

UNHCR/HCP/2016/2

UNHCR Policy on Evaluation

Approved by: Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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Contact: Head, Evaluation Service

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I. PURPOSE

1. This policy sets out the overall framework for the evaluation function in UNHCR. It confirms UNHCR's commitment to the importance of evaluation and its role in supporting organizational accountability, learning and the continual improvement of UNHCR's performance in addressing the protection, assistance and solutions needs of refugees, stateless persons and other persons of concern.
2. The policy establishes a dedicated Evaluation Service in UNHCR headed by a Head of Service who reports to the High Commissioner.
3. It defines the purpose of evaluation, clarifying its dual accountability and learning functions, incorporates United Nations evaluation norms and standards¹ and introduces evaluation quality assurance. The centralised and decentralised levels of the evaluation function in UNHCR are defined.
4. To further strengthen the delivery of the evaluation function, the Deputy High Commissioner and, if appropriate, in consultation with members of UNHCR's Senior Executive Team (SET), will maintain regular liaison with the Evaluation Service on the planning, implementation, and follow-up of the Annual Work Plan.

II. SCOPE

5. The policy applies to UNHCR Headquarters and all Field Operations.
6. Compliance with the policy is mandatory.

III. RATIONALE

7. A review of the existing UNHCR Evaluation Policy, which dates from August 2010,² highlighted the need for a revision to align it with established international norms and standards and strengthen and professionalize the evaluation function in UNHCR. External reviews and audits of the function³ have reinforced this view and called for, among others, the establishment of a robust, independent and professional evaluation function that is both centralised and decentralised.
8. The revised policy herewith reflects UNHCR's agreement with these views and recommendations. It provides for a stronger, evidence-informed, quality evaluation function in the Organization based on the principles of independence, impartiality, credibility and utility.

¹ United Nations Evaluation Group – UNEG (2016) [Norms and Standards for Evaluation](#). New York: UNEG.

² While the 2010 Evaluation Policy was not issued under a cover IOM/FOM, it was made available on the UNHCR website.

³ Office of Internal Oversight Services (2013) [Review of the evaluation capacity of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees](#) and Joint Inspection Unit (2014) [Analysis of the evaluation function in the United Nations system](#), and Board of Auditor financial report and audited financial statement for the year that ended in 2010 and Report of the Board of Auditors. A/66/5/Add.5

IV. DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF EVALUATION

Definition

9. UNHCR applies the following UN definition of evaluation:

“An evaluation is an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.⁴ An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders”⁵

10. Two main levels of evaluation⁶ are established under this policy:

- (i) **Centralised evaluations**, commissioned and managed by the Evaluation Service. They primarily focus on (a) policies, strategies, programmes and themes of corporate significance at the global, strategic and institutional levels; and (b) Level 3 emergency operations.⁷
- (ii) **Decentralised evaluations**, commissioned and managed by Divisions, Services, Regional Bureaux or Regional and Country Offices. They primarily focus on activities, themes, operational areas, strategies, programmes and projects at the regional or country level.

Purpose of evaluation

11. UNHCR’s decision-making and work often occur in environments of political fluidity, operational uncertainty or limited resources. To ensure that the decisions are made, and the resources applied optimally, and to achieve the intended results, it is essential for UNHCR to understand what works, or does not work, and why. UNHCR further needs to know the ways in which its specific interventions affect the lives of refugees, stateless persons and other persons of concern and contribute to the achievement of protection, assistance and solutions.

12. The evaluation function provides the Organization with a structured approach to (a) obtain an impartial reflection on, and analysis of, its performance and results (*for accountability purposes*); and (b) recommend ways to improve and

⁴ When evaluating Humanitarian Action, the conventional evaluation criteria developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) have been adjusted to include criteria such as *appropriateness, coverage, connectedness* (replacing ‘sustainability’) and *coherence*. (ALNAP (2006) [Evaluating Humanitarian Action Using the OECD-DAC Criteria](#)).

⁵ United Nations Evaluation Group (2016) [Norms and Standards for Evaluation](#). New York: UNEG.

⁶ The main types of evaluations carried out under these respective levels and their key distinguishing features are listed in **Annex II**.

⁷ Evaluation of Level3 emergency operations will be conducted by the Evaluation Service within 9 to 12 months, or earlier if requested by the High Commissioner. Evaluations of L1 of L2 emergencies may also be undertaken upon request. See paragraph 10.4 of the [“Policy on Emergency Response Activation, Leadership and Accountabilities”](#), UNHCR/HCP/2015/1.

build on its strengths, address its weaknesses and contribute to lessons learned (*for learning and knowledge generation purposes*). The overall purpose of evaluation is thus to contribute to both learning and accountability, and inform policy decisions and strategic and programmatic choices.

