible evaluation (e.g., the nature of evaluation questions, the appropriate use of different methodologies, and the concept and use of evidence). Evaluations test the credibility of its reports through tools such as peer reviews, evaluation audits, external verifications, and data checks of reliability and validity. While independence is an important institutional feature of evaluation, it is not enough to predict the credibility of evaluations:

> *While important, independence on its own does not guarantee quality (relevant skills, sound methods, adequate resources and transparency are also required) but there is no necessary trade-off between independence, quality, credibility and utility. Indeed, evaluation quality without independence does not assure credibility or use. Furthermore, in open and accountable working environments, evaluation independence induces credibility, protects the learning process and induces program managers and stakeholders to focus on and use results. Thus, evaluation independence, quality, credibility and use are complementary characteristics that together contribute to evaluation excellence.*[67]

Although independence is an important concern for system-wide evaluation, for many it is not the key concern. The credibility[68] of the evaluation is seen as more important. Interview data suggests that the credibility of SWE in the United Nations is a significant preoccupation. As one interviewee pointed out:

> *If I and our staff feel that the work does not provide adequate evidence to draw conclusions we do not accept the evaluation –system-wide or not. Credibility of the data and evidence in a system-wide evaluation is key for its use. This is true for any evaluation!*

Therefore, the institutional focus on independence is seen as necessary but far from a sufficient condition for shaping an ISWE function.

Finding 20: Creating a modern institutional framework that supports ISWE in the United Nations has been an elusive activity. Its institutional history and evolution, or lack of evolution, is inextricably linked to the JIU.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, ISWE has been practised in the United Nations for decades. Its history is linked to the history of the JIU. The JIU was created in the 1960s as a result of a serious financial crisis. In response to this crisis, an ad hoc committee recommended that an "external" body be established to serve a system-wide oversight function, and in substantial terms, to focus principally on management auditing (i.e., value for money auditing) and less on classical financial auditing such as voucher auditing.

The report of the ad hoc committee was adopted in 1966 and the JIU was constituted on an "experimental basis". In 1978, the General Assembly approved the statute of the JIU.. As noted earlier, most of the substantive work of the JIU revolves around issues related to efficiency. This is both a function of the preferences of JIU inspectors as well as the institutional imperative identified in the 1960s. The concerns with managerial efficiency as reflected in the 2007 TCPR also contribute to this focus on efficiency. Since 2003, the JIU has reviewed its statute and operations and has made various proposals to improve its functioning, as well as that of ISWE. Where possible internal changes have been made. As one inspector pointed out in an interview:

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[67] Ibid.

[68] We are using credibility to include useability.

> *I am proud of all the changes we have made. If you would have done your report a decade ago, you would have seen a very different JIU (…) we are a much better unit today because of the changes we made!*

The JIU has been very much involved in a process of change since 2003. However, despite the efforts made by the JIU, fundamental changes to the role and function of the JIU and to ISWE more generally in the United Nations have been elusive. In general, there have been 6 main reasons.

1) **Role of the JIU**: The JIU is seen, at least by some, as a body that has focused on issues of efficiency. The new concerns of SWE relate more to effectiveness and results. As mentioned in the demand chapter, strategic issues related to policy, countries, and themes are all subjects for SWE. Some want the JIU to lead on everything; many want a more focused role.

2) **Structure and work processes**: The JIU has been set up as an inspectorate. Each inspector chooses a subject for evaluation (through an agreed upon process) and is responsible for writing a report on the subject. Inspectors are given support from the staff of the JIU Secretariat, along with modest expenses for travel and external support. Some interviewees find this approach (an inspectorate) to evaluation to be outdated and not credible when doing system-wide work. They argue that a major reorganization is required of the JIU to bring it in line with other independent multilateral evaluation units.

3) **Selection of inspectors:** While the selection of inspectors in the JIU is similar to the process used by the UN Board of Auditors (UNBOA) and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), neither the UNBOA nor the ACABQ actually engage in the research and production of reports. Because of the complexities of ISWE work, critics argue that inspectors need specialized evaluation experience and skills. They argue that the selection process does not adequately weigh evaluation competence (knowledge, skill and experience), and overly weighs "system experience". While all concede that JIU inspectors are experienced professionals, they argue that they are not experienced nor trained "evaluation" specialists. Furthermore, they argue that the model of "inspectorate" is incompatible with the complexity of the issues faced today.

4) **Value for money**: The cost of each JIU evaluation is approximately $500,000.[69] While this is not out of line with SWE, critics argue that the evaluations are not adequately used, and thus their system value is significantly reduced. The JIU and the General Assembly are attempting to improve the utilization rate but there are inherent ownership issues.

5) **Accountability, quality control and client engagement**: As alluded to in Finding 19, a balance is required between independence and aspects of quality and accountability. There is only a broad external accountability mechanism for inspectors: though they report to the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies, they are not held accountable for poor or non-performance since the JIU Chair has no real power other than to coordinate the Programme of Work. Moreover, there is no external peer review process for JIU reports. In addition, clients of evaluations interviewed suggested that they did not adequately participate in the development of Terms of Reference or methodologies included in work plans, but the JIU indicates that this is improving. Again, critics argue that these practices reduce the credibility and usefulness of the work.

6) **UN Politics**: If ISWE is addressed as a technical area which supports improved governance of the General Assembly, then debates can be had on the best way to provide credible and useful evaluative data to Member States and senior managers.. However, if ISWE is seen as another opportunity for power blocs to use their influence for self-interest, then progress on this issue will

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[69] This is an approximate number attained by dividing the JIU budget by 10 –the average number of reports produced- and adjusting for other activities.

be stymied as it has been in the past. ISWE can help the UN system improve its functioning. This is the goal and should be the content of the debate.

As mentioned throughout this chapter and the report, the JIU is not the only group that is part of the institutional framework of the UN system. It is however at the apex of the system. Many in the General Assembly consider it as an essential component for improving ISWE in the United Nations.[70] Thus, if progress is to be made on ISWE, then progress will also be required in further reform of the JIU.

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[70] There have been 2 attempts in the last 5 years to marginalize the JIU. Both have failed. The first was the Report of the Independent Steering Committee for the Comprehensive Review of Governance and Oversight in the United Nations (transmitted by Report of the Secretary General A/60/883 Addendum 2, 28 August 2006). The second was the ISWE proposal by the CEB.

5 . A s s e s s m e n t   o f   E x i s t i n g   E v a l u a t i o n   C a p a c i t y

Evaluation capacity is generally understood as the ability of an individual, organization or system to respond to evaluation challenges, supported by the necessary tools, resources and enabling environment. One of the challenges facing the United Nations with respect to ISWE is to determine what can be done to both understand and meet the demand for ISWE.

This chapter of the report answers the question *"What capacity exists within the United Nations to manage, conduct and contribute to an independent system-wide evaluation?"* The focus is on the organizational capacity of the United Nations, as the issue of institutional capacity has been discussed in Chapter 4. In assessing UN organizational capacity, we considered the question of operational mandates, support from governance structures, the available human and financial resources, and the competencies for ISWE. Our assessment focused on evaluation capacity of central evaluation units as time and resource constraints did not allow for detailed assessment of evaluation capacity at the country level. We are of the view that the country level capacity is an important consideration and make some observations about this.

In addition, we reviewed the existing mechanisms the United Nations uses to engage in ISWE. The chapter draws on self-reported UNEG fact sheets[71] supplied by 21 UNEG member organizations, self-evaluation questionnaires completed by 22 United Nations entities, and interviews conducted with 69 people from 18 UN entities and 15 Member States.

Finding 21: Most evaluation units surveyed believe that they have sufficient flexibility to engage in system-wide evaluations. Yet, there is a low frequency of participation in system-wide evaluations by evaluation units in the UN system.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, most of the entities surveyed (15 out of 22) believe that they have the necessary operational mandate to contribute to system-wide evaluations. Of these, seven entities claimed that they had the mandate to manage, conduct and contribute to system-wide evaluation. Only three entities surveyed stated that they had no mandate whatsoever with regard to system-wide evaluation.

The view expressed by most respondents was that the existing governance arrangements generally allow and support the participation of their evaluation units in system-wide evaluations. Most respondents believed that the governance arrangements allowed their organization to at least contribute to system-wide evaluations. Nearly half (7) indicated that the governance arrangements not only allowed them to contribute, but also to manage and conduct system-wide evaluations (Exhibit 5.1).

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[71] The UNEG Secretariat maintains fact sheets that are meant to be completed and updated regularly by member organizations. From the sample of fact sheets provided to the team, it is evident that there is inconsistency in how the fact sheets have been completed and a number of organizations have not updated their fact sheets since 2008. This should be taken into account when interpreting the data.

Exhibit 5.1   Perceptions of 22 respondents as to whether their evaluation unit's governance arrangements allow it to conduct, manage and or contribute to ISWE
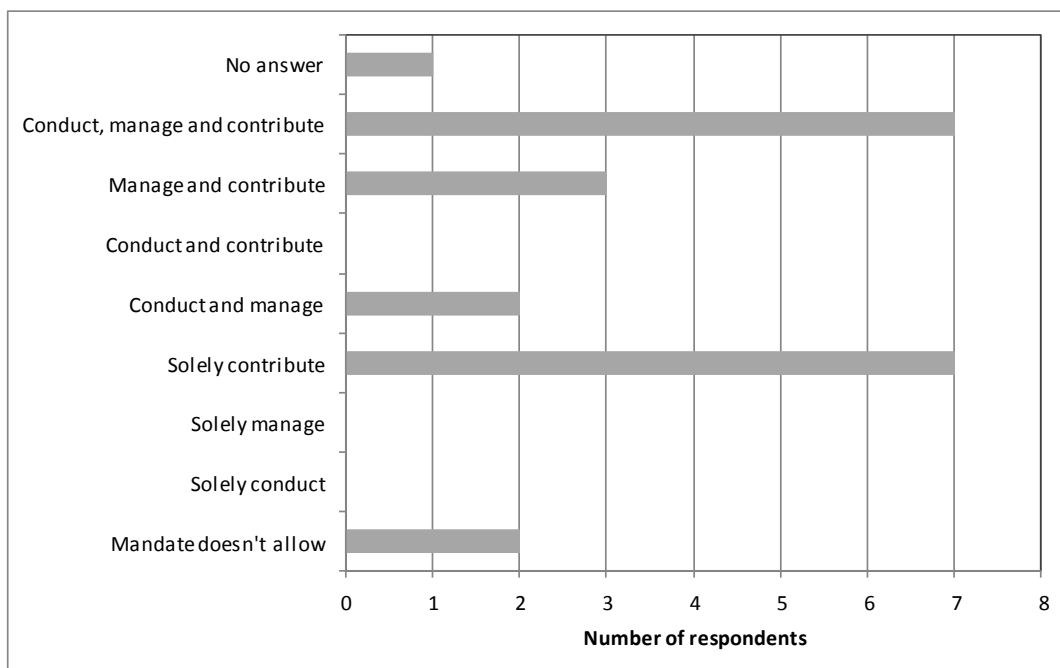
Source: ODSG Survey

Twenty of the entities reported that their staff had the necessary competencies for system-wide evaluations. In fact, thirteen entities indicated having already participated in system-wide evaluations: six reported to conducting system-wide evaluations, four to managing system-wide evaluations, and 10 to contributing to system-wide evaluations. Of these, only two had participated in more than 10 system-wide evaluations over the past five years; most had participated only once or twice over this timeframe (Exhibit 5.2).

Exhibit 5.2   Frequency of participation in system-wide evaluation over the past five years for 22 evaluation units
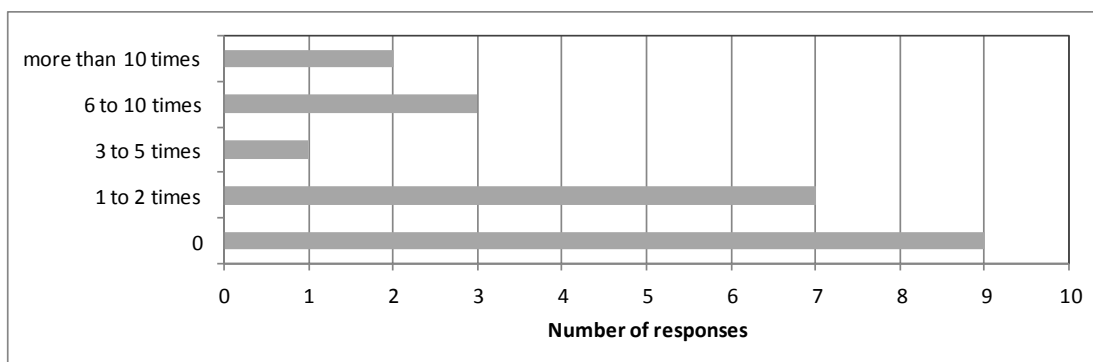
Source: ODSG Survey

Most entities surveyed indicated willingness to participate in system-wide evaluation. However, only five entities expressed interest in conducting, managing and contributing to system-wide evaluations. Meanwhile, 14 entities limited the extent of their desired involvement to only contributing to system-wide evaluations (i.e., not conducting or managing them). UN entities with past experience in participating in system-wide evaluations recounted a mixture of positive and negative experiences as shown in Exhibit 5.3.

Exhibit 5.3   Positive and negative experiences of participating in system-wide evaluations

| Positives of participating	Negatives of participating
Participation makes an entity very influential in the evolution of key reforms.	It is time consuming; there are delays in the process.
It leads the entity to seriously follow-up on evaluation recommendations.	It requires intense stakeholder consultations.
It enables pooling of resources, so evaluation is cost-effective.	The capacity and resources are not adequate; teams are too small for the task.
It provides the entity with an overview of the system.	Coordination is inefficient and communication difficult.
It provides an opportunity for mutual learning.	There is weak staff expertise; the network of professionals is not set up to undertake system-wide evaluations.
It enables agencies to find areas for improvement.	Perspectives of individual agencies get lost.
It leads to collaboration and partnership.	There is a lack of independence.
	Coverage is broad so it lacks depth.

