

2007

ANNUAL EVALUATION REPORT

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United Nations Environment Programme

2007
Annual Evaluation Report

Evaluation and Oversight Unit

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Foreword

This report is being published in a watershed year for UNEP. It comes at a time when tremendous changes have occurred not only in the strategic focus of the organization, but also in the way we plan and programme our work. While this report fulfils the requirement of a Governing Council Decision requesting the “Executive Director to report to the Governing Council at subsequent sessions on the results of the evaluations carried out”, it is also a very forward-looking document.



This year, the report has focused primarily on the analysis of evaluations of projects undertaken in 2007 and methodological work done by the Evaluation and Oversight Unit. Both the analysis of evaluations conducted in 2007 and the methodological work presented in this report are more forward-looking in the sense that they anticipate what would be required to evaluate a thematic subprogramme as opposed to a functional subprogramme. The special studies present new approaches to observing patterns among lessons learned from evaluations and communicating them more effectively to enhance programme/project design and implementation. They may also serve as a priority setting mechanism which has the potential to identify evaluation opportunities that provide the greatest pay-offs to UNEP. Indeed, the study found that these pay-offs will come from evaluations that focus on the assessment of outcomes, influences and impact of ongoing programmatic activities that are closely aligned with the strategic priorities of UNEP.

Over the past year, substantial changes to our programme and project development and approval processes have been implemented to address the accumulated body of findings from monitoring and evaluation activities as well as audit observations in the area of programme/project design and management. However, it is too soon to either assess or document the impact of the changes introduced. The evaluations conducted in 2007 echo the same findings as in previous years. As a part of our decisions on the UNEP evaluation policy and to better utilise evaluation findings and the accountability framework into our work programme, we plan to provide the necessary resources in the programme of work of the organization, not only to allow the evaluation function to develop a more strategic approach to the development and maintenance of a rolling portfolio of evaluations, but also to promote systematic evaluation of the work of UNEP consistent with our determination to fully implement Results Based Management within the organization.

With most of the key programmatic and managerial reforms now agreed, the 2008/2009 biennium will also provide us with an opportunity to ensure that evaluations and lessons learnt feed more directly into the process of institutional and programmatic management. The EOU has consistently produced high quality evaluations. However, as in all organizations, it is not the quality of the reports alone, but the process by which the results impact the programme and management of UNEP that ultimately determine their value – both to management and the governing bodies. We are committed to addressing this challenge during the coming year.


Achim Steiner
Executive Director

Acknowledgements

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Finally, the Unit expresses its appreciation to UNEP Division Directors and staff, whose comments have greatly enriched this report.

Evaluation and Oversight Unit

Acronyms and abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ASCOBANS	Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas
BINU	Biodiversity Indicators for National Use
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species
CP	Cleaner Production
C-REED	China Rural Energy Enterprise Development
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization
DCPI	Division of Communication and Public Information
DDP	Dams and Development Project
DELC	Division of Environmental Law and Conventions
DEPI	Division of Environmental Policy Implementation
DEWA	Division of Early Warning and Assessment
DGEF	Division of Global Environment Facility Coordination
DRC	Division of Regional Cooperation
DTIE	Division of Technology, Industry and Economics
EOU	Evaluation and Oversight Unit
FSP	Full Size Project
GEF OP	Operation Programme (of Global Environment Facility)
IBA	Important Bird Area
IPEP	Implementation of the Stockholm Convention (NGO-POPs Elimination Project)
IWRM	Integrated Water Resource Management
LD	Land Degradation
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEAs	Multilateral Environmental Agreements
MFI	Microfinance Institutions
MSP	Medium Size Project
MTE	Mid Term Evaluation
NCPC	National Cleaner Production Centres
NCPPs	National Cleaner Production Programmes

NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NIPs	National Implementation Plans
NWAS	North West Sahara Aquifer System
OSS	Observatoire du Sahara et du Sahel
POPs	Persistent Organic Pollutants
PTS	Persistent Toxic Substance
PV	Photo-Voltaic
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SASS	Système Aquifer du Sahara Septentrional
SCP	Sustainable Consumption and Production
SIT	Strategic Implementation Team
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SSG	Site Support Group
TE	Terminal Evaluation
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
WCD	World Commission on Dams
WHC	World Heritage Convention