13. Evaluations shall be conducted to answer questions such as: *Have the right things been undertaken? Are we doing them on a scale that will make a difference in the lives of persons of concern? How well have things been done and how do we know this? What results have been achieved? Are there better ways of achieving them? To what extent can a certain result be attributed to a specific intervention?*

Distinctions from and complementarity with other functions

14. Evaluation is distinct from yet complementary to other functions in the oversight spectrum such as audit and inspection. It makes use of findings from those mechanisms as part of the broader evidence base needed to assess the achievement of both expected and unexpected results.⁸
15. Evaluation and monitoring are often linked together. However, evaluation differs from monitoring and other forms of assessment that take place in the course of a programme or operation. It provides an impartial analysis of whether expected results have been achieved, whether unexpected results occurred and why, and asks specific questions about relevance, context, cause-and-effect and contribution to results.

V. EVALUATION PRINCIPLES

16. In line with established standards for evaluation in the UN system,⁹ the *Code of Conduct for evaluation in the UN system*¹⁰ and the *UN Ethical Guidelines for evaluations*,¹¹ evaluation in UNHCR is founded on the fundamental principles of **independence**, **impartiality**, **credibility** and **utility**. These principles, which are connected and mutually reinforcing, subsume a number of specific norms that shall guide UNHCR's work in commissioning, conducting and supporting the use of evaluation. They include the protection of those providing information to evaluators and of data,¹² requirements for informed consent, respect for dignity and diversity and the minimisation of risk, harm or burden upon those participating in an evaluation while at the same time not compromising the integrity of evaluation findings.
17. All those carrying out or involved in evaluations in UNHCR shall be guided by and must adhere to these principles to ensure that (a) evaluations are fit for the stated purposes as set out in this policy; and (b) evaluation findings, conclusions, recommendations and proposed lessons to be learned are

⁸ **Annex I** contains an overview of the different types of oversight, accountability, learning and knowledge-generating exercises undertaken in UNHCR.

⁹ United Nations Evaluation Group (2016) *Norms and Standards for Evaluation*. New York: UNEG.

¹⁰ United Nations Evaluation Group (2008) *UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System*. New York: UNEG.

¹¹ United Nations Evaluation Group (2008) *UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation*. New York: UNEG.

¹² See also "*Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons of Concern to UNHCR*", /UNHCR/HCP/2015/6.

viewed with confidence by their intended audience and users within UNHCR, its partners and beyond.

Independence

18. The principle of independence provides **legitimacy** to evaluation work by reducing actual or potential conflicts of interest which could arise if managers and policy-makers had sole responsibility for evaluating their own interventions.
19. The **independence** of evaluations comprises two key aspects. The first, behavioural independence, entails the ability at centralised and decentralised levels to initiate evaluations and communicate evaluation results without undue influence by any party, including management, and to carry out evaluative work without fearing negative effects on career development. The second, organizational independence, requires the central evaluation function to be positioned independently from management functions in order to carry out the responsibility of setting the evaluation agenda for UNHCR and be supported by adequate resources to execute it. Organizational independence also requires evaluation managers to be able to submit evaluation reports to the appropriate level of management and decision-making in the Organization.

Impartiality

20. **Impartiality** is vital to ensure the independence of evaluation. It is achieved through (a) the professional integrity of evaluation managers and evaluation teams; and (b) absence of undue influence that may create bias. Impartiality applies at all stages of an evaluation process including when taking decisions on planning and initiating an evaluation; selecting topics and interventions to be looked at; selecting the evaluation team; developing the design and methodology for data collection and analysis; and generating the evidence needed to support findings, conclusions and recommendations.
21. Impartiality should not be merely assumed. Rather, those managing and conducting an evaluation should assess the evaluation's institutional and political context, note any risks and plan accordingly.
22. To support both the independence and impartiality of evaluations in UNHCR:
 - (i) The Head of the Evaluation Service reports to the High Commissioner, has no direct responsibility for management functions other than evaluation, and has full discretion over the preparation of the annual centralised evaluation Work Plan for approval by the High Commissioner and the approval and issuance of centralised evaluation reports;
 - (ii) Evaluation Service personnel may, in an observer capacity only, attend management committees or operational task forces for the purpose of keeping abreast of important policy, strategic and operational issues and developments;

- (iii) All evaluations, both centralised and decentralised, shall be conducted by independent consultants with no direct or indirect roles in what is being evaluated. Prior to hiring the consultants/evaluation teams, any actual or potential conflict of interest must be assessed;
- (iv) UNHCR personnel managing centralised evaluations must not have been, nor be expected to be in the near future, directly responsible for the policy setting, design or management of the subject being evaluated. UNHCR personnel managing decentralised evaluations shall, in particular, take steps to comply with quality assurance requirements including safeguards against undue influence at all stages of an evaluation process;
- (v) UNHCR personnel managing evaluations and evaluation teams shall be provided timely and unhindered access to relevant information on the subject of the evaluation (including programme and budget data); and
- (vi) All evaluation reports, both centralised and decentralised, shall be made publicly available.¹³