Source: ODSG Survey

The experiences recounted in the survey are not dissimilar to the views expressed by a number of interviewees. There is ambivalence about ISWE. While interviewees see ISWE as being beneficial for the UN system, they know from past experiences working on system-wide evaluations or interagency programmes that it usually requires intensive transactions among the agencies involved. Furthermore, the results sometimes fall short of expectations and are not always commensurate with the effort and resources invested. Thus, for ISWE to work in the UN system there needs to be clear incentives for entities to participate in ISWE.

Finding 22: Most evaluation units in the system have modest staff resources and budgets for their core evaluation mandates and their participation in system-wide evaluations is constrained by limited resources.

The survey of evaluation units found that the most frequently cited constraints to participation in system-wide evaluations were staff resources and financial resources. Data obtained from UNEG fact sheets show that the annual evaluation expenditure of most evaluation units is below $5 million, with only the JIU, IFAD and WFP exceeding the $5 million mark (Exhibit 5.4). UNEG Fact Sheets also record the ratio of evaluation expenditure to the total expenditure of the organization. While there is no official standard for the budget ratio, a widely-used guide is to spend 1 percent of the total budget on evaluation. Exhibit 5.5 shows the budget ratios, and as can be seen, most evaluation units' expenditure in the UN system is less than 1 percent.[72] IFAD and OCHA are exceptions, with a budget ratio of 4.18 percent and 1.21 percent, respectively.

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[72] Please note that budget ratio figures for JIU are not available.

Exhibit 5.4   Evaluation expenditure of central evaluation offices for 2011
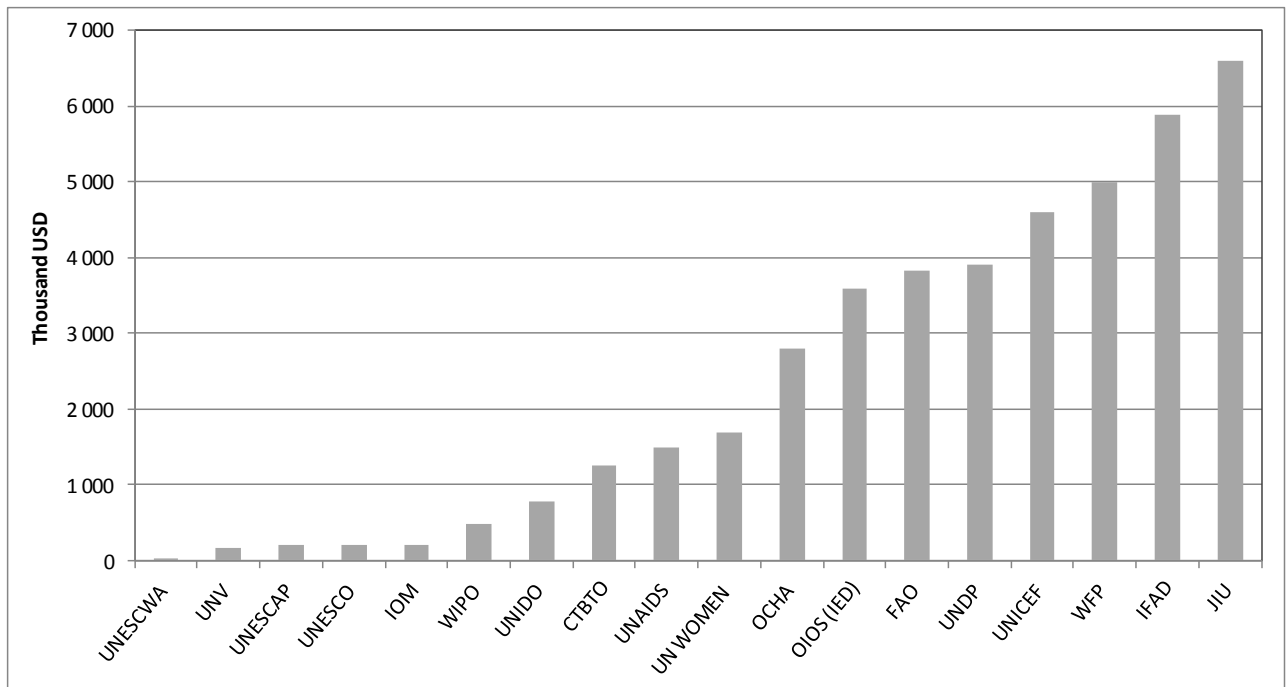
Source: UNEG Fact Sheets

Exhibit 5.5   Budget ratios of evaluation units in the United Nations

| Entity	Ratio of annual evaluation expenditure to total annual expenditure
IOM	0.03
UNESCO	0.04
UNESCWA	0.05
WFP	0.06
UNDP	0.07
UNV	0.08
UNICEF	0.13
WIPO	0.18
UNESCAP	0.32
FAO	0.35
UNIDO	0.41
OIOS	0.47
UN WOMEN	0.83
CTBTO	1.12
OCHA	1.21
IFAD	4.18
JIU	Not applicable

Source: UNEG Fact Sheets

Most evaluation functions in the UN system operate with relatively small centralized units with below 10 core professional staff (Exhibit 5.6). It should be noted that in some programmes such as UNDP, the larger proportion of evaluations are managed by country offices. UNDP Evaluation Office is responsible evaluating the global programme, independent assessments of development results at country level, thematic evaluations and regional evaluations. The small centralized units in many instances commission external consultants to conduct evaluations, with the core staff being responsible for managing the evaluations. The JIU is one of the few organizations that does not commission external consultants to conduct evaluations.

Interviews with evaluation units suggest that their staffing, though it has improved over the past five years, is still insufficient to meet the perceived demand for evaluations. Given the capacity constraints of most of these units for 'ordinary' evaluations, there is even more limited capacity for extraordinary, system-wide evaluations. Unless the evaluation entity has a mandate to promote coordination across the system, as in the case of UN Women, or has a mandate for system-wide evaluation, there is little incentive to make resources available for system-wide evaluations.

Resources for decentralized evaluation functions are equally constrained. The report of OIOS on the state of evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat found that most staff involved in evaluation activities did so on a part-time basis and that only 11 programmes had staff exclusively dedicated to evaluation.[73]

Exhibit 5.6   Core staff of central evaluation units in the United Nations
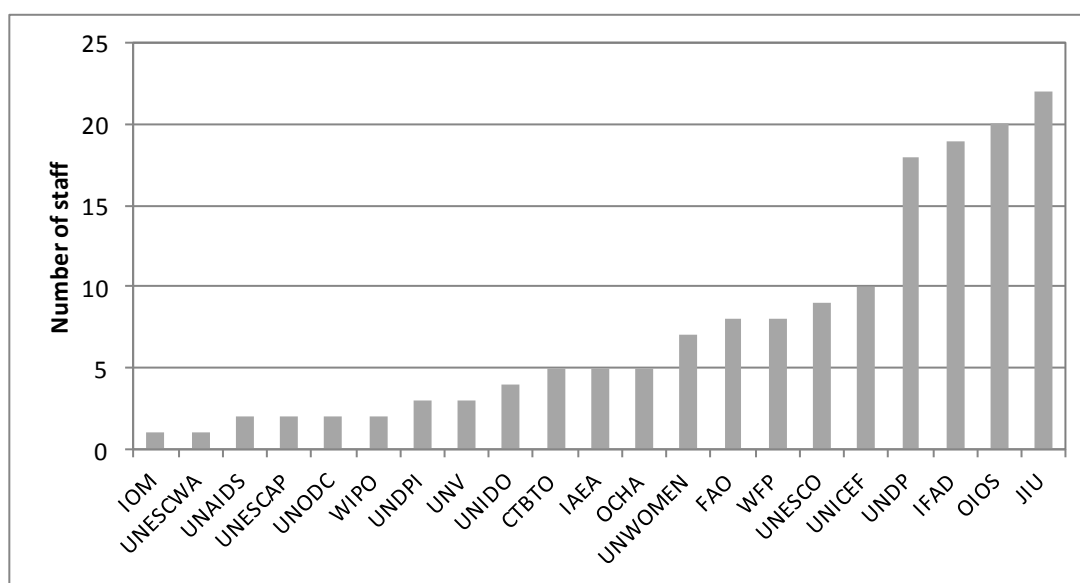
Source: UNEG Fact Sheets

From the UNEG fact sheets and our interviews, it is evident that there is limited staff capacity in evaluation units and therefore not surprising that these units are reluctant to engage in system-wide evaluation (unless it falls within their mandate, such as is the case for the JIU). The implications for ISWE are that the evaluations would have to be prioritized (demand management) and that ISWE cannot rely solely on existing evaluation staff resources.

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[73] United Nations General Assembly, 'Strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives: Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services', A/66/71, 28 March 2011.

Gender equality as a human rights issue is central to the mandate of the United Nations and all UN entities are required to incorporate gender equality into their policies and operations. The question we ask is whether there is the requisite capacity to evaluate the promotion of gender equality across the UN system. As recently as 2008, UNIFEM established a full-fledged evaluation unit with its own budget. The unit has been transformed into the UN Women Evaluation Office and reports directly to the Executive Director. The Evaluation Office promotes joint evaluation initiatives on gender equality and women's empowerment and launched its first evaluation of joint gender programmes with UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP and the MDG Fund. The Evaluation Office undertakes corporate evaluations on UN Women's thematic areas, institutional performance and country level work. Its decentralized evaluation function is supported with evaluation advisers in three regions. It operates with a capacity of 8 professional staff and complements its capacity with consultants. On average UN Women Evaluation Office conducts 15-20 evaluations per year, covering corporate and decentralized evaluations. An independent meta-evaluation completed in 2010 on UNIFEM evaluations found that the evaluation function had invested in developing tools and systems and better resourcing of the function and that this was beginning to yield positive results against the baseline established by the previous meta-evaluation. The evaluation found that there was room for improving the quality of evaluations, as well as volume of evaluations, particularly in some sub-regions where no evaluations had been produced in the period under review.[74]

With a mandate to lead, coordinate and promote accountability of the UN system in its work on gender equality and the empowerment of women, UN Women will need to continue its efforts at strengthening its evaluation capacity as existing capacity might not be adequate for its broadened role.

A similar situation prevails with regard to human rights. The Office of the High Commission on Human Rights (OHCHR) believes that there are issues that need to be looked at system-wide, but there is no capacity in the UN system to do so.

DESA, as discussed in Chapter 2, is responsible for the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review, which covers the operational activities for development. The QCPR evaluates the relevance and impact of the UN system's operational activities and as such is an enormous undertaking. The Development Cooperation Branch in the Office for Economic and Social Council Support is responsible for leading the process. Interviews with stakeholders, including officials in DESA, raised concerns about the capacity of the Development Cooperation Branch to lead and manage the QCPR process: the branch does not have a dedicated evaluation unit to lead and manage such an enormous task. Stakeholders interviewed also raised concerns about the quality of the previous TCPR, in particular, its lack of thorough analysis. The Development Cooperation Branch is aware of these concerns and is securing feedback from colleagues in the UNDG on the preparations for the QCPR. DESA is a member of UNEG and the branch claims to follow UNEG standards as far as possible.[75]

Finding 23: The UN system is making strides to improve the quality of its evaluation practitioners by more clearly articulating the competencies required to engage in modern evaluation practice. However, guidance and capacity development for system-wide evaluation have received less attention.

Evaluators need to have the necessary technical and professional competencies to produce credible evaluations. UNEG has been the driving force behind efforts to improve the overall quality of evaluation practice in the UN system. As described in Chapter 4 of this report, UNEG has produced norms and standards for evaluation, as well as guidance documents to professionalize evaluation within the UN

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[74] UNIFEM, 'UNIFEM Global Meta-Evaluation 2009, Final Report', May 2010.

[75] Interviews with DESA officials.

system. For example, it has defined the competencies needed by heads of evaluation units, and determined the core competencies and job descriptions of other evaluation positions at various levels.[76]

UNEG Standard 2.4 stipulates that "Evaluators need to have specific technical knowledge of, and be familiar with the methodology or approach that will be needed for the specific evaluation to be undertaken, as well as certain managerial and personal skills."[77] The text that accompanies this standard provides examples of specialized experiences, knowledge and skills which evaluators should have (e.g., understanding results based management, human rights approaches to programming, or gender considerations). It should be noted however that, among these examples, no reference is made to any specialized knowledge, experience or skills that may be required for system-wide evaluations, joint evaluations or multi-agency evaluations. Such considerations are also absent from the core competencies of heads of evaluation units and the job description guidance for senior evaluators published by UNEG.

Experiences from system-wide evaluations such as Delivering as One and the Joint South Africa-UNEG evaluation suggest that this type of evaluation can be methodologically complex, as they cut across different parts of the UN system. Working with different planning regimes and data systems requires a high order of methodological skills and innovation. The political context within which system-wide evaluation takes place adds another dimension of complexity. It requires an ability to traverse organizational boundaries and think strategically.

Almost all entities who completed the self-assessment questionnaire (20 out of 22) claimed that their staff have the necessary competencies to engage in system-wide evaluations. Most pointed to the technical expertise of their staff regarding evaluations and their knowledge of the United Nations system, and highlighted that some already have experience with system-wide evaluations. The respondents did not seem to consider that there are additional specialized competencies that might be required of evaluators engaging in system-wide evaluations.

We reviewed the job descriptions of those entities within the UN system that have conducted system-wide evaluations to ascertain whether specific competencies have been required from staff participating in system-wide evaluations. The JIU inspectors do not have job descriptions, though this has been on the reform agenda for several years. Resolution 59/267 of the General Assembly did however give more content to Article 2 of the JIU Statute with regard to the appointment of inspectors. It stressed "the importance of ensuring that candidates have experience in at least one of the fields (…) oversight, audit, inspection, investigation, evaluation, finance, management, public administration, monitoring and/or programme performance, as well as knowledge of the UN system and its role in international relations."[78] The job description for the Executive Secretary of the JIU makes explicit reference to system-wide competencies: "working experience in two or more organizations of the United Nations system" and "[s]ufficient knowledge of the structure, functioning, activities and working methods of the United Nations system organizations."[79] Job descriptions for professional staff also make reference to the requirement of a working knowledge of the UN system.

The issue of staff competencies was raised in the peer review of the OIOS Investigation and Evaluation Division. It concluded that the IED's credibility was challenged inter alia by its limited thematic expertise in diverse programmes of the United Nations and insufficient human resource capacity in relation to the

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[76] United Nations Evaluation Group, 'Core Competencies for Evaluators of the UN system: Guidance Document', UNEG, 2008.