Executive summary

1. This report provides analyses of information provided in 19 in-depth project evaluations, including six mid-term evaluations, eleven terminal evaluations and two programmatic evaluations conducted by the Evaluation and Oversight Unit in 2007. These projects represent a total monetary value of more than \$126 million. The report also contains, in a separate chapter, analyses of the compliance status of evaluation recommendations including recommendations in evaluation reports from 2002-2007. In two further chapters we present the findings of two special studies: one on a new strategic approach to selecting evaluation opportunities and developing a strategic evaluation plan and the second on a framework which facilitated identification of patterns in lessons from evaluations.
2. The analysis of in-depth evaluations this year has been prepared within the context of six new strategic priorities for the organization, namely: climate change; disasters and conflicts; ecosystems management; environmental governance; harmful substances and hazardous waste; and resources efficiency (sustainable consumption and production). As UNEP moves towards the implementation of its programme in relation to these new thematic priorities, the findings and lessons learned from in-depth evaluations can help to inform design, planning and implementation of projects and programmes.
3. Seventy eight percent of the projects evaluated achieved a satisfactory rating¹ (*'moderately satisfactory'* or better) and twenty two percent (four projects) were rated *'moderately unsatisfactory'*. In addition, 41% of the projects were rated as *'satisfactory'* for attainment of objectives and planned results, 55% were rated as *'moderately satisfactory'*, and only one project evaluation expressed concern about the likely achievement of its impact. Sustainability of the project benefits was *'moderately likely'* or better in 70% of the projects, *'moderately unlikely'* in about 30%. The projects performed best in the achievement of their outputs and activities: 60% were *'satisfactory'* and the rest *'moderately satisfactory'*. Most interesting was that over 85% of the projects either had a *'satisfactory'* or *'moderately satisfactory'* catalytic role or were very likely to be replicated.
4. However, there was concern on the standard of the monitoring and evaluation systems of the projects. Forty (40) % of the evaluated projects reported *'moderately unsatisfactory'* or *'unsatisfactory'* M&E systems and less than 20% were *'satisfactory'*. This is partly due to new and more rigorous standards for assessing M&E² being applied to completed projects that pre-date such standards. The implementation approach, which is an analysis of the projects' framework adaptation to the changing conditions, was also *'unsatisfactory'* or *'moderately unsatisfactory'* in about 40% of the projects. In 2007, EOU developed an 'Evaluation Manual' that highlights good practice in M&E.
5. As in 2006, the projects have continued to strengthen institutional and individual capacity in the areas of climate change, ecosystems management, harmful substances and hazardous

1 All evaluation parameters are rated on a six point scale from 'highly satisfactory' through to 'highly unsatisfactory'.

2 The GEF approved its M&E policy in 2006, the standards it contains are applied in all EOU evaluations.

waste, sustainable consumption and production, and environmental governance. For the most part, the projects have contributed to the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, developed assessment methodologies, provided environmental information to the public, raised awareness among policy- and decision-makers, and developed guidelines and tools for environmental management.

6. Five evaluations (26%) related to internally executed projects/programmes, with the remainder being externally or jointly implemented. As in previous years, the substantive input by UNEP into the projects in 2007 focused on assuring the quality of project outputs by reviewing project technical reports, documents and other products, followed by coordination, project development, provision of expertise, methodologies and approaches, technical assistance, backstopping/oversight, and provision of monitoring and evaluation of project activities. Assistance in project administration, fund-raising, information exchange and institutional and professional capacity-building also featured as the contribution of UNEP.
7. The challenges identified by project evaluations have continued in the areas of project design, financial planning and management, project implementation and project sustainability. The specific challenges in project design include: poor design of project coordination and effective logistical arrangements, inadequate monitoring and evaluation plans, unrealistic project assumptions and inappropriate selection of project partners. In the area of financial planning and management, a high percentage of the projects lacked sufficient funding to complete project activities as a result of overambitious project designs, price fluctuations which outstripped project costs, late receipts of allotments, and inflexibility of financial regulations even in post-conflict situations.
8. As a follow-up to the successful implementation of a revised quality assurance process for evaluations, EOU has implemented new procedures for management responses to evaluation findings. Over the period between 2002 and 2007, our analysis of the levels of compliance with reporting on evaluation recommendations show quite variable levels of compliance. While DEC, DCPI, DRC and DEWA show compliance rates of 70% and above DEPI (58%), DGEF (50%) and DTIE (47%) need to make considerable improvements. It should however, be acknowledged that the compliance challenges are generally proportional to the numbers of projects managed by each division³. If compliance is examined in relation to the number of projects for which recommendations were issued in terms of the average number of recommendations remaining open per project, then DCPI, DTIE and DEWA perform least well with 5.0, 3.9 and 3.9 respectively. EOU intends to continue to disclose the levels compliance with evaluation recommendations within UNEP and strongly suggests that the level of compliance with evaluation recommendations be adopted by UNEP Senior management as a performance measure at Divisional level.
9. In 2007 the Evaluation and Oversight Unit undertook a study to develop a method which establishes the relative priority of '**evaluation opportunities**' against criteria that directly relate to the primary purposes of the evaluation function. The study found that while application of a rigorous priority setting approach helps considerably with the development of an evaluation portfolio that can maximize the returns to the organization with respect to the primary purposes of the function, **tactical investments in some evaluation activities** will still be necessary. An earlier study on evaluation demand in UNEP showed that the demand for accountability-oriented evaluations is high and not currently well-matched either

3 The numbers of projects, by division, for which recommendations were issued (2002-2007) was: GEF – 50, DEC – 20, DTIE – 13, DEWA – 8, DEPI – 5, DRC – 5, DCPI – 2

with the capacity or the level of resources required by the evaluation function of UNEP to deliver them.