Credibility

23. Evaluations need to be credible if their intended users are expected to act with confidence upon their results and take steps to incorporate the lessons generated into policy, advocacy, programming, decision-making and implementation processes.
24. Credibility is determined by the extent to which evaluation findings and conclusions are (a) complete, unambiguous and informed by logic; and (b) adequately supported by evidence generated through appropriate methodologies and fair and transparent analysis and triangulation.
25. To support the credibility of evaluation processes and products in UNHCR:
- (i) Evaluation managers and evaluation teams shall demonstrate professional integrity, cultural awareness, sensitivity and respect for diversity and the professional background required to develop and facilitate inclusive approaches to meaningfully involve relevant stakeholders, particularly refugees, stateless persons and other persons of concern in the different stages of an evaluation;
 - (ii) Evaluation teams shall also demonstrate the required mix of evaluation-specific competencies, professional background and expertise, and adequate knowledge, *inter alia*, of forced displacement; protection; rights-based programming; and age, gender and diversity approaches and accountability to persons of concern;
 - (iii) Evaluation managers shall ensure that the views of all relevant stakeholders, including refugees, stateless persons and other persons of concern, are taken into account in evaluation methodologies and related data collection and analysis approaches and tools. This should be done

¹³ An exception to putting an evaluation report in the public domain shall be in accordance with “UNHCR’s Information Classification, Handling and Disclosure Policy”, IOM/FOM/76/2010.

as systematically as possible throughout an evaluation, and in a manner as sensitive as possible to age, gender and diversity; and

- (iv) Evaluation Quality Assurance (EQA) shall, as elaborated in Part VI of this policy, be applied to both centralised and decentralised evaluations including through quality review of draft evaluation Terms of Reference, inception and draft reports by the Evaluation Service.

Utility

26. The utility of evaluations at centralised and decentralised levels shall be assured and enhanced by:

- (i) Ensuring adequate preparatory analysis to determine the timeliness and readiness of a subject or intervention (such as a strategy, policy, theme, programme or project) to be evaluated in a timely, useful and credible fashion;
- (ii) Clearly defining and communicating the intention to use the results of all evaluations in pertinent decision-making processes, organizational learning and improving programmatic planning, delivery and accountability;
- (iii) Strategically planning and initiating evaluations in a timely manner, while striving to ensure an adequate alignment with the programming/operational/policy development and reporting cycles;
- (iv) Assuring leadership support at all relevant levels for both centralised and decentralised evaluations;
- (v) Establishing clear mechanisms and processes for response to key evaluation findings and recommendations and follow-up; and
- (vi) Ensuring the accessibility of evaluation results, making reports publicly available, and actively communicating and disseminating evaluation findings and conclusions.

VI. KEY ELEMENTS OF THE EVALUATION FUNCTION

27. The main functional elements of both centralised and decentralised evaluation comprise planning and initiating evaluations; providing quality assurance; approval of final evaluation report, and managing the response and follow-up. Together with the roles and responsibilities outlined in Section VIII of the policy, they form the substantive operational framework for evaluation in UNHCR.

Planning and initiating evaluations

28. Drawing on consultations with the SET and senior management, Divisions, Bureaux and other functions in the oversight spectrum, the Evaluation Service will independently develop the annual Evaluation Work Plan along with the budgetary requirement for commissioning centralised evaluations.

29. The subjects to be evaluated at centralised or decentralised levels, the appropriate type of evaluation to be undertaken and prioritization in resource

allocation for and timing of the evaluations shall be decided upon as provided in the paragraphs below:

Centralised evaluations

30. Decisions to initiate an evaluation at centralized level are:

- (i) As stipulated in pertinent UNHCR policy documents;¹⁴
- (ii) On the initiative of the Head of the Evaluation Service in consultation with, and/or responding to specific requests by the SET and senior management, for instance to inform the development of new, or revision of existing, global policies and strategies;
- (iii) In accordance with provisions in Grant Agreements or Donor Contribution Agreements;¹⁵ and
- (iv) Jointly, following discussions, with other UN agencies and other partners.

Decentralised evaluations

31. Decisions to initiate a decentralised evaluation are taken by Divisions, Regional Bureaux, Regional or Country Representations:

- (i) In light of relevant UNHCR demands, advice by the Evaluation Service or specific requests by senior management – e.g. to inform a change in strategic orientation of a programme/operation, before taking the decision to scale up or scale down a certain type of intervention (pilot or innovative project) or to decide a change in strategy or modality of protection or assistance provided;
- (ii) In accordance with provisions in Grant Agreements or Donor Contribution Agreements;¹⁶ and
- (iii) Jointly, following discussions, with other UN agencies and other partners.

