General Assembly

Seventy-eighth session
Items 140 and 148 of the preliminary list*

Programme planning

Report on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

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

Summary

　　The present report is the result of the biennial review on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives. It provides an assessment of the state and utilization of evaluation across 76 United Nations entities and includes an analysis of the extent to which the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the promulgation of administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3, entitled "Evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat", influenced this landscape over the 2020–2021 biennium.

　　During the review, it was found that the evaluation culture across the Secretariat was largely still weak and that most entities reported inadequate capacities and skills necessary to engage in meaningful internal evaluation.

　　Limited advances since the previous biennial review were observed. A higher number of internal evaluation policies had been adopted, and more entities reported the use of evaluation procedures, than in the prior bienniums. While expenditure on evaluation reports increased compared with the prior bienniums, the number of evaluation reports prepared across the Organization decreased considerably. The quality of evaluation reports improved, owing largely to stronger reporting on gender and human rights. Finally, the use of evaluation and the extent to which findings from evaluation reports informed programme design improved slightly.

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A review of evaluation reports suggested that interventions evaluated typically scored higher on relevance and effectiveness than they did on efficiency, coherence and sustainability. Entities displayed resilience regarding evaluation in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, and most reported completing their evaluation workplans, using digital tools and allowing additional time for data collection.

Across the board, entities raised the need for dedicated and sufficient resources and called for greater support in strengthening their internal evaluation function. In line with administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and the Office of Internal Oversight Services will provide further guidance and support on the implementation of the instruction.

The Office makes two important recommendations:

(a)   To strengthen the practice of evaluation across the Secretariat, the heads of entities that are not covered by an evaluation policy should ensure implementation of recommendation 1 from the 2018–2019 biennial review, in line with the requirements of the extant administrative instruction on evaluation (ST/AI/2021/3), by establishing an evaluation function with clear terms of reference and/or adopting an evaluation policy;

(b)   To strengthen the administrative instruction on evaluation (ST/AI/2021/3), for its review scheduled for 2023, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, with inputs from the Evaluation Management Committee, and in consultation with relevant entities, should consider further guidance relating to, inter alia:

(i)   Evaluation arrangements for small operational, peacekeeping, political affairs and management and support entities;

(ii)   Requirements for evaluation planning and coverage to better reflect the diversity of programme types and components;

(iii)   Norms on the independence of evaluation, particularly in smaller missions and offices, to strengthen the credibility and integrity of internal evaluations.

Contents

Abbreviations

Large operational entities

DCO	Development Coordination Office
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
ITC	International Trade Centre
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Small operational entities

GCO	Global Compact Office
ODA	Office for Disarmament Affairs
OHRLLS	Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
OOSA	Office for Outer Space Affairs
OSAA	Office of the Special Adviser on Africa
OSCSEA	Office of the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
OVRA	Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate
OSRSG/CAAC	Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict
OSRSG/SVC	Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict
OSRSG/VAC	Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNOCT	Office of Counter-Terrorism

UNOP	United Nations Office for Partnerships

Peacekeeping operations

DPO	Department of Peace Operations
MINURSO	United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
UNDOF	United Nations Disengagement Observer Force
UNFICYP	United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNISFA	United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNMOGIP	United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan
UNSOS	United Nations Support Office in Somalia
UNTSO	United Nations Truce Supervision Organization

Political affairs

BINUH	United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti
DPPA	Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
OSASG Cyprus	Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus
OSESG Great Lakes	Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region
OSESG Horn of Africa	Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa
OSESG Myanmar	Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar
OSESG Syria	Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria
OSESG Yemen	Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen
PBSO	Peacebuilding Support Office
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNAMI	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
UNITAD	United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant

UNITAMS	United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan
UNMHA	United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement
UNOAU	United Nations Office to the African Union
UNOCA	United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa
UNOWAS/CNMC	United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel/Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission
UNRCCA	United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia
UNRGID	Office of the United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions
UNSCO	Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process
UNSCOL	Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon
UNSMIL	United Nations Support Mission in Libya
UNSOM	United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia
UNVMC	United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia

Predominantly management and support entities

DGACM	Department for General Assembly and Conference Management
DGC	Department of Global Communications
DMSPC	Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance
DOS	Department of Operational Support
DSS	Department of Safety and Security
IRMCT	International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals
OICT	Office of Information and Communications Technology
OLA	Office of Legal Affairs
UNOG	United Nations Office at Geneva
UNON	United Nations Office at Nairobi
UNOV	United Nations Office at Vienna

Other abbreviations

COVID-19	coronavirus disease
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services

I. Introduction

1. Evaluation is an integral component of the United Nations programme management cycle, as provided in the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/2018/3), to enhance accountability and learning for stronger performance and results.[1] Pursuant to regulation 7.4 of Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2018/3, the review of evaluation has been conducted biennially since 1988, focusing on the main programmes of the Secretariat. In line with the Secretary-General's 2017 reform initiatives, including the delegation of authority to heads of entity, the current review covers 76 Secretariat entities, including field missions.[2]

2. The review provides a systematic overview of the state of evaluation for the 2020–2021 biennium. It includes an assessment of the structure, capacity and practice of evaluation, identifies key trends in organizational performance as assessed in evaluations, and provides recommendations to further strengthen evaluation in the Organization. It also includes a review of the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic and the promulgation of administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3 on evaluation had an impact on those trends.

3. Comments from entities on the draft report (see annex) were considered in the final report.

II. Methodology

4. The review answered the following questions:

    (a) What was the state of the evaluation function during 2020–2021 based on the evaluation dashboard[3] indicators?

    (b) What have been the overall use and utility of evaluations?

    (c) What were the key trends in performance identified in evaluations, and how have they added value to programming?

    (d) What is needed to strengthen the evaluation function?

5. The review used a mixed-methods approach and triangulated information from the following sources spanning the 76 entities:

  • Review of evaluation polices, plans and procedures (172 documents in total)

  • Review and screening of 389 reports submitted by 51 entities, of which 210 reports from 31 entities met the criteria as evaluation reports (see figure I)

  • Quality assessment of a sample of 127 evaluation reports

  • Content analysis against the evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of a subsample of 64 evaluation reports by 19 entities rated as "excellent" and "good"

  • Survey of evaluation focal points (n=62)[4]

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[1] In ST/SGB/2018/3, evaluation is defined as a process that seeks to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, effectiveness and impact of an activity in the light of its goals, objectives and accomplishments.
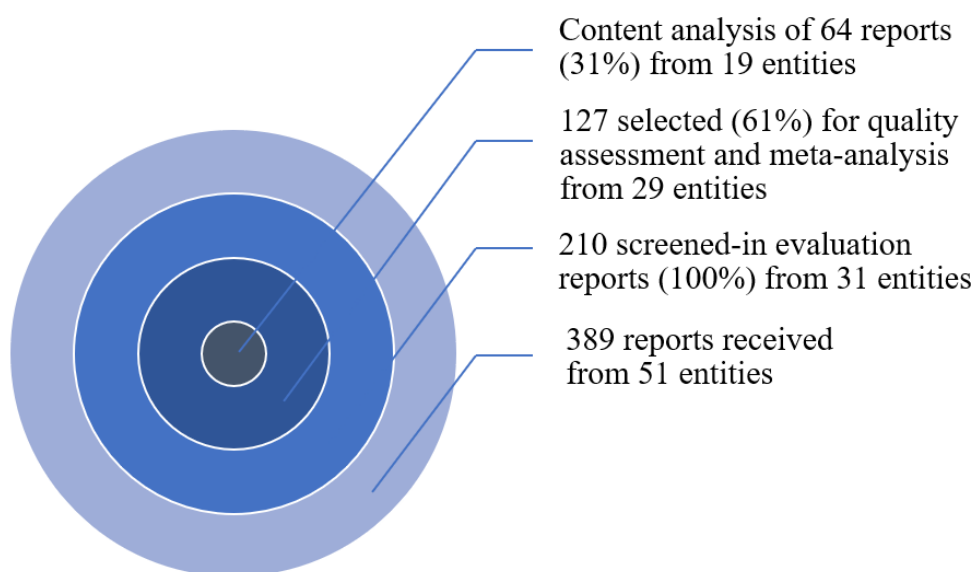
[2] OIOS evaluation work was excluded; new entities since the previous biennium are IRMCT, OICT, UNITAD, UNITAMS and UNMHA.

[3] Based on the United Nations evaluation dashboard, issued as a companion report available on the OIOS website.

[4] Survey population=75, 83 per cent response rate, responses collected between 7 September and 19 October 2022.

- Survey of staff members across the Organization (n=589)[5]

- Analysis of evaluation expenditure survey (n=50)

- Interviews with 71 staff (40 men and 31 women) representing senior management, programme managers and evaluation practitioners across 32 different entities

Figure I
Summary of report screening

Content analysis of 64 reports (31%) from 19 entities

127 selected (61%) for quality assessment and meta-analysis from 29 entities

210 screened-in evaluation reports (100%) from 31 entities

389 reports received from 51 entities

Source: Document review.

6.   The current review has several data limitations. It relied in part on self-reported data on evaluation resources, as entities are no longer required to submit information on monitoring and evaluation resources as part of their annual proposed budgets; self-reported financial data were not independently verified. In addition, owing to resource constraints, there was a need to sample a selection of reports for the quality assessment. Moreover, the synthesis of evaluation findings was prepared on the basis of an even smaller sample, drawing only on those reports that had been rated as "excellent" and "good" and thus passed the quality screening.

III. Results

7.   The results are structured in line with the review's key questions: (a) state of the evaluation function; (b) use of evaluation; (c) key trends in performance; and (d) strengthening the evaluation function.

8.   For the purpose of analysis and presentation, the 76 entities were classified into five groups, based on their mandate and size,[6] as follows:[7]

- Large operational entities (14)

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[5] Survey population=2,000, 30 per cent response rate, responses collected from 53 entities between 17 October and 1 November 2022.

[6] Large operational entities, on average, had an annual budget of $190 million; the average annual budget of a small operational entity was approximately $13 million.

[7] The table of abbreviations contains the detailed list by entity grouping.

- Small operational entities (13)

- Peacekeeping operations (14)

- Political affairs (24)

- Predominantly management and support entities (11)

A. Evaluation frameworks and use of evaluation across the Secretariat improved slightly, but significant gaps in evaluation practice and capacities remain evident

9.   As shown in table 1, most Secretariat entities do not have dedicated evaluation units, and where units exist, they vary significantly in size.