10. In practice, while it is very informative to understand the relative priorities of different evaluations on the EOU work programme, the overwhelming majority of evaluations the unit currently undertakes are mandatory and their costs are not fungible – the evaluation budgets reside in the project/programme budgets and not with EOU. Therefore, **there is currently little scope to link this priority setting approach to resource allocation decisions under current arrangements for the evaluation function in UNEP.** The bulk of evaluation resources are linked to project-level evaluations and therefore the returns to UNEP from investment in evaluation are falling well short of their potential maximum. It is hoped that under the new arrangements planned for the work programme of UNEP in the 2010-2011 biennium, resources will be allocated for programmatic results-oriented evaluations.
11. Assuming that EOU will, at some future juncture, be at liberty to decide among competing evaluation alternatives, this priority setting method will allow EOU to develop a strategic approach to the development and maintenance of a rolling portfolio of evaluations. The findings indicate that the greatest pay-offs to UNEP will come from evaluations that focus on the assessment of outcomes, influences and impact of ongoing programmatic activities that are closely aligned with the Agency's strategic priorities.

A. Lessons

12. In order to enhance the quality of lessons, improve their utilisation, and to aid the dissemination and communication to both internal and external audiences, EOU has developed a ***Framework of Lessons from Evaluation***.
13. The framework of lessons learned provides a means to visualise all lessons at once, and to see how different clusters of lessons relate to one another. It is intended to be a user-friendly way of presenting and storing information in relation to lessons from evaluation. Its problem-oriented nature is intended to provide a more intuitive and interactive 'user interface' to the usual databases of lessons that are commonly collated by evaluation units and can therefore serve as a useful 'platform' for both collating and disseminating lessons. This approach has been favourably reviewed by the UN Evaluation Group and the GEF Evaluation Office and has potential for adaptation and application by professional evaluators in a wide range of organizations.
14. Among the most common 'problem clusters' relating to 'project/programme management and implementation' identified in the lessons framework were:
 - Delays in project implementation due to slow recruitment of the project team
 - Poor project coordination due to inadequate/ineffective communication and unclear roles among partners
 - Poor fund management due to poor tracking and coordination of project expenditures
 - Inadequate dissemination and outreach due to poor use of available dissemination methods
 - High transaction costs due to insufficient use of local experts
 - Poor understanding and execution of M&E

15. With respect to achievement of outcomes, especially policy influence and impacts, the issues most commonly encountered, for which lessons were articulated, were:
- Lack of ownership and legitimacy for project outputs/outcomes caused by lack of adequate stakeholder participation/representation
 - Lack of ownership and legitimacy for project outputs/outcomes caused by consensus-based multi-stakeholder decision processes that avoided difficult but important issues
 - Lack of a ‘critical mass’ of effort caused by too many different project activities/initiatives being pursued in a limited timeframe
 - Lack of sustainability for project outcomes due to inappropriate institutional arrangements and/or lack of engagement with long-term initiatives
16. A common feature of most evaluation feedback is that it tends to be supply driven, with the evaluation unit ‘pumping out’ information on the assumption that someone will use it. Though inevitable to some degree, it is generally acknowledged as a common weakness. It can be argued that the greatest learning occurs during the course of the evaluation itself through presentations and workshops to debrief and discuss findings.
17. For this reason, EOU intends to place greater emphasis on the provision of early feedback. It is therefore recognised that the framework of evaluation lessons will need to be used within the context of interactive ‘face-to-face’ communication with project/programme managers and project design staff if evaluation lessons are to truly become ‘lessons learned’.
18. Selected lessons drawn from evaluation studies conducted in 2007 are summarized below. These lessons are consistent with the most commonly encountered clusters of issues and trends in evaluation lessons derived from the *special study on lessons* summarized above.

B. Selected Lessons from 2007 Evaluations

1. Project Design

19. Potential uncertainties in project implementation need to be considered at the design stage. A strong emphasis on conducting a needs assessment investigation, especially in projects with multi-stakeholder processes, provides direction and can draw the attention of UNEP management teams and implementing agencies to key issues. A systematic assessment makes the project demand-driven, relevant to the communities and other expected end users and helps to sustain its outcomes.
20. Complex regional projects require carefully considered project management structures and project delivery mechanisms at the project design stage. Such structures should have been identified through a participatory process in each country. A regional project implies a longer “chain of command” to manage the day-to-day operation of the project. However, particular effort should be made to streamline this “chain of command” in order to empower local project implementers. A regional project requires strong regional coordination with a full time project manager to be in the region to coordinate/communicate regularly with project partners in each country and support the implementation of the project in each country.

