



*Evaluation Guidance Note Series*

UNIFEM Evaluation Unit

October 2009

## **Guidance: Quality Criteria for Evaluation Reports**

## 1. Introduction

The UNIFEM quality criteria for reports are intended to serve as a guide for preparing meaningful, useful and credible evaluation reports. It does not prescribe a definite format that all evaluation reports should follow but rather indicates the contents that need to be included in quality reports. The UNIFEM quality criteria are derived from UNEG standards (2005), specifically reporting standards, UNEG ethical guidelines for evaluation (2007) and draft UNEG guidance on integrating gender equality and human rights in evaluation (2009).

UNEG standards for evaluation in the UN system (2005) instruct that “the final evaluation report should be logically structured, containing evidence-based findings, conclusions, lessons and recommendations, and should be free of information that is not relevant for overall analysis. A reader of an evaluation report must be able to understand: the purpose of the evaluation; exactly what was evaluated; how the evaluation was designed and conducted; what evidence was found; what conclusions were drawn; what recommendations were made; what lessons were distilled”.

The below described criteria should be used by contracting units to assess the quality of evaluation reports. They should also be annexed to the TOR that the evaluators are informed about the requirements for UNIFEM evaluation reports at the outset of evaluation process.

## 2. UNIFEM Quality Criteria for reports

<b>ELEMENTS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE EVALUATION REPORT</b>	
<b>1. Basic key information</b>	The title page and opening pages provide key basic information: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Name of the evaluation subject (i.e. activity, project/programme, theme, policy etc.);</li><li>2. Name and organization(s) of the evaluators;</li><li>3. Locations (country, region, etc) of evaluation subject;</li><li>4. Name of the organization(s) that commissioned the evaluation;</li><li>5. The date;</li><li>6. Table of content;</li><li>7. List of acronyms.</li></ol>
<b>2. Executive summary</b>	A short stand-alone synopsis of the substantive elements of the evaluation report provides the uninitiated reader with a clear understanding of what was found and recommended and what has been learnt from the evaluation. It includes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Brief description of the subject being evaluated;</li><li>2. Context, present situation, and description of the subject;</li><li>3. Purpose of evaluation;</li><li>4. Objectives of evaluation;</li><li>5. Intended audience;</li><li>6. Short description of methodology, including rationale for choice of methodology, data sources used, data collection &amp; analysis methods used, and major limitations;</li><li>7. Most important findings &amp; conclusions;</li><li>8. Main recommendations.</li></ol>

<b>3. Purpose of the evaluation</b>	Purpose of the evaluation is described including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why the evaluation is being done;</li> <li>2. How it will be used;</li> <li>3. What decisions will be taken after the evaluation is complete;</li> <li>4. The context of the evaluation is described to provide an understanding of the setting in which the evaluation took place.</li> <li>5. Explanation is provided on how the evaluation informs UNIFEM’s work priorities outlined in Strategic Plan and Sub regional strategies, where possible, the connections are made to national gender equality commitments and human rights.</li> </ol>
<b>4. Evaluation objectives and scope</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The evaluation report provides a clear explanation of the objectives and scope of the evaluation</li> <li>2. The limits of the evaluation are acknowledged.</li> <li>3. The original evaluation questions are explained, as well as those that were added during the evaluation.</li> <li>4. An explanation of the evaluation criteria used is provided and the rationale for not using a particular criterion is explained.</li> <li>5. Any limitations in applying the evaluation criteria are explained.</li> <li>6. Specific criteria that reflect human rights and gender equality aspects are considered, for instance, empowerment, participation, social transformation.</li> <li>7. Performance standards or benchmarks used in the evaluation are described.</li> </ol>
<b>5. Evaluation Methodology</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Data sources;</li> <li>2. Description of data collection methods and analysis (including level of precision required for quantitative methods, value scales or coding used for qualitative analysis; level of participation and empowerment of stakeholders through evaluation process);</li> <li>3. Description of sampling (area and population to be represented, rationale for selection, mechanics of selection, numbers selected out of potential subjects, limitations to sample);</li> <li>4. Reference indicators and benchmarks, where relevant (previous indicators, national statistics, human rights treaties, gender statistics, etc.);</li> <li>5. Reflection on whether the evaluation approach, data collection and analysis methods are gender equality and human rights responsive and appropriate for analyzing gender equality and human rights issues identified in the scope;</li> <li>6. Evaluation team, including the involvement of individual team members;</li> <li>8. The evaluation plan;</li> <li>9. Key limitations.</li> </ol>
<b>6.Context of subject</b>	An explanation of how context contributes to the utility and accuracy of the evaluation, including key social, political, demographic, institutional, and human rights and gender equality factors.