Table 1
Structure of evaluation functions of entities included in 2020–2021 review

Stand-alone evaluation unit (7)	*Dedicated evaluation unit within a multifunctional division (11)*	*Unit not dedicated to evaluation (7)*	*No evaluation unit but evaluation focal point (21)*	*No evaluation unit but some evaluation activity[a] (18)*	*No evaluation unit and no evaluation activity or missing data (12)*
DESA	DCO	DMSPC	BINUH	DOS	GCO
DGC	DGACM	ECE	MINURSO	DSS	IRMCT
OLA	DPO	ECLAC	OHRLLS	MONUSCO	MINUSCA
UNCTAD	DPPA	OSAA	OVRA	ODA	MINUSMA
UNEP	ECA	PBSO	OSRSG/CAAC	OOSA	OICT
UN-Habitat	ESCAP	UNIFIL	OSRSG/VAC	OSESG Great Lakes	OSCSEA
UNODC	ESCWA	UNITAD	UNAMA	OSESG Horn of Africa	OSESG Syria
	ITC		UNAMI	OSESG Myanmar	OSASG Cyprus
	OCHA		UNDOF	OSESG Yemen	UNITAMS
	OHCHR		UNMHA	OSRSG/SVC	UNMOGIP
	UNOCT		UNMIK	UNDRR	UNSCOL
			UNMISS	UNFICYP	UNSOS
			UNOAU	UNISFA	
			UNOG	UNOCA	
			UNON	UNOP	
			UNOV	UNRGID	
			UNOWAS/CNMC	UNSOM	
			UNRCCA	UNVMC	

| Stand-alone evaluation unit (7)	Dedicated evaluation unit within a multifunctional division (11)	Unit not dedicated to evaluation (7)	No evaluation unit but evaluation focal point (21)	No evaluation unit but some evaluation activity[a] (18)	No evaluation unit and no evaluation activity or missing data (12)
			UNSCO		
			UNSMIL		
			UNTSO		

Source: Dashboard – focal point survey.

[a] E.g. internal assessments and reviews, drafting/updating of evaluation policy and evaluation-related guidance, support to external evaluations, tracking and follow-up of evaluation recommendations.

Structures and frameworks for evaluation have improved since the prior biennium, although evaluation practice continue to be concentrated mostly in a few large entities

10.   Some 74 per cent of entities had staff assigned to cover evaluation-related activities, compared with 49 per cent in the previous biennium. More entities also assigned senior staff to head the function (43 per cent, from 35 per cent in 2018–2019). Figure II presents the level of staff heading evaluation functions.

Figure II
Seniority of staff heading evaluation functions
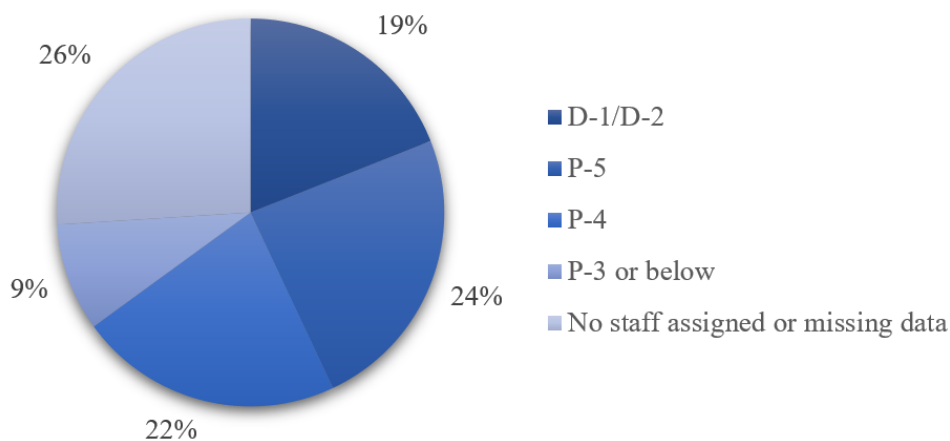
Source: Dashboard – focal point survey.

11.   Thirty-three entities had an evaluation policy in place, while eight reported having a draft policy as of August 2022 (see table 2). The average score for the assessment of evaluation policies was 27.4 on a 36-point scale.[8] The number of evaluation plans shared by entities remained unchanged from the past biennium. Twenty-one plans were collected, mostly from entities in the large operational group, with an average score of 10.9 on a 14-point scale.

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[8] Source: United Nations evaluation dashboard – desk review. The evaluation policy assessment measured the 18 criteria on a scale of 0 to 2 across the following themes: concept and role of evaluation, evaluation standards, institutional framework, organization, management and budgeting of evaluations, mechanisms for follow-up, practice of disclosure and dissemination, and integration of gender equality and human rights. Entity scores can be seen in the accompanying evaluation dashboard.

12. Fifty entities reported using evaluation procedures to at least some extent. The most frequently mentioned procedures were feeding evaluation results into programme planning and establishing action plans for implementing recommendations as well as systems for tracking their implementation.[9] The focal point survey revealed that 27 entities applied quality assurance procedures[10] always or most of the time (20 entities in 2018–2019). Given that 31 entities submitted evaluation reports, this is an encouraging finding. However, only 19 entities, mostly from the large operational group, provided documentary evidence of quality assurance procedures in place.

13. Through the focal point survey and interviews, staff noted that evaluation culture, structures and procedures needed to be strengthened to better support the establishment and use of evaluation functions; they raised the roles of the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and OIOS in this regard. Evaluation culture was described as needing greater leadership engagement and commitment, a stronger appreciation of the value of evaluation, and more use of innovative methods. Evaluation structures were assessed as needing greater attention to the establishment of a policy, challenges to ensuring independence and credibility of internal evaluations, and the identification of sufficiently empowered staff. Procedures were determined to require greater clarity on internal evaluation coverage and to require more evaluation guidelines.

Table 2
Evaluation function over time

|	Large operational		Small operational		Peacekeeping operations		Political affairs		Predominantly management and support		Total	
	2018–2019	2020–2021	2018–2019	2020–2021	2018–2019	2020–2021	2018–2019	2020–2021	2018–2019	2020–2021	2018–2019	2020–2021
Number of entities	14	14	13	13	15	14	23	24	9	11	74	76
Entities with dedicated evaluation functions	11	12	–	1	1	1	1	1	4	3	17	18
Entities with evaluation policies	13	13	7	7	1	2	2	4	5	7	28	33
Entities with evaluation plans	13	13	2	1	–	1	3	3	3	3	21	21

Source: 2020–2021: draft dashboard – desk review and analysis of proposed programme budgets for 2020 and 2021; 2018–2019: dashboard accompanying A/76/69.

14. Evaluation coverage of subprogrammes also remained the same across the bienniums at 43 per cent. Out of 240 subprogrammes or peacebuilding budget components across all entities, 103 were covered by internal evaluations. Sixteen entities (21 per cent) covered all of their 57 subprogrammes over the course of the 2020–2021 biennium. Average coverage by group is presented in figure III.

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[9] Source: United Nations evaluation dashboard – focal point survey and desk review.
[10] E.g. use of the United Nations Evaluation Group quality checklists, or a periodic independent quality assessment of evaluation reports.

Figure III
Average coverage of subprogrammes or components through internal evaluations, by group
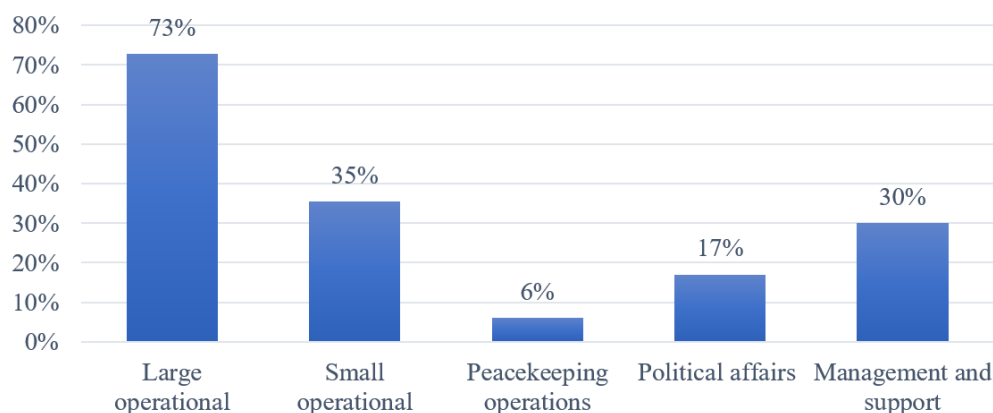
Source: Evaluation expenditure survey and document review.

15. During the review, it was found that there was some confusion among entities as to what the administrative instruction required from them in terms of evaluation coverage. While the instruction states that all subprogrammes are to be covered by an internal evaluation at least once every six years, it also requires entities to establish an annual evaluation plan. Since 32 of the 76 entities have only one subprogramme, the expected periodicity and the scope of their internal evaluations would benefit from further clarification.

The overall volume of evaluation reports has decreased since 2018–2019, although some entities have issued other organizational learning products

16. Fewer evaluation reports were produced during the 2020–2021 biennium compared with the prior biennium. Of the 389 reports submitted by 51 entities, 210 reports (54 per cent), produced by 31 entities, were determined to be evaluations based on predefined criteria.[11] This is a decrease from 2018–2019, when 261 reports (58 per cent) were determined to be evaluations based on the same criteria. The decrease in the overall number of reports is likely due to challenges in the conduct of evaluations related to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also to the fact that some entities shifted towards conducting fewer project evaluations, in favour of better-resourced strategic evaluations with a programmatic or thematic scope. A further 25 entities did not submit any reports at all. Only 10 entities produced a large majority (77 per cent) of the evaluation reports during the 2020–2021 biennium.[12] The breakdown of report submission by group is presented in table 3. Despite a decrease in the number of reports, the overall estimated expenditure on evaluation reports in 2020–2021 was approximately $18 million, which reflected a slight increase in expenditure since 2018–2019 ($17 million). The increase largely reflected expenditures from one entity in the large operational group.[13]

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[11] Criteria included the following: (a) the report assesses element of programme performance; (b) the report presents questions and/or criteria for the assessment and methodology; (c) the report presents findings and evidence for them; (d) the report presents conclusions and/or recommendations.
[12] UNEP: 41, UNODC: 26, DCO: 17, DESA: 17, ESCAP: 14, UN-Habitat: 14, ECE: 10, UNCTAD: 10, OHCHR: 7, ITC: 6. Source: Document review.
[13] DCO.

Table 3
Entity report submissions, by group

	Large operational (14)	Small operational (13)	Peacekeeping operations (14)	Political affairs (24)	Predominantly management and support (11)	Total (67)
Percentage (number) out of the total number of evaluation reports	85 (178)	3 (7)	2 (4)	5 (10)	5 (11)	(210)
Percentage of overall budget spent on evaluation reports	0.31	0.13	0.00	0.03	0.03	0.08[a]
Number of entities with all reports determined to be evaluations	11	4	1	3	–	19
Number of entities with some reports determined to be evaluations	3	1	1	2	5	12
Number of entities with no reports determined to be evaluations	–	6	5	8	1	20
Number of entities with no reports submitted	–	2	7	11	5	25

Source: Document review.

  [a] 0.14 per cent when the budget of OIOS is included.

17.   Of the 179 reports screened out, 103 reports were not evaluations prepared or managed by the submitting entity. A further 76 reports submitted by 28 entities did not meet the definition of an evaluation report. Further analysis of these 76 reports revealed that, while not constituting evaluation reports, they reflected substantial elements of learning, such as self-assessments, lessons learned and good practice studies, and after-action and performance reviews.

18.   Through the focal point survey and interviews, entities frequently highlighted the need to recognize that they had different internal evaluation requirements according to the nature and scale of the entity's mandate and urged better-tailored support. Several entities also expressed oversight fatigue as they perceived themselves as being subject to numerous parallel oversight exercises by OIOS, the Board of Auditors and the Security Council, as well as several other assessment exercises being undertaken (such as strategic reviews and after-action reports), and queried whether and how these could be adapted to meet the requirements of the administrative instruction.