[77] United Nations Evaluation Group, 'Standards for evaluation in the UN system', UNEG, April 2005, p.9.

[78] United Nations General Assembly, resolution 59/267, 23 December 2004, p.2.

[79] Joint Inspection Unit, Geneva, April 2002.

large number of programmes it was required to evaluate.[80] Our review of the job descriptions of core evaluation professionals for the IED found that although there is no mention of system-wide evaluation, there is recognition that certain skills are required for the complex context within which IED conducts evaluations. The job description of senior IED evaluation professionals expects incumbents to be capable of identifying key issues in complex situations. These professionals are required to take the lead in designing and conducting complex, multi-faceted, in-depth and thematic evaluations. The ability to identify and make use of strategic opportunities is identified as an additional qualification.

UNEG has recognized the existence of a gap in guidance and capacity development for system-wide evaluation, and has endeavoured to fill this gap. The development framework documents to support the country-led evaluations of Delivering as One, the guidance on UNDAF evaluations, and more recently, the Guidelines for Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality Dimensions into Evaluations[81] are examples of capacity development and guidance for system-wide evaluations. UNEG is a voluntary professional organization that may produce guidelines and encourage its members to use them, but it cannot compel them to do so.

Finding 24: Coordination mechanisms are an important element of capacity for ISWE. The UN system uses multiple mechanisms to coordinate its evaluation work, but each has its limitations for coordination at the system-wide level.

General Assembly resolution 64/289, which was the impetus for our review, hints at two competing ideas. The resolution first asks that we explore the establishment of a single ISWE mechanism. However, it also suggests that the existing institutional framework and capacities be fully utilized and strengthened. In researching the latter issue, we found that the United Nations is already using multiple mechanisms to manage ISWE (see Exhibit 5.7). Furthermore, we probed interviewees and found there was almost unanimous support for exploring the idea of multiple mechanisms to improve ISWE, rather than seeking a solution using only one mechanism.

Exhibit 5.7   Mechanisms for coordinating ISWE in the UN system

Type of coordinating mechanism	Coordination activities	Examples of the coordinating mechanism in the UN system
Coordinating Unit	• A mandated unit responsible for coordination.	• N/A
Direct Contact	• Evaluation managers mandated to meet face-to-face to coordinate activities.	• N/A
Coordinator Role	• A specific manager is given permanent responsibility (mandated) for coordinating with other managers or sub units on behalf of the function.	• OCHA evaluation unit

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[80] Siegfried, G et al, 'Peer Review of the Evaluation Function of the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the United Nations', Swiss Development Cooperation, Bern, 2009.

[81] UNEG published guidelines: 'Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation: Towards UNEG Guidance', 19 September 2011. UN Women has an on-line 'Manager's Guide to Gender Equality and Human Rights Responsive Evaluations', www.unwomen.org.

Type of coordinating mechanism	Coordination activities	Examples of the coordinating mechanism in the UN system
Liaison role	• A specific manager is given temporary responsibility (mandated) for coordinating with other managers or sub units on behalf of his organization.	• Delivering as One Independent Evaluation
Task force	• Managers meet regularly in temporary committees to coordinate cross-functional activities. The governing body provides the mandate.	• N/A
Coordination committee	• Managers meet regularly in permanent committees to coordinate cross-functional activities. The governing body provides the mandate	• IASC • UNDG • CEB
Team	• Managers meet regularly in a permanent committee to coordinate activities (not mandated –informal).	• CEB and its committees do coordination of development, but coordination of ISWE is ad hoc
Ad hoc group	• Managers get together when needed to coordinate work (informal mandate).	• UNEG's historical support for ISWE • Tsunami Evaluation Coalition
Guiding principles	• Standardization of work process. • Standardization of outputs. • Standardization of skills and competencies.	• UNEG's Norms and Standards and other guidelines • Secretary-General's bulletin on evaluation • JIU Statute

Source: UN documents and reports

A question that arises is whether or not the existing multiple mechanisms are adequate for coordination of ISWE in the UN system. Our assessment indicates that there are some limitations in the array of mechanisms. These limitations revolve around the limits of independence, system-wide and development activities –all of which we discussed in Chapter 3. Furthermore, while these mechanisms are helpful, they have not provided an institutional mechanism to bring forward issues surrounding ISWE function, strategy, use, limitations and so forth. Nor have these mechanisms had a formal mandate to coordinate ISWE activity. Therefore, while there are multiple coordination mechanisms in use, this does not mean that the existing coordination capacity within the UN system is commensurate with what is required for ISWE. What is lacking is a formally mandated mechanism that operates within a strategic framework, focusing on important questions for ISWE, for example:

- What should the ISWE agenda look like over the next three to five years?

- How should the United Nations use ISWE to improve the transition from conflict to development?

- What new tools, methodologies and competencies do evaluation professionals within the UN system require for ISWE?

While UNEG has endeavoured to stimulate thinking in this direction, its lack of a formal mandate and its very limited resources prevent it from playing this role.

Finding 25: The UN system is improving its capacity to use evaluation evidence, including evidence provided by system-wide evaluations. However, the absorptive capacity of the system is being increasingly tested as evaluation outputs increase across the system.

Individual entities as well as UNEG continue to work on improving the utilisation of evaluation results. There is emphasis on stakeholder involvement to build ownership of evaluation results (without compromising the independence of the evaluation); improving the quality of presentation of reports and tailoring these for different audiences; and putting in place effective mechanisms to monitor the implementation of recommendations. UNEG has produced good practice guidelines to enhance follow-up to evaluations in the UN system, and individual entities such as the JIU and OIOS have invested in strengthening their monitoring of management responses and recommendations.

It has been difficult to establish the number of evaluations produced annually by the UN system as there is no system within the United Nations that actively monitors this[82]. From the available information in the fact sheets, evaluation units in the UN system each complete an average of 10 evaluations per year (Exhibit 5.8). The number of evaluations produced annually by the UN system is therefore likely to be higher than the figures presented in Exhibit 5.8.

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[82] Only some entities in the UN system load copies of their evaluation reports on the Evaluation Resource Centre (ERC) managed by UNDP.

Exhibit 5.8   Number of evaluations completed per year by evaluation units in the United Nations
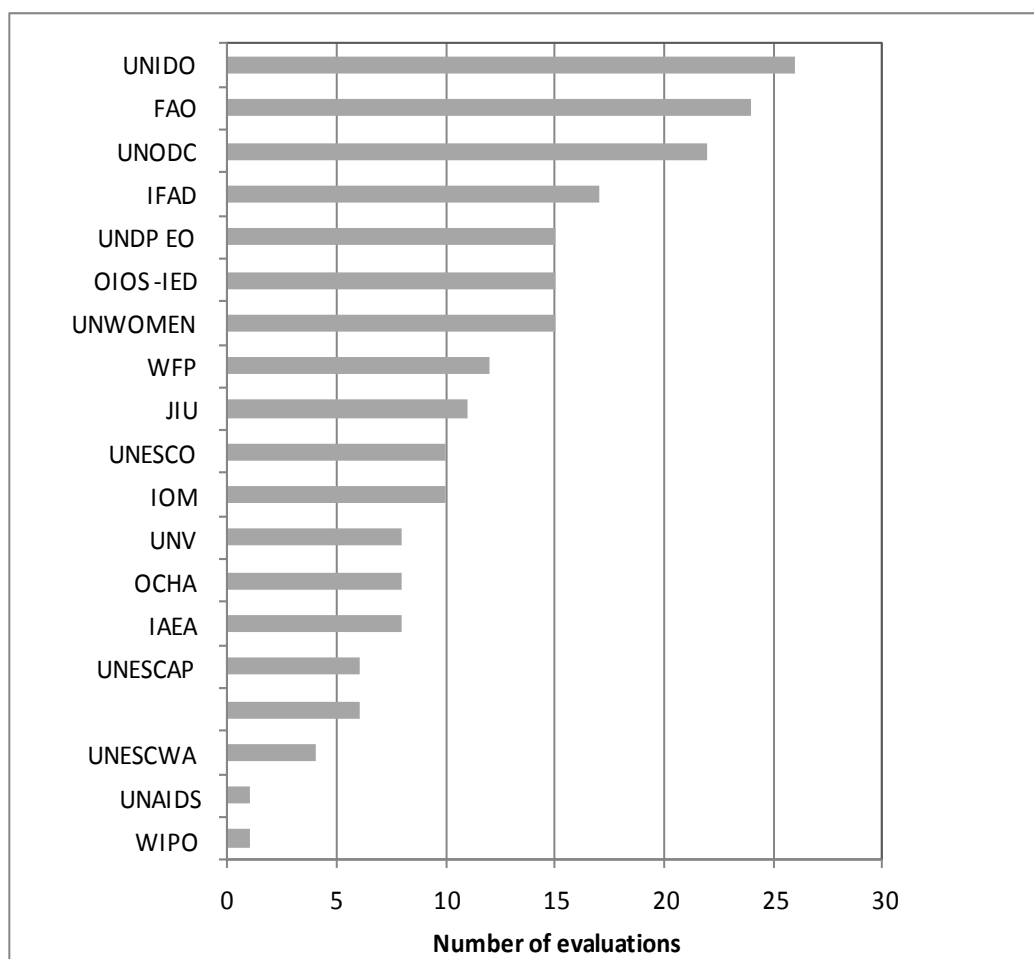
Source: UNEG Fact Sheets and Evaluation Units

It is debatable whether the system has the capacity to absorb all the evaluations that it produces. The concerns raised by the JIU about the limited time available for in-depth discussions of its reports was discussed in Finding 11. The response to JIU reports is probably not unique to the JIU. The agendas of legislative bodies and governing boards are crowded and unless the particular evaluation is considered important (or controversial) by these bodies, it will not receive much attention. Member States themselves have uneven capacity in responding to evaluations. Those Member States with small delegations often have a single delegate to deal with matters in more than one committee and do not necessarily have the time for adequate preparation for responding to reports. Those Member States with larger delegations are more likely to have the capacity to read the volumes of reports generated by the system. The issue of uneven capacity of Member States was raised by some of the delegates interviewed who were concerned that the design of ISWE should take this into account. Some interviewees have suggested that the issue of use of evaluation results is not only related to the capacity to use, but also to the willingness or motivation of governing bodies and senior management to act on recommendations.

Finding 26: Good capacity at the country level is necessary for engaging in country-focused system-wide evaluations. While some United Nations agencies, especially those that are members of the United Nations Development Group, support the development of national evaluation capacity, this is an area that requires more attention.

A number of Member States interviewed emphasized the importance of country-focused evaluations for accountability of the UN system at the country level. In particular, Members States from middle-income countries indicated that there is likely to be a growing interest from their countries for evaluations on the effectiveness and relevance of the UN system's contribution at the country level.

It was beyond the scope of our review to conduct a detailed assessment of the capacity for SWE at the country level. From the limited information at our disposal, it appears that there are capacity challenges for evaluation in country offices of the UN system and in national government ministries. UNEG has a task force that focuses on issues pertaining to country level evaluation capacity. UNEG's assessment of a sample of UNDAF evaluations found that the quality of these evaluations is variable, and that UN country offices do not always possess the necessary skills for the methodological complexities of these evaluations.[83] It should be pointed out that until recently UNDAF evaluations were not mandatory. UNEG has since developed support material on UNDAF evaluations to complement the formal guidance documents of the United Nations Development Group. The mandate of UN Women is to promote coherence on gender equality issues. As discussed in Finding 22, there has been until recently a gap in guidance on this aspect of evaluation. The UNEG Human Rights and Gender Equality Task Force has developed a handbook to assist evaluators and intends to publish a full guidance document in 2012.

Country level evaluations require functioning evaluation units in government and evaluation capacity in civil society organizations. Building this national capacity becomes increasingly important as governments pursue country-led evaluations or joint evaluations. The JIU raised the issue of national evaluation capacity in its report on National Execution of Technical Cooperation Projects in 2008. The report raised concerns that monitoring and evaluation of nationally executed projects in a number of instances were not government-led. It recommended the integration of more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of national execution under the overall leadership of recipient governments, and identified the need for the UN system to support governments in this regard.[84]

The UNEG task force is working on the development of a conceptual framework for developing national evaluation capacity. Among other things, this framework will define UNEG's role in building capacity for evaluation at the national level.[85] Individual agencies, for example UNICEF and UNDP, are working in partnership with evaluation associations and governments to develop national evaluation capacity. Through such partnerships, UNICEF has published a series of papers on important evaluation issues, lessons learned, approaches and methodologies.[86] These publications draw on contributions from national evaluation practitioners as well as international experts and serve as a vehicle for knowledge sharing with national evaluation practitioners. In 2009, UNDP co-hosted the first international conference on National Evaluation Capacity with the Government of Morocco, and a second conference in 2011 with the Government of South Africa. These "working" conferences have focused on issues of independence, credibility and use of evaluations and have attracted delegates from over 27 countries. The last conference

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[83] Garcia, O, 'Challenges for conducting UNDAF evaluations', Discussion paper presented at United Nations Evaluation Group Practice Exchange, 21-22 March 2011, Paris.

[84] Zahran, M and Fall, PL, 'National Execution of Technical Cooperation Projects', Joint Inspection Unit: United Nations. JIU/REP/2008/4

[85] UNEG, 'Report on the UNEG Annual General Meeting 2010', Vienna, Austria.

[86] Other entities involved are ILO, UNDP, UN Women, WFP, World Bank, International Development Association and International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation.

in September 2011 generated great interest on the part of national governments; UNDP has already received expressions of interest from governments to co-host the next conference in 2013.[87]

UN Women contributes to building national and regional capacity in evaluating gender equality and human rights in addition to its capacity building contribution to UNEG. It has produced tools such as a practical on-line guide for managers to conduct and/or manage gender-responsive evaluations and evaluations from a human rights perspective.

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[87] Communication from the UNDP Evaluation Office to the 2011 conference participants and advisory group members, 6 October, 2011.

