

► **Guidance Note 2.3:
Joint evaluations**► **Date:** June 2020, V.2 (V.1 - 2012)This guidance note is part of Pillar 2 ► *Types of evaluation***CONTENTS (CLICK TO NAVIGATE)**

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The importance of joint evaluation has grown exponentially in recent years. Joint evaluations are another increasingly attractive avenue to meet the commitments in the Paris Declaration, the 2030 Agenda and the reform of the United Nations.

The Sustainable Development Goals and the review of the UN development system funding have resulted in an increased role of independent system-wide evaluations (ISWE) of UN development initiatives at country, regional and global level. At the country level, the revamped UN country programme frameworks¹ (UNSDCF) and related joint funds (such as the SDG Fund) have determined new working modalities where cooperation, coherence and results-orientation constitute the backbone to achieve the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. The United Nations System is articulating approaches to improve transparency and effective joint work for country-level results and

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Right-click on hyperlinks and select 'Open in new tab' to access, if viewing in browser.*

1. United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).

learning towards the 2030 Agenda. UNSDCF evaluations, joint evaluations, and other evaluative products, such as synthesis reviews, evaluability assessments, and evidence gap mapping are a few examples of evaluative and knowledge sharing activities that are expected to be carried out by UN agencies to provide substantive system-wide learning opportunities.

Partner agencies, donors and host countries alike are encouraged to transparently collaborate on evaluations. ILO policies provide ample space for this type of evaluation, and guidance provided by the OECD/DAC on the conduct of such evaluations provides helpful support in this area.

The following guidance note presents a review of trends on joint evaluation in the UN community and explains the collaboration that will be required from ILO's perspective to evaluate the rising number of joint programmes implemented by UN Agencies at the country level. Though a joint evaluation is not so different from a single-agency evaluation, there are points of differentiation highlighted below and addressed throughout this guide.

Joint projects and programmes are best served by joint evaluations in which each agency agrees on their respective roles, accountability and learning needs. When ILO is the lead agency in a joint project or programme, the ILO's Evaluation Office requires that ILO also takes the lead in the joint evaluation process. In cases where ILO is not the lead agency, the ILO responsible official needs to ensure the active participation of ILO in the joint evaluation process as member of the evaluation management team. The guiding principles below inform the evaluation process, including agreement on the composition of the evaluation team; a common TOR; and the necessity for one final independent evaluation report. In cases where ILO is not the lead agency, relevant ILO offices that participate in SDG related funds are expected to be pro-active and actively participate in the joint evaluation process as member of the management team.

► 1. BACKGROUND ON JOINT EVALUATIONS

As development agencies shift their strategies away from isolated projects towards programmatic approaches JEs offer numerous benefits. Collaborative work offers opportunities for mutual capacity development and learning between the partners, for building participation, ownership, sharing the burden of work, and increasing the legitimacy of findings.

Joint work can also generate particular costs and challenges and these can put significant burdens on partner agencies. Building consensus between the partners and maintaining effective coordination processes can be costly and time-consuming. Delays in the completion of complex joint evaluations can adversely affect timeliness and relevance of the findings.

► 2. DEFINITIONS AND TYPES OF JOINT EVALUATION

2.1 DEFINITION

The OECD DAC Evaluation [Glossary](#) defines joint evaluation as “an evaluation to which different donors and/or partners participate” and notes that:

There are various degrees of ‘jointness’ depending on the extent to which individual partners cooperate in the evaluation process, merge their evaluation resources and combine their evaluation reporting. Joint evaluations can help overcome attribution problems in assessing the effectiveness of programs and strategies, the complementarity of efforts supported by different partners, the quality of aid coordination, etc.²

2. OECD/DAC (2002). [Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management](#), p. 26.

2.2 TYPES OF JOINT EVALUATIONS

There is a range of different types of JE depending on which agency is requesting, initiating and contracting the evaluation. An important distinction is the role of ILO in the JE. Is ILO the leading agency? Is ILO, a partner agency with another group with the leading role? Types of JEs and different degrees of joint collaboration³ are described in table 1 below. Irrespective of it, participation of ILO in the joint evaluation needs to be ensured.