2. Project Implementation

21. Coordination Group and Steering Committee processes facilitate stakeholder buy-in and provide a means of informing organizations and individuals of project developments and

required outputs. Similarly, the peer-review process, though time consuming for stakeholders, provides valuable input for project managers and encourages stakeholders to explore and analyse the usefulness and accuracy of the project. Peer review workshops provide exchange opportunities and are highly appreciated by the country teams. Clear Terms of Reference are important so as to clarify whether an entity such as a Steering Committee has an advisory role or a binding decision-making role.

22. In large-scale regional projects, the role of UNEP should be pursued through partnership and not a mere oversight. Delegating the monitoring of the project activities to competent agencies increases the chances of project success. However, playing a hands-off role could undermine the potential impact of the project as the capacity of UNEP in disseminating the findings at government level is higher compared to executing agencies.

3. Sustainability

23. Under constraints of limited resources and time, projects aimed at local policy-making instead of national policy influence are more readily achievable and realistic as municipalities and local governments are more receptive and open to results and knowledge up-take. In addition, to guarantee financial resources, projects have to involve relevant policy makers. Sometimes securing political support for the issue, rather than just the project, is crucial to ensuring adequate resources from government budgets.
24. Projects are likely to be sustainable if they articulate their 'exit strategy' at the design stage with an action plan to mainstream the project activities into the regular programs of the relevant institutions and garner political support to ensure adequate resources from government budgets.
25. Good policy and regulatory frameworks have to be in place at national level to sustain and foster sustainable land management in agriculture, forestry and other sectors and stimulate stakeholder participation. This is especially true when significant changes occur in the governance and policy at the national level, during implementation of projects of long (≥ 4 year) duration. It is important to constantly make project managers and other stakeholders aware, train and capacitate them at national level regarding changes that may occur in policies and activities of financing and implementing agencies as well as the state-of-the-art of the subject matter. National focal points have differing backgrounds and differing levels of understanding, experience and knowledge about project development and subject matter issues and, therefore need to be constantly updated.

4. Stakeholders

26. It is easy to identify stakeholders, but difficult to maintain their participation unless they see tangible results that have a direct relevance to their lives. Setting varying criteria for stakeholder involvement depending on specific circumstances and the context within the country is more productive and ultimately only stakeholders who see themselves as relevant should be involved.
27. The success of a multi-stakeholder process is also to a large extent attributed to efficient communication among its stakeholders. Websites can serve as an important platform for stakeholders' effective consultation through well-developed online interactive features. This provides continuity as well as promoting the implementation of the future activities.

5. Involvement of policy makers

28. Significant involvement of policy-makers in the project kick-off workshops especially in identifying key questions helps ensure the utility of the project in the policy realm. The key aspects that seek to influence policy must directly relate to key national policy questions in order for the project outputs to be relevant for decision-making processes.
29. The benefits in terms of ‘ownership’ of new research ideas and initiatives from early involvement of policy makers, private sector and NGOs are immediate and great. In this way, these stakeholders will also gain the same understanding and experience as the scientists and field level project participants. As tricky or difficult as this may seem, national teams should involve/engage policy makers, NGOs and private sector (for marketing services) at an early stage. Their representatives should be involved at the outset of the project activities such as in the surveys, in capacity building exercises and in the research and analysis, long before policy discussions.

6. Measuring project success in changing attitudes and behaviours towards biodiversity

30. Education and awareness-raising activities aim to build knowledge and awareness, and through these challenge attitudes, create new understandings and change behaviours. However, there seems to be particular uncertainty over how to best measure changes in awareness, attitudes and behaviours brought about by project activities (impact of awareness-raising and educational activities). Changing deep-seated attitudes can take many years, and may require a generational change. Consequently, it is often difficult to say if the project has had an effect on public perceptions and behaviours towards biodiversity issues during its 3-4 year lifetime. What is needed is a follow-up assessment of impact some years (say 5 years) after the project has finished. UNEP should consider identifying money in proposals to undertake post-project evaluations, or perhaps as a regional examination of the effectiveness of awareness-raising activities of all its Biodiversity projects.

C. Findings and recommendations

Project Design

Finding 1

31. Many UNEP projects fail to formulate proper monitoring and evaluation plans during their design phase. This makes it difficult for adequate monitoring of project activities and future evaluation; especially in the absence of the basic parameters including baselines and indicators that are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound).

Recommendation 1

32. Comprehensive M&E plans must be developed on the basis of the logical framework indicators and properly resourced and implemented. The focus should be on the impact of projects and on the impact on growth of political and institutional support to environmental management. The focus of monitoring and reporting should be on outcomes as opposed to activities. Detailed reporting on individual activities is time-consuming and takes valuable time away from efforts to maximize the project's impact. The use of the logical framework and performance indicators should be evident in project reporting. It should be noted that DGEF has already developed a tool to assist in the design of good M&E plans and determine

the cost of all project-related M&E activities. Similarly DGEF has produced revised UNEP progress report templates to facilitate outcome monitoring. EOU recommends the adoption of these tools and templates across the organization.