6. Characteristics of Good Independent System-Wide Evaluation

The Terms of Reference asked that we outline what constitutes a good system-wide evaluation and what kinds of mandates and capacities it would require. As discussed in Chapter 2 of this report, system-wide evaluation is not new to the UN system: it has already been conducted by some entities in the United Nations. The system-wide evaluations that have been produced have differed in the extent to which they cover the UN system and in the kinds of issues they focus on. The context within which system-wide evaluations have been conducted has been changing, and what constituted good system-wide evaluation a decade ago may not hold true in today's context.

While efficiency concerns remain important, the demand for system-wide evaluation is now broader, encompassing issues related to results and coordination of the UN system and its contribution to national development and the achievement of internationally agreed goals. Evaluation practice has also undergone changes, with complex evaluations warranting higher levels of professional skills and standards. Most major development organizations and, increasingly, governments in developing countries see evaluation playing an important role in improving organizational performance, accountability and learning. Dedicated evaluation units are the norm and their independence is seen as necessary for the credibility of their work.

The purpose of this chapter is to synthesize the material gathered in our review and thus distill the characteristics of good system-wide evaluation for today's context. It also draws on lessons learned from past and current system-wide evaluations in the UN system.

Finding 27: Good system-wide evaluation mechanisms are independent and credible, and SWE outputs or products are used. Independence is a necessary but not sufficient condition for good system-wide evaluation.

Best practice dictates that system-wide mechanisms should be independent, going beyond the structural autonomy suggested in the Terms of Reference to this review. The four basic criteria of independence, namely (i) behavioural autonomy, (ii) avoidance of conflicts of interest, (iii) insulation from external influence, and (iv) organizational independence, should be the independence test for system-wide evaluation.

Independence should not result in isolation of the mechanism from operations. There is scope for considerable gains from mutual interactions without interfering with one another's activities. These interactions can contribute toward ensuring coherence of corporate standards (as with UNEG norms and standards) and toward fostering corporate ownership of findings and the use of recommendations for improvement. For example, in the World Bank, the participation of the Director General of IEG in senior management forums (such as the relevant meetings of the Management Committee) is seen as mutually beneficial. This participation enhances the quality of operations by highlighting the evaluation lessons. At the same time, such participation helps improve understanding of the current internal and external environments that face operations and influence development outcomes.

Independence is a necessary but not sufficient condition for good system-wide evaluation. While independence is a requirement for credible evaluation, the credibility of an evaluation also depends on other factors such as the quality and integrity of analysis, the degree of transparency of the evaluation process, and the competence and credibility of the evaluators. Producing credible evaluations is not sufficient. An evaluation can be credible from a technical perspective, but may not necessarily be used if it does not meet the needs or expectations of those who are expected to use the results.

Credibility of an evaluation unit is built on the competence of the work it does. Today, this is measured against the quality of the data evaluations provide as evidence for specific evaluation questions. Data, both quantitative and qualitative, are judged by the extent to which systematic methods are used to present a fair

representation (reliable and valid) of what was gathered. Given the complexity of the UN system, the credibility of the evaluators and the evaluation mechanism cannot be understated.

Finding 28: Good system-wide evaluation focuses on the key questions that governors want answered to improve the strategic and operational functioning of the organization.

Depending on the definition one uses for ISWE, there is already a great deal of such work occurring in the UN system. It is being carried out by the JIU, DESA and OCHA, as well as through ad hoc and joint arrangements.

It is evident from the interviews and our analysis of demand regarding system-wide evaluations that Member States of the UN system are beginning to seek answers to questions that are not answered by routine or ordinary evaluations or even through UNDAF evaluations. Increasingly, Member States are asking where and how the United Nations should invest: what should be the balance between country level investment and investment on global issues? How can entities in the UN system work together to support countries in making the transition from crisis to recovery and development? The questions cut across the four pillars of the UN system and in many instances are normative and present critical dilemmas that need articulating and negotiating. They are also critical for assessing the progress being made by the UN system in helping to reduce poverty. These themes cut across agencies and geographies. Significantly, there is also external pressure from individual governments who are asking what value the UN system adds to a particular issue, be it at the country, regional or global level. Individual governments are also putting pressure on UN entities to focus on their comparative strengths and exit from those areas in which other bilateral and multilateral organizations are better equipped.

These are among the key or strategic questions that the Member States of the UN system are beginning to ask, albeit not always articulated as explicitly. However, our review of the evaluation agenda of the various evaluation units in the UN system indicates that these questions have not found their way onto the evaluation agenda of the UN system. This may be because there is not a coherent evaluation agenda for the UN system, nor is there a body mandated to think through these questions and how they can be addressed through evaluation.

Finding 29: ISWE must be mandated by those who govern the organization. Governors ensure that there is an environment for independent, credible and useful evaluation.

In developing ISWE, mandate plays a critical role. Mechanisms that have a clearly defined process for collectively articulating and communicating their mandates are more successful in achieving their goals (Senge, 1990; Drucker, 2004). An organizational mandate is a written authorization, normally from a governing body, which authorizes a unit or mechanism to engage in identified actions. With respect to developing an appropriate ISWE mechanism, it is imperative that this mechanism has authorization to engage in ISWE work from either ECOSOC or the General Assembly. The authorization would depend on the ultimate agreed to definition of 'system-wide'. The authorization should identify to whom and how ISWE is accountable, and the mechanisms needed to ensure independence (structural, behavioural, conflict of interest), compliance and ownership (aiding utility) of the ISWE. It should also determine the access to information given to evaluators, and the professional staff and structure needed for the ISWE's credibility. Within the United Nations today, several groups and or units claim to have many of these qualities. Some see themselves as system-wide, but not as independent. Others see themselves as sub-system players, just needing the authority to work system-wide. However, all our interviewees indicated that whatever mechanism is created will require a governing structure that ensures adequate resources for the tasks

required and that is committed to engaging with the complex governing environment of the United Nations.[88]

Who mandates ISWE has implications for how results are fed back into the system, and for who is responsible for acting on recommendations from ISWE. In the South African case study, the joint country level system-wide evaluation was mandated by the Government of South Africa, with the UN system represented by UNEG. On the South African side, there was a formal process for feeding results back into the government system and acting on the recommendations. By contrast, UNEG, not being an intergovernmental structure, has no mandate to compel UN agencies to act on the recommendations of the joint evaluation. Despite UNEG's best efforts, it could not secure management responses from the relevant governing bodies, nor was it clear who should respond on behalf of the United Nations.

While the mandating by the relevant legislative bodies is essential for good ISWE, so too is the commitment of senior management to ensure that the necessary resources are available, and importantly, that recommendations from ISWE are acted upon and monitored.

Finding 30: **Financial and human resources for ISWE should be commensurate with the scope of delivery expected from ISWE by those who govern and senior management. ISWE requires a significant investment of resources to produce quality evaluations that can be used.**

Presently, the United Nations spends about 6 million dollars a year on the work of the JIU. In addition, it spends several million dollars on other system-wide evaluation activities. Data we obtained from UNEG members indicate that less than 0.5 percent of most agency funds are spent on evaluations. While there are no definitive cost estimates, the perception of those interviewed suggests that evaluation generally and ISWE in particular are not adequately funded. Our point is that a good ISWE has the funds required to prepare credible and useful reports that can answer key operational and strategic questions. Such funding would vary depending on the demand for this type of evaluations and the work plan approved by the people who govern the system (i.e., Member States in the United Nations). Interviews with JIU suggest that the unit is significantly limited in the ISWE work it is engaged in due to funding constraints.[89]

Finding 31: **Member States should have the requisite capacity to play their role in engaging in the strategic evaluations that ISWE is expected to produce.**

Lessons from system-wide evaluations and institutional frameworks of other multilateral organizations suggest that governors play a key role in ISWE, as the ones responsible for mandates and oversight of ISWE. Good ISWE therefore requires that governors have the requisite capacity to play that role. What does this mean in practice in the United Nations?

First, Member States should have the capacity to articulate the strategic questions they want answered by ISWE. How these questions are articulated determines to a large extent what the Member States will get out of ISWE. Lessons from other system-wide evaluations, such as Delivering as One, show that defining the overall vision, scope and purpose of a system-wide evaluation is not a straightforward matter.

Second, Member States need to understand the role they play in ISWE so that their contributions count. This means that their roles should be articulated unambiguously in the governance framework for ISWE. Again, the lessons from past evaluations are instructive in this regard.

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[88] Delivery as One Independent Evaluation put together an interesting model for governing an evaluation, quite different from others we reviewed. The issue is whether such a model can lead to a reasonable level of governance ownership and interest in the evaluation.

[89] We will look at this issue later in our recommendations.

Third, Member States need capacity to engage with the results of ISWE. This means having the necessary time and resources to do so.

It is a fact that the existing agenda of Member States is already crowded and that, as the experience of the JIU shows, very little time is dedicated to discussion of reports. It is also a fact that different Member States have different levels of capacity to engage in ISWE. A good ISWE mechanism will have to find ways to overcome this challenge of asymmetry in the capacity of Member States.

Finding 32: Good ISWE has evaluators and evaluation managers who are technically competent to deal with methodological complexities, have good strategic sense, and possess political astuteness to negotiate across the institutional, organizational, geographic and other boundaries involved in system-wide work.

Credible evaluations need credible evaluators and this is no less true for ISWE. It could be argued that given the methodological complexities of evaluating horizontally or across boundaries, ISWE places a premium on exceptionally good technical evaluation skills. Evaluators for ISWE need to be technically competent in designing and conducting evaluations that cut across several organizations, in dealing with issues of multiple and incompatible data collection practices, and in designing the evaluation so that it is focused at the system-wide level, yet is of use to the individual entities that make up the system. As discussed previously, demand for ISWE should be driven by the Member States who need answers to strategic questions facing the UN system. It therefore follows that evaluators in ISWE need to have a good sense of what is strategic and what is not if they are to be effective evaluators.

Technical skills however are by themselves insufficient. ISWE takes place in a political context where stakeholders more often than not have very divergent interests. Credible ISWE therefore also requires evaluators, especially those who are charged with leading ISWE, to possess the necessary political and negotiation skills to work across boundaries and manage these divergent interests.[90] Evaluation managers, in addition to technical competencies, need to be skilled in managing complex processes, engaging with stakeholders who have competing interests, ability to navigate internal and external politics, and excel at advocating for the use of evaluation results.

While the UN entities who responded to the survey believe that their staff have the necessary skills for ISWE, our assessment is that there are pockets of good skills and capacity within the UN system, but these are not sufficient to meet the current demand for ISWE.

Finding 33: A central quality of a good ISWE is to manage a balance between supporting the governors of the organization in their oversight responsibilities and being useful to senior management. There are also different interests within these respective groups which need balancing. This balance is not easy to manage.

The people who govern an organization have an oversight responsibility. In the case of the United Nations, its Member States must be able to obtain credible evidence that answer their most pressing concerns: are Member States obtaining results that are commensurate with the resources and efforts invested? How has the UN system contributed to development effectiveness? To what extent is the UN system contributing to global improvement in the quality of life of citizens? These questions are not easy to answer at the country level, as was made evident in the Joint South Africa-UNEG evaluation, and more so at the global level. While these questions are not easy to answer, it is ultimately up to the Member States of the UN system to respond to them as best as possible. This is a key responsibility of theirs. ISWE needs to support this responsibility by providing credible evaluation reports.

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[90] The Joint South Africa-UNEG evaluation was led by the former Auditor-General of South Africa who also had experience in auditing the UN system. Being highly respected on both sides, he was able to manage the different stakeholder interests without compromising the evaluation.

One problem is that Member States of the UN system do not necessarily share the same interests. On the one hand, the country (national government) is the ultimate judge of whether or not the UN system is contributing to national development and of what should be done to achieve the desired results and impact. On the other hand, those Member States who make large financial contributions have a duty to their constituents to ask whether funds are being managed and used efficiently and effectively. A good ISWE mechanism must understand the complexity of divergent interests amongst those who govern and be able to navigate these interests without compromising the credibility of its evaluations.

The same reports produced for Member States have to be useful to the senior management of various entities in the UN system, so as to inform them from an external view about the strengths and weaknesses of their entities. This, however, is not a simple managerial or technical issue as the environment within which ISWE operates is a political one. There is always the risk that technical issues become politicized and result in no changes or improvements being made. ISWE by definition would cut across a number of functions or entities in the UN system. Like Member States, senior management is not a homogenous group and inter-organizational politics are a reality of any organization as large and diverse as the United Nations. Balancing all these different interests is a role usually played by a head of evaluation that has the necessary mandate from the governors, as exemplified in the governance models of the World Bank and the IMF. In addition, such balance requires a level of interpersonal skill and maturity on the part of the individual tasked to lead an ISWE function.

Finding 34: Good ISWE takes time to develop and institutionalize. The complexity of the United Nations environment suggests that experimentation be used as a means of testing new structures and processes.

ISWE operates in a very complex political and technical environment. The political complexity emerges from the diversity of the United Nations' membership and interests. The technical complexity emerges from the various UN entities which must be coordinated if a system-wide evaluation is to be conducted.. Such complexity requires a high level of experimentation and learning. The Delivery as One evaluability assessments and the Joint South Africa-UNEG evaluation are some examples of experimentation and learning, as are the Real-Time Evaluations of OCHA. In the case of the South African evaluation, both South Africa and UNEG were in unchartered waters as there was no precedent for a system-wide country level evaluation that covered the four pillars of the United Nation's mandate. The lessons generated by this evaluation informed the Delivery as One country-led evaluations.

To date a great deal of ISWE has been carried out above and beyond people's normal work load. Incentives are minimal and a lot of work has to be done without extra resources. Previous proposals for the introduction of a new ISWE mechanism or unit have been rejected by a significant number of stakeholders. Introducing a new ISWE mechanism or even strengthening existing mechanisms in as complex an organization as the United Nations cannot be achieved over a short period of time and the 'learning by doing' or experimentation approach is better suited to the operating environment of the UN system.

Finding 35: ISWE is one part of a larger system. If it is strengthened, the other components of the larger system need strengthening as well to keep the system in balance.

