

**AGENDA ITEM VI.**  
***Multi-donor partnerships and multilateral evaluation***

**Room Document 8**

**UPDATE ON PEER REVIEWS OF EVALUATION FUNCTIONS**

This document has been prepared by the co-chairs (Belgium and UNDP) of the joint UNEG–DAC Task Team on Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Functions of United Nations' Organisations *for discussion* at the 16<sup>th</sup> Evaluation Network meeting.

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# Update on peer reviews of evaluation functions

## 1. Within the UN-system

Professional peer reviews have been undertaken since 2005 with the aims of providing peer advice and peer support to improve evaluation systems and products and promoting common quality standards among evaluation functions in the UN-system. The formula has proven successful : 10 peer-reviews have been achieved, one is in progress, 3 organisations have requested a “second-generation“ peer review and 5 more organisations are on the waiting list.

In May 2011, the UNEG Annual General Meeting 2011 approved the “UNEG Framework for Professional Peer Reviews of the Evaluation Function of UN organizations“. This Framework builds on the "*Framework for Professional Peer Reviews*" developed by the DAC/UNEG Joint Task Force on Professional Peer Reviews of Evaluation Functions in Multilateral Organizations (January 2007). It reflects the experience gathered through the peer reviews until 2011. Evaluations functions are reviewed against the UNEG Norms and Standards. Peer Reviews are part of the new UNEG Strategy for 2014-2019, as a tool to ensure that evaluation functions and products of UN entities meet the UNEG Norms and Standards for evaluation Strategic objective 1)

In May 2013, the Chairs of UNEG and Evalnet presented a [Lessons Learned Study of Peer Reviews of UNEG Evaluation Functions](#) by Ian C Davies & Julia Brümmer. The report takes an exhaustive look at the peer review processes and reports done to that date and collects perceptions of peer reviewers, reviewees and related parties about the quality and the usefulness of peer reviews. A major finding is that evaluators tend to approach peer reviews as evaluations rather than as a peer exchange of experiences. This is especially the case in the first processes. The reviews are a process of learning by doing, both for the reviewed organisations and the peers.

Overall peer reviews have achieved the goal of raising the profile of evaluation functions, increasing their independence and the adoption of new evaluation policies. However the study is unable to say whether peer reviews have had any effect on the number of donor-commissioned evaluations of UN-Organisations, which was a key postulate of the whole process. Finally, the study sheds some light on the financial and time burden related to peer reviews and makes suggestions for a more efficient and equitable way of funding.

**Second generation peer reviews** tend to focus on specific issues rather than on independence, credibility and use, which were at the heart of the first generation of reviews. The second UNDP review (January 2013) focuses on methodology and knowledge sharing, while the ongoing second generation peer review of WFP deals under more with decentralized evaluations (operations evaluations) and the trade off in OEV between strategic evaluations and operations evaluations.

Looking at the **panel composition**, recent peer reviews are led by a head of evaluation of an UN-Organisation. There is however an increasing tendency to ask the same people to participate in successive panels. There is nothing wrong with having a core group of experienced peer-reviewers, provided new people continue to join the panels. Given the number of applications for peer reviews in 2014 and 2015, the Task Force will have to make sure enough candidates volunteer for these exercises.

## Future developments

Peer reviews remain popular among evaluation functions of the UN. For 2014/2015, six peer reviews have been requested by UNEG members:

Agency	Possible dates
UN Women	First Half of 2014
GEF	First half of 2014
WIPO	First half of 2014
WHO	Late 2014
ITC	Early 2015
OCHA	2015

In addition to the planned reviews, UNEG will also review its peer review framework and possibly update it based on the most recent experiences. A UNEG Peer Review funding mechanism may be created and UNEG encourages partners, including DAC Evalnet members, to continue to contribute to the peer review process.

The partnership and support from the DAC Evalnet is much appreciated and UNEG will continue to welcome Evalnet members to get involved in UNEG peer reviews. *The joint task team is specifically looking for an Evalnet member to participate in the panel for the UN Women review, which will begin shortly; please inform the team if you are interested.*

### 2. Peer reviews of evaluation functions of the development banks

In 2009 the ECG approved a “review framework of the Evaluation Function within MDBs”

So far, only IFAD requested a peer review under that framework. The report was presented to an IFAD board committee in 2010.

### 3. Peer reviews among bilateral agencies

In 2009, the Special Evaluator and the Head of internal evaluation in the Belgian cooperation jointly asked for a peer review of the evaluation function in the Belgian cooperation. The review was led by the Netherlands, with Canada and Spain in the panel and with the support of an advisor hired by the Netherlands. The review led to the merge of the two existing evaluation offices under the independent setting of Special Evaluation and raised the profile of evaluation in the agency. Following this example, other members may be interested in requesting a peer review of their own system.