Deborah Rugg retires from helm of IED and UNEG

Dr. Deborah Rugg, Director of OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Division since 2011, IED Newsletter Editor-in-Chief, and UNEG Chair since December 2012, retires from the UN at the end of March. Before she sets sail for her next stage in her career we sat down to capture some key lessons learned from her role in holding the helm of the UN’s evaluation function and from her prior 30-year career in the global AIDS arena.

Before coming to OIOS, Deborah served for six years as Director of Evaluation at UNAIDS in Geneva and for 19 years with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention where she was Associate Director of Monitoring and Evaluation for the Global AIDS Program (GAP), as well as a professor doing research and teaching.

What are the key lessons you have learned while you have been Director?

I am learning something new every day...that is why I love this job! Never a dull moment. Here are some of the key things that come to mind:

- The critical importance of always listening well.
- That to pass a UN GA Resolution it takes persistence, patience and learning politics: both “big P” politics- i.e. intergovernmental- and “little p” politics- interpersonal.
- That evaluation can be a fun, adventurous, varied, and very fulfilling career, if you have a passion for it. For me it is the faces...the faces of the people I have met in the field, on the front lines, whether they were workers or beneficiaries...it is for them I do what I do. Keeping a laser-like focus on the people we seek to serve will help you prioritize the right things.
- You really can’t do it alone, you need allies and like-minded colleagues, and some of the best evaluation champions are not evaluators.
- You must expect the best...don’t ever settle for mediocrity...and don’t be afraid to speak truth to power. That’s your job.
- Evaluators must learn to communicate their messages better...our messages need to be simple, salient and compelling.
- Finally, as the Secretary General has said “Evaluation may not be popular but it is essential” and I have learned that it is essential that evaluators become leaders of change. To do this you must have courage, be determined, and always communicate clearly.

What does the future hold for evaluation at the UN, and in general?

There are many things happening right now at the UN that will affect the future of evaluation. One of the most significant is the advent of the new SDG Accountability Framework and the growing expectations for “Big Data and the data revolution”. In this context there will be a growing need for evaluators to articulate their necessary and complementary role in understanding what is and isn’t working with the implementation of the new SDGs and provide the data for important mid-course corrections.

In general, I see two basic trends, one is where I see the public and civil society starting to advocate for “evaluation as a right”...the right to know if their government programs are working and how they might be improved. And the second is...
that I see national governments increasingly demanding that they be supported in acquiring the capability and capacity to evaluate programs themselves, as evidenced by the recent General Assembly Resolution on national evaluation capacity for development. By raising their own capacity they will reduce the need to always have to fly in expatriate evaluators from other countries to conduct their evaluations, and thus be more empowered to design, conduct, and use evaluations.

Before we finish, let me just say how honored I feel to have been given the opportunity to lead this amazingly talented group. Every day I come to work, I am in awe of the incredible responsibility the public has entrusted us with. There are so many things we have accomplished together over the past three and half years and I couldn’t have done half of it, if it were for the amazing professionals in IED and their hard work and tireless dedication. I am also quite proud of our accomplishments in UNEG these past three years with the new 2014-2019 strategy and the exciting passing of the first standalone GA resolution on evaluation.

And lastly, what does the future hold…for you?

Oh that’s easy! Rest! Ha! Not for long. After a short rest I will work on getting my next level of sailing certification so I can skipper a boat by myself.

I will also be helping my oldest daughter plan her artsy wedding in San Francisco this summer. I have two daughters and they are the joy of my life! Then by fall I expect to be back in New York working on my book, my public speaking and evaluation capacity development business, and training for a Ted talk …and a big sail!

**Lighting of the Evaluation Torch: 2015 – the International Year of Evaluation**

On 17 December, UNEG and the Mission of Fiji hosted a small gathering with Member States, UN partners and EvalPartners to celebrate the adoption of the first ever, stand-alone resolution on national evaluation capacity development titled "Capacity building for Evaluation of Development activities at the Country-level".

During this event, Ambassador Thomson of Fiji (sponsor of the resolution), Ms. Deborah Rugg (UNEG Chair and Director IED OIOS) and Mr. Marco Segone (UNEG Vice-Chair, Co-Chair EvalPartners, and Director UN Women Independent Evaluation Office) lit the International Year of Evaluation Torch. They were joined by Mr. Indran Naidoo (UNEG Vice-Chair and Director UNDP Independent Evaluation Office), Mr. Scott Green (UNEG Vice-Chair and ISWE), Mr. Vincent Herlihy (Ireland), Mr. Peni Suveinakama (Fiji), Mr. Rafael Beleboni (Brazil), Mr. Navid Hanif (Director Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, DESA), Ms. Andrea Cook (Director UNFPA Evaluation Office), Mr. Colin Kirk (Director UNICEF Evaluation Office) and other participants, including the Under Secretary-General of OIOS, Ms. Carman Lapointe.