ISWE should be understood as only one part of a "system" that enables the governors and senior management to be accountable and create systemic improvements. Strengthening the capacity of governors and operators to engage in ISWE supports two components of the system. However, the system consists of other components as well. We identified a variety of system components that make up the institutional framework for ISWE. As one strengthens ISWE, it is important to strengthen other components as well (e.g., evaluation entities, country entities and capacity, monitoring systems, country statistical units, etc.). Indeed, building national evaluation capacity is a critical task. Member States need to own the evaluation process affecting their countries, have the capacity to lead such evaluations, have appropriate data systems

and have the capacity to use the evaluations. While many countries have these capacities, a significant number do not.

Good ISWE does not operate at the expense of evaluation functions of individual agencies. In fact, good ISWE requires well-capacitated and functioning individual evaluation units that can support and contribute to ISWE in addition to carrying out their agency-specific mandates. While most evaluation units reporting in the survey praise the present level of capacity of their unit, experience tells us that, as one moves to more strategic evaluations, a greater level of both technical and political capacity is required. Thus, as one builds ISWE mechanisms, other system components will need to be built as well.

Finding 36: Good ISWE pays attention to the human rights and gender equality dimensions of the programmes and activities being evaluated. It also integrates human rights and gender equality into the design, implementation and reporting of ISWE.

Promoting and protecting human rights is central to the mandate of the United Nations and all UN entities are required to incorporate human rights and gender equality into their work. These two principles are system-wide principles and therefore should be an integral part of the institutional framework for ISWE.

Good ISWE should respond to questions that go to the heart of the United Nations' mandate: how well are human rights and gender equality incorporated into UN policies, programmes and practices? Are UN policies, programmes and practices contributing to human rights and gender equality and thereby contributing to results?

Good ISWE also ensures that its own actions do not undermine the gender equality and human rights agenda of the United Nations. It therefore integrates these considerations into the design, implementation and reporting of its evaluations. This in turn requires those conducting or managing ISWE to have the necessary technical skills and respect for these principles.

7. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

As identified in Chapter 1, the purpose of this review is to provide recommendations to the United Nations on how to strengthen the existing system-wide evaluation function in the UN system with regard to operational activities for development. To arrive at these recommendations, we reviewed the demand and use for ISWE; the institutional framework; and the existing capacity within the UN system to manage, conduct and contribute to ISWE. Understanding what presently exists with respect to ISWE and identifying what makes a "good" ISWE allows us to explore gaps in the system and make recommendations on the types of mechanisms the United Nations might use to bridge these gaps. This chapter summarizes the major findings, identifies the major gaps and suggests ways for the United Nations to address these issues.

It needs to be made clear that a system-wide evaluation is not the only type of information that is useful and that it is not a replacement for the many kinds of evaluations that exist (e.g., project, programme, organizational, etc.).

7.2 Summary of Findings

7.2.1 The Context

The current interest in ISWE is part of the broader context of reform in the UN system. There are increased demands for strengthened accountability and improving the impact of the Organization's operations. The context is characterized by a greater focus on results, a desire for better evaluative reporting and the desire to provide value for money invested in the UN system.

The review found that there is a wide variety of interpretations of what constitutes ISWE and several evaluation units claimed to have participated in system-wide evaluations, mostly on an ad hoc basis. However, the JIU is the only entity with a substantive mandate to conduct or manage independent system-wide evaluations. Others such as UN Women and OCHA have system-wide mandates pertaining to specific themes, for examples, gender equality and humanitarian activities, while the mandate of OIOS is confined to the UN Secretariat.

UNEG, although it is a voluntary professional network and not a legislated body, plays an important role in promoting an enabling environment for evaluation and good evaluation practices. It has, on an ad hoc basis, filled the gap in managing system-wide evaluations (for example, the Joint South Africa-UNEG evaluation and the Delivering as One Evaluability Assessment). This gap has persisted, as over the past five years it has been difficult for the United Nations to reach consensus on the institutional and organizational approaches to ISWE.

7.2.2 Demand for ISWE

The demand for ISWE is varied and diverse. The different mandates of UN entities and the different interpretations of ISWE complicate the analysis of demand. The review found that demand for ISWE varied depending on how interviewees interpreted the concepts of "system-wide" and "independence". Some interviewees suggested that they were more interested in requesting ISWE work when system-wide truly meant the entire UN system. Other interviewees felt that evaluation at the UN system level was too cumbersome, while a third group questioned the idea and assumption that the UN should be considered as a system that can be evaluated.

Regardless of this definitional issue and of ambivalence on the part of senior managers and Member States towards ISWE, data suggest there is a growing interest and demand for a wide variety of evaluative work

which has system-wide characteristics. Four types of demand for ISWE were identified and explored: evaluation studies that focus on UN work within a country; evaluation work that deals with the UN strategy and/or policies; evaluation work that explores UN themes implemented by multiple agencies; and evaluation studies of UN management practices. These categories can be further subdivided according to whether evaluations focus primarily on strategic or operational work.

There is a paucity of systematic data to assess the actual demand for ISWE, except for the data collected by the JIU through its needs assessment surveys. Data from the JIU suggests that demand for ISWE, though erratic, has increased over the past 10 years. Increasingly, the demand comes from UN organizations and oversight bodies, with emphasis on management/administrative studies. This focus is largely in response to the 2007 TCPR which identified system-wide management issues and the need for harmonization of business practices within the UN system. There has been a steady demand for evaluations in the humanitarian sector that are of an inter-agency nature and most of these are country level operational evaluations.

Demand for ISWE at the country level is nascent and can be expected to grow. UNDAFs represent operational activities for development at the country level and evaluations of UNDAFs became mandatory in January 2010. Programming countries themselves are asking what the contribution of the UN system is to their national priorities.

It is not surprising that demand for ISWE is varied and diverse as the interests of Member States and UN organizations are diverse and complex. System-wide evaluations are resource intensive and diverse demands need to be prioritized and coordinated to ensure that the UN system derives maximum value for money from ISWE. Other than the coordination between the JIU and OIOS, the UN system as whole does not coordinate demand for ISWE. Prioritization of ISWE demand is not done across the UN system, nor can it be done as there is no overarching strategy to guide prioritization. The question of "demand for what purpose?" or "what does the United Nations want to achieve through ISWE?" has not been answered unambiguously by the UN system.

7.2.3 Institutional Framework

The institutional framework for ISWE in the UN system was explored in Chapter 4. The review made use of the institutional criteria for evaluation developed by UNEG (with some minor adjustments for ISWE). In addition, the review examined institutional issues such as governance and operational institutions, including UN programming countries. In general, the review found that for ISWE, institutional components such as leadership, policies, structures, norms, and values were ad hoc and weak. Only the JIU has been given a strong mandate to engage in ISWE work. The study suggests that the role and function of ISWE is not clear, nor are expectations for this work. Furthermore, the review suggests that while Member States pay some attention to individual ISWE studies, there is virtually no oversight to the totality of evaluation work being done beyond a single organization (ISWE, various joint evaluations). Similarly, individual units engage in ISWE in areas of concern to them (e.g., OCHA in the humanitarian sector), but there is little coordination of this work at the system level. The dearth of mechanisms to coordinate work represents a major gap for ISWE in the United Nations.

7.2.4 Existing Evaluation Capacity

We reviewed the existing evaluation capacity in Chapter 5 and found that the existing capacity for ISWE is inadequate. The financial and human resources for most evaluation units in the UN system are limited for their day-to-day work, and participation in ISWE often means working without extra resources. Very few entities in the UN system have an evaluation expenditure that exceeds 1% of the total expenditure of the particular UN entity.

There is little doubt that the quality of evaluation practitioners in the UN system continues to improve, in large part due to the work of UNEG. However, there is a gap in developing capacity for ISWE. No specific

competencies have been identified for evaluation managers and evaluation practitioners for ISWE, and it is assumed that no special competencies are required beyond the normal evaluation competencies. Lessons from existing ISWE show that this is not the case.

Evaluation capacity at the country level is essential for effective ISWE but, based on an assessment of UNDAF evaluations, capacity at this level is not adequate for ISWE. There are pockets of good capacity in the UN system, but other than UNEG, there is no structure that has an overview of existing capacity. Furthermore, UNEG is a voluntary organization and does not have the resources or the mandate to coordinate existing capacity.

We were unable to determine accurately the number of evaluations produced in the UN system each year, but from the data available through UNEG, there are over 300 evaluations completed each year. From our interviews as well as the JIU reports, we are concerned that the system may not have the capacity to engage effectively with the recommendations of so many evaluations.

7.2.5 Characteristics of Good ISWE

When we look at the various components of ISWE in the UN and explore what constitutes good ISWE, a number of issues emerge. Firstly, a good ISWE is one that meets the key requirements of the organization. It provides credible and useful evidence on key strategic and operational questions facing the UN system. At a strategic level, it provides evidence on the extent to which the various United Nations objectives, treaty obligations, and other system-wide mandates such as gender equality are being carried out by the organizations. In this sense, it is providing information on system level outcome results.

In addition, a good ISWE needs to provide evidence about the value members are obtaining from their various investments. Efficiency is but one issue of the value for money concern. Good ISWE also provides insights into the needs and aspirations of the wide ranging partners and stakeholders. While these aspirations of ISWE are easy to articulate, few organizations are able to deliver on them. Given the present resources, technologies, capacities, context, and institutions, the best ISWE approaches are the ones that are able to identify their strengths and weaknesses and create the conditions for change. Good ISWE thus needs to be flexible and adaptive to the changing UN system circumstances.

As we looked at the United Nations, we found a wide assortment of gaps that deviated from the ideal. This is not surprising nor is it different from many other organizations. The issue is which gaps can be addressed to obtain the most gain with the least institutional disruption and resource use. This is congruent with the intent of our Terms of Reference. This is the focus of our recommendations.

7.3 Conclusions

In conclusion, ISWE is occurring in a wide variety of forms and in a wide variety of ways. Some ISWE reports have been identified as helpful, but others have been considered less helpful. At an operational level, ISWE has suffered from a lack of coordination. This is not surprising, considering there is little policy guidance and no clear leadership or strategy for ISWE within the system.

There is also little data on the demand for ISWE and little data indicating that trade-offs are being made in choosing which ISWE activities to do from a system perspective. While the available data suggest that there continues to be a demand for ISWE, there is also reluctance from senior managers and Member States to move ahead in addressing this demand because of concerns related to current ISWE use.

Furthermore, clear analysis of financial requirements for doing ISWE have not been made and quality controls have been ad hoc. In this context, there has been very little consciously invested in building the institutional and organizational capacity to improve the system-wide evaluation function in the United Nations. In fact, when the United Nations has tried to tackle the issues confronting ISWE, it has approached the problem as a structural rather than a functional one –functional referring to the role ISWE plays and should play within the UN. By addressing ISWE from a structural standpoint (i.e., creating units

or establishing an accountable group), ISWE became politicized[91] with different groups in the United Nations supporting different structural approaches. Our interviews confirm that the politicization of ISWE remains a significant concern even today. Hence, moving the issues which pose problem to ISWE ahead will not be easy. However, the experience we have had in doing this review suggests that there is willingness in the UN system to have substantive discussions and dialogue on ISWE. Our interviewees see that continuing the ad hoc approach to ISWE is inefficient and sometimes ineffective, and therefore not sustainable.

7.4 Recommendations

Our approach to formulating recommendations was shaped by the need for ISWE to get out of the politicization rut. We considered what actions are in the realm of the possible and the importance of dialogue in moving the issue forward. Our recommendations are structured into actions that can be accomplished in the short-term (within the first two years) and the medium-to-long term (what can be done in the three to five year horizon). Responsibility for implementing these recommendations should fall under the purview of the General Assembly.

Recommendation 1: **The President of the General Assembly should set up a working group to explore the specific function it wants ISWE to play within the United Nations system.**

Independent system-wide evaluation is going on within the United Nations and will continue. This review recommends that it needs a firmer institutional footing (rules, standards, mandates) as well as mechanisms to coordinate activity and provide legitimacy for the work undertaken. In addition, we suggest that system-wide evaluations are not adequately being carried out in the policy and strategic areas and propose a way forward.

While this review was able to explore some operational questions, it was unable to put in place a process that would allow for a more complete discussion of some of the underlying value issues that are linked to ISWE, for example, on such questions as:

- What role should ISWE play within the United Nations? What is its function?
- What are its goals?
- How should ISWE be governed? How should priorities be set?
- What should ISWE include? Exclude?
- What do UN members want to accomplish with ISWE?
- What resources should the system invest in this function?
- What structures and mechanisms should be put in place to support the coherence of the function?
- What should their mandates be?
- What are the expectations of ISWE and how should they be reported on and reviewed?

A review of fundamental values is the role of Member States and senior officials of the United Nations. This review can point the way but it cannot presuppose the values of the Organization. Discussions at the

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[91] By bypassing existing structures which were supported by some groups for ISWE, without consultation or consensus, past ISWE activities were interpreted as being institutional power plays, even though this was not the intention.

consultative workshop in October 2011 suggested that continuing dialogue on some of the most difficult value questions associated with ISWE is the only way to move this agenda forward in the long term. We agree with this position and thus recommend that the President of the General Assembly sets up a working group composed of Member States to discuss these issues. The exact form and participation should be determined by the General Assembly. We suggest that those intergovernmental structures that have a particular interest in ISWE, for example ECOSOC, the 2nd Committee and 5th Committee, be part of the working group.

Finally, we suggest that the working group take up an issue that has been central to the United Nations ISWE discussion but which has not yet been solved: what role should the JIU play in the emerging ISWE function and how does this role affect the current JIU mandate and style of work?

Recommendation 2: **The Secretary-General should establish a process for strengthening coordination of the existing ISWE activities in the UN system. An interim coordination mechanism in the form of a Steering Group should be tasked with managing the process.**

Many different types of collaborations are emerging around interagency and system-wide evaluations. The UN system regularly collaborates within countries (Delivering as One, Haiti Emergency Relief), engages in multi-agency projects (Iraq Fund, Sudan Fund), shares administrative procedures (medical insurance), works together on cross cutting themes (AIDS, gender), operationalizes system-wide policy directives (decentralization), and so forth. These require coordination and collaboration among and between agencies in order for an ISWE to take place. All require some type of coordinating mechanism to carry out an ISWE.

The existing system-wide evaluations will continue because an authorizing group (for example, from a fund, programme, IASC or the General Assembly) requests that they be carried out. In such an ad hoc system, an interim Steering Group should be formed and tasked with managing the process of improving coordination, until such time when there is agreement on the form and mandate of a permanent coordinating mechanism (s).

