

ECOSOC Operational Activities Segment 2025
Effective accountability: UN system evaluation:
Thursday, 22 May 2025, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm, NY time
ECOSOC Chamber

Part 1. (following short introductory remarks from the Chair)

Presentation of the annual report of the System-wide Evaluation Office

Ms. Andrea Cook, Executive Director, UN SDG System-Wide Evaluation Office

It is a pleasure to present the annual report for 2024 to the Economic and Social Council in response to the request of the General Assembly.

The Secretary-General's report "Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda" set out his proposals to make the UN development system more strategic, accountable, and responsive, **including the establishment of an independent evaluation office.**

The General Assembly subsequently welcomed strengthening of independent system-wide evaluation in resolutions A/72/279 and A/76/4.

Today I am pleased to provide an update on the achievements for 2024, the first full year of operations.

The UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Policy was formally adopted in November 2024.

The Policy confirms the structural independence of the UNSDG System-Wide Evaluation Office. It confirms SWEO's structural Independence as a stand-alone office within the UN Secretariat and with the Executive Director reporting directly to the Secretary General, to maintain independence and neutrality.

The policy establishes a framework, guiding principles, and procedures for system-wide evaluation, detailing roles, responsibilities, and reporting arrangements to ensure effective planning, conduct, and follow-up. It also sets out the resource requirements, risks, arrangements for reporting and for policy implementation and review.

The report provides details of the implementation status of evaluation activities in 2024. Some highlights.

Two reports were completed of the Spotlight Initiative, an investment of over USD 500 million to address violence against women and girls.

An evaluation assessed overall performance and contribution to UN development system reform, presenting findings in seven main areas and concluded that the model demonstrated the ability of an integrated, inter-agency approach to contribute to higher-order changes at regional, national, and local levels. But with challenges due to a complicated operational model and limitations in the compatibility of UN administrative and financial systems.

It made eight recommendations which have all been accepted in the management response.

A **value for money assessment** was conducted in parallel to assess the economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity of the Initiative.

SWEO plays an important role in strengthening the use of and learning from the extensive but fragmented UN evaluation evidence base.

In 2024, in response to the request from the General Assembly in its resolution 78/166, user-friendly products improved the accessibility and use of evaluation evidence for the **2024 QCPR**.

This included a series of interactive digital maps of United Nations evaluation evidence on QCPR mandates and the SDGs. The initiative served as a strong proof of concept for use of artificial intelligence to accelerate and systematize this work.

It also produced five evidence summaries sampling UN evaluations reports to generate key insights on priority topics for the QCPR.

Two new evaluations were launched. An evaluation to assess progress towards a new generation of UN Country Teams, at the request of the UN Sustainable Development Group.

It examines two key elements of the repositioning of the UN development system repositioning:

- i. **Alignment & derivation of UN entity programmes from the Cooperation Framework**
- ii. **UNCT configuration to deliver shared results in response to Cooperation Framework priorities**

The evaluation has an extensive scope with data collection in 21 “focus countries”, interviews and focus groups involving over 500 participants, extensive global and country-level document review, and re-analysis of existing survey data (2021-2024). The final report will be published in July.

Launched in June 2019, The UN Disability Inclusion Strategy calls for an external assessment after five years of implementation.

The evaluation is global in scope, assessing the implementation of the Strategy to contribute to accountability and learning on disability inclusion in the United Nations.

Effective use of system-wide evaluation evidence entails broad system-wide engagement supported by the **delivery of timely system-wide evaluation reports** with relevant and targeted recommendations is intended to improve the performance of UN development system entities focusing on key issues and activities that cannot be adequately addressed through existing mechanisms.

Effective management response and follow-up mechanisms are essential to ensure that entities implement evaluation recommendations. All evaluations completed to date have a published management response.

To provide transparency and oversight and promote use of reports, management responses and follow-up are widely accessible. A full

repository is available on UNEG and UNSDG websites and since 2025 on the main website of the UN Secretariat.

In order to build understanding of this new function and promote broader cooperation and dissemination, the office worked to strengthen engagement across the UN, with Member States and other partners.

This includes the Joint Inspection Unit and the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) to consult on ongoing work and future plans.

The office contributes to the activities of the United Nations Evaluation Group to share learning and good practice and co-leads the **Global SDG Synthesis Coalition** with other partners to make evaluative evidence more accessible to contribute to achievement of the SDGs

Significant progress was made in resourcing the work of the office in 2024.

In 2024, 3 posts were established and all are currently encumbered, including two by temporary secondments from UNFPA and WFP.

Staff primarily manage evaluation activities and follow-up. Evaluations are generally undertaken by teams of independent experts. This model ensures that the Office remains small, agile and responsive to emerging needs.

Against a budget of \$2.4 million for 2024, a total of \$1.54 million was received in extrabudgetary and \$80,562 in in-kind contributions.

A further \$ 739,119 was provided for the evaluation of the Spotlight Initiative

We plan to launch two new evaluations, together with a series of other reports, listed here, subject to availability of resources.

A further priority is the development of foundational guidance and systems, including:

- a 4-year work plan to identify priority evaluations through a more open and transparent consultative process;
- robust quality assurance and assessment mechanisms;
- management responses and follow-up systems.

The proposed budget requirement for 2025 is presented here with the overall perspective to 2028, the period of the current QCPR.

The Secretary-General submitted a proposed programme budget of USD 3.4 million to secure stable funding for 2025. However, the General Assembly endorsed the report of the ACABQ, which had recommended against conversion to regular budget funding, noting concerns, which have now been fully resolved following adoption of the policy and confirmation of reporting to ECOSOC.

Consequently, we remain reliant on extrabudgetary resources with a revised budget of USD 3.01 million for 2025 and are seeking to broaden its funding base.

Cooperation Framework evaluations are commissioned and managed by Resident Coordinators in collaboration with the UNCT in the penultimate year of the cycle with details of planned and completed evaluations for 2023-2025 in our report.

In conclusion, 2024 marks a successful first full year of operations, demonstrating the added value of this unique function.

The report highlights the value and strategic importance of the work of the Office in assessing the contribution of the entire UN development system to implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It underlines the critical need for stable and predictable resources in meeting the expectations of Member States

However, despite this initial success, the scarcity of financial resources has hindered the ability to deliver at the pace intended and presents concerns about the viability of the Office given the limited availability of voluntary resources in the current context.