Finding 2

33. Many of the difficulties encountered by projects in early implementation stemmed from the initial project design. Project personnel did not have the same understanding of project expectations. This is sometimes because project proposals/concepts and subsequently the project documents were authored by several people over a period of several years and thus tended to represent an amalgamation of different initiatives and priorities, as well as adjustments to evolving requirements.

Recommendation 2

34. It is recommended that all projects have a training workshop at the inception to give clear guidance to all stakeholders on the approach, management process, roles and responsibilities, and project expectations.

Finding 3

35. UNEP projects are usually overly ambitious; they are multi country, regional projects aiming to deliver a broad range of outputs and outcomes (education, awareness-raising, scientific publications, conservation action, local stakeholder development, national capacity-building or influence on national policies) in a limited amount of time. While this is not necessarily a bad thing, projects are often not able to deliver effectively against such a wide range of outputs and outcomes.

Recommendation 3

36. UNEP needs to ensure that future projects are more focused with a realistic set of objectives and activities and adequate capacity and budgets. Linked to this, UNEP should set targets for the overall performance of projects. For example, the GEF requires that the performance of at least 75% of projects should be independently evaluated as '*moderately satisfactory*' or better.

Reporting

Finding 4

37. UNEP projects do not have a mechanism for quick and simple assessment of financial elements of the project (by outcomes, outputs and activities) because reporting of budgetary disbursements is not done in a cumulative way.

Recommendation 4

38. Better financial management tools should be made available to project managers and UNEP staff. In particular, expenditure report formats and cash advance request formats should show cumulative expenditures and relate such expenditures to project components (activities/ outputs/outcomes). DGEF has developed specific templates to facilitate the job of project managers in tracking disbursements and expenditures against project progress. These have the potential to be applied more widely in UNEP.

Impact

Recommendation 5

39. In the design of UNEP projects, due attention should be paid to international best practices and strategies (derived from several disciplines) in enhancing the use of innovations and their impact or influence on policies. Among the key strategies and best practices are the following:
- Seek out powerful or influential alliances/partnerships for uptake and ‘promotion’ from the outset, select a strong and credible lead agency;
 - Ensure that the innovation has a volunteer ‘champion’ through the entire process from initiation of research or pilot activities to eventual impact (e.g. policy ‘entrepreneur’);
 - Adopt a pluralistic attitude to project design and implementation processes and encourage multi-institutional ownership of insights and innovations;
 - Invest in ‘market research’ and learn from the audience through: advisory groups, planning workshops, partnerships and network;
 - Build the intended audience into the project processes and seek feedback at all stages;
 - Translate pilot project/research findings into ‘operational’ language e.g. management suggestions, or policy decision options;
 - Embed research or pilot activities within influential policy change processes or within development initiatives;
 - Invest in outreach processes, making use of a combination of approaches to enhance uptake;
 - Using ‘Launch events’ for key products and findings;
 - Use mass media to reach large but important constituencies;
 - Develop good interpersonal channels of communication with key influential individuals (or make use of partners that can do this);
 - Use internet and email list servers as communication tools not as a dissemination strategy;
 - Send frequent reminders or conduct repeated demonstrations to intended users about the innovation;
 - Invest in interactive ‘educational’ meetings (policy or ‘best practice’ discussion fora) that involve project stakeholders and practitioners.

Management Response to Evaluation Recommendations

Finding 6

40. Analysis of the levels of compliance with reporting on evaluation recommendations over the period between 2002 and 2007 show quite variable levels of compliance. There is a need to make considerable improvements in levels of compliance in some of the Divisions of UNEP. EOU intends to continue to disclose the levels of compliance with evaluation recommendations within UNEP.

Recommendation 6

41. Management response to evaluation recommendations is an essential way to promote accountability and ensure programme improvement. It is therefore strongly recommended that the level of compliance with evaluation recommendations be adopted by UNEP Senior management as a performance measure at both Divisional level and for performance appraisals of managers of projects/programmes.