32. When deciding to initiate an evaluation, Divisions, Regional Bureaux, Regional or Country Representations shall inform the Evaluation Service on all the pertinent aspects as provided for in this policy including quality assurance measures and support that may be required from the Evaluation Service.

33. For its part, the Evaluation Service shall:

- (i) Provide expertise, support and advice on timing and readiness for evaluation; evaluation methodologies; evaluation management including quality assurance guidance; resource allocation to different types of

¹⁴ For instance the organization's [Policy on Emergency Response Activation, Leadership and Accountabilities](#) UNHCR/HCP/2015/1 which provides in paragraph 10.4 that "An evaluation of Level 3 emergency operations will be conducted by the Evaluation Service within 9 to 12 months, or earlier if requested by the High Commissioner".

¹⁵ As per [UNHCR/AI/2014/15](#) on the acceptance and signing of contribution agreements (cash or in-kind donations), both draft completed Grant Agreements Templates as well as specific Donor Contribution Agreement have to be sent to DER/Donor Relations and Resource Mobilization (DRRM) or Private Sector Partnerships Service (PSP) for clearance. DER will liaise with the Evaluation Service for advice and guidance as appropriate.

¹⁶ See also footnote 15 above.

evaluations and matching resources with the scope and complexity of the exercise;

- (ii) Review the quality of draft evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR), inception reports and draft evaluation reports; and
- (iii) Publish resulting evaluation reports on the UNHCR evaluation website page.

Evaluation Quality Assurance

34. Adherence to Evaluation Quality Assurance (EQA) provisions for both centralised and decentralised evaluations is fundamental to (a) bringing greater predictability, consistency and quality to evaluation processes; (b) producing high quality, evidence-informed and credible evaluation products; and (c) supporting the realisation of the evaluation principles of independence, impartiality, credibility and utility introduced in this policy. Taking steps towards systematic implementation of EQA will ensure that the evaluation function is increasingly professional, fit for purpose and more responsive to the accountability, evidence generation, knowledge and learning needs of the Organization.

35. Quality assurance provisions covering all stages in an evaluation process will be provided in operational guidance that will accompany this policy with the dual objective of:

- (i) Providing general guidance on conducting evaluations in UNHCR, covering the main steps required to manage and complete an evaluation, and the different roles, tasks and inputs required at each step; and
- (ii) Clarifying the expected quality standards in terms of evaluation process, content and products.

36. The Evaluation Service shall exercise a quality assurance function for:

- (i) Centralised evaluations through the review of draft evaluation ToR, inception reports and draft evaluation reports;
- (ii) Decentralised evaluations through the review of draft evaluation ToR, inception reports and draft evaluation reports, and providing support and expertise to UNHCR personnel managing decentralised evaluations.

Finalisation and approval of evaluation reports

37. After the Evaluation Service has reviewed a draft evaluation report submitted by the evaluation team to ensure the required quality, the draft report shall be shared for comments with the senior managers concerned, including members of the SET for centralised evaluations. The evaluation team shall incorporate the comments as appropriate, and submit the final report for approval to (a) the Head of the Evaluation Service for centralised evaluations, and (b) the senior manager in the Division, Regional Bureau or Regional/Country Office who commissioned the decentralised evaluation.

Management Response and follow-up to evaluations

38. A management response is required to key findings and recommendations put forward in an evaluation report within two months from the date of dissemination of the report. This is the responsibility of the senior management directly concerned, including the SET for centralised evaluations.
39. The management responses¹⁷ will be placed in the public domain with other pertinent evaluation documents (ToR and final evaluation reports).
40. To fulfil its commitment to improve organizational learning and accountability, the Evaluation Service shall ensure that the results of UNHCR's evaluation work are effectively communicated and disseminated, both internally and externally.¹⁸

VII. PARTNERSHIP IN EVALUATION

41. UNHCR's evaluation policy is firmly grounded in greater interaction, cooperation and partnership with other organizations¹⁹ with the objectives of:
 - (i) Furthering peer learning through evaluations conducted by other agencies and partners at global, regional and country levels;
 - (ii) Seizing opportunities for initiating, commissioning and managing evaluations jointly with partners and other actors at global, regional and regional level;
 - (iii) Contributing to reflections on existing and new normative guidance on evaluation by participating in evaluation thematic networks within the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) and other evaluation networks; and
 - (iv) Contributing to inter-agency evaluation work in the context of the IASC Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IASC-IAHE)²⁰.

