Independent System-Wide Evaluation Progress Report

Workshop, New York, February 17, 2012

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Objectives of the workshop

- To summarize the review questions, process, and findings
- To obtain feedback on the draft recommendations
- To have a substantive engagement on the future of ISWE including a way forward for the Members and the Secretary General
Major questions of the study

- What is the demand for ISWE, and how would it be used?
- What constitutes a good ISWE and what kind of mandate and capacities would be required to do one?
- What capacity exists to manage, conduct and contribute to an ISWE?
- How could the UN system address capacity gaps in ISWE in the future building on existing mechanisms?
- What is the present institutional framework for system-wide evaluation of operational activities for development?
Addressing the questions

- **Interviews**
  - Over 50 interviews in-person in New York, Geneva, Ottawa and South Africa, covering Member States and UN entities
  - Over 20 global-phone interviews including follow up interviews
  - Used content analysis to identify major themes

- **Documents**
  - Collected and read over 100 documents related to the study
  - Used major themes in interviews to do analysis of documents

- **Case Descriptions**
  - Reviewed reports from 6 case studies and interviewed staff involved

- **Fact sheets- Human resource and financial data on entities**
  - Analysed UNEG Fact sheets from 21 UNEG member entities

- **Self Assessment Questionnaire- mandate, governance, demand, involvement, capacity**
  - Analysed 22 self assessment questionnaires

- Held 2 workshops to review direction of report and findings.
- Responding to factual draft report concerns from Reference Group
Context

- Current ISWE interest – part of larger set of reforms to strengthen accountability, improve impact and value for money
- Increasing need to look at the whole of UN, not just the parts
- Varying opinions about what ISWE means in the UN context:
  - JIU type work – efficiency across entire UN system
  - OCHA – humanitarian (sub) system that includes external organizations
  - OIOS – within the (sub) system of UN Secretariat
  - DESA – (sub) system - operational activities for development
  - UN Women – gender equality evaluations across the UN system
- Past 5 years – hard to reach consensus on the institutional and organizational approaches to ISWE
Main findings-36 findings altogether

- Demand data fragmented but suggests growing interest and demand for evaluative work that has system-wide characteristics.

- Institutional components for ISWE (leadership, policies, structures, norms and values) are ad hoc and weak.

- Pockets of good capacity in UN system, but overall existing capacity (systems, financial and human resources) for ISWE is inadequate). Capacity of Members need to be considered and addressed.

- Good ISWE provides credible and useful evidence on key strategic and operational issues facing the UN system.
Conclusions

- ISWE occurs in variety of forms, with varying degrees of usefulness.
- ISWE is not strategic and suffers from lack of coordination at operational level.
- ISWE has been approached as a structural issue and structural changes became politicized.
- Evidence of demand for ISWE, but reluctance to respond to demand because of concerns about low use.
- Addressing the gap between what exists and what constitutes good ISWE requires substantive discussion and dialogue in the United Nations.
Recommendation 1

- The Secretary-General should update the evaluation guidelines for the United Nations and include special directives related to ISWE in these guidelines.
Recommendation 2

- The United Nations should establish a process for improving 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.
Recommendation 3

- The existing sub-system mechanism for ISWE should be continued, but information sharing is required with the coordinating committee. This should be mandated through the Secretary-General’s evaluation update as well as through the TOR related to the coordinating committee.
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, it should commission an independent evaluation of the QCPR purpose, approach, credibility and usefulness.
Recommendation 5

- UNEG should work with its members in developing specific standards, guidance and competencies associated with system-wide evaluation.
Recommendation 6

- The General Assembly should set up a working group to explore the specific function it wants ISWE to play within the United Nations system.
Recommendation 7

- The JIU should be supported in its ongoing 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 the operational work of ISWE.
Next steps

- Revise and finalise report on basis of inputs from workshop