I Introduction

A. Evaluation and Oversight Unit

42. The mandate for conducting, coordinating and overseeing evaluation in UNEP is vested in the Evaluation and Oversight Unit. This mandate covers all programmes and projects of the Environment Fund, related trust funds, earmarked contributions and projects implemented by UNEP under the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The Unit conducts various types of evaluations and management studies, in accordance with the requirements of the United Nations General Assembly, the UNEP Governing Council, and the norms and standards for evaluation of the United Nations system.
43. The activities of the Evaluation and Oversight Unit comprise management studies, in-depth subprogramme and project evaluations and project self-evaluations. The Unit provides technical backstopping to project and programme managers in their annual self-evaluation and closely follows up on the implementation of evaluation recommendations. The Unit prepares Special Studies designed to provide information relevant for decision-making and to improve evaluation processes, and procedures. Guidelines and practical approaches for conducting evaluations are elaborated in the UNEP Evaluation Manual which can be found on the UNEP Evaluation Web site at: <http://www.unep.org/eou>.
44. All UNEP projects, independent of their funding source, are subject to evaluation. Evaluation of projects takes two main forms:
 - i) Annual self-evaluation reporting;
 - ii) Mid-term and terminal evaluations conducted as desk or in-depth studies.
45. UNEP subprogrammes are covered by in-depth evaluations conducted every four or five years. However, to improve the methodology, availability of supporting data and resource requirements used in assessing results achieved by subprogrammes during the course of the biennium, the Evaluation and Oversight Unit has been supporting subprogrammes in the development of their mandatory self-assessment plans for the 2006–2007 and 2008–2009 biennia.

B. Mandate and mission

46. The present annual evaluation report has been prepared as part of the mission of the UNEP Evaluation and Oversight Unit to provide strategic information to Governments, UNEP senior management and programme managers to enable them to review progress made by the organization and to reflect critically on the constraints and challenges of delivering a quality global environmental programme.
47. The mandate for undertaking evaluations has been stated in various General Assembly resolutions and UNEP Governing Council decisions. The Governing Council has recognized

the importance of evaluation as an integral part of the programme planning cycle, while retaining its independence, and has requested the Executive Director to continue to refine evaluation methodologies in collaboration with Governments (Governing Council decisions 75 IV, 6/13, 13/1 and 14/1) and partners within the United Nations system. In its decision 19/29, the Council also requested the Executive Director to strengthen the UNEP oversight function. According to the Secretary General's bulletin on programme planning, monitoring and implementation (ST/SGB/2000/8), which consolidates the General Assembly decisions on the evaluation function, the purpose of the evaluation function is to facilitate the review of results achieved from programme implementation, examine the validity of programme orientation and determine whether there is need to change the direction of different programmes.

C. Scope and objective

48. The annual evaluation report is prepared as an inter-sessional document of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum and serves as part of the input of UNEP to the Secretary-General's report on evaluation to the General Assembly. The report provides stakeholders such as Governments, UNEP senior management and UNEP partners with an evaluative assessment of UNEP programme and project performance in 2007. The main objective of the annual evaluation report is to help UNEP reflect on its programme performance through evaluative evidence and lessons from programme and project implementation. The terms of reference for the report are provided in annex I to the present report.
49. The report is based on evaluations conducted in 2007 and comprises data provided in 19 in-depth project evaluation reports and 2 special studies. The report also contains a review of the status of implementation of the recommendations contained in the 2002–2007 annual evaluation reports, a chapter on evaluation priority setting and a framework study on lessons conducted by the Evaluation and Oversight Unit.

D. Method

1. Evaluation parameters

50. The report is based on a review and assessment of the key parameters in four specific areas: first, relevance and appropriateness; second, effectiveness and efficiency; third, results and impacts; and, fourth, sustainability.

(a) Relevance and appropriateness

51. The relevance and appropriateness of evaluated programme and project activities implemented under the mandate of UNEP (General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972, the 1997 Nairobi Declaration, the 2000 Malmö Declaration and the 2002 Johannesburg Plan of Implementation) were examined by assessing the following parameters:
 - i) Relevance of activities and their contribution in such areas as promoting the development of international environmental law, implementing international norms and policy, conducting environmental assessments and providing policy advice and information, and raising awareness and facilitating effective co-operation between all sectors of society;
 - ii) Relevance of activities and their contribution to providing policy and advisory services in key areas of institution-building to Governments and other institutions;

- iii) Relevance of activities and their contribution to strengthening the role of UNEP in coordinating environmental activities in the United Nations system and as a GEF implementing agency.

b) Effectiveness and efficiency

52. The review and assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of programmes and projects was based on in-depth evaluations and took into account the following factors:
- i) Evaluation ratings based on a critical analysis of 11 aspects of implementation for the projects that have been used since 2004;
 - ii) Emerging lessons learned from project implementation and evaluation recommendations;
 - iii) Results and impact.

53. The review and assessment of the results and impact of the evaluated activities largely focused on capacity-building in areas related to environmental information and assessment, monitoring of compliance with existing conventions and international agreements, supporting institution building and awareness-raising, and fostering improved linkages between the scientific community and policymakers.

c) Sustainability

54. The evaluation of project sustainability adopts a risk-based approach and identifies potential risks to the sustainability of outcomes across four areas: socio-political, financial, institutional framework and governance, and environmental sustainability.