VIII. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The High Commissioner

42. The High Commissioner is responsible for:
 - (i) Issuing the Evaluation Policy;
 - (ii) Promoting evaluation across the Organization as a mechanism for corporate learning and accountability;

¹⁷ Generally presented in a matrix used to table all the evaluation recommendations, the degree of acceptance by management, and rationale for their decisions and follow-up actions agreed. Specific guidance on management response, including templates and practical advice, will be provided in operational guidance.

¹⁸ An exception to putting an evaluation report in the public domain shall be in accordance with "[UNHCR's Information Classification, Handling and Disclosure Policy](#)", IOM/FOM/76/2010.

¹⁹ At the time of issuing this policy, the importance of partnership in the context of evaluation is enhanced by the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals which refer to refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons and thus emphasize the importance of data collection and evidence and thus greater cooperation and partnership with all pertinent players. See: UN Secretary General (2015) [Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

²⁰ The Evaluation Service already participates in IAHEs evaluation management groups.

- (iii) Appointing the Head of the Evaluation Service with the required experience, expertise, profile and qualifications; and
- (iv) With support by the Deputy High Commissioner, approving the annual Work Plan for centralised evaluations and the Evaluation Service Budget.

The Senior Executive Team (SET)

43. To further strengthen the delivery of the evaluation function, and notwithstanding the Head of the Evaluation Service reporting line to the High Commissioner, the Deputy High Commissioner and, if appropriate, in consultation with members of the SET, shall
- (i) maintain regular liaison with the Evaluation Service on implementation and follow up of the Annual Work Plan; and
 - (ii) ensure a coordinated and timely clearance of a management response to centralised evaluations, and follow-up on implementation.

Head of the Evaluation Service

44. The Head of the Evaluation Service is responsible for:
- (i) Overseeing implementation of the evaluation policy across the Organization working closely with Divisions, Regional Bureaux, Regional and Country Offices;
 - (ii) Preparing the Work Plan and Budget for centralised evaluations in consultation with senior management, members of the SET, and other relevant stakeholders, including other functions in the oversight spectrum;
 - (iii) Overseeing the work of commissioning, managing, approving and communicating the results of centralised evaluations;
 - (iv) Presenting an annual report on evaluation in UNHCR to the Executive Committee;
 - (v) Promoting and supporting an effective implementation of quality assurance at both the centralised and decentralised evaluation levels, including technical advice and support for capacity development, particularly for decentralised evaluations;
 - (vi) Taking steps to ensure that the evaluation function is adequately supported – including through targeted evaluation capacity development initiatives - across the Organization; and
 - (vii) Maintaining cooperation and partnerships with other evaluation services and professional networks to contribute to inter-agency evaluation, learning and guidance and normative development initiatives.

Directors of Regional Bureaux, Divisions and Representatives

45. With respect to **centralised evaluations**, Bureaux and Division Directors, Regional and Country Representatives shall:

- (i) Engage in the consultations to develop the annual Work Plan for centralised evaluations and provide input and feedback as required;
- (ii) Facilitate the evaluation process, including by providing access to information which may be required;
- (iii) Ensure that consolidated comments from relevant sections and offices are provided in a timely fashion on draft evaluation reports; and
- (iv) Ensure that required input for the 'management response' is submitted in a timely manner, and take steps to implement and support follow-up actions to the agreed recommendations.

46. With respect to **decentralised evaluations** they shall:

- (i) Plan, commission and make resources available for decentralised evaluations according to the key evaluation principles and quality assurance provisions outlined in this policy;
- (ii) Inform and consult with the Evaluation Service on plans for decentralised evaluation for quality assurance purposes, technical advice and other support that may be required from the Service;
- (iii) Facilitate the evaluation process, including by providing access to information which may be required;
- (iv) Ensure that a management response to key findings and recommendations in an evaluation report is issued within two months of its dissemination; and
- (v) Take steps to implement and support follow-up actions to the agreed recommendations.

IX. RESOURCES FOR EVALUATION

Human resources

47. Adequate and professionally skilled human resources for the evaluation function in UNHCR shall be progressively achieved through the following:

- (i) Realizing, by the end of 2018, at least a 50/50 ratio within the Evaluation Service of (a) externally recruited evaluation specialists with the required competencies and expertise assigned to expert positions; and (b) existing UNHCR staff with the required profile and experience assigned through the regular process following the rotation policy. This will ensure that the evaluation function is equipped with both sufficient technical experience on and knowledge of up-to-date evaluation practice, and knowledge and understanding of UNHCR's specific protection mandate, operations and work environment;
- (ii) Developing, investing in and strengthening staff capacity to commission, manage and support the use of decentralised evaluation results. The Evaluation Service shall provide in particular expertise, support, guidance, tools and technical advice and, in consultation with the Global Learning Centre (GLC) and the Programme Analysis and Support Section (PASS) of the Division of Programme Support and

Management (DPSM), develop an appropriate capacity development programme to support decentralised evaluations; and

- (iii) Hiring independent consultants, consultancy firms or qualified institutions to conduct evaluations commissioned by UNHCR. For specific subjects, a qualified UNHCR staff may act in an advisory capacity to the evaluation team.