The Steering Group could be mandated to inform senior management and Member States in the UN system about annual ISWE activities, and to advise on planning and resourcing of ISWE. In addition, this group could be tasked with helping the General Assembly better understand the totality of all planned and reported ISWE work, the limits of existing human and financial resource capacity, and the development of norms and standards for ISWE, as well as with providing technical guidance for evaluation units participating, managing or conducting ISWE.

One of the first tasks of the Steering Group could be to define what type of work qualifies as ISWE. The Terms of Reference for this review suggest that "system-wide" should be limited to development activities. Our suggestion is for the General Assembly to consider a broader definition, since an increasing amount of UN activities do not fall within development and humanitarian work.

We propose the following as a starting point for developing the mandate of the Steering Group:

1) To maintain a database on all internal and external ISWE activities.

2) To work with the various evaluation units to develop a yearly overall list of planned SWEs.

3) To respond to requests from the General Assembly and the CEB regarding the best way to conduct ISWE using the existing institutional framework and capacities.

4) To provide the General Assembly support for engaging in evaluation work related to the United Nations' role in international agreements.

5) To identify institutional and capacity issues related to the conduct of ISWE. Special attention should be given to the capacity requirements of Member States who are asked to lead and or participate in such evaluations.

6) To provide an assessment of the resources being expended by ISWE activities to the General Assembly.

7) To make suggestions, where appropriate, on potential topics to guide a work programme for ISWE.

8) To do an annual demand analysis based on data that exists in the system and to make recommendations with respect to ways the United Nations can improve its understanding of ISWE demand.

9) To provide an annual report on the state of ISWE in the United Nations.

The composition of the Steering Group should ultimately be determined by the United Nations. We suggest that the Reference Group for the ISWE review be retained to serve as the Steering Group, with additional members to be added.

Recommendation 3: **The JIU should be supported in its on-going efforts to improve its effectiveness and relevance as an ISWE mechanism. This support should include providing the JIU with the opportunity to test its ability to coordinate operational work of ISWE.**

Over the last 40 years the JIU has played a role in ISWE in the United Nations. Its statute, written in 1978, identified a set of practices and principles that guide its work. The primary modus operandi of the JIU is for an inspector (sometimes two) aided by JIU staff to conduct an evaluation. We call this the "inspector approach". In this approach, each inspector carries out their own evaluation (subject to peer review), and does so within the budget constraints of the unit. Conversations with several inspectors from the JIU and its Executive Secretary indicate that there is an openness to explore other approaches and methodologies which can utilize the JIU's experience but not necessarily its "inspector approach".

To date, many changes have been suggested to the JIU and the unit itself has made many suggestions for change. Some suggestions have been implemented, others not. Some require a change in the JIU statute, for which there is a great deal of reluctance. The JIU is contemplating a self-evaluation and has put this into their Strategic Framework. We propose that the JIU takes this a step further and commissions an independent review.

Discussions we have had indicate that both JIU and UN staff have thought about improvement and are interested in figuring out new and innovative ways for engaging the JIU in ISWE. An example which was casually discussed concerns how the JIU could have played a more substantive role in DaO evaluations. Conversations with JIU and DESA officials suggest there is a new willingness to explore the use of the JIU as an implementer of ISWEs such as DaO. Interviews with those involved in the DaO evaluation suggested that it would have been more efficient to utilize the JIU as a mechanism for the DaO evaluation than to set up a separate ad hoc unit in DESA.[92] The issue is that changes in longstanding practices need to be planned and discussed before situations arise. However, respectful dialogue, time and resources are required.[93, 94]

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[92] We were told that the JIU was approached to work on DaO but declined due to resource constraints. Our own assessment is that there is a new openness to thinking about new ways to utilize the experience of the JIU. This will take some dialogue and could be done as part of the role of the coordinating committee –of which the JIU should be a member.

[93] One of the concerns the JIU had in undertaking DaO is that the resource implications for this work were not well understood and thus would have taken away from the unit's existing resources –which the JIU feels are inadequate.

Recommendation 4:   **The UN system should take action to improve the quality of system-wide, policy-focused evaluations such as the QCPR. As a starting point, the Secretary-General should commission an independent evaluation of the QCPR purpose, approach, credibility and usefulness.**

Strategic/policy evaluations are one of the tools required for the governance of the UN system and, given the issues confronting the United Nations as an organization, there is an emerging demand for more strategic or policy evaluations on a system-wide level. DESA has the mandate to support policy development in the United Nations through its work on policy analysis. In addition, DESA engages in the evaluation of the strategic foci (QCPR evaluation) of the United Nations.

Throughout our interviews, it became clear that there is ambivalence with respect to the QCPR process and report. Should DESA do this evaluation, even though it does not have an evaluation unit? What type of strategic or policy evaluation is warranted? Many questions were raised as part of this review. As we discussed this issue along with the more general issue of who should engage in United Nations policy evaluations, we came to the conclusion that the Member States should request the Secretary-General to commission a study exploring the methods being used to evaluate the implementation and results of policy decisions made by the General Assembly and ECOSOC. Within this request, the General Assembly should ask for a special review of the process for assessing the operational activities of the UN system and its contribution to development. Such a review would explore the purpose, approach, credibility and usefulness of the QCPR as a case study. The lessons generated through the evaluation of the QCPR can inform the UN system on what might be done to improve strategic/policy level evaluations.

Recommendation 5:   **The Secretary-General should request UNEG to work with its members in developing specific standards, guidance and competencies associated with system-wide evaluation. The Secretary-General should ensure that the necessary resources are made available to UNEG to facilitate this work.**

UNEG has been a strong supporter in the United Nations' endeavour to improve its evaluation capacity. UNEG's efforts have led to a variety of guidelines and standards that have been adopted in various forms by its member groups. While its work to date has primarily dealt with individual evaluation units, it should be noted that SWEs are different. They are inherently larger, more complex and often very costly. Ownership and utilization has been a problem, as has, in some instances, the credibility of the work. While independence is often discussed as a necessary condition for engaging in SWE, independence as discussed in this report is an elusive idea and sometimes trade-offs need to be made. In this context, a body such as UNEG is in a good position to make suggestions to the United Nations about the standards, guidelines and competencies required for ISWE work.

To facilitate this work, we recommend that dedicated resources be made available through the Secretary-General for UNEG to carry out this task. The work of UNEG would be fed into the General Assembly by the Secretary-General, for approval of the General Assembly. This would be a complement to Recommendation 6.

Recommendation 6:   **The Secretary-General should update the evaluation guidelines for the United Nations and include special directives related to ISWE in these guidelines.**

The Secretary-General's bulletin (ST/SGB 2000/8) provides the regulations and rules for programme planning, monitoring and evaluation. This is the principal evaluation guidance provided to the system by

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[94] From the perspective of DESA officials involved in DaO evaluations, governance of the evaluation activity entailed a significant amount of transaction costs which could have been reduced by better utilizing the expertise of the JIU.

the Secretary-General and it does not include any reference to system-wide activities or joint activities. Many things have changed since this bulletin came out in the year 2000, including the role and function of ISWE in the UN system. Clarifying definitions, processes and activities for evaluation that include ISWE would provide a rule-based mechanism within which ISWE can operate.

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Appendix II List of Definitions

Term	Definition
Appraisal	A critical assessment of the potential value of an undertaking before a decision is made to implement it.
Audit	An assessment of the adequacy of management controls to ensure the economical and efficient use of resources; the safeguarding of assets; the reliability of financial and other information; the compliance with regulations, rules and established policies; the effectiveness of risk management; and the adequacy of organizational structures, systems and processes.
Capacity	This is defined as the ability to carry out an independent system-wide evaluation.
Evaluation	An 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 lack thereof. It aims at determining the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the interventions and contributions of the organizations of the UN 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 UN system and its members.[95]
Governance Arrangement	This is defined as the authorizing environment which provides the legitimacy of an organization or group to carry out its work.
Independence	An evaluation function has to be located independently from the other management functions so that it is free from undue influence and that unbiased and transparent reporting is ensured. It needs to have full discretion in submitting its reports for consideration at the appropriate level of decision-making pertaining to the subject of the evaluation.[96]
Institutional framework for system-wide evaluation	This represents the rules under which independent system-wide evaluation operates. Such rules are made explicit in mandates, policies, values, norms, beliefs, structures, finance, partnerships etc.
Inspection	A general examination that seeks to identify vulnerable areas and malfunctions and to propose corrective action.
Internal management consulting	Consulting services to help managers implement changes that address organizational and managerial challenges and improve internal work processes
Investigation	A specific examination of a claim of wrongdoing and provision of evidence for eventual prosecution or disciplinary measures.
Monitoring	Management's continuous examination of progress achieved during the implementation of an undertaking to track compliance with the plan and to take necessary decisions to improve performance.
Operational activities for development	Operational activities for development of the United Nations system are defined as those activities of funds, programmes and agencies which have the specific objective of promoting development. A number of United Nations entities have specific mandates in this regard. Operational activities for development cover both longer-term development-related activities as well as activities with a humanitarian assistance focus

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[95] UNEG Norms and Standards

[96] Ibid.

Term	Definition
Research	A systematic examination designed to develop or contribute to knowledge.
Review	The periodic or ad hoc often rapid assessments of the performance of an undertaking that does not apply the due process of evaluation. Reviews tend to emphasize operational issues.
System-wide	System-wide refers to all relevant member organizations of the UN system involved in a specific area, effort, issues or sector, at country/regional/global level. It usually implies a focus on how effectively the different parts of the system are working together.

Appendix III List of Persons Consulted

Name	Designation	Affiliation
United Nations entities		
Angela Li Rosi	Senior Policy Adviser, Policy Development and Evaluation Service, Executive Office	UNHCR
Arild Hauge	Section Chief, Inspection and Evaluation Office	OIOS
Caroline Heider	Head of Evaluation	WFP
Colin Kirk	Director, Office of Evaluation	UNICEF
Craig Russon	Senior Evaluation Officer, Evaluation Office	International Labour Organization
David Webb	Director, Office of Internal Oversight Services	WHO
Deborah Landey	Director	DOCO
Deborah Rugg	Director, Evaluation Office	OIOS
(Eddie) Yee Woo Guo	Acting Director, Inspection and Evaluation Division	OIOS
Gérard Biraud	Inspector	Joint Inspection Unit
Istvan Posta	Inspector	Joint Inspection Unit
Jeff Crisp	Head, Policy Development and Evaluation Service, Executive Office	UNHCR
Jennifer Worrell	Chief, Policy, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Service	OHCHR
Jesús Lara Alonso	Senior Evaluation and Inspection Officer	Joint Inspection Unit
Lucien Back	Chief of the Secretariat to the Independent Evaluation of Delivering as One United Nations	DESA
Maria Santamaria	Medical Officer, Office of Internal Oversight Services	WHO
Marion Barthelemy	Chief, Development Co-operation Policy Branch	Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, DESA
M. Mounir Zahran	Chairman and Inspector	Joint Inspection Unit
Naomi Asukai	Evaluation and Inspection Officer	Joint Inspection Unit
Navid Hanif	Acting Director, Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Nikhil Seth	Director	Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Nikolay Chulkov	Inspector	Joint Inspection Unit
Oscar Garcia	Evaluation Adviser, Evaluation Office	UNDP

Name	Designation	Affiliation
Parfait Onanga Anyanga	Director	Office of the Deputy Secretary-General
Paul De Lay	Deputy Executive Director, Programme (Former Director of Evidence, Monitoring and Evaluation)	UNAIDS
Phyllis Lee	Secretary, High-Level Committee on Programmes	CEB Secretariat
Remo Lalli	Secretary, High-level Committee on Management	CEB Secretariat
Saraswathi Menon	Director, Evaluation Office	UNDP and former Chairperson of UNEG
Stefan Helck	Evaluation and Inspection Officer	Joint Inspection Unit
Susanne Frueh	Executive Secretary	Joint Inspection Unit
Tadanori Inomata	Vice Chairman and Inspector	Joint Inspection Unit
Tim Martineau	Director, Technical and Operational Support Department Programme	UNAIDS
Vicky Tennant	Senior Policy Officer, Development and Evaluation Service, Executive Office	UNHCR
Vincent Hermie	Evaluation and Inspection Officer	Joint Inspection Unit
Yuen Ching Ho	Officer-in-Charge, Evaluation and Planning Unit	UNCTAD
Reference Group		
Belan Sanz	Chief, Evaluation Office	UN Women and Current Chairperson of UNEG
Demetra Arapakos	Acting Deputy Director, OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Office	OIOS
Juha Utto	Deputy Director, UNDP Evaluation Office	Representing UNEG Secretariat
Kristinn Sv. Helgason	Deputy Chief, Development Co-operation Policy Branch	DESA
Scott Green	Chief, Evaluation Section	OCHA
Member States		
A. Gopinathan	Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative	Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland
Alexander S. Alimov	Senior Counsellor, Chief of Economic Division	Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations
Charlotta Schlyter	Counsellor	Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations
Claude Lemieux	Counsellor for Development, Legal, Economic and Social Affairs Section	Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations

Name	Designation	Affiliation
Gastón Lasarte	Chair of the fifty-first session of the Committee for Programme and Coordination	Eastern Republic of Uruguay
Gjemund Saether	Minister Counsellor	Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations
Jairo Rodriguez Hernandez	Attaché	Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cuba to the United Nations
Jorge Cumberbatch	First Secretary	Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cuba to the United Nations
Lizwi Eric Nkombela	Counsellor (Economic)	Permanent Mission of the Republic of South Africa to the United Nations
Magnus Lennartsson	Minister, Economic and Social Affairs	Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations
Maria Tarp	First Secretary	Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nations
Mohamed El Karaksy	First Secretary	Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations
Motumisi Tawana	Deputy Director	Department of International Relations and Cooperation, Republic of South Africa
Nicolas Weeks	First Secretary	Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations
Noel González Segura	Second Secretary	Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations
Ren Yisheng	Counselor	Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations
Shangzhe Song	Third Secretary	Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations
Sharon Kinsley	First Secretary (Development and Human Rights)	Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom to the United Nations
Stephen Ronaghan	Adviser	United States Mission to the United Nations
Tatiana A. Zvereva	Senior Counsellor	Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations
Tobias H. Glucksman	Adviser, Economic and Social Affairs	United States Mission to the United Nations
Ysabel Blanco	Second Secretary for Development	Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations
Case studies, models and analogies, other		
Ann Routhier	Senior Director	Canadian Centre of Excellence for Evaluation
Brian Moo Sang	Evaluator	Canadian Centre of Excellence for Evaluation
Henri Raubenheimer	Minister Counsellor	Embassy of Republic of South Africa in Russia