Use and usefulness of evaluation reports is reported to have increased, although evaluation use varied considerably across entities

19.   The reformed budget process requires entities to indicate how evaluations have been used in programming, and there has been a positive trend in this direction. A review of the 2022 budget documents of 76 entities showed that 23 had provided examples of actions taken on the basis of internal and external evaluation reports from 2020. For the 2023 programme budget, 36 entities provided examples of use, so a positive trend can be observed, mainly in political affairs and predominantly management and support entities, as shown in figure IV.

Figure IV
Proportion of entities mentioning examples of use of evaluation findings and/or recommendations, by group
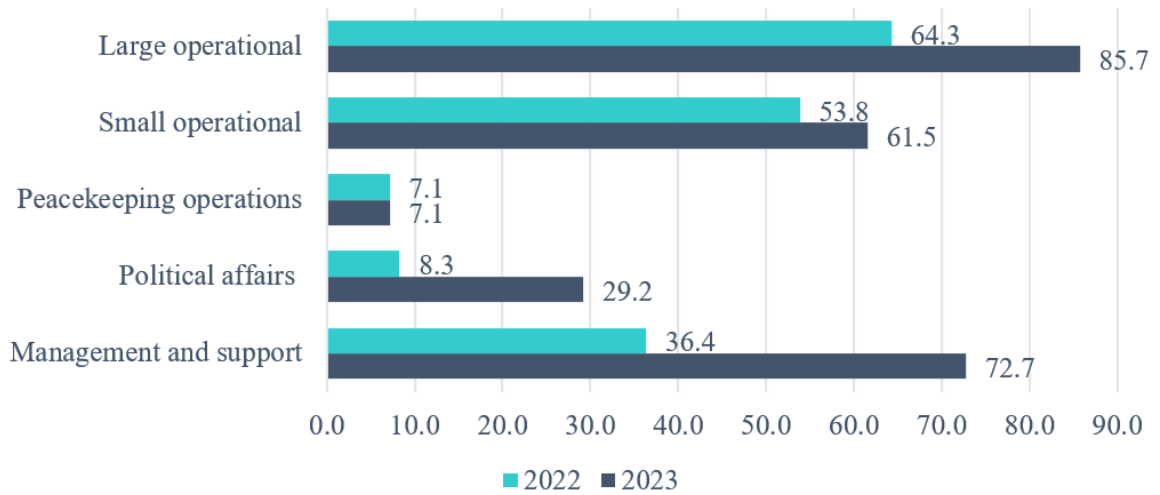
Source: Document review – proposed programme budgets.

20.   Focal point survey respondents also reported evaluation use, as shown in figure V. Overall, most focal points indicated that evaluation reports were used to a great or some extent, with evaluation use most prominent in the large operational and small operational groups.

Figure V
Focal point perceptions of use of evaluation reports
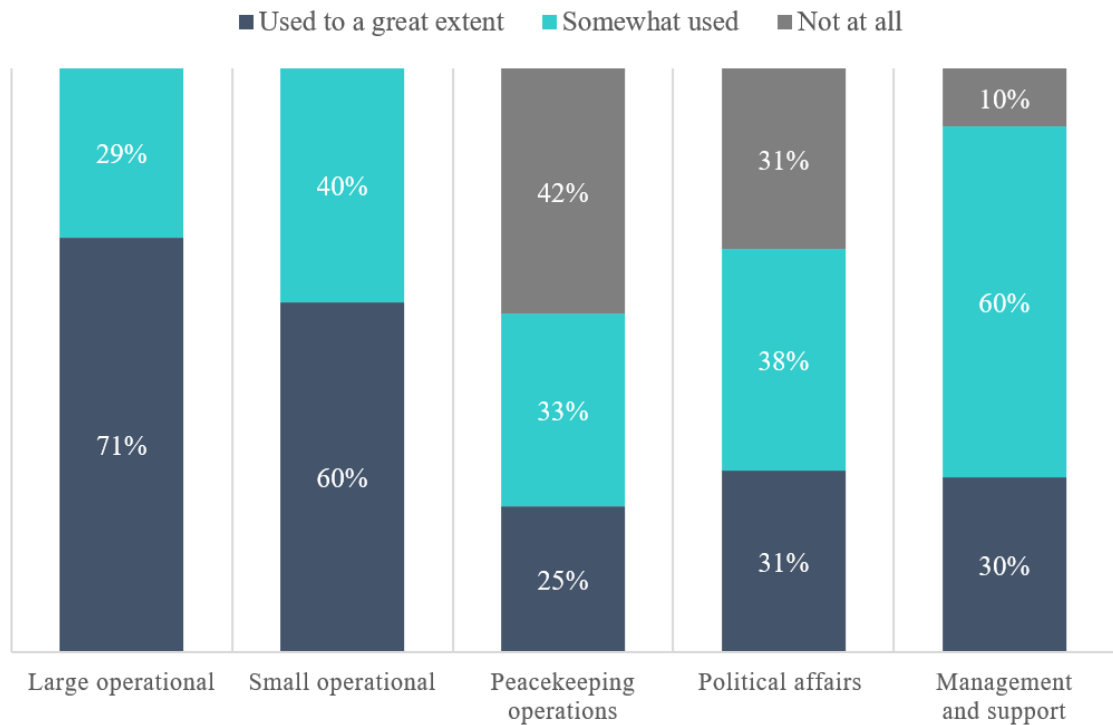
Source: Focal point survey (n=62).

21.   Focal point survey respondents also identified specific types of evaluation usage, including, most commonly, to inform future planning, programme implementation and reporting to management, as shown in figure VI.

Figure VI
Percentage of entities reporting types of evaluation use

Source: Focal point survey (n=62).

22.   Staff across the Secretariat also reported an increased positive impact of evaluations over the past two bienniums. As shown in figure VII, over 50 per cent of staff survey respondents considered evaluations to have generated large or very large positive changes in accountability (53 per cent), delivery of mandate (51 per cent) and transparency (50 per cent). This is an increase over the previous biennium, for which contribution of evaluations to accountability and transparency were rated as large or very large by only 38 per cent of staff survey respondents.

Figure VII
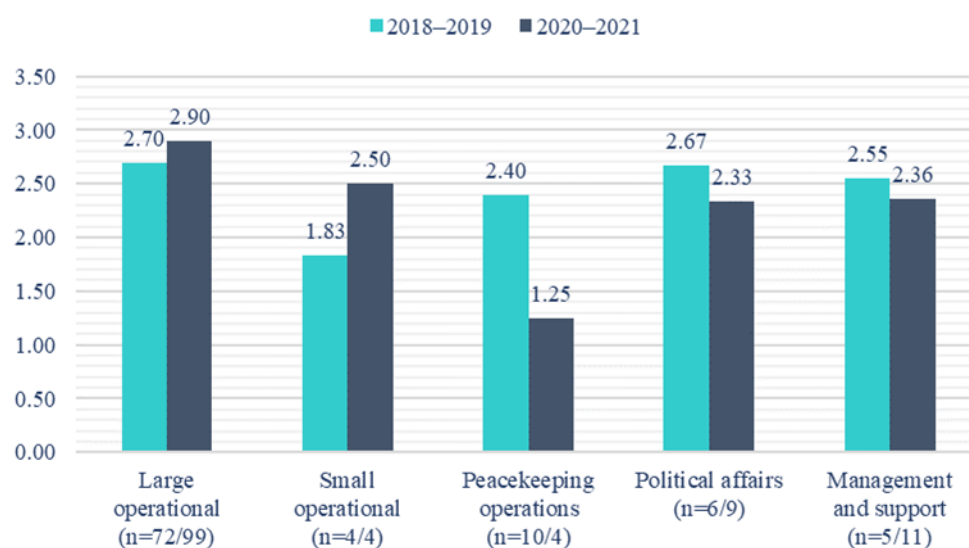**Perception of staff on changes generated by evaluations**
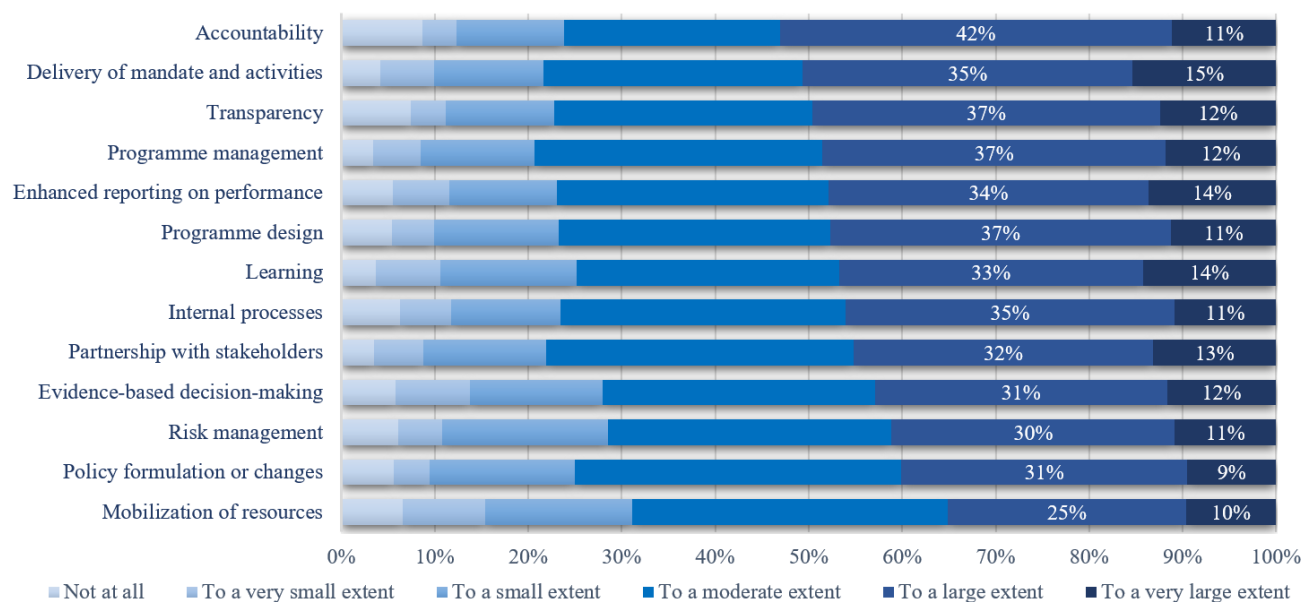
Source: Staff survey (n=589).

B. **Overall, the quality of evaluation reports has remained the same, with the biggest improvements made on the inclusion of gender and human rights considerations**

23. Most evaluation reports reviewed were of good quality. Out of the sample of 127 reports assessed, 67 per cent were rated as "high quality", 22 per cent as "fair" and 11 per cent as "poor" or "very poor" (compared with 60 per cent rated as "high quality", 37 per cent as "fair" and 3 per cent as "poor" for 2018–2019). Notwithstanding the improved quality of reports in the large operational and small operational groups compared with the previous biennium, however, the quality ratings for the other three groups decreased, as shown in figure VIII.