Financial resources

- 48. The budget of the Evaluation Service will cover the costs of commissioning centralised evaluations, providing technical and quality assurance support to decentralised evaluation and developing an Organization-wide quality assurance framework for evaluation.
- 49. The financing of decentralised evaluations will require Divisions, Regional Bureaux, Regional and Country Offices to allocate resources from their approved annual budgets. Depending on the availability of funds, these may be supplemented as appropriate by the Evaluation Service.
- 50. Subject to availability of funds, UNHCR is committed to increasing the level of resources to sustain progress towards global parameters recommended for supporting the evaluation function.²¹ A systematic tracking of expenditure on evaluation across the Organisation will also be pursued.

X. MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE

- 51. This policy is comprehensive in nature and shall be implemented across the Organization. Compliance with the policy shall be monitored by the Evaluation Service.
- 52. A formal peer review of the UNHCR evaluation function shall be initiated no later than 30 June 2019.²²

XI. DATES

- 53. This policy shall come into force on 15 October 2016. The next scheduled review shall be conducted no later than 31 December 2019. However, as provided in the Policy on the Development, Management and Dissemination of UNHCR's Internal Guidance Material (UNHCR/HCP/2013/1 of 20 December 2013), the High Commissioner may at any time recall or initiate a review of any UNHCR official guidance.

²¹ The UNEG Norms and Standards of June 2106 recommend that benchmarks for resourcing of the evaluation function globally should be commensurate with the size and function of the Organization. The United Nations Joint Inspection Unit report (JIU/REP/2014/6) concluded that organizations should consider a range of funding that is between 0.5% and 3% of organizational expenditure.

²² The review will be conducted in participation and cooperation with Regional Bureaux, Divisions, Regional and Country Representations so as to further corporate commitment to the learning and insights generated by evaluation work. Meanwhile, it is recalled that, as per the Policy on the Development, Management and Dissemination of UNHCR's internal guidance material (UNHCR/HCP/2013/1 of 20 December 2013), the High Commissioner may at any time recall or initiate a review of any UNHCR official guidance.

XII. CONTACT

54. The contact for this policy is the Head of the Evaluation Service.

XIII. HISTORY

55. This policy revises and supersedes UNHCR's Evaluation Policy of August 2010, which is hereby cancelled

XIV. REFERENCES

- ALNAP (2006) Evaluating Humanitarian Action Using the OECD-DAC Criteria. London: Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action. <http://www.alnap.org/resource/5253.aspx>
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ANNEXES:

- Annex 1: Overview of the main types of oversight, learning and knowledge-generating exercises undertaken in UNHCR;
- Annex 2: Types of Evaluation

ANNEX I

Main types of oversight, accountability, learning and knowledge-generating exercises undertaken in UNHCR.

TYPE of EXERCISE	PURPOSE	DEFINITION/OBJECTIVES	SOME KEY FEATURES
Evaluations (both centralised and decentralised)	Mix of learning and accountability. Evaluation aims to reflect on and analyse to what extent intended and unexpected results are achieved, and to analyse their implications.	<p>UNHCR adopts the evaluation definition of the UN Evaluation Group:</p> <p>“An evaluation is an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.</p> <p>An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of Organizations and stakeholders.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adherence to the UNHCR Evaluation Policy including provisions on independence, credibility and utility of evaluations. • Requirement to apply Evaluation Quality Assurance provisions covering evaluation management processes, evidence generation, and report. • Can answer different types of questions: descriptive, normative and cause-and-effect questions. • Systematic of use of triangulation in the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data to provide evidence-informed answers to the key evaluation questions asked. • Requirement to place evaluation reports in the public domain.
Evaluative reviews	Mix of learning and accountability.	Similar to evaluations (see above definition), but less focus on results chain. Sometimes is done for less “evaluable” subjects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above, but less systematic methodological approach (e.g. because of lack or poor quality of data, or lack of policies or strategies underpinning the subject of evaluation). • Requirement to place final reports in the public domain.
Operations reviews²³ and Real-time Reviews²⁴	Predominant learning focus emphasising “support” to ongoing	<p>High level reviews of strategic objectives and implementation modalities.</p> <p>Targets individual operations, i.e. not “themes”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No requirement to follow the UNHCR Evaluation Policy. • Data collection, analysis and report are expected to have a faster turnaround compared to evaluation. • No requirement to apply Evaluation Quality

²³ Operations Reviews concept paper DPSM/DIP – 20 October 2014

²⁴ Paragraphs 3.5 and 10.4 of the [“Policy on Emergency Response Activation, Leadership and Accountabilities”](#) UNHCR/HCP/2015/1.