2. Analytical approach

55. The Evaluation and Oversight Unit conducts all evaluations in consultation with the relevant programme and project managers to ensure that, while United Nations and UNEP evaluation standards are followed, the views and concerns of the respective programmes and projects are adequately and fairly reflected. The same approach has been used in the preparation of this report and issues and questions that arose from the reviews and consultations have been further discussed with relevant divisions and circulated to all divisions in the form of a draft report.

56. The analysis and conclusions contained in the report are based on:

- (a) Review of in-depth evaluation reports;
- (b) Review of special studies;
- (c) Review of desk evaluation reports;
- (d) Review of implementation plans and management responses to the recommendations of the evaluation reports over the period 2000–2007; and;
- (e) Discussions with UNEP staff on subjects related to partnership framework agreements, implementation of evaluation recommendations and self-evaluation reporting.

3. Evaluation rating

57. All project evaluations are assessed on a six-point scale with the following categories: “highly unsatisfactory” (1), “unsatisfactory” (2), “moderately unsatisfactory” (3), “moderately satisfactory” (4) “satisfactory” (5) and “highly satisfactory” (6), based on a qualitative analysis of project performance in evaluations. The rating system and evaluation quality control processes have recently been further developed and refined and ensure consistency with the rating

system used by the GEF because a substantial number of the evaluations conducted by the Evaluation and Oversight Unit are for GEF projects. The evaluation parameters include:

- (a) Achievement of objectives and planned results;
- (b) Attainment of outputs and activities;
- (c) Cost-effectiveness;
- (d) Country ownership;
- (e) Financial planning and management;
- (f) Impact;
- (g) Implementation approach;
- (h) Monitoring and evaluation;
- (i) Replicability;
- (j) Stakeholder involvement;
- (k) Sustainability.

II. Findings from in-depth evaluation of projects in the context of the thematic priorities of UNEP

58. The new strategic direction of UNEP focuses its efforts on delivering against its mandate by exercising environmental leadership in six cross-cutting thematic priority areas: These priority areas and their specific objectives are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: UNEP six cross-cutting thematic priorities for the period 2010-2013

Thematic priorities	Objectives	In-depth evaluations discussed
Climate change	Strengthen the ability of countries to integrate climate change responses into national development processes	1
Disasters and conflicts	Minimize environmental threats to human well-being arising from the environmental causes and consequences of conflicts and disasters.	0
Ecosystem management	For countries to utilize the ecosystem approach to enhance human well-being.	12
Environmental governance	Environmental governance at country, regional and global levels is strengthened to address agreed environmental priorities.	1
Harmful substances and hazardous waste	Minimize the impact of harmful substances and hazardous waste on the environment and human beings.	1
Resource efficiency – sustainable consumption and production	Natural resources are produced, processed and consumed in a more environmentally sustainable way.	2

59. As UNEP moves towards the implementation of its programme in relation to these new thematic priorities, the findings and lessons learned from in-depth evaluations can help to inform project design, planning and implementation of projects and programmes.
60. The 19 in-depth project evaluations conducted in 2007, representing a monetary value of over \$126 million, have been categorized according to the thematic priorities of UNEP (Table 1). The nineteen evaluations included a donor partnership evaluation (with the Netherlands) and covered a number of thematic areas including climate change, biodiversity conservation, sustainable agricultural practices, eco-health, dry lands, POPs, fresh water management, marine pollution and technology transfer/energy (see Annex II for a full list of the projects evaluated).
61. The overall performance of the projects evaluated, when considered at an aggregated level, was rated by EOU as “*moderately satisfactory*”.

A. Climate Change

62. The GEF Climate Change mitigation project entitled “**Building sustainable commercial dissemination networks for household PV systems in Eastern Africa**” had specified its goal was to “stimulate increased rural sales of PV by increasing consumer awareness and by

sharing experiences between commercial markets and projects in region”. UNEP has, for the first time, implemented a solar photovoltaic project which aimed to support the establishment of commercial dissemination networks in four Eastern African countries. The project budget was used mainly to increase local awareness and to help actors in the supply chain to set up or strengthen their solar businesses in a sustainable way. The project has not been able to induce major effective changes in national policies but many decision-makers have been sensitised.

