Professional Peer Review of the Evaluation Function

International Trade Center

by Oscar A. Garcia, IFAD; Jyrki Pulkkinen, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Finland; Anne-Claire Luzot, WFP/WHO; Nurul M. Alam, consultant

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Brief Background
Peer review focus and timeline

- Assessment of Independence, Credibility and Utility of ITC’s evaluation function (focus on Quality and Use)
- Conducted between Dec 2015 and June 2016
- Process:
  - Review of background docs and assessments of evaluation reports
  - Fact finding mission and stakeholders interviews
  - Discussions and comments on the draft report
- Very positive engagement of all stakeholders throughout the process
Main conclusions
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- Evaluation function evolving since 2006
- High level of commitment of the ITC management to the evaluation function
- High degree of acceptance and recognition in supporting organizational change
- On-going reform process within ITC and increased emphasis on results and accountability expected to further strengthen EU’s role and position
Main conclusions (cont’d)

Evaluation function in ITC:

- Created a **distinct institutional space** for its role as stipulated in the Evaluation Policy
- Has an **earmarked operational budget** and critical minimum staff to carry out its annual plan of work
- Is generally respected by the programme and technical departments as **credible and useful**
- 2015 Evaluation Policy: a **leap forward** in terms of alignment with UNEG norms and standards
Independence

- Concept of independent evaluation function gaining ground within the organization

- No guidance in the Policy on principles of structural and functional independence of the Evaluation Unit (EU)

- Strong progress made but to date:
  - No structural independence of the EU
  - Nuanced functional independence supported by the integrity of the current management

- Need for functional independence also being recognized and accepted by majority of senior professionals of ITC
Credibility

- EU’s approach and methodologies in line with UN evaluation principles and UNEG evaluation quality standards

- Institutional quality assurance mechanism of evaluation reports is lacking

- Financing of evaluation function considered inadequate compared to variety and depth of its responsibilities
Substantial efforts by the EU to make evaluations widely accessible internally and externally

Evaluations conducted in the past 3-5 years generally useful

Increasing uptake of recommendations

Use of evaluation results appears stronger at programmatic than at policy level

Small number of evaluations limits influence of evaluation on policy and programmes
Recommendations
Independence

- Need to **conduct regular reviews of Evaluation Policy periodically**:
  - To align with the evolving international standards
  - To consider **more clarity on the independence dimension** of EU
  - **distinct structural status** for the EU separate from SPPG and reporting directly to the ED
  - Position level of the EU Chief should be **upgraded** to P5
Credibility

- Finalization of the work plan should be independently vested with the Chief of EU.

- **Predictability of resources and autonomy** are important for the independence and credibility of evaluation.

- The annual evaluation work plan should be adequately budgeted and resources should be **specifically allocated to various types of evaluations under EU’s control**.

- Projects and programmes considered strategically important should have a **mandatory budget for evaluations**.

- Interface national stakeholders could be strengthened.
Utility: evaluation coverage

- **Scarcity of evidence of results of ITC initiatives** as a critical issue for the organization (*Ext. Indep. Evaluation 2014 and OIOS Review of ITC 2015*)

- **Corporate mechanism** should be instituted by EU that ensures that different evaluation streams comply with an integrated set of methodological and quality standards.

- EU should be **informed of the process of evaluations commissioned elsewhere within ITC** and be involved with their **quality assurance**
ITC should establish a **clear division of responsibility** between the evaluation function and the organization’s line management regarding the management of the response to evaluations.

- Macro data on **status of implementation of management responses** is maintained and periodically reported to SMC by EU.

- **Responsibility for ensuring compliance** of implementation of agreed actions remains with the line department.
EU should establish mechanisms to **systematically harvest and share lessons** from existing evaluations.

Essence of lessons and organizational learning must **percolate to the higher layers** and governance for informing and enriching their perspective for decision-making.

Strategic and thematic evaluations of organizational significance and annual evaluation synthesis reports should be **presented to JAG in a systematic way**.
Thank you