TYPE of EXERCISE	PURPOSE	DEFINITION/OBJECTIVES	SOME KEY FEATURES
	operations. Rapid feedback for course correction to operations		Assurance provisions.
Internal Audit	Predominantly accountability.	“Internal audit is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organisation's operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control, and governance processes. This is conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services.” ²⁵	Checking accuracy and compliance through documentation, file, financial reviews, and individual interviews in accordance with the International Standards for Professional Practice of Internal Auditors. Focus on adequacy and effectiveness of internal control systems and risk management. Providing assurance to the High Commissioner that (i) UNHCR operations are efficient and effective; (ii) its financial and operational reporting is accurate; (iii) its assets are safeguarded and (iv) it complies with mandates, regulations and rules.
External Audit	Predominantly accountability, compliance and oversight.	“External Audit is an independent activity conducted by the United Nations Board of Auditors (UN BoA) who provides the General Assembly with an opinion on UNHCR’s financial statements and with a report on the administration and management of the Organization in general” ²⁶	Checking accuracy and compliance through documentation, file, financial reviews, and individual interviews in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing and Article VII of UN Financial regulations. Focus on financial and procedural compliance.
Inspection (NB: structure and functioning of Inspection currently under review).	Predominantly accountability.	“Systematic check of whether, and how effectively, established policies, guidelines and good practices are being applied in the management of a field office or a Headquarters Unit. Inspections focus on those factors, internal and external to the Office, deemed essential to the efficient achievement of objectives.” ²⁷ Supports effective and accountable management, including	Focus on compliance, effectiveness, and the quality of the organisation’s management of its mandated activities through Desk/document review, briefings, on-site visits, confidential interviews with staff, partners, persons of concern, donors, and other key stakeholders both internal and external, questionnaires/surveys, observation.

²⁵ Briefing Note on internal and external Audit in UNHCR, Policy and Audit Coordination Unit, June 2016.

²⁶ *Ibid.* It has been noted that some audits at times labelled by scholars “performance audits” or “effectiveness audits” can overlap with evaluations in that they attempt to assess the extent to which policies, programmes or projects are meeting the intended objectives. (See Mayne, J. “[Audit and evaluation in public management: challenges reforms, and different roles](#)” *The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, 21/2006). The European Court of Auditors defines performance audits as “an independent, objective and reliable examination of whether undertakings, systems, operations, programmes, activities or organisations are operating in accordance with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, and whether there is room for improvement”.

²⁷ UNHCR (2012) [The role, functions and modus operandi of the Inspector General's Office](#) IOM-FOM 009-010/2012.

TYPE of EXERCISE	PURPOSE	DEFINITION/OBJECTIVES	SOME KEY FEATURES
		through preventive measures to minimize the need for remedial action. Highlights recurring issues that need to be addressed at a higher or systemic level and identifies good practices.	Inspection methodology based on the Inspection Handbook and enshrined in IOM/FOM/009/2012 on “The role, functions and <i>modus operandi</i> of the Inspector General’s Office”.
Organisational assessments (e.g. MOPAN or DfID MAR) ²⁸	Predominantly accountability (towards donors).	“Systematic process for obtaining valid information about the performance of an organisation and the factors that affect performance” ²⁹ . “The mission of MOPAN is to support its members in assessing the effectiveness of the multilateral organisations that receive development and humanitarian funding. Aiming to strengthen the organisations’ contribution to overall greater development and humanitarian results, the network generates, collects, analyses and presents relevant and credible information on the organisational and development effectiveness of multilateral organisations.” ³⁰ DfID Multilateral Aid Review (MAR): “A systematic assessment to examine the value for money that we get from putting our funding through multilateral organisations, and to help decide future funding levels to these organisations.” ³¹	Focus on “organizational effectiveness” (MOPAN) and on Value for Money (DfID -MAR) through data collection tools including desk/document reviews and perception surveys.
Functional reviews	Predominantly learning.	In-depth look at how an organisation works: how it gets things done and achieves its goals, including through formal and informal systems.	Often carried out by external consultants. Use of extensive interviews with staff across all levels of the organisation. May also include a formal analysis of organisational and financial structures.
Self-assessments or self-evaluations	Predominantly learning.	Assessment of an intervention expected and achieved accomplishments; and examines the contextual factors and causality in order to understand achievements or the lack thereof.	Direct observation, baseline data. Typically, less systematic methodology than formal evaluations.
Research and	Predominantly	“ <u>Research</u> is the systematic process of collection and	Different types of designs, methodologies and related

²⁸ MOPAN stands for Multilateral Organizations Assessment Network (led by several key donors) and was carried out for UNHCR twice in the recent past. The MAR implemented by DfID stands for “Multilateral Aid Review” and was also carried out twice for UNHCR.

