

ANALYSIS OF THE EVALUATION FUNCTION IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (JIU/REP/2014/6), just released.

Geneva, February 2015: Evaluation is one of the main instruments that support the United Nations system in addressing accountability for results and added value. It also serves learning and knowledge development. It strengthens the leadership role of the United Nations system in global governance, and instituting reforms that influence the lives of people worldwide. Thus the continuous development of the evaluation function is critical to the United Nations system's ability to achieve its objectives, to account for success, and bring about necessary changes to improve international development and governance.

This JIU report contains the results of a system-wide study of the evolution, development and advancement of the evaluation function in the United Nations system. The study seeks to contribute to on-going efforts across the system to strengthen the capacity of the evaluation function in meeting professional standards, and in enhancing the value of the United Nations system in the world. The report feeds into the 2015 International Year of Evaluation, the implementation of the UNEG strategy on evaluation, as well as the imperatives of the post-2015 development agenda.

The report focuses mainly on the central evaluation function, which generally supports overall corporate-level policy and strategic decision-making. It also provides a rapid review of the decentralized evaluation function, which is generally embedded in programme and operational units throughout the United Nations system supporting line management decision-making. The report has found that the central evaluation function has grown through the years striving for quality and efficiency. However, the level of commitment to evaluation across the United Nations system is not commensurate with the growing demand and importance of the function. The quality of evaluation systems, mechanisms, and outputs vary across organizations. In most cases the level of advancement is affected by the size of the organization, the resources committed to evaluation, and the structural location of the function.

The report makes nine recommendations to improve the evaluation function. They include, *inter alia*, the need for organizations to deal with systemic constraints associated with the function being under-resourced and overstretched and, therefore, unprepared to respond to emerging demands; the need to be more strategic in positioning the function to play a greater role as an agent of change and in balancing priorities between accountability and the development of the learning organization; and the need for organizations to apply more integrative and system-based approaches to enhance coherence, impact and sustainability of the function.

The evaluation also calls for more openness to restructuring the function to support change and transformations in today's world including: enhanced linkages between central and decentralized evaluation; more joint and United Nations system-wide evaluations and common mechanisms for quality assurance; linkages with national evaluation systems and support for evaluation capacity development. In addition, it has found that very few organizations have defined institutional frameworks for decentralized evaluations. The purpose, level of development, and overall integrity of decentralized evaluation are ambiguous.

Finally, the report calls for a dedicated effort and more resources to address the strategic positioning and comparative value of decentralized evaluation in the current context, as well as for the development of an appropriate institutional framework and mechanisms fit-for-purpose for the decentralized function.