Figure VIII
Average quality rating of evaluation reports on a scale from 0 to 4 (0=very poor, 1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, 4=excellent), by group
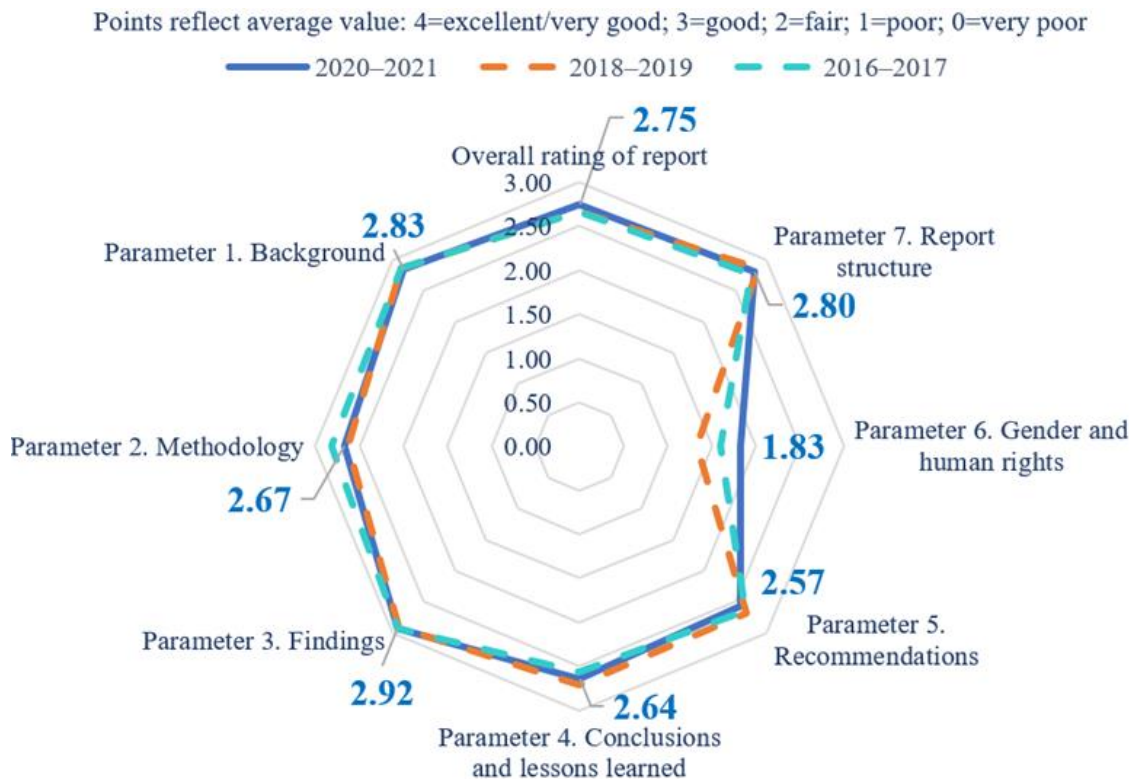

■ 2018–2019   ■ 2020–2021

Group	2018–2019	2020–2021
Large operational (n=72/99)	2.70	2.90
Small operational (n=4/4)	1.83	2.50
Peacekeeping operations (n=10/4)	2.40	1.25
Political affairs (n=6/9)	2.67	2.33
Management and support (n=5/11)	2.55	2.36

Source: Quality assessment of the sample 127 reports.

24. Overall, across the seven quality parameters assessed in the past three bienniums, the findings, background and report structure parameters received higher quality scores than the conclusions and recommendations. During the review, it was found that, in almost half of the reports (48 per cent), the concluding section did not go beyond summarizing the findings and therefore did not offer added value to the analysis. On recommendations, two thirds of the reports (68 per cent) provided recommendations that were too vague to be actionable. The average quality ratings by parameter are presented in figure IX.
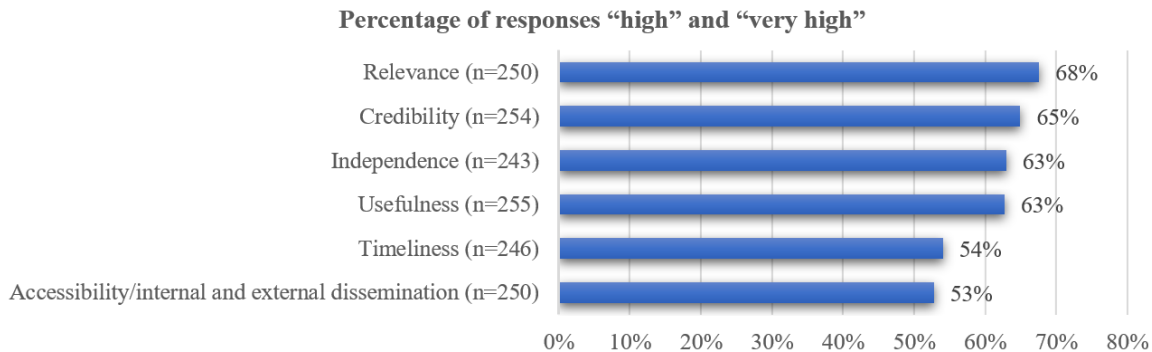
Figure IX
**Average quality ratings of evaluation reports in the past three bienniums,
by parameter**

Points reflect average value: 4=excellent/very good; 3=good; 2=fair; 1=poor; 0=very poor

—— 2020–2021   – – 2018–2019   – – 2016–2017

2.75
Overall rating of report
3.00
2.83
Parameter 1. Background
2.50
2.00
Parameter 7. Report structure
1.50
2.80
1.00
Parameter 2. Methodology
0.50
0.00
1.83
Parameter 6. Gender and human rights
2.67
Parameter 5. Recommendations
2.57
Parameter 3. Findings
2.92
2.64
Parameter 4. Conclusions and lessons learned

Source: Quality assessment of the sample 127 reports.

25.   Overall, as shown in figure X, the staff assessment of evaluation report quality was positive, with 61 per cent of staff survey respondents rating the six quality aspects as "high" or "very high", a slight increase from the previous cycle (56 per cent). Compared with other criteria, timeliness and accessibility were assessed less positively but still higher than in the previous biennium (47 and 43 per cent, respectively).

Figure X
Staff feedback on quality of reports

Percentage of responses "high" and "very high"

Relevance (n=250)	68%
Credibility (n=254)	65%
Independence (n=243)	63%
Usefulness (n=255)	63%
Timeliness (n=246)	54%
Accessibility/internal and external dissemination (n=250)	53%

Source: Staff survey (n=589).

26.   For the 17 entities included in the past three biennial reviews, the overall quality of reports shows a positive trend. In the 2020–2021 biennium, the average quality score was 2.86, compared with 2.70 in 2018–2019 and 2.61 in 2016–2017, as shown in figure XI.

Figure XI
Overall quality of reports of entities participating in the past three biennial reviews
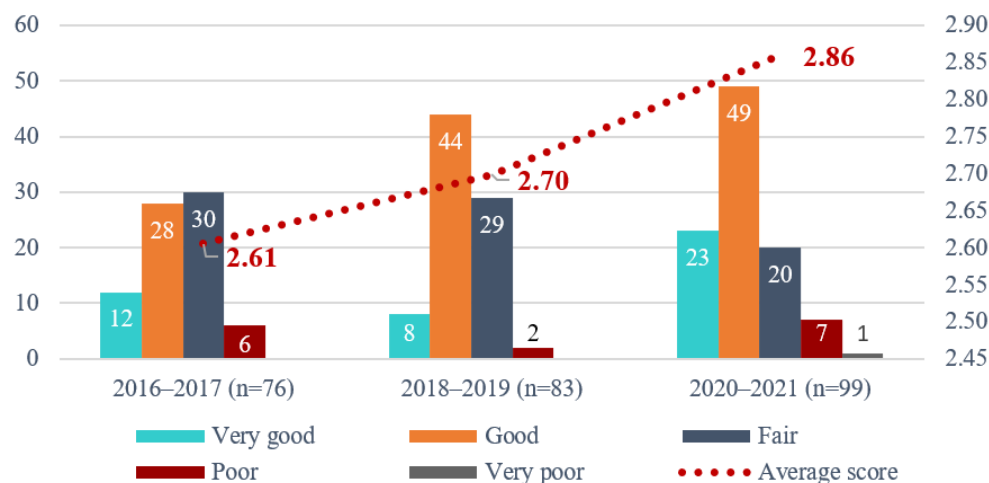
Source: Quality assessment of the sampled reports.

27.   Within the reporting period, reports of excellent quality were produced by 12 entities.[14] Good practices noted in some of those reports included good use of visuals and infographics to demonstrate theories of change, display stakeholder mapping, and present key findings. Other good practices in good-quality reports included showing clear linkages between findings, conclusions and recommendations and including cross-cutting issues, for example, a thorough analysis of gender considerations,[15] human rights issues,[16] the environment[17] and disability,[18] which are further discussed in the next section.

Integration of human rights and gender in evaluation reports improved significantly over the previous biennium but remained a challenge

28.   Of all the quality parameters assessed, gender and human rights integration saw the largest improvement between 2020–2021 and 2018–2019. On average, the reports analysed were found to be "approaching requirements" in the parameter of gender according to the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women score (5.17), which was an increase from the score in the previous biennium (4.87). Some 39 per cent of reports met requirements, 34 per cent approached requirements and 28 per cent missed requirements.

29.   As regards "full" or "satisfactory" integration of human rights, less than half of the evaluation reports (40 per cent) were found to have addressed it; of the 51 reports that effectively integrated these issues, 9 (16 per cent) came from entities with a clear

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[14] DCO, DESA, DSS, ECA, ECE, ESCAP, ITC, PBSO, UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat, UNOCT.
[15] DCO, OCHA, OHCHR, UNODC, UNEP.
[16] DCO, OCHA, OHCHR, UNEP.
[17] DCO, ECA, ESCAP, UNEP, UN-Habitat.
[18] DCO, ECE, OCHA, OHCHR.

human rights, legal or political mandate,[19] while the vast majority of reports satisfactorily considering these aspects came from entities with a broader mandate.[20]

30. Integration of disability inclusion and environmental issues was introduced in the 2020–2021 review.[21] During the review, it was found that these issues were weakly integrated in evaluation reports, in particular for disability inclusion considerations, which were only occasionally mentioned and exceptionally analysed, as shown in figure XII. Environmental issues achieved slightly better results, having been incorporated in the scope, methodology and analysis in 38 per cent of reports. Of the reports fully or satisfactorily incorporating environmental issues, 31 per cent came from an organization with an environmental mandate (UNEP). The low scores are likely due to the fact that guidance on both topics is relatively recent or is being developed.[22]

Figure XII
Environmental and disability considerations in evaluation reports
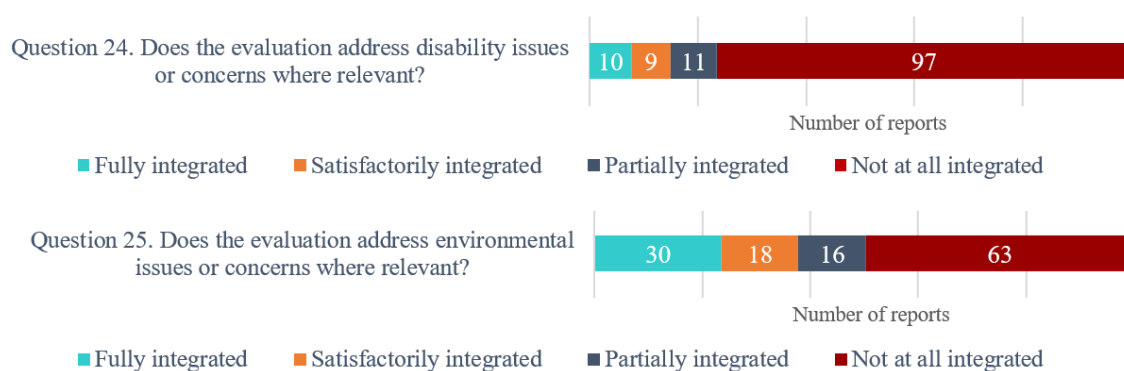
Source: Quality assessment of the sample 127 reports.