²⁹ Better Evaluation, “[Evaluating the Performance of an Organization](#)”.

³⁰ MOPAN [mission statement](#)

³¹ DfID MAR Collection [Multilateral Aid Review](#)

TYPE of EXERCISE	PURPOSE	DEFINITION/OBJECTIVES	SOME KEY FEATURES
studies	learning (contribution to generating knowledge).	analysis of data and information, in order to generate new knowledge, to answer a specific question or test a hypothesis”. “ <u>Studies</u> establish current knowledge around a specific topic [and] are generally descriptive in nature. They can take the product of research and adapt it to specific projects or country settings” ³²	data collection approaches. They are not designed to assess UNHCR’s performance or its role in the results chain.
Lessons papers	Learning-orientation.	Experiences distilled from a variety of sources (including but not limited to evaluations) to inform future interventions. Often designed to help ensure that the experience of a given intervention / response is candidly recorded in order to help with the planning and execution of future interventions. Example ALNAP Lessons papers	Make use of synthesis methodologies drawing on evaluation reports as well as other materials and reports (e.g. operational reviews, After Action Reviews). Data collection and analysis predominantly desk-based. Can be kept as internal document targeting specific audience internal to the organisation.
Monitoring	Accountability and learning.	“Monitoring is the continuous review of programme implementation to confirm whether planned activities are on track to deliver the expected outputs and contribute to the expected impact. UNHCR measures progress towards targets for outputs and objectives using performance and impact indicators from its results framework. Monitoring takes places on a continuous basis throughout the year, conducted by partners and UNHCR, both individually and jointly.” ³³	Data collection and analysis through document review, partners reporting, on-site monitoring (interviews, focus groups, surveys, field visits) or remote monitoring.

³² UNICEF (2014) “Taxonomy for Defining and Classifying UNICEF Research, Evaluation and Studies”, Florence: UNICEF-Innocenti Office for Research.

³³ [UNHCR Programme Manual](#), Chapter 4 (5 Monitoring, pp 183-84). On the other hand “protection monitoring” has been defined as “collecting, verifying, and analysing information in order to identify human rights violations and protection risks encountered by IDPs and other affected populations” See [Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons](#)

ANNEX II

TYPES OF EVALUATION

All evaluation types listed below can be initiated at different stages of implementation of a project / policy or country operation. They can also be commissioned and managed jointly with UNHCR partners or other actors. Some types of evaluations (as indicated below) are the specific responsibility of the Evaluation Service (“centralised evaluations”) whereas others are the responsibility of other entities in UNHCR (“decentralised evaluations”). This list presents the main types of evaluation likely to be used in UNHCR but does not cover all forms of evaluation.

EVALUATION TYPE	KEY FEATURES
By subject/ focus / scope	
Policy	Focuses uniquely on global level and assesses the quality of design, extent of implementation, and broad results of a UNHCR policy. → <i>Centralised</i>
Strategy, thematic	Assesses the quality of design, extent of implementation and results of a corporate, regional or country specific strategy, of specific operational areas, or themes adopted by UNHCR. → <i>Centralised for strategies and themes of corporate significance at global, strategic level</i> → <i>Decentralised for strategies and themes at the regional and country level.</i>
Region/Country Operation	Assesses the overall relevance, extent of implementation, and results of a UNHCR plan in a specific region or country. → <i>Decentralised or centralised with the Evaluation Service for evaluation quality assurance and dedicated support for particular country situations, regions, complex programmes</i>
Operation / Specific PPGs	Assesses the relevance, extent of implementation, and results achieved in pursuit of a particular UNHCR goal or specific population planning group (PPG). → <i>Decentralised</i> → <i>Centralised in the case of large, complex regions or country programmes</i>
Project	Assesses the relevance, extent of implementation and results of an individual project or intervention of importance to the UNHCR country portfolio. → <i>Decentralised</i>
By commissioning and management modality	
UNHCR-commissioned and managed evaluations	Commissioned and managed at centralised or decentralised level.
Joint with partners	Assesses the relevance, extent of implementation and results of any of the subjects tabled above → <i>Can be centralised or decentralised depending on the evaluation subject and scope</i>
IASC Agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHE)	Commissioned by the IASC Inter Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) Steering Group of which UNHCR (Evaluation Service) is a member. IAHE evaluations focus on collective results achieved by humanitarian actors participating in IASC coordination structures, primarily in response to IASC-declared Level 3 emergency response operations. → <i>Evaluation Service involvement</i>