Table 1: Joint evaluations by type and mode of joint collaboration⁴

Type	Mode of work / examples
1. Classic joint evaluation	Participation is open to all stakeholder agencies. All participants contribute actively and on equal terms. Examples of classic JEs include: the joint evaluation of the World Food Programme (WFP) , the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) Evaluation and the General Budget Support (GBS) Evaluation, and the One UN Programme joint evaluation .
2. Qualified joint evaluation	Participation is open only to those who qualify – through membership of a certain grouping [e.g. DAC, EU, Nordics, UNEG, Evaluation Coordination Group (ECG)] or through active participation in the activity (e.g. SWAP, basket funding mechanism, jointly implemented programme) that is being evaluated. Examples include evaluations of country programmes under a UNDAF, evaluations under the Spanish Millennium Development Achievement Fund , and the UN Interagency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (UNIAP), Phase III joint evaluation.
3. Hybrid joint evaluation	Includes a wide range of more complex ways of joint working: (a) responsibilities are delegated to one or more agencies while others take a “silent partnership” role; (b) some components of the evaluation are undertaken jointly while other parts are delivered separately; (c) various levels of linkage are established between separate but parallel and interrelated evaluations; (d) the joint activity is to agree upon a common evaluation framework and responsibility for implementation of individual evaluations is devolved to different partners; and (e) research, interviews and team visits are undertaken jointly but each partner prepares a separate report. Examples include the JE on Support to Internally Displaced Persons , the Tsunami Coalition Evaluation or the JE of the UNDP-IRAQ Trust Fund .

3. There are various degrees of “joint collaboration” depending on the extent to which individual partners cooperate in the evaluation process, merge their evaluation resources and combine their evaluation reporting.

4. Adapted from OECD/DAC (2006) *ibid*, p. 8

3. COUNTRY PROGRAMME REVIEW DESIGN

In preparing to conduct or participate in a joint evaluation, here are some things to consider:

3.1 ACKNOWLEDGING A LEAD AGENCY AND AGREEING ON ROLES

The decision to conduct an evaluation with a single-agency approach or jointly has to be taken on a case-to-case basis, considering the potential benefits and challenges. In most joint programmes, it is already pre-defined at the launch of the joint activity that the mid-term and final evaluations will be performed as JEs, along with the identification of the lead agency which will initiate the evaluation. When ILO is the lead agency in a joint project or programme, it is an EVAL requirement that ILO also takes the lead in the joint evaluation process.

The JP steering group, in which the ILO should be a member, should agree on the role of the lead agency and the roles assigned to other participating agencies. It is therefore important for the ILO to take action at the earliest possible stages to establish the role it needs to play in the evaluation process according to ILO evaluation policy. Models with no clear evaluation leader, in which responsibilities are dispersed too broadly among partners, do not appear to work well.

3.2 BUDGETING FOR EVALUATION

It is important to review funding implications for all aspects of the process and their duration or timeline. Joint evaluations should ideally be financed from joint programme resources. If the ILO is the lead agency, the funding needs to be secured within the joint programme document and allocated in full to ILO’s budget component. Should partner agencies not agree

on the lead role for the joint evaluation, its management procedures and budgetary allocation upfront, the ILO will ensure that sufficient funds (at least 2 per cent of the ILO-component budget) are set aside for conducting independent or internal evaluations of ILO’s contribution to the joint programme in compliance with ILO’s evaluation policy.

The steering committee should agree on a draft budget and cost-sharing arrangements; typically, agencies share consultant costs equally and provide funding for the staff member appointed to join the evaluation team. Realistic costing is required, full budgeting of all expenditures of the evaluation cycle, and sufficient budgetary provisions to meet additional costs that may be incurred during the evaluation due to unexpected circumstances.

Budgeting for joint evaluations

The ILO JE manager should ensure that sufficient funds (at least 2 per cent of the ILO-component budget) are set aside for conducting independent or internal evaluations of ILO’s contribution to a JP. If the ILO is the lead agency, the funding needs to be secured within the agency.

3.3 SETTING UP AN EVALUATION MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

When setting up a management structure for the evaluation it is important to recognize that the JE process is not just an evaluation but also a collaboration. The management team must be realistic about the time it will take the evaluation team to get the job done and to avoid pressure to make ‘politically correct’ or expedient choices imposed by the lead JP agency, steering committee members or other high-level stakeholders of the evaluation.

It is advised to seek out individuals for the management group and evaluation team who are committed to a successful outcome, even if they are not conventional choices. Where there is a need for political representation, space should be created for these individuals in some high profile, but less critical function (e.g. a non-managerial group of sponsors who will launch the process and come back to launch the report).

The agency appointed to lead the JE should designate one of its staff members to be the evaluation manager. It is the evaluation manager who hires and supervises the evaluation team, coordinates travel logistics, provides team members with workspaces, organizes meetings, and gives leadership regarding the definition of the objectives. Ultimately, it is the evaluation manager that is accountable for the evaluation. Please see GN 6 on evaluation management for more information.