31. The box below presents some examples of good practices in the inclusion of these cross-cutting dimensions.

Good practices in the inclusion of gender, human rights, disability and environmental considerations

• In the final evaluation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2018–2022 for Kyrgyzstan, sex-disaggregated data and human-rights based language were used throughout the report, and gender and human rights were mainstreamed into data-collection tools. The report also provided a good analysis of both issues.

• In the evaluation of the Cambodia country programme 2017–2020 by OHCHR, an excellent description of the human rights context was provided and gender, human rights and disability inclusion were added as specific evaluation criteria and explored as specific questions under all core lines of enquiry with stakeholders.

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[19] OHCHR, OLA, PBSO, UNSMIL.

[20] DCO, DESA, ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, OCHA, UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-Habitat, UNOCT, UNODC.

[21] The ratings obtained in the 2020–2021 biennium serve the purpose of creating a baseline and do not count towards the overall score.

[22] The guidance on integrating disability inclusion in evaluations and reporting on the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy Entity Accountability Framework evaluation indicator (2022) and the guidance on disability inclusion in UNFPA evaluations (2020) are examples of guidance recently published and found in a web search. Other similar documents may exist but are not reflected in the present report.

• The needs of persons with disabilities were fully addressed throughout the report on the inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the response to Cyclone Idai in Mozambique, managed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, where disability was included among the criteria used in the sampling strategy and results disaggregated according to gender, disability and three displacement categories.

• The independent review of UNEP contributions to poverty reduction, which included specific review questions addressing environmental aspects, offered a good analysis of the poverty-environment nexus and useful evidence of the results of these efforts. Climate change was also included as a cross-cutting issue in the final evaluation by ECA of support to boosting intra-African trade.

C. Evaluation findings from the past biennium suggest that programmes are more relevant and effective than efficient or coherent

32.   A sample of 64 high-quality evaluation reports was analysed to identify some of the factors affecting programme delivery in 2020–2021 (see figure XIII). Overall, compared with the same analysis in the previous biennial review, no significant changes in the assessment of organizational performance were identified.

Figure XIII
Ratings of interventions,[23] by evaluation criterion
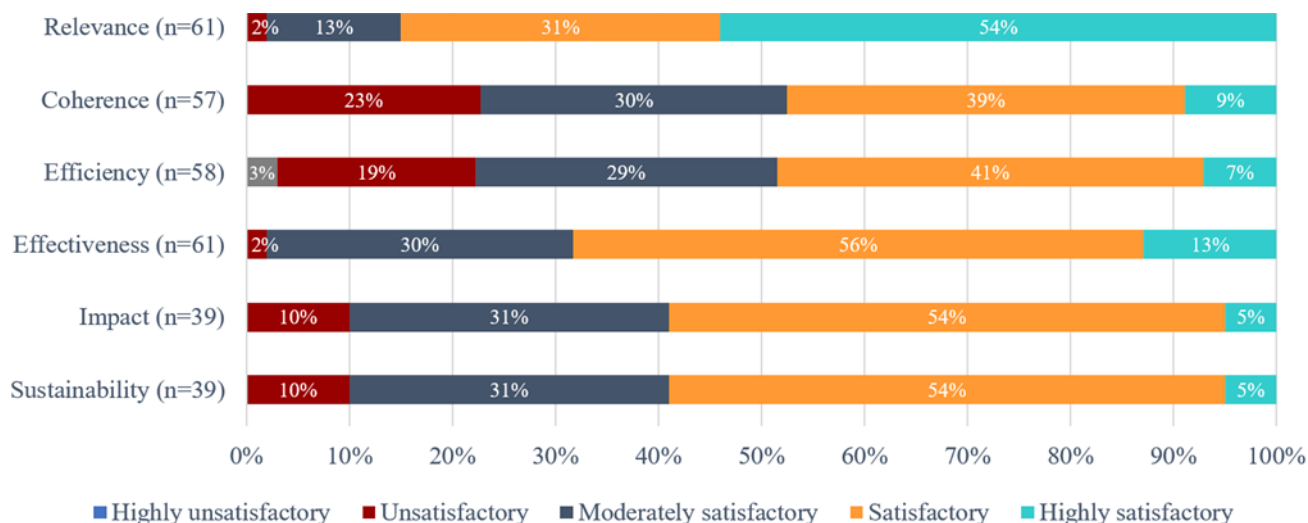
Source: Content analysis of a sample of 64 reports rated "excellent" and "good".

33.   As shown in figure XIII, the interventions in the reviewed reports scored highest on relevance. In almost 85 per cent of those reports, interventions were found to be fully relevant, meaning that they were in line with national priorities and United Nations strategic frameworks. While this rating was similar to the previous biennium, more specifically, over half of the reports were rated "highly satisfactory", compared

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[23] The term "intervention" is used broadly to include programmes, subprogrammes, projects, country portfolios and other subjects of evaluations included in the content analysis.

with 29 per cent in 2018–2019. Many evaluations noted that the relevance of the intervention emanated from the ability of entities to provide tools for and support the capacity-building of member States to comply with their international and/or regional obligations and commitments.

34. Almost 70 per cent of the evaluation reports reviewed also indicated that interventions had effectively achieved their objectives (rated "satisfactory" or "highly satisfactory"), and almost 60 per cent reported evidence of impact at various levels. Although contribution to project outcomes was reasonably demonstrated, a considerable number of reports indicated difficulties in identifying these contributions or measuring progress against outcomes due to weak monitoring and evaluation systems and indicators. Success factors contributing to the effectiveness of interventions related to:

(a) Inclusive planning and implementation, including the ability to engage government and other partners at strategic levels;

(b) The importance of going beyond traditional stakeholders by partnering with civil society organizations, the private sector and regional bodies;

(c) The ability to adapt to the needs of the context and to rely on localized knowledge; such adaptive approaches were also identified as beneficial to promote buy-in, ownership and, eventually, sustainability of interventions.

35. Sustainability was rated as "satisfactory" or "highly satisfactory" in nearly 60 per cent of the evaluations reviewed. The ability of programmes to promote strong ownership of processes and results and to embed mechanisms and capacities that ensured further action beyond project completion was found to be a key contributing factor to programme sustainability. However, the analysis also suggested that systemic approaches and exit strategies to enhance the likelihood of results being sustainable had yet to be sufficiently implemented.

36. Efficiency and coherence received the lowest scores for the evaluation reports reviewed (49 per cent and 48 per cent were rated "satisfactory" and "highly satisfactory", respectively). Sources of programme inefficiencies included: gaps in the structures of roles and responsibilities; overambitious workplans; governance and management processes that did not facilitate strategic decision-making; and lack of resources or funding shortfalls. Coherence among projects and leveraging existing relationships with other development partners was made evident in several reports as a contributing or impeding factor affecting the delivery of results. Strong internal coherence and project design were also frequently mentioned as contributing factors in reports, highlighting the effectiveness of using systemic and integrative or multidimensional approaches in project design.

There was emerging evaluative evidence of entities contributing to systemic changes at the national, regional and global levels

37. Only a minority of interventions that aimed to promote systemic changes failed to do so, according to the evaluation reports assessed, as shown in figure XIV. A majority of reports (67 per cent) provided clear evidence of significant contribution to policy changes and/or system reforms, while 22 per cent of reports showed that some level of change might have happened and were rated as "moderately satisfactory". Several reports presented concrete examples of reforms promoted or supported by United Nations entities, including systemic changes in national laws and systems as well as at the regional and international levels. Key factors associated with success in promoting more systemic changes included country ownership and political commitment among political decision makers, the brokering role of United Nations entities and the importance of designing interventions with strategic multidimensional approaches.

Figure XIV
Contribution of interventions to policy change or system reform
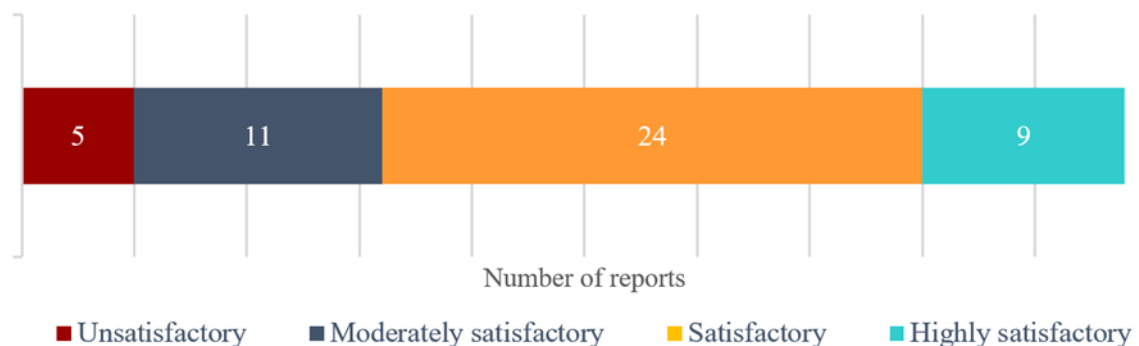
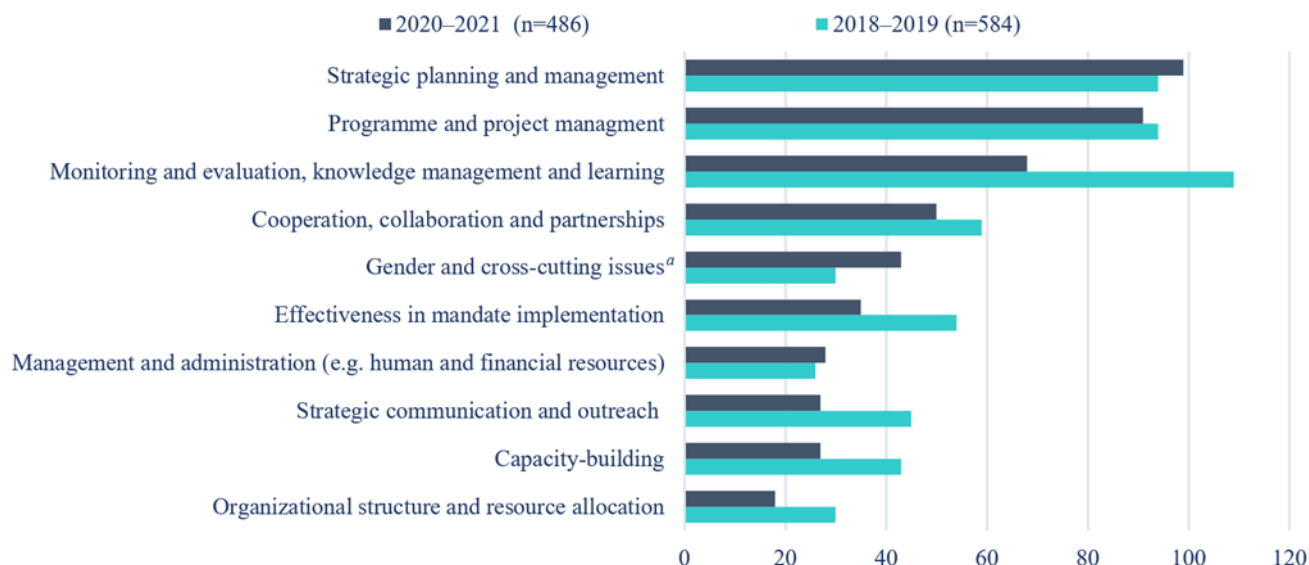*Source*: Content analysis of a sample of 64 reports rated "excellent" and "good".