<b>7. Description of the subject</b>	<p>The subject being evaluated is clearly described. Information is also provided on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Purpose &amp; goals;</li> <li>2. Logic model and/or the expected results chain and intended impact;</li> <li>3. Implementation strategy and key assumptions;</li> <li>4. Importance, scope and scale of the subject being evaluated;</li> <li>5. The recipients / intended beneficiaries;</li> <li>6. Budget figures;</li> <li>7. Stakeholders - their roles &amp; contributions to the subject being evaluated (financial resources, in-kind contributions, technical assistance, participation, staff time, training, leadership, advocacy, lobbying, and any contributions from primary stakeholders, such as communities. An attempt is made to clarify what partners contributed to which outcome.)</li> <li>8. Description of women's rights that the programme attempts to support.</li> </ol>
<b>8. Findings</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inputs, outputs, and outcomes / impacts are measured to the extent possible (or an appropriate rationale given as to why not).</li> <li>2. Findings regarding inputs for the completion of activities or process achievements are distinguished clearly from outputs, outcomes and impact.</li> <li>3. Outcomes and impacts include any unintended effects, whether beneficial or harmful.</li> <li>4. Additionally, any multiplier or downstream effects of the subject being evaluated are included.</li> <li>5. To the extent possible, each of these are measured either quantitatively or qualitatively. In using such measurements, benchmarks are referred to.</li> <li>6. The report makes a logical distinction in the findings, showing the progression from implementation to results with an appropriate measurement and analysis of the results chain, or a rationale as to why an analysis of results was not provided.</li> <li>7. Findings cover all of the evaluation objectives, questions and use the data collected.</li> <li>8. Reported findings provide adequate information on gender equality and human rights aspects, including the views of groups subject to discrimination.</li> </ol>
<b>9. Analysis</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Results attributed to the subject being evaluated are related back to the contributions of different stakeholders. There is a sense of proportionality between the relative contributions of each, and the results observed. (If such an analysis is not included in the report, the reason why it was not done has been clearly indicated.)</li> <li>2. Reasons for accomplishments and difficulties of the subject being evaluated, especially constraining and enabling factors, are identified to the extent possible.</li> <li>3. An evaluation report goes beyond a mere description of implementation and outcomes and includes an analysis, based on the findings, of the underlying causes, constraints, strengths on which to build on, and opportunities.</li> <li>4. External factors contributing to the accomplishments and difficulties are identified and analyzed to the extent possible, including the social, political or environmental situation.</li> <li>5. An understanding of which external factors contributed to the success or failure of a subject being evaluated helps determine how such factors will affect the future of</li> </ol>

	<p>the subject being evaluated, or whether it could be replicated elsewhere.</p> <p>6. The report assesses if the design of the object was based on a sound gender analysis and human rights analysis and implementation for results was monitored through gender and human rights frameworks, as well as the actual results on gender equality and human rights.</p>
<b>10. Conclusions</b>	<p>1. The logic behind conclusions and the correlation to actual findings are clear.</p> <p>2. Simple conclusions that are already well known and obvious are not useful are avoided.</p> <p>3. Tentative conclusions regarding attribution of results, include detailing of what is known and what can plausibly be assumed in order to make the logic from findings to conclusions more transparent and credible.</p> <p>Conclusions are:</p> <p>4. Substantiated by findings consistent with data collected and methodology;</p> <p>5. Represent insights into identification and/or solutions of important problems or issues;</p> <p>6. Add value to the findings;</p> <p>7. Focus on issues of significance to the subject being evaluated, determined by the evaluation objectives and the key evaluation questions.</p>
<b>11. Recommendations</b>	<p>Recommendations are:</p> <p>1. Firmly based on evidence and analysis.</p> <p>2. Relevant (to subject, ToR &amp; objectives of the evaluation).</p> <p>3. Realistic, with priorities for action made clear.</p> <p>4. Formulated in a clear and concise manner.</p> <p>5. Prioritized to the extent possible and state responsibilities and the time frame for their implementation.</p> <p>6. Provide specific recommendations on how the project can improve gender equality and human rights performance.</p>
<b>12. Lessons learnt</b>	<p>(Not all evaluations generate lessons).</p> <p>1. Lessons drawn represent contributions to general knowledge.</p> <p>2. They are well supported by the findings and conclusions of the evaluation and are not a repetition of common knowledge.</p> <p>3. The analysis presents how lessons can be applied to different contexts and/or different sectors, and takes into account evidential limitations such as generalizing from single point observations.</p> <p>4. The report highlights more general lessons learnt regarding human rights and genders equality that are relevant beyond immediate scope of the project (if applicable).</p>

<b>13. Annexes</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Terms of Reference for the evaluation.</li> <li>2. Additional methodology related documentation such as evaluation matrix, data collection instruments: questionnaires, interview guide(s), observation protocols, etc. as appropriate.</li> <li>3. Lists of institutions interviewed or consulted and sites visited. In order to ensure confidentiality, UNIFEM recommends not including the names of individual interviewed in the report but rather providing the names of institutions or organisations that they represent.</li> <li>4. List of supporting documents reviewed.</li> <li>5. Project or Programme results model or results framework.</li> <li>6. Summary tables of findings, such as tables displaying progress towards outputs, targets, goals relative to established indicators.</li> <li>7. Short biographies of the evaluators and justification of team composition.</li> </ol>
<b>14. Key UNIFEM's programming approaches &amp; strategies: innovation and catalytic role, partnerships and capacity building</b>	<p>Does the report assess and provide recommendations and lessons learnt on key UNIFEM programmatic strategies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Innovative and catalytic approaches;</li> <li>2. Working through Partnerships;</li> <li>3. Capacity building.</li> </ol>
<b>15. Stakeholder participation</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The evaluation gives a complete description of stakeholders' participation in the evaluation process.</li> <li>2. Participation includes both primary and secondary stakeholders (key stakeholders) and a rationale for why the different stakeholders were selected for participation.</li> <li>3. The methodology involves using participatory techniques that are clearly described.</li> <li>4. There is evidence of key stakeholders playing in active and meaningful part throughout the entire evaluation process.</li> </ol>
<b>16. Ethical safeguards</b>	<p>The evaluation report includes a discussion of the extent to which the evaluation design included ethical safeguards where appropriate. This includes protection of the confidentiality, dignity, rights and welfare of human subjects, including children, and respect for the values of the beneficiary communities.</p>
<b>17. Clear communication</b>	<p>Clear, precise and professional language used. Correct terminology and grammar. Highly reader friendly. Useful graphs and tables are included.</p>

**References:**

Draft UNEG guidance: Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality Perspectives in Evaluations in the UN system (2009). UNEG  
 UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation (2007). UNEG  
 UNEG Standards for Evaluation in the UN system (2005). UNEG