To ensure the effectiveness and the utility of the evaluation, team members must possess complementary knowledge, skills and attitudes. Team members should also be selected with a view to balancing the needs of multiple clients with sensitivity. It is up to the team leader to select an approach that will examine each agency’s work with enough rigour to inspire confidence in the findings, but not detract too much from a focus on the combined impact of the partners’ response.

The steering committee is expected to provide inputs to the evaluation on the development of the Terms of Reference. This could include, but is not limited to, advising on the purpose, scope and clients for the evaluation; suggesting questions for the evaluation criteria; and, making recommendations on stakeholder or beneficiary selection for the interviews. Participating agencies must agree on the application of UNEG standards for the JE.

Joint evaluations need clear agreements on communication focal points, where to find and send documents, e-mail usage, etc. One solution, in addition to a designated communication focal point, is to set up a simple web-based archive (i.e., Drop Box) where documents pertaining to the evaluation can be uploaded, as well as contact lists, schedules and other essential information. Partners should also consider an adequate number of face-to-face meetings to build cohesion.

It is also important to have regular opportunities along the way for the evaluation team to discuss concerns with and receive feedback from steering committee members. For example, early in the process, the team can give feedback on progress and initiate exchanges with the steering committee on whether these should be modified.

► 4. CONDUCTING THE JOINT EVALUATION

The process for conducting a joint evaluation is much the same as that for conducting an independent evaluation or even an internal evaluation. Please see [Guidance note 2.1 Independent midterm and final evaluations](#) for more information. Below is additional guidance that is unique to joint evaluations.

- Brief the team upon arrival and ensure that the team has a chance to discuss the Terms of Reference with each of the steering committee members, or somebody from each of the partner agencies that has the ability and authority to make strategic decisions. The lead evaluator should also go over the Terms of Reference with the steering committee as a group.
- Another person, such as the administrator/manager or steering committee chair, can brief team members on roles and responsibilities within the evaluation structure. The team, and especially the team leader, will need to be clear

on how the evaluation is run, the role of the lead agency and the other partners, who the team reports to, where they will get logistical support, and how they will maintain independence. Anticipate the extra consultation time needed when estimating how much time the team will need for the evaluation.

- Ensure findings are reported with sensitivity. Receiving and reviewing the findings of a joint evaluation can be an exciting time for the partners but also a time of apprehension. The lead evaluator should present findings in a way that will not make any agency feel inferior or unfairly compared against the others. Agencies will also inevitably look for mentions of them and judge whether they think the findings are fair, regardless of what is said about others. Findings that are critical in nature should be balanced with positive feedback. In addition to the main report, the evaluator could also create short individual reports for each of the partners.

Another approach is for the evaluation team to analyse and interpret the data in advance but also let the partners be part of the analysis through self-assessment tools and form their own conclusions and lessons learned. With this type of participation, partners are more likely to accept the conclusions and feel responsible for acting on the recommendations.

Ultimately, in an evaluation that is entered into for learning purposes and conducted well, partners are less likely to take issue with the results and there should be no major surprises at the end. A focus on learning makes even the least flattering findings more palatable because they can be instructive.

Once the partners have had a chance to discuss and debate the findings, they should discuss them with a broader group of stakeholders, especially those that were consulted during the evaluation process, such as UN agencies, beneficiaries, national constituents, local NGOs, and local government. One way to do this is to hold an inter-agency event where they are given an opportunity to confirm or dispute the major findings and recommendations. This should be anticipated and planned in advance to ensure the availability of key actors.

Partners need to agree on how the event will be showcased, making it clear for example that it is a multi-agency event and that all their logos appear on event material.

► 5. CONCLUDING A JOINT EVALUATION

With the evaluation work done and the findings revealed, one part of the process comes to a close. But in other ways, the real work is just beginning.

Here is some guidance for making the most of the completed evaluation:

- Develop both collective and individual rollout plans. Because joint evaluations have relevance to a wide range of actors, ILO should share the report national tripartite constituents, Regional Offices, DWTs in addition to headquarters
- Share a joint evaluation report widely. This demonstrates transparency and a commitment to contribute to learning within the broader sector of focus for the JP. ILO may want to develop simple collective and individual communications plans including distribution lists for the report and small action planning meetings to discuss and present the implications of the findings.

- Emphasize peer accountability. With joint evaluations, partners have the opportunity to hold one another accountable for progress on recommendations. They may choose to work on some recommendations together. They may agree beforehand to hold a follow-up workshop in six months or a year's time. At such a time they could then discuss how the findings were shared, what progress was made and what the outcome of any actions taken was.