The poor quality of monitoring and evaluation frameworks is still a barrier to identifying programme results, promoting learning and determining the contribution of United Nations entities to identified achievements

38.   Many evaluations found that weak monitoring and evaluation systems were still a barrier to understanding progress, allowing learning, and measuring results. Several evaluations could not determine the overall effectiveness of programmes against the results framework, either at the outcome or at the output level. For many others, the monitoring and evaluation systems were considered insufficient to reliably determine the outcomes achieved. Some 36 per cent of reports were unable to provide evidence of impact, in many cases owing to the lack of a clear monitoring framework. Even in cases where progress was verified in evaluations, the difficulty of understanding the specific level of contribution of the United Nations to that progress was frequently mentioned. Monitoring and evaluation had the third highest number of recommendations of all focus areas and was identified as key to strengthening a "results culture" and to promoting learning within and across programmes.

As in the previous biennium, most recommendations related to strategic planning and programme and project management

39.   The sample of reports analysed (64) included a total of 528 recommendations. The highest number of recommendations related to strategic planning and management (19 per cent), followed by actions in the areas of programme and project management and monitoring and evaluation (17 per cent and 13 per cent, respectively), as shown in figure XV. To improve strategic planning and management, the recommendations called for better use of theories of change, improved contextualization of interventions, and development of resource mobilization strategies. Recommendations related to programme management focused on the need to: further build monitoring and evaluation and results-based management capacities; adjust existing business models for resource mobilization; improve linkages between programmatic and financial tracking mechanisms; ensure fit-for-purpose governance systems and fully functional governance structures; and create more robust risk management systems.

Figure XV
Distribution of most common recommendations per focus area

Source: Content analysis of a sample of 64 reports rated "excellent" and "good".

 [a] Scoring under the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women assesses the inclusion of gender or human rights recommendations and lessons in an evaluation report, thereby promoting the issue of gender and human rights issues in recommendations.

D. Entities demonstrated resilience and adaptability in the face of the pandemic

Entities continued to deliver on their evaluation workplans

40.   Around 30 per cent of entities reported being highly or very highly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with regard to implementing their evaluation workplans. The pandemic forced some entities with established evaluation units to revise their data-collection methodologies, whereas other entities who had been using remote methods in the past were not as adversely affected.[24] Around a third of all entities (22) reported a shift to using online modalities, particularly for data collection; for 7 of those entities, it led to delays in completing the evaluations. While some entities (8) reported the limitations of online data collection, several (6) reported that it had created net efficiencies, including lowering evaluation costs. Seven entities reported that they had to revise or put a pause on their evaluation workplan owing to competing priorities created by the pandemic.[25]

The COVID-19 pandemic affected programme implementation but also provided strategic opportunities to expand reach

41.   The restrictions imposed by the pandemic were frequently mentioned in evaluation reports as a factor explaining delays or low delivery rates of programme or project workplans[26] and was, together with political instability and government change, one of the factors most cited as negatively affecting programme effectiveness and sustainability.[27] Evaluations reviewed reported that activities were often slowed

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 [24] E.g. ECE, ECLAC, ESCWA.
 [25] UNOCT, MINURSO, UNDOF, UNAMA, UNOCA, DGC, OLA.
 [26] DCO, ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, UNCTAD, UN-Habitat, UNMISS, DSS.
 [27] UNEP, UNODC.

down or, exceptionally, stopped. Some evaluations also acknowledged that the crisis had a heavy impact on the programming priorities of entities and diverted time and priority away from planned programmes.[28] Some of the evaluations reported that programmes had repurposed funds to address the immediate impact of COVID-19 and formulated rapid assessments and other products that were instrumental in supplying national institutions and development partners with much-needed data for joint interventions aimed at alleviating the impact of the crisis, with focus on the most vulnerable groups and/or people at risk of being left behind.[29] For instance, the work of UNCTAD under the project "Indices for benchmarking productive capacities for evidence-based policymaking in landlocked developing countries" helped to inform the analysis of the impact of the crisis on productive capacities in the least developed and developing countries.

42.   However, despite COVID-19-related disruptions in activities, most evaluations found that programmes had swiftly adapted to pandemic restrictions and that adjustments had been made to the format of meetings and implementation modalities to achieve results, allowing participatory discussion and decision-making across a wider array of stakeholders.[30] Evaluations revealed that the shift to online work modalities was reasonably smooth in all cases, although it required rapid upskilling and adjustments for both staff and stakeholders.[31] As an example, the evaluation of support from the General Legal Division of the Office of Legal Affairs to the United Nations COVID-19 response concluded that the Division had effectively adapted its internal working structures to best meet the operational demands posed by the pandemic and that it was able to take advantage of information technology tools to streamline communication and collaboration.

IV.   Follow-up on recommended actions of the Committee for Programme and Coordination

43.   The General Assembly, in its resolution 76/236, endorsed the four recommendations contained in the previous report and called for their timely implementation. At the time of writing, all four recommendations were considered in progress. Their implementation will continue to be monitored.

44.   Regarding recommendation 1,[32] as shown in figure XVI, 16 out of 62 entities[33] in the small operational, peacekeeping operations, political affairs and management and support groups reported that there was an evaluation unit or focal point established with terms of reference or a job description. Fifteen entities reported having an evaluation unit or focal point, but without a corresponding set of terms of reference or job description. Of the 62 entities, 30 reported not having an evaluation unit. Of those, five entities reported having terms of reference or job descriptions related to evaluation included as part of other related functions (for example, programme management unit, monitoring and evaluation unit). Since the previous biennium, five entities have adopted new evaluation policies, and eight have

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[28] DCO.

[29] DCO, ECLAC, ESCAP, OHCHR.

[30] ESCAP, UN-Habitat.

[31] OHCHR.

[32] To strengthen overall evaluation capacity, entities in small operational, peacekeeping, political affairs and management and support groups should:
  (a) Establish an evaluation function and/or focal point with clear terms of reference;
  (b) Adopt or update the existing evaluation policy.
  Indicators of achievement: Evaluation terms of reference and policy adopted.

[33] Based on self-reported data; data on terms of reference or job descriptions were missing from the reporting for 22 entities.

developed draft evaluation policies. Several entities have updated or are in the process of updating their evaluation policies.

Figure XVI
Number of entities in the small operational, peacekeeping operations, political affairs and management and support groups reporting established evaluation units or focal points and terms of reference for evaluation
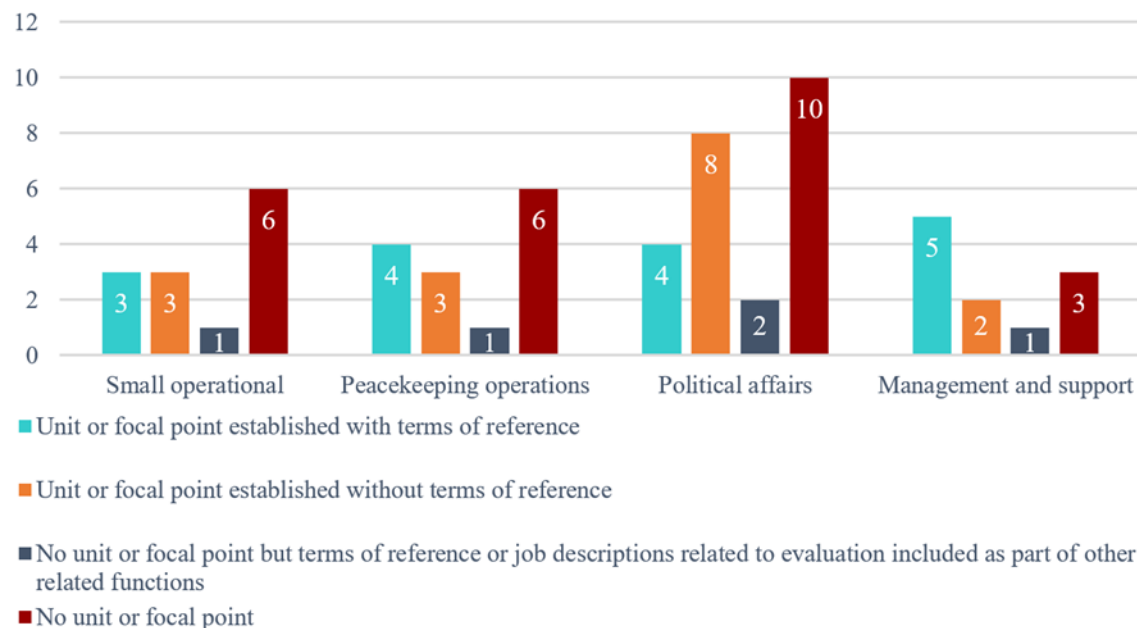
Source: Focal point survey.

45. Regarding recommendation 2, [34] the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance reported that, since the issuance of the recommendation, it had held four workshops in conjunction with OIOS, with the participation of 70 Secretariat entities. Eighty per cent of the attendees represented small operational entities, peacekeeping operations and management and support entities with the most significant capacity gaps. The Department also reported that materials from workshops, recordings and evaluation webinars were available on the community of practice website to promote knowledge-sharing and learning among community members, as were recently endorsed evaluation policies to assist colleagues in developing their own evaluation policies. Finally, the Business Transformation and Accountability Division of the Department and the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS provided 26 one-on-one consultations, 12 evaluation policy or plan reviews and 10 reviews of evaluation terms of reference and methodological guidance

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[34] Evaluation practices should be strengthened or, where necessary, established, for each entity under the small operational, peacekeeping, political affairs and management and support entities groups. This should include internal consultation to decide on the arrangement for evaluation, including considering the options of (a) a pooled central evaluation function per group; (b) decentralized evaluation functions within each entity operating under the guidance of a centralized unit in the appropriate headquarters entity; and (c) independent evaluation functions at the entity level, taking into consideration factors including the delegation of authority, size, similarity of mandates, capacity and economies of scale. The Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance should lead those efforts, in collaboration with OIOS, the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, as appropriate.
Indicator of achievement: The best approaches for evaluation practices in the respective entity groups decided and the appropriate arrangements put in place.

materials. In addition, colleagues from eight peacekeeping missions participated in the first United Nations System Staff College training course on evaluation. [35]

46. Recommendation 3 [36] was expected to bring about increased focus on evaluations of subprogrammes, which could be observed, with 15 per cent of all evaluations focusing on the programme or subprogramme level, compared with 9 per cent in the previous biennium. [37] It should be noted, however, that only 32 entities reported having a workplan [38] and only 21 entities submitted a relevant document. [39] As regards coverage, it remained unchanged from 2018–2019 (see para. 14); [40] 43 entities reported expecting that all their subprogrammes would be covered within a six-year period, but 9 entities reported that it would take more than six years and no data were available for 23 entities. [41] On follow-up to evaluation recommendations, 28 entities reported having mandatory follow-up tools and mechanisms for the implementation of recommendations, while 47 entities reported having follow-up tools and mechanisms for the implementation of recommendations from external evaluations. [42]

47. Finally, regarding recommendation 4, [43] the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance reported that it continued to work on institutionalizing submissions on evaluation workplans in the budget proposals as a requirement and on developing a mechanism to track evaluation workplans, resource allocation and expenditure in Umoja.