Name	Designation	Affiliation
Finbar O'Brien	Director of Multilateral Corporation	Multilateral Division Irish Aid
Martha Ainsworth	Acting Director General (Senior Economist)	World Bank Independent Evaluation Group
Nick York	Deputy Director, Evaluation Department	DFID
Sheldon Moulton	Director, Economic Development	Department for International Relations and Cooperation, Republic of South Africa

Appendix IV List of Attendees at the Workshops

Name	Designation	Affiliation
United Nations entities		
Arild Hauge	Section Chief, Inspection and Evaluation Office	OIOS
Belen Sanz Luque	Chief, Evaluation Office,	UN Women Evaluation Office, representing UNEG
Colin Kirk	Head of Evaluation Office	UNICEF
Juha Uitto	Deputy Director/Officer-in-Charge	UNDP Evaluation Office
Kristinn Sv. Helgason,	Deputy Chief, Development Co-operation Policy Branch	DESA
Lucien Back	Chief	Secretariat to the Independent Evaluation of DaO
Masumi Ono	Economic Affairs Officer	ODSG
Navid Hanif	Acting Director, Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination	DESA
Phyllis Lee	Secretary	High-Level Committee on Programmes
Scott Green	Chief, Evaluation Section	OCHA
Susan Frueh	Executive Secretary	JIU
Member States		
Aisha Sabar	Adviser in the Mission's Management and Reform Section	United States Mission to the United Nations
Claude Lemieux	Counsellor for Development, Legal, Economic and Social Affairs Section	Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations
Courtney R. Nemroff	Counselor for Economic and Social Affairs	United States Mission to the United Nations
Jairo Rodriguez	Attaché	Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations
Nadieska Navarro	Secretary	Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations
Magnus Lennartsson	Minister, Economic & Social Affairs	Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations
Mohamed El Karaksy	First Secretary	Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations
Pio Wennubst	Counsellor	Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations
Ren Yisheng	Counsellor	Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations
Simone Christensen Hald	Assistant Attache	Economic and Development Affairs

Name	Designation	Affiliation
Sharon Kingsley	First Secretary (Development and Human Rights)	Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom to the United Nations
Susan Eckey	Minister Counsellor	Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations

Appendix V Institutional Evaluation Respondents

Questionnaire Respondents (organization and division):

1) Department of Public Information, Evaluation and Communications Research Unit

2) DESA, Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination (OESC)/Development Cooperation Policy Branch (DCPB)

3) FAO, Office of Evaluation (OED)

4) IFAD, Independent Office of Evaluation

5) ILO, Evaluation Unit

6) JIU

7) OCHA, Evaluation Section

8) OIOS, Inspection and Evaluation Division

9) OPCW, Office of Internal Oversight (OIO)

10) UN Women, Evaluation Office (EO)

11) UNDP, Evaluation Office (EO)

12) UNEP, Evaluation Office

13) UNESCO, Internal Oversight Service (IOS)

14) UNESCWA, Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities (PPTCD)

15) UNIDO, Office of the Director General (ODG)/ Evaluation Group (EVA)

16) UNODC, Independent Evaluation Unit

17) UNRWA, Department of Internal Oversight Services

18) UNV, Evaluation Unit

19) WHO, Office of Internal Oversight Services

20) WMO, Internal Oversight Office (IOO)

21) WIPO, Evaluation Section

22) WFP, Office of Evaluation

Appendix VI Interview Guide

Background

The Office of the Deputy Secretary-General contracted Dr. Charles Lusthaus and Ms. Angela Bester to constitute a Review team to conduct an assessment of the existing institutional framework for system-wide evaluation at the UN. This was mandated in GA resolution 64/289 and is expected to provide recommendations to Member States on how to further strengthen this important function in the work of the UN system. The establishment of an independent system-wide evaluation (ISWE) mechanism within the UN system should also be aimed at fully utilizing and strengthening the existing institutional framework and capacities.

The main purpose of this interview protocol is to obtain the perceptions of Key Stakeholders on the issues surrounding ISWE. In addition, the interview would have two further purposes. First to identify key documents-national-international or within the UN that would provide the review team with insight into ISWE. Second to identify important interviewees who might have specialized insight into ISWE.

Interview Questions and Prompts

1) What has been the history of ISWE in the UN?
   – Within JIU, Board of auditors
   – Within UNEG, DESA, OCHA, OIOS
   – Other

2) What is your understanding of the concepts?
   – Independent system-wide evaluation

3) What is the rationale for ISWE?
   – What is the demand for ISWE? Who is making this demand? What are the perceived uses for ISWE?
   – What are the governing bodies that would use ISWE—for what type of decisions?
   – What are the risks and opportunities that ISWE pose?

4) What constitutes the Institutions that compose the ISWE? What is meant by a comprehensive review of existing institutional framework for system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development?
   – Existing institutional framework for system-wide evaluation?
   – Agencies, plus UNEG, DESA< OCHA< JIU, OIOS
   – What needs to be known about the existing institutional framework for system-wide evaluation?

5) What are the strengths and weaknesses of the existing system?
   – Governance, leadership, strategy, structure, staffing, program work, funding, quality concerns, horizontal coordination
   – What are the existing capacities (strengths) and concerns (weaknesses) related to the ISW evaluation function within the UN today?

6) Is anything missing? What should the mandate of such a unit be?

   – Identify some system-wide issues you think-such a unit should evaluate? E.g. UN Delivering as One, the degree to which gender equity is supported and advocated throughout the system

7) What would constitute a good ISWE mechanism?

   – E.g. independent, credible, useful to improve UN

8) What are the capacities needed for the ISWE to be a good mechanism?

   – Legal or policy framework, access to information, access to staff and external HR, access to finance, authority structure, coordinating relationships

9) What documents ought we to read?

10) What other people should we interview?

Appendix VII Self-Assessment Questionnaire for Members of UNEG

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

"Comprehensive review of existing institutional framework for system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development of the United Nations system"

Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Completed by:

Organization:	
Division/Unit:	
Name:	
Title:	
Date:	

This self-assessment questionnaire to be completed by members of the United Nations Evaluation Group is commissioned by the Office of the Deputy Secretary-General as part of a review of the existing institutional framework for system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development, mandated in GA resolution 64/289. The review is expected to provide recommendations to Member States on how to further strengthen the system-wide evaluation (SWE) function in the work of the UN system.

Mandate and governance	
1. Does your current mandate allow your office to conduct, manage and/or contribute to system-wide evaluations?[97] (Please check as many as apply)	Yes, to conduct Yes, to manage Yes, to contribute ☐ No
1a. Please cite the mandates and specify and explain your answer above:	
2. Do your current governance arrangements allow your office to conduct, manage and/or contribute to system-wide evaluations? (Check as many as apply)	Yes, to conduct Yes, to manage Yes, to contribute ☐ No
2a. Please explain your answer above:	
3. What in your view are the important system-wide issues that need to be addressed by a "system-wide evaluation mechanism"?	
3a. Please identify reports that in your view are related to system-wide evaluation	
Participation in system-wide evaluations	
4. Has your office ever participated in any way in a system-wide evaluation?	Yes ☐ No (Skip to question 10)
5. How many over the past 5 years?	
6. What role(s) did your office play in the system-wide evaluation(s)? (Check as many as apply)	Conducted the SWE Managed the SWE Contributed to the SWE ☐ Played some other role (Please explain)
7. How was independence of the system-wide evaluation(s) protected, if at all?	
8. What governance arrangements were in place for the system-wide evaluation(s)?	
9. Briefly describe your experience (positive and negative) in participating in system-wide evaluations including lessons learned	
10. Would your office have interest in participating in a system-wide evaluation in the future? (Check as many as apply)	Yes, to conduct the SWE Yes, to manage the SWE Yes, to contribute to the SWE ☐ No

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[97] System-wide refers to all relevant member organisations of the UN system involved in a specific area, effort, issues or sector, at country/regional/global level. It usually implies a focus on how effectively the different parts of the system are working together.

Capacity and resources	
11. If your office was asked to contribute to a system-wide evaluation, what capacity and resources, if any, would you have to do this? (Check as many as apply)	One or more full-time staff members to work on the SWE team One or more part-time staff members to work on the SWE team Advisory role Funds for SWE consultants ☐ Some other contribution (Please explain)
12. In your opinion, do staff in your office have the necessary competencies to participate in a system-wide evaluation? Please explain your answer	Yes ☐ No Professional staff in EO consist of highly qualified evaluation experts
13. In your opinion, does your office have the necessary independence to participate in a system-wide evaluation?	Yes ☐ No
14. What value added do you think your office could bring to a system-wide evaluation?	
15. What current limitations do you have that would prevent you from participating in a system-wide evaluation?	
16. What final comments would you like to make about the ability of your office to participate in a system-wide evaluation?	
17. What do you see as the institutional and organizational strengths and weaknesses of the UN system to engage in and use "system-wide evaluations"?	

For further information, please contact:

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United Nations
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Appendix VIII UNEG Fact Sheet Template for its Members

Organization

Total number of staff (organization)	
Total expenditure (USD) of the organization	
Breakdown of Annual Total Expenditure of the Organization into Categories	
a) Regular (core)	
b) Extra-budgetary (non-core)	
c) Other (non-core)	
Total	

Evaluation Function

Evaluation Staff	
a. Of central evaluation office	
Core / long-term staff	
Non-core / short-term staff (temporary staff and consultants fulfilling staff roles)	
Permanent Support Staff	
Other	
Total	
b. For decentralized evaluations	
Core / long-term staff	
Non-core / short-term staff (temporary staff and consultants fulfilling staff roles)	
Permanent Support Staff	
Other	
Total	
Human Resource ratio	
Evaluation Expenditure (USD)	
a. Of central evaluation office	
b. For decentralized evaluation	
Budget Ratio	
Reporting Lines	

Where in the organizational structure is the Central Evaluation Office located?		
To whom does the head of the Central Evaluation Office report directly (immediate supervisor)?		
Does the Head of the evaluation function have the authority to sign off on and distribute evaluation reports to the governing body and/or chief executive without prior clearance from other parties within or outside the organization?		
On average, how many evaluations does your Organization complete per year?		
Centralized evaluations (managed/led by the central evaluation office)		
a. Corporate/thematic/strategic		
b. Country level/portfolio		
c. Operations		
Decentralized evaluations (managed/led by units other than the central evaluation office)		
a. Corporate/thematic/strategic		
b. Country level/portfolio		
c. Operations		
Are all units required to inform the central evaluation office of evaluations they undertake?		
Other evaluation activities undertaken during the year by the Central Evaluation Office		
a. Core task of the central evaluation office	Overseeing the process & quality of decentralized evaluations	
	Participating in a team conducting an evaluation led by an external consultant	
	Managing an evaluation conducted by external consultants	
	Leading an evaluation team	
b. Other task of the central evaluation office	RBM	
	Monitoring	
	Training (designing, conducting courses)	
	Developing evaluation capacities (in your organization)	
	Developing evaluation capacities (outside your organization)	
	Quality assurance processes (beyond the function)	
	Policy/strategy development	
	Programme/budget development	

Appendix IX Terms of Reference

1. Background

> **GA resolution 64/289**
>
> *Recognizes that the current multi-tiered evaluation system of operational activities for development within the United Nations consists of a number of entities with distinct roles and responsibilities, including the United Nations Evaluation Group, the evaluation offices of individual United Nations organizations, the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat and the Joint Inspection Unit;*
>
> *Requests the Secretary-General, in consultation with the United Nations Evaluation Group and the Joint Inspection Unit, to commission a comprehensive review of the existing institutional framework for the system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, and to submit a report, with recommendations, to the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session;*
>
> *Affirms, in this regard, that the establishment of an independent system-wide evaluation mechanism within the United Nations system should be aimed at fully utilizing and strengthening the existing institutional framework and capacities (July 2010, paragraphs 11-13).*

Strengthening capacity for system-wide evaluation of the work of the United Nations (UN) system at country and global levels has been the subject of significant debate at the intergovernmental level, as well as among UN entities themselves, in the past few years.

The General Assembly, in resolution 59/250, on the triennial comprehensive policy review (TCPR)[98] of UN operational activities for development, for example, "encouraged ………..the systematic use of monitoring and evaluation approaches at the system-wide level and the promotion of collaborative approaches to evaluation, including joint evaluations………" In resolution 62/208, the GA also "requested the UN development system to further develop guidance and oversight mechanism for the funding, planning and implementation of the monitoring and evaluation of UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), with a view to assessing their contribution to national development and the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals (IADGs), including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)".

Since 2007, an important driver of the debate on strengthening system-wide evaluation of UN operational activities for development has been intergovernmental deliberations on system-wide coherence.[99] During the 63rd session, for example, the co-chairs of the GA consultations on system-wide coherence pointed out in a report to Member States dated 7 August 2009 that "the need to assess system-wide efficiency, effectiveness and performance of the UN system at the country and global levels also met with general support".

As a result, the GA, in resolution 63/311, paragraph 8, reaffirmed:
The importance of strengthening evaluation as a United Nations system function and the guidance contained to this effect in its resolution 62/208, and in this regard requests the Secretary-General, in consultation with the members of

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[98] Has since become the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of the GA.

[99] The High-level Panel of the Secretary-General on UN System-wide Coherence, in its November 2006 report, recommended that a UN system-wide independent evaluation mechanism should be established by 2008, and taking into account the evolving role of the OIOS, to monitor how system-wide goals are being delivered. The panel also made several other recommendations to strengthen evaluation across the UN system, see HLP report, page 56.

the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, to propose modalities to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session for the establishment of an independent system-wide evaluation mechanism to assess system-wide efficiency, effectiveness and performance, bearing in mind the evaluation functions carried out by respective United Nations organizations, the Joint Inspection Unit and the United Nations Evaluation Group.