This launched the celebrations of the 2015 - International Year of Evaluation. This is a historic time for evaluation, when a renewed and stronger commitment between Member States, UNEG and EvalPartners has been declared. All partners have started to work hand-in-hand to advocate for stronger evaluation functions at the UN and for enhanced national evaluation capacities, in order to prepare for the implementation of the new sustainable development agenda 2016-2030.
OIOS-IED evaluands and themes for 2016-2017 reports announced

Following the crop of evaluations that come to final report completion in March 2015 (see first column below) IED will immediately move on to a new round of evaluation assignments. Based on a process of risk assessment coordinated OIOS-wide, the topics for thematic and programme evaluation, as well as triennial reviews, has been set for 2016 and 2017. In June this year, the GA’s Committee on Programme and Coordination (CPC) will decide which among these evaluations it will consider at its 2017 session.

IED has already announced to relevant evaluands that, come April, work will begin on five new programme evaluations. Within the cycle that ends with final reports in March 2016, three triennial reports will also be completed. In addition, there will be three thematic peacekeeping evaluations, the topics for which are as yet preliminary. The topics for the following ‘regular budget’ cycle, beginning in April -2016 and with finalization of reports by 2017, have also been identified.

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Peacekeeping                   | Peacekeeping                |                         |
Leadership Training             | Force generation            |                         |
Standing Police Capacity        | Robust peacekeeping         |                         |
Sexual Exploitation and Abuse   | ‘Rehatting’ of contingents  |                         |

For Peacekeeping evaluations 2016 topics are tentative, for 2017 topics yet to be identified

General Assembly adopts change, adjusting IED’s mandated ‘Logical Framework’

The General Assembly’s final review of the UN Secretariat’s Proposed Strategic Framework for 2016-2017, as proposed by the Secretary General (A/69/6), brought some change to the ‘logical framework’ that underpins IED’s workplan and budget. The ensuing GA resolution 69/17 adopted a number of tweaks to this key aspect of IED’s mandate; with the below now having been approved:

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To strengthen accountability, learning, efficiency, effectiveness and impact in the implementation of programmes and the relevance of administrative procedures and to assess whether the activities correspond to the mandates. | Increased contribution to the decision-making processes of Member States and increased ability of the Secretariat to take appropriate actions based on inspections and evaluations by the OIOS that assess the efficiency and effectiveness of programmes, thematic issues and self-evaluation capacities, the relevance of administrative procedures and whether the activities correspond to the mandates. | (i) Increased percentage of programmes and thematic inspections and evaluations that have been used by Member States to inform decision-making on efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation of programmes and the relevance of administrative procedures and whether the activities correspond to the mandates. (ii) Increased number of programmes evaluated and inspected. |
In line with the established cycle of Secretariat programme planning (as per the ‘PPBME’, ST/SGB/200/8), the agreement on ‘logical framework’ is followed by budgeting phase, during which details of associated outputs, together with indicator targets and baselines are added.

Accompanying the adoption of this language, resolution 69/17 also recognized the importance of continuing to improve the logical frameworks, encouraging programme managers to further improve the qualitative aspects of indicators of achievement in order to enable better evaluation of results. The resolution also involves adoption of CPC’s recommendation that OIOS include in its future recommendations, where possible, indicators that make the result of implementing such recommendations measurable. Also at this General Assembly session, further resolution 69/253, it was decided that both OIOS’s audit and evaluation reports be published on the public website of the office. All IED’s evaluation reports will therefore be available to the public.

**IED capacity building continues including “BBL” and technical training**

OIOS-IED kicked off 2015 with an exciting new round of evaluation capacity development events by welcoming in January Mr. Colin Kirk of UNICEF’s Evaluation Office to its Brown Bag Lunch series to speak of the “Challenges for evaluation in the post-2015 world.”

Also, in February, IED arranged a 2-day technical training session on “Presenting Data Effectively: Practical Methods for Improving Evaluation Communication”, which was held by Dr. Stephanie Evergreen, organized in partnership with Dr. Ann Doucette, Director of The Evaluators Institute at George Washington University.

As stated in Dr. Evergreen’s book: “Crystal clear reports, slides, and graphs are valuable: they save an audience’s mental energies, keep a reader engaged, and make you look smart!”

The attendees, including staff from the Department of Management, UN-Women, UNFPA, and UNICEF, learnt how to visualize and present data that support legibility, comprehension, and retention in the minds of the evaluation stakeholders. The training included also several hands-on step-by-step sessions on how to make impactful charts and graphs in Excel, to become true “Excel Ninjas”!

**UN and international evaluation community**

**Upcoming Events:**

2015 UNEG Evaluation Week, New York
- High-Level event featuring UN Secretary General-9 March
- Annual General Meeting-9-12 March
- Evaluation Practice Exchange -11-13 March

2015 Summer Evaluation Institute, AEA, Atlanta-May 31-June 3

**Evaluation Vacancies:**

**OIOS:** Evaluation Officer, P4, New York, closing 11 April, 2015

**WHO:** Coordination, Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring and Evaluation (PBM), P6, Brazzaville, closing 2 March 2015

**IFAD (IOE):** Evaluation Analyst, P2, Rome, closing 17 March, 2015