V. Strengthening evaluation capacities and functions

Administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3 on evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat is in the early stages of implementation, and entities reported needing dedicated resources and support to meet the aspirations of the Secretary-General's reform initiative

48. The administrative instruction on evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat (ST/AI/2021/3) was promulgated in August 2021 with the purpose of clarifying the governance and architecture of the evaluation function in the Secretariat. As noted in the present report, despite some improvements, gaps in capacity, practice, and use, allocation and tracking of resources for evaluation persisted in the 2020–2021

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[35] Source: Inspection and Evaluation Division.
[36] To strengthen the use of evaluation, all entities should:
   (a) Develop an evaluation plan and evaluate all subprogrammes within a six-year period;
   (b) In all evaluation reports, include mandatory follow-up tools and mechanisms for evaluation recommendations, for example, the inclusion of a management response and/or an action plan for the implementation of recommendations.
Indicators of achievement: Increased subprogramme evaluations and improved recommendation follow-up tools.
[37] Source: Document review.
[38] Source: Focal point survey.
[39] Source: Document review.
[40] Source: Evaluation expenditure survey and document review.
[41] Source: Focal point survey.
[42] Source: Focal point survey. In the previous biennium, 29 entities reported having mechanisms for recommendation follow-up.
[43] To improve the tracking of evaluation activity, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance should:
   (a) Work with all entities to include and enhance the quality of submissions on evaluation workplans in the budget proposals;
   (b) Develop a mechanism to track evaluation workplans, resource allocation and expenditure in Umoja.
Indicators of achievement: Budget submissions refer to actual evaluations; corresponding resources allocated for planned evaluations; mechanism developed in Umoja.

biennium. These are particularly evident in the small operational, peacekeeping operations, political affairs and management and support groups.

49. Entities across all five groups raised the need for dedicated and sufficient resources for a stronger internal evaluation function: 47 of 63 respondents to the focal point survey and 27 of 32 entities participating in interviews raised resources as a concern for the implementation of the administrative instruction. In cases where entities had added the conduct or management of evaluation to staff members' existing responsibilities, they reported having done so at the cost of other functions. Entities that relied more on extrabudgetary funds tended to have greater evaluation activity to cater to donors' reporting requirements. Other entities, particularly smaller ones with less than 10 staff, had less flexibility to reallocate resources. Most entities, particularly but not limited to those in the small operational, peacekeeping operations, political affairs and management and support groups, cited the need for additional resources to be allocated, and highlighted the need to advocate for the approval of programme budget proposals that include requests for the allocation of resources for evaluation; some reported unsuccessful experiences with this in prior budget submissions.

50. Several entities raised the need for external expertise and additional guidance and capacity-building. The need to bring in reliable external expertise to conduct evaluations and expertise on data analytics was frequently mentioned, given the lack of such expertise in many entities, and frustrations were raised by several entities about the consultants database maintained by the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, including that the consultants had not been vetted.

Actions to strengthen evaluation capacities

51. The Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS and the Business Transformation and Accountability Division of the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance were tasked with providing technical support to entities through workshops, individual consultations, capacity-building, methodological support and review of draft evaluation policies and other documents after the administrative instruction was promulgated. The overall evaluation support function for the Secretariat, staffed by two different sections in the Business Transformation and Accountability Division and the Inspection and Evaluation Division, has developed a programme of work and enhanced its staffing. During the 2021–2022 biennium, 36 entities made 46 requests for individual assistance, and 22 entities either developed or updated their policy with the support of the two Divisions. In evaluation support client feedback surveys, entities indicated overall high satisfaction with the support provided, while entities receiving tailored support based on their individual needs, for example on the application of the administrative instruction, or policy formulation, tended to rate support from both Divisions higher than those participating in group workshops.

52. Looking ahead, in line with administrative instruction ST/AI/2021/3, which specified the respective roles and responsibilities for providing evaluation capacity support, the Department and/or OIOS will:

    (a)   Ensure better outreach to and sensitization of heads of entity and staff across the Organization;

    (b)   Conduct a study to support the identification of the level and type of resources necessary for entities to implement the administrative instruction, and support advocacy for such resources as necessary;

    (c)   Continue to provide tailored support to entities based on their specific needs;

(d)   Provide customized guidance on how internal evaluation can build upon existing learning and accountability frameworks and activities;

(e)   Strengthen the evaluation community of practice in the Secretariat;

(f)   Improve the consultants database to facilitate timely recruitment of vetted evaluation expertise.

VI.   Recommendations

Recommendation 1

53.   To strengthen the practice of evaluation across the Secretariat, the heads of entities that are not covered by an evaluation policy[44] should ensure implementation of recommendation 1 from the 2018–2019 biennial review (see footnote 32), in line with the requirements of the extant administrative instruction on evaluation (ST/AI/2021/3).

Indicators of achievement: evaluation terms of reference and/or policy adopted

Recommendation 2

54.   To strengthen the administrative instruction on evaluation (ST/AI/2021/3), for its review scheduled for 2023, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, with inputs from the Evaluation Management Committee, and in consultation with relevant entities, should consider further guidance relating to, inter alia:

(a)   Evaluation arrangements for small operational, peacekeeping, political affairs and management and support entities, in line with recommendation 2 from the 2018–2019 biennial review (see footnote 34) and in line with the requirements of the extant administrative instruction on evaluation;

(b)   Requirements for evaluation planning and coverage to better reflect the diversity of programme types and components;

(c)   Norms on the independence of evaluation, particularly in smaller missions and offices, to strengthen the credibility and integrity of internal evaluations.

Indicator of achievement: review of the administrative instruction reflects the necessary revisions

VII.   Evaluation workplan

55.   Based on OIOS evaluation workplans, the evaluations below will be available for consideration by the Committee for Programme and Coordination in 2023 and 2024.

56.   The Committee selected for consideration at its sixty-third session, in 2023, the following evaluations:

(a)   Development Coordination Office regional support;

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[44] Entities concerned include: DCO, OSCSEA, OVRA, OSRSG/SVC, OSRSG/VAC, MINUSCA, MINUSMA, UNDOF, UNFICYP, UNIFIL, UNISFA, UNMIK, UNMISS, UNMOGIP, UNSOS, OSESG Great Lakes, OSESG Horn of Africa, OSESG Syria, OSESG Myanmar, UNAMI, UNITAMS, UNOAU, UNOCA, UNRCCA, UNRGID, UNSCO, UNSMIL, UNVMC, IRMCT, UNON, UNOV.

(b)   Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia: subprogramme 3, Shared economic prosperity;

(c)   Economic Commission for Europe: subprogramme 4, Economic cooperation and integration, and subprogramme 6, Trade;

(d)   Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific: subprogramme 4, Environment and development;

(e)   Thematic evaluation of Secretariat support for the Sustainable Development Goals;

(f)   Thematic evaluation of the youth, peace and security agenda: youth participation.

57.   The following evaluations are planned for consideration by the Committee in 2024:

(a)   Coordination of humanitarian action and emergency response;

(b)   United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia;

(c)   Development Coordination Office and the resident coordinator system: coordination of coherent policy advice;

(d)   Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation;

(e)   Triennial reviews of the implementation of recommendations from the 2021 evaluations of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and United Nations support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the inspection of the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

Annex*

Comments received from entities on the draft report

Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance

1.   With reference to your memorandum dated 21 February 2023 regarding the above subject draft report, please find below the comments of DMSPC.

A.   General comments

2.   The Department welcomes the efforts of OIOS in undertaking this biennial exercise that provides meaningful insights into the evaluation capacity and function of 76 entities in the Secretariat. The Department would like to acknowledge our close cooperation with the OIOS team and thanks OIOS for incorporating the comments we provided during the draft report process.

3.   DMSPC agrees with the findings of the review as they pertain to the Department and the wider Secretariat. As acknowledged by the report, the areas for action to support entities in implementing the administrative instruction on evaluation are included in the workplan of the Business Transformation and Accountability Division (BTAD), working in close cooperation with partners in OIOS.

B.   Specific comments

4.   Regarding the two new recommendations, DMSPC requests that recommendation 1 be modified to include a reference to the extant administrative instruction on evaluation. The Department is concerned that, given ongoing discussions of the Evaluation Management Committee (EMC) on the requirement for each entity to have an evaluation policy, the recommendation as drafted may result in a General Assembly resolution which would limit the scope of the revision of ST/AI/2021/3 before it has concluded. Without this modification, the Department will not be able to accept the recommendation, and has included suggested text below:

> To strengthen the practice of evaluation across the Secretariat, the heads of entities that are not covered by an evaluation policy should ensure implementation of recommendation 1 from the 2018–2019 biennial review in line with the requirements of the extant administrative instruction on evaluation.

5.   The Department accepts recommendation 2 and attaches the recommended action plan.** The review of ST/AI/2021/3 was discussed and agreed by EMC in its meeting on 28 February, at which time the Committee confirmed the instruction's revision as a priority element of the EMC workplan for 2023. The revision exercise will be led by BTAD.

Department of Peace Operations

1.   Thank you for sharing the final draft biennial report of OIOS on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives for the 2020–2021 biennium.

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  * In the present annex, OIOS sets out the full text of comments received from DMSPC, DPO, ECE, ITC, OHCHR, UN-Habitat, OSAA, UNOCT, UNFICYP, UNISFA, UNMIK, UNMOGIP, UNMISS and UNRCCA. The practice has been instituted in line with General Assembly resolution 64/263, following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee.
 ** On file with OIOS.

2.   As conveyed previously since the last biennial review, the Action for Peacekeeping initiative has generated impetus to peacekeeping partnership in strengthening performance and accountability. DPO has launched a number of initiatives, including the integrated peacekeeping performance and accountability framework and the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System, and has deepened the implementation of the action plan to improve the security of United Nations peacekeepers. The efforts have produced positive results in the field and helped to build a solid base for strengthening results-based management, as well as building and improving monitoring and evaluation.

3.   DPO notes again that the evaluation policy requires significant resources which have not been provided and cannot be provided from within existing departmental resources. This is the most significant factor hindering the implementation of the policy in peacekeeping operations, and it would be useful to discuss more holistically how peacekeeping operations might be best supported to meet the policy, including by drawing on resources provided under the peacekeeping support account for evaluations with OIOS.

4.   DPO welcomes the central evaluation consultant roster and the training on evaluation planning and methodology; however, the lack of vetting of the roster and the high staff turnover in the field mean that these efforts are insufficient to build adequate awareness and evaluation capacity in missions, or to enable actual execution of quality evaluation studies.

5.   DPO also welcomes the recommendation on revising ST/AI/2021/3 and would urge thorough consultation with all departments to ensure that the revised policy will take into account the challenges encountered and provide clarity on realistic and feasible measures in a stringent funding environment.