Prior to the adoption of GA resolution 63/311, significant dialogue had taken place within the UN system on the issue of system-wide evaluation. In March 2007, the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) endorsed the recommendation of a joint meeting of its High-level Committee on Management (HLCM) and High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) taking place in the same month, to request the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG), in cooperation with the CEB secretariat, to develop a detailed proposal on the possible scope, funding and governance of a system-wide evaluation unit.

UNEG recommended that the UN-wide evaluation system would consist of:

(a) A new independent unit driving the programme of work for system-wide evaluation;

(b) Evaluation functions in each of the organizations of the UN system; and

(c) The professional network of UNEG.

At the September session of the HLCM in 2007, UNEG was requested to continue to work on the development of the proposal for the establishment of a system-wide independent evaluation unit for consideration at the committee's next session.

The UNEG proposal was further developed in a paper submitted to the HLCM in September 2008. In the absence of any system-wide governing arrangement, the UNEG proposal mentioned linking the new unit to the CEB. The Joint Inspection Unit on the other hand pointed out that the JIU already has a mandate for independent system-wide evaluation. Within the CEB, there was general support for the strengthening of system-wide evaluation, but the idea of establishing an independent unit was not endorsed, suggesting instead that UNEG could become such a mechanism. This proposal was rejected by UNEG because the Group is a professional network and has no mandate to conduct evaluations.

This view was echoed in a December 2008 report of a UNEG evaluability study of the "delivering-as-one" pilots. The report highlighted that "in the absence of a system-wide evaluation mechanism, UNEG had developed ad-hoc arrangements to manage, fund and perform quality assurance of the evaluability exercise". This arrangement, the report concluded, did not represent a sustainable methodology for system-wide evaluations.

In response to GA resolution 63/311 on system-wide coherence (see above), the CEB secretariat prepared two notes, one in December 2009, and one in May 2010 that was submitted to the GA. These notes were intended to further facilitate intergovernmental deliberations on this issue. The CEB notes highlighted three key principles for establishing a system-wide evaluation mechanism: (a) the importance of strengthening evaluation capacities in programme countries; (b) building on the evaluation functions already provided by UN organizations and by existing oversight and professional bodies; and (c) full independence of any new mechanism.

In accordance with these principles, the CEB secretariat offered three options for strengthening system-wide evaluation in the UN system for consideration by Member States: [100]

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[100] The note pointed out that although no independent professional UN-wide evaluation unit exists within the UN system, some contributory elements are in place:

(a) The Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of the GA of UN operational activities for development with analytical work undertaken by UNDESA;[100]

(b) The Joint Inspection Unit with its longstanding mandate on evaluation activities;

A. The <u>JIU</u> with its independent mandate for system-wide evaluation, inspection and investigations and the appropriate governance arrangements. Recognising the challenges identified by the JIU, the GA could review its mandate, operations, job descriptions, way of working, resources, capacity etc. to ensure that it had the necessary senior professional evaluation capacity to be able to ensure that its evaluations were in line with norms and standards.

B. <u>A new unit</u> to conduct system-wide evaluation, linked to the CEB secretariat, but with reporting lines independent of UN system organizations. Issues related to the secretariat, the development and approval process of its programme of work, its resources etc. would have to be determined if this option were to meet the favour of the GA. Such issues are contained in the above-cited earlier proposal presented by UNEG.

C. <u>Ad-hoc arrangements</u> such as Evaluation Management Groups of professional evaluators within the system could be established, if and when the need for a system-wide evaluation arises. Within such a scenario, the most appropriate evaluation unit in the UN system would provide secretariat support. The evaluation functions in each of the UN system organizations with the mandate and the capacity could take the lead co-ordinating role for system-wide evaluation of certain sectors or types of activities.

During the consultations of the GA on system-wide coherence in the 64th session, Member States generally felt that a new unit linked to the CEB secretariat would not provide for sufficient independence of the system-wide evaluation function and would therefore weaken its credibility. Some Member States inquired whether it was possible to strengthen the existing system and mechanisms (e.g. joint evaluations). Some pointed out that the JIU has a mandate to conduct independent system-wide evaluations, while others stressed the need to address issues of capacity and working method identified in JIU's own report of A/58/343/Add.1.

This understanding among Member States led the GA in resolution 64/289 (see above) to request the Secretary-General to undertake a thorough review of the existing mechanisms for system-wide evaluation as well as the capacity of individual evaluation entities to contribute to such undertakings. This is the focus of the present exercise.

(c) The Office of Internal Oversight Services with an evaluation mandate covering the UN Secretariat, but not the funds, programmes and specialized agencies; and

(d) The Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which since 2002, in the context of GA resolution 42/182, has developed capacity to coordinate joint system-wide evaluations of humanitarian interventions. Such system-wide evaluation activities and reporting and reporting in the humanitarian context also includes the NGO sector, and are therefore not limited to the UN system.

In the humanitarian sector, the use of independent system-wide evaluations (ISWEs) has been expanded to support policy-making and improve humanitarian operations. Since 2005 the GA has requested three independent evaluations of the operations of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) while a number of ad-hoc evaluations have been conducted on pooled funding arrangements. The Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the main forum for policy co-ordination across the sector, has also commissioned several ISWEs focussing on system-level co-ordination arrangements including a new series of mandatory inter-agency real-time evaluations in the case of very large operations. Humanitarian system-wide evaluations are implemented through joint management arrangements typically involving the evaluation offices of several UN agencies. Given the difficulties which single agency evaluation functions face in focussing on issues of broad systemic concern, OCHA has as a gap filling measure assumed a lead role in providing the required evaluation services. In this role, OCHA typically serves as the main contracting entity for hiring the services of independent evaluators and in providing a quality control function. OCHA currently has in place an evaluation policy and strategy to expand its capacities to provide ISWEs to both the UN system and to the global humanitarian community.

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2.   Scope and use

The comprehensive review of the existing institutional framework for system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development, mandated in GA resolution 64/289, is expected to provide recommendations to Member States on how to further strengthen this important function in the work of the UN system. The establishment of an independent system-wide evaluation mechanism within the UN system should also be aimed at fully utilizing and strengthening the existing institutional framework and capacities.

(a) Definitions

For the purpose of this review, the key terms used in this TOR are defined as follows:

System-wide

System-wide refers to all relevant member organisations of the UN system involved in a specific area, effort, issue or sector, at country/regional/global level. It usually implies a focus on how effectively the different parts of the system are working together.

Evaluation

An 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 lack thereof. It aims at determining the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the interventions and contributions of the organizations of the UN 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 UN system and its members.[101]

Independence

An evaluation function has to be located independently from the other management functions so that it is free from undue influence and that unbiased and transparent reporting is ensured. It needs to have full discretion in submitting its reports for consideration at the appropriate level of decision-making pertaining to the subject of the evaluation.[102]

To avoid conflict of interest and undue pressure, evaluators need to be independent, implying that members of an evaluation team must not have been directly responsible for policy-setting, design, or overall management of the subject of evaluation, nor expect to be in the near future.

Operational activities for development

Operational activities for development of the United Nations system are defined as those activities of funds, programmes and agencies which have the specific objective of promoting development. A number of United Nations entities have specific mandates in this regard. Operational activities for development cover both longer-term development-related activities as well as activities with a humanitarian assistance focus.

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[101] UNEG Norms for Evaluation in the UN System.

[102] Ibid.

(b) Users

The primary users of system-wide evaluations would be the General Assembly and ECOSOC which have been mandated to establish, monitor and evaluate system-wide policies on UN operational activities for development.

Another important user of system-wide evaluations would be key UN system inter-agency mechanisms such as the CEB and its three pillars: UNDG, HLCP and HLCM, as well as the Inter-agency Standing Committee for Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (IASC, and the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA).

An independent system-wide evaluation would be undertaken when legislative bodies such as GA and ECOSOC, or key UN system inter-agency mechanisms, call for a comprehensive and impartial assessment of operational activities for development of entities of the UN system, including the implementation of normative mandates, focused either on a particular system-wide development and/or humanitarian issue or a geographically-defined area. System-wide evaluations will contribute to enhanced public accountability of the UN system.

3.   Evaluation questions and methods

The study will seek to answer the following overarching evaluation questions:

1.   What is the demand for independent system-wide evaluation, and how would it be used?

2.   What constitutes a good independent system-wide evaluation and what kind of mandates and capacities would be required to do one?

3.   What capacity exists to manage, conduct and contribute to an independent system-wide evaluation (based on past experiences [validation through review and interview])?

4.   How could the UN system address capacity gaps in independent system-wide evaluation in the future building on existing mechanisms?

The following outlines the principal methods for the comprehensive review. The review team upon initial research, interviews and document review may propose changes to the methodology, provided that the research and analysis suggests changes and that the above questions will be addressed, the purpose of the review fulfilled and the expected outputs produced at the required quality. Such changes should be discussed with and approved by the ODSG.

(a) Data collection

The review team will collect data through various means that may include but are not necessarily limited to the ones listed below. The methods will be used selectively to collect data and respond to the four overarching questions.

Desk review

The team will review all relevant documentation, such as UN resolutions requesting and/or examining system-wide evaluations and reviews, existing system-wide and joint evaluation reports; lessons learned documents regarding joint/system-wide/sector-wide evaluations; experience with undertaking joint evaluations by non-UN actors (e.g. OECD-DAC, EU etc.).

Case studies

The team will review system-wide evaluations undertaken in the past 5 years to identify lessons on the process of conducting, managing or supporting system-wide evaluation activities. The team will examine relevant evaluations (e.g. Tsunami Evaluation Coalition, Delivering-as-One, South Africa, South-South and Triangular Cooperation, and Real Time Evaluations for Pakistan and Haiti).

Institutional self-assessments

Self-assessments will be carried out by the UN system evaluation offices to map and identify existing capacity and practice with specific focus on their ability to engage in system-wide evaluation activities. The evidence provided by the entities in their self-assessments will be analyzed by the review team and reported capacity will be explored through visits and interviews, with a particular focus on the following five entities: JIU, OIOS, DESA, OCHA and UNEG. The summary findings and conclusions from the self-assessments will be incorporated into the final report.

Interviews and surveys

The team should interview members of the UN evaluation community (UNEG, secretariat and agency evaluation offices, JIU) as well as internal and external potential recipients and users of system-wide evaluations (Member States/CPC/CEB/UNDG/IASC).

The review team will conduct interviews with Member States groups who have shown active interest in this review to answer the following broad questions:

- What is their understanding of the terms "independent" and "system-wide"?
- Which governing bodies would most likely require evaluations?
- How would governing bodies use such evaluations, for what kind of decisions?
- How often would such evaluations be required?

The review team may also consider conducting internet-based surveys as deemed desirable.

(b) Stakeholder workshops

Stakeholder workshop on preliminary findings

The review methodology includes a one-day workshop in New York to be attended by members of the Reference Group, members of the individual evaluation offices of the UN organizations, CEB, UNDG, JIU and IASC. The workshop will be conducted to identify data gaps and to present and validate preliminary findings and conclusions of the review. The workshop will also be an opportunity for the UN evaluation community to examine the gaps in mandates and capacities that would need to be addressed to achieve, high quality independent UN system-wide evaluations. Member States representatives will be invited to join the second half of the meeting so as to build confidence in the findings and recommendations emerging from this review.

The workshop will be facilitated by the review team. The review team leader should work with the Reference Group in organizing the workshop, including drafting the agenda, drawing up the methodology and identifying participants.

Stakeholder workshop on draft report

A second one-day stakeholder workshop will be organized towards the end of the review process with the participation of Member States. The draft report will be presented at the stakeholder workshop, which will discuss the draft conclusions and recommendations of the review flowing from evidence-based findings. The stakeholders will be invited to provide verbal and written comments to the team. The review

team will be responsible for consolidating and considering these comments on their merit in finalizing the report.

4.   Review team, process and timeline

The review will be carried out by a team of two highly qualified and internationally-recognized evaluation experts, known for their professionalism, independence and ability to complete assignments within a given timeframe, with one serving as the team leader. The two consultants would come from different regions with at least one from a developing country. To avoid conflict of interest, the review team should not be reliant on income from the five main entities which institutional capacity is being reviewed, with full freedom to conduct their evaluation work to high standards of professionalism and impartiality.

The review team will jointly review and validate the findings of the self assessments undertaken by evaluation entities; review documentation from earlier system-wide evaluation efforts as well as other material mentioned here above; interview staff of UN evaluation entities as well as Member States; design and help organize two stakeholder workshops; conduct an independent assessment of the existing institutional framework for system-wide evaluation of UN operational activities for development; and prepare a report to serve as the basis for intergovernmental deliberations as mandated in Assembly resolution 64/289. As a background document for the first stakeholder workshop, the review team will produce an inception report with adequate details about the proposed approach to the exercise.

For quality assurance purposes, two external expert readers will be engaged to comment on the draft report of the review team prior to finalization. The members of the Reference Group will also be invited to comment on the draft report as part of the quality assurance process.

Below is an indicative timeline for completing the review exercise:

Completion date	Task(s)	Responsibility
11 Mar. '11	Finalize TOR	ODSG
30 Mar.	Circulate self assessment tool to relevant UN evaluation entities	ODSG
30 Mar.	Finalize selection of two consultants	ODSG
20 Apr.	Return self-assessment questionnaire	Respective entities
1 May	Start documentation review, interviews, analysis of self assessments etc.	Review team
30 Jun.	Convene 1-day stakeholder consultation to validate accuracy of preliminary findings of self-assessments and documentation review	Review team with support from ODSG
1 Jul. – 15 Sep.	Undertake analysis; interviews; documentation	Review team

	review; drafting of report	
3 Oct.	Convene 1-day stakeholder consultation to discuss findings & recommendations of review team	Review team with support from ODSG
24 Oct.	Draft report sent to "Expert Readers"	ODSG
30 Oct.	Finalize report and send for official editing and circulation to Member States	ODSG

5.   Management and resources

Management

The Office of the Deputy Secretary-General (ODSG) will oversee the management of the review process within the UN system. A Reference Group, composed of experts from JIU, OIOS, UNEG, DESA, and Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA), will be established to advise the ODSG and to facilitate effective engagement of UN evaluation entities in the review process. UNEG will also keep its member organizations informed of progress in the review exercise.