Economic Commission for Europe

1.   I refer to your memorandum dated 21 February 2023, transmitting the formal draft report of OIOS on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives for the 2020–2021 biennium.

2.   ECE appreciates the continuous efforts of OIOS to highlight the importance of evaluation in the Secretariat. ECE is committed to enhancing the role of evaluation findings to programme design, delivery and policy directives, and the OIOS biennial report is a useful tool to continue improving the quality of ECE evaluations.

3.   In line with its biennial evaluation plan approved by the ECE Executive Committee in December 2017, one programme-level and three subprogramme-level evaluations were conducted during the biennium. In addition, ECE evaluated 10 projects at the end of their cycle during the biennium. For each evaluation, ECE issued a management response and a progress report, tracking twice a year the implementation of recommendations. Closed recommendations are presented to the ECE Executive Committee in an annual report; all evaluation reports, evaluation briefs, management responses and progress reports are publicly available at https://unece.org/evaluation-reports.

4.   In 2020–2021, ECE continued to strengthen the role of the evaluation function. It increased the seniority of the professional leading the evaluation function; revised its evaluation policy to align it with the new evaluation framework of the Secretariat; and managed to significantly improve the quality of its evaluation reports, among others by strengthening the inclusion of cross-cutting issues in the evaluations.

5.   Despite this progress, acknowledged in the draft biennial report, I remain concerned about the lack of adequate resources from the regular budget to evaluate regular budget activities in line with the ST/AI/2021/3 request that all subprogrammes be covered by an internal evaluation at least once in every six years within existing resources. The continuing trend of decreasing resources under the regular budget puts evaluation activities at risk. Independence and the quality of evaluations are inextricably linked to dedicated resources for engaging external evaluators. ECE welcomes that DMSPC and/or OIOS will conduct a study to support the identification of the level and type of resources necessary for entities to implement ST/AI/2021/3, as indicated in the biennial report, and stands ready to engage in this endeavour.

6.   I take this opportunity to commend the professionalism of the OIOS evaluation team led by Yuen Ching Ho and the constructive engagement between our respective offices. We are very appreciative of the fruitful discussions and time invested to ensure a participatory approach.

International Trade Centre

1.   Thank you for your memorandum dated 21 February 2023, transmitting the draft report of OIOS on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives.

2.   I appreciate that you have given our staff the opportunity to comment on the earlier informal draft and that you have given us the opportunity to comment on the final draft of the report.

3.   ITC management welcomes the final report and acknowledges that the recommendations are not for ITC action but for information only.

4.   ITC appreciates the quality of the report and thanks OIOS and its staff for the good working relationship and cooperation spirit in the preparation of the report.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

1.   In response to your memorandum of 21 February 2023, I am pleased to provide herewith the formal comments from OHCHR on the draft biennial report of OIOS on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives for the 2020–2021 biennium.

2.   OHCHR welcomes the findings of the OIOS biennial review of the state of evaluation in 2020–2021. The biennial review has been very important in the building of the incipient evaluation function in OHCHR, as the areas of improvement identified every biennium are among those key inputs that guide our work for the development and revision of plans, guidance and tools.

3.   As co-conveners of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) working group on gender, disability and human rights, we are particularly pleased to learn that the quality of evaluation reports has remained good with improvements made on the parameter of inclusion of gender and human rights considerations.

4.   We also welcome the addition of the integration of disability inclusion as one of the areas considered in the biennial review since the current exercise. OHCHR had a leading role in the development of the UNEG guidance on this area launched last year, and we provide continue support and promote the exchange of experiences on its implementation through the UNEG group.

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

Thank you for your memorandum dated 21 February 2023 and sharing with us the draft report of OIOS on strengthening the role of evaluation and application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives for the 2020–2021 biennium.

I support the review findings, actions to strengthen evaluation capacities and recommendations contained in the draft report. It reveals how the evaluation culture in the Secretariat is largely weak and most entities reported inadequate capacities and skills to engage in meaningful internal evaluations.

At UN-Habitat, as in other United Nations agencies, we are faced with the challenge of managing expectations of the role of evaluation with insufficient financial and human resources. This is a fundamental challenge that hinders strengthening the evaluation function, and I would welcome your views and suggestions on how we can obtain the most gains with inadequate resources.

I welcome the proposed actions of providing technical support to our entities as well as continuing to provide tailored support based on specific needs of organizations and to improve the consultancy database to facilitate timely recruitment of vetted evaluation experts.

In the attached, kindly find our comments on recommendations that constitute our formal management response.*

Office of the Special Adviser on Africa

1.   Reference is made to your memo of 21 February transmitting the draft biennial report of OIOS on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives for the 2020–2021 biennium.

2.   I would like to congratulate your Office on the completion of the draft biennial report.

3.   As a small operational entity, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa welcomes the report's analysis and recommendations. We also welcome the reference made to ST/AI/2021/3 and the importance of more dedicated support needed to ensure all entities are able to implement the administrative instruction in support of the Secretary-General's reform initiative. Indeed, evaluation plays a pivotal role in informing entities' application of robust programme planning, budgeting and implementation, and provides important information for decision-making purposes.

4.   With this in mind, we take note of the report finding that a large proportion of survey respondents indicated that resources consumed towards carrying out evaluations often negatively impact other functions, and in doing so, that small operational entities are seemingly less flexible in reallocating resources and possibly experience more constraints. Specifically, we take note that, overall, small entities were less likely to have dedicated evaluation functions and evaluation plans in comparison to large operational, peacekeeping, political affairs and management and support offices. Your assessment shows that small operational entities, on average, spent less than 3 per cent of the amount that larger operational entities have spent on evaluation reports in the 2020–2021 biennium. Of course, larger operational budgets allow for more investment in evaluation capacity, which in turn allows for more

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* On file with OIOS.

information to be gathered and assessed to inform strategic decision-making both in terms of management and operational decisions.

5.   The task before us, then, is to identify solutions that would lead to increased support and guidance to small operational entities so that they may benefit from the critical and strategic value added that a strong evaluation function brings with it. As an entity that has undergone substantial reform in the past two years, including the reorganization and strengthening of its planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation capacity, OSAA continues to explore all possible avenues to arrive at a fit-for-purpose evaluation function. I particularly welcome recommendation 2 contained in the report, which calls for a strengthening of ST/AI/2021/3, and would like to offer the full cooperation and support of OSAA to OIOS, EMC and DMSPC in finding innovative ways and solutions towards the implementation of the recommendation.

Office of Counter-Terrorism

1.   This is in reference to your inter-office memorandum dated 21 February 2023 transmitting the draft report on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives for the 2020–2021 biennium to all heads of offices and departments and requesting a formal management response.

2.   We are pleased to note that UNOCT is featured in your draft publication among the 12 entities that produced "reports of excellent quality" within the reporting period and that the majority of our reports satisfactorily considered the integration of human rights.

3.   While UNOCT made significant progress in strengthening its evaluation function in the previous biennium, which is confirmed by the reported data, we also take note of the low score assigned to UNOCT as it relates to seniority of staff heading the evaluation function. Although the Evaluation and Compliance Unit is still headed at the P-3 level under direct supervision of a staff member at the D-1 level, progress was made in securing sustainable and predictable funding for the Unit's existing P-3 and G-6 posts, which have been converted from extrabudgetary to regular budget posts effective 1 January 2023, allowing us to prioritize future voluntary contributions for the possible creation of a senior evaluation position.

4.   We take note that OIOS introduced the integration of disability inclusion and environmental issues in the 2020–2021 review, which found that "these issues were weakly integrated in evaluation reports, in particular for disability inclusion considerations". I am pleased to note that UNOCT is currently in the process of finalizing an internal policy to guide the inclusion of disability aspects in UNOCT policy and programmes and an evaluation handbook with specific guidance on evaluating disability considerations in our programmes.

5.   We thank you for this evaluation that covered 76 United Nations Secretariat entities, including field missions, and provided useful insight on the status, structure, capacities, practice and functioning of evaluations for the betterment of service delivery to Member States.

6.   Our Office remains committed to continuously enhancing and strengthening its evaluation function.

United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus

1.   I refer to your inter-office memorandum dated 21 February 2023 requesting a formal management response on the biennial report on strengthening the role of

evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives for the 2020–2021 biennium.

2. Please note that the mission has no comments on the draft biennial report and accepts recommendation 1. The mission considers recommendation 2 as not applicable to UNFICYP.

3. The mission's plan of action for recommendation 1 is attached.*

United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

I am pleased to inform you that I have reviewed the following OIOS evaluation reports:

• Draft biennial report of OIOS on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives for the 2020–2021 biennium

• Draft report of OIOS on the evaluation of the incorporation of climate-related security risks by United Nations peace operations

• Draft report of OIOS on the thematic evaluation of United Nations Secretariat support for the Sustainable Development Goals

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the OIOS team for its evaluation reports and invite you to consider the responses herewith attached.*

United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

1. I am pleased to receive the draft 2020–2021 biennial report on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives.

2. UNMIK concurs with the findings of the evaluation. The Mission also acknowledges one recommendation in paragraph 53 as relevant to the Mission and commits to adopting an evaluation policy and terms of reference for its evaluation function and/or focal point.

3. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your team for a fruitful collaboration.

United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan

As it is well pointed out, UNMOGIP does not have a dedicated evaluation function. That said, with its limited resource, the current Doctrine Officer has been identified/nominated to serve as the evaluation focal point for our mission until the end of his tour of duty. Subsequently, efforts will be made to identify an evaluation focal point to continue with the evaluation efforts in the mission. An alternate focal point has also been nominated by the Chief of Mission Support and the focal point is currently the mission's audit focal point.

As recommended, terms of reference for the evaluation focal point and a simplified mission-specific evaluation policy will be crafted in due course, hopefully by the end of May, but the exact date will depend on the workload of the Doctrine Officer/Evaluation Focal Point.

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 * On file with OIOS.

A point to be noted is that in a small mission like UNMOGIP, there will always be resource constraints to conduct evaluations. UNMOGIP does not have the expertise within the mission.

United Nations Mission in South Sudan

1.   UNMISS welcomes the OIOS biennial report on strengthening the role of evaluation and the application of evaluation findings on programme design, delivery and policy directives for the 2020–2021 biennium.

2.   UNMISS acknowledges the findings of the report, including the need to continue strengthening programmatic evaluations in peacekeeping missions, and welcomes the DMSPC commitment in calling for greater support through additional guidance and support on the implementation of the administrative instruction on evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat (ST/AI/2021/3). UNMISS attaches great importance to measuring impact to improve evidence-based decision-making, as demonstrated by the progress that the Mission has made in implementing the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System, and through the integration of evaluations, best practices and lessons learned into our programmatic activities.

3.   UNMISS accepts the recommendations, inasmuch as they concern peacekeeping missions, and is looking forward to working with DPO, DMSPC and OIOS on developing further a framework and tools to enhance the evaluation function in missions.

United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia

Thank you very much for sharing the report with us. We find the recommendations very useful, tangible and applicable.

From our side we would like to inform you that in accordance with the recommendations UNRCCA has assigned a political officer (myself) to be an evaluation focal point. We have also drafted an evaluation policy, but it is subject to approval by a new Special Representative of the Secretary-General upon her or his appointment.

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