63. The national linkage to establish a commercial route for PV products was the core activity of the project and can be considered as rather successful in 3 countries (Tanzania, Uganda and Ethiopia). But the mobilisation of **microfinance institutions** (MFI) has been challenging and limited in Ethiopia and Tanzania in particular where interest and/or confidence were lacking. In Uganda & Tanzania, the national policy is clearly supporting private sector development and the promotion of renewable energies. Therefore, the establishment of a commercial route or supply chain for PV dissemination was facilitated and, after the project ended, many actors were in place and involved to some degree. In this rather positive context, two new projects with a similar commercial approach for PV dissemination came out as a replication effect based on lessons learnt from the UNEP project. MFI and local cooperatives are slowly attracted by the solar business.
64. In Ethiopia, the political and economic context was less favourable to PV commercialisation than in Uganda and Tanzania as the whole financial sector and many companies are still tightly regulated by the government. Consequently, the dissemination network between the capital and the project area is disadvantaged (only 2 dealers) and low sales volumes were reached during the project period. The recent investment of Energy through Enterprise (E+Co) in one PV supplier to develop his business is an encouraging impact of the project.
65. The case of Eritrea is separate as the political and economic context was extremely unfavourable to PV commercialisation, and thus to the project implementation. The Terminal Evaluation has confirmed that the project activities in Eritrea were clearly outside the scope of the project. There were no achievements in terms of establishing a dealers’ network between the capital and a rural area. However the ‘Fee-For-Services’ dissemination model developed in Eritrea by the national consultant has shown interesting results; with reduced upfront barriers, the rate of PV system penetration in the villages is drastically increased and the PV business becomes more profitable and more sustainable.
66. The UNEP-GEF project related to household PV has demonstrated its capacity to establish a network of PV actors (suppliers, dealers, technicians, agents) between capitals and targeted districts, and to create a “PV Aware Market” thanks to the project’s activities (i.e. market studies, capacity building, awareness-raising, co-financing, overall supervision and M&E). However, achieving a sustainable and effective “PV Sales Market” was found to be much more difficult as PV sales will ‘take off’ only if prices are significantly reduced or attractive credits are available. Therefore, the mobilisation of microfinance institutions is an essential but arduous and drawn-out pre-requisite.

B. Ecosystem Management

67. In 2007, twelve projects which relate to the broad theme of Ecosystem Management were evaluated. However, for the purpose of understanding the contribution that **results** from

UNEP projects have made towards the organization's new strategic priorities, only the terminal evaluations will be taken into consideration (these being eight)⁴.

1. Ecosystem Management for Development Planning

68. The medium-sized GEF project **Biodiversity Indicators for National Use (BINU)** was designed to promote conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity by improving the information on which decisions are based. The project had two main achievements. The first was demonstrating that functional national level biodiversity indicator frameworks can be created with data currently available. Within the data used by the BINU countries there were many gaps, but the countries brought all the available data together to create an overall picture of the status of biodiversity within a certain ecosystem within their country. BINU presented the first opportunity within the participating countries to put together an aggregate picture of biodiversity at the national level. The second was the building of capacity by bringing together diverse stakeholders working on biodiversity conservation-related issues within each country. However, there was only very limited progress in assisting policy and decision-makers to apply information supplied by biodiversity indicators to national planning and decision-making. In common with many projects, the evaluation found that the project document was overambitious in anticipating that the intended policy influence of the project would be achievable within the limited time and resources budgeted.
69. The BINU project and the indicator frameworks developed were highlighted in the Third National Reports to the CBD of Kenya, the Philippines and Ukraine (Ecuador had, at the time of the evaluation, not submitted a second or third national report to CBD). However, the fact that there was no mechanism in place to provide for the systematic aggregation of indicator-related data in the future may affect the project's sustainability. Whether the indicators will be used in the fourth national report (2009) to the CBD remains to be seen.
70. The **Protection of the North West Sahara Aquifer System (NWSAS) and related humid zones and ecosystems** project was designed to improve management of the NWSAS aquifer system shared by Algeria, Libya and Tunisia through protection of water quality and of the recharge areas and humid zones and ecosystems related to the aquifer. The project was successful in achieving a political agreement at the ministerial level with regard to the management of the shared aquifer resources as the participating countries succeeded in establishing a permanent consultative mechanism ("Mécanisme de concertation", better translated as "Mechanism for Concerted Action") for the Système Aquifère du Sahara Septentrional (SASS), defining the role and missions, and requesting support from the Observatoire du Sahara et du Sahel (OSS) to put in place a secretariat.
71. The goal of the **Community Based Management of On-Farm Plant Genetic Resources in Arid and Semi-Arid Areas of Sub-Saharan Africa** project was to improve the effectiveness of traditional farming systems for conservation of crop landraces of local and global importance. While policy-makers have been engaged, the link between this project and the policy initiatives in these countries cannot be ascertained from the evidence provided. Although mechanisms to achieve it are in place more time will be required to influence the policy environment.
72. Another project evaluation related to ecosystems management was the **Global Support to Facilitate the Early Development and Implementation of Sustainable Land**

4 Mid Term evaluations focus more on 'operational improvement' and, at mid term, the intended project results are often yet to be achieved

Management Programmes and Projects Under the GEF Operational Programme Number 15 (OP15). The project was designed to facilitate early development and implementation of GEF programmes and projects on sustainable land management through global information and training of the relevant decision-makers in addressing land degradation issues, and developing and implementing activities eligible for GEF funding under OP 15.

73. This was the first time that UNCCD and GEF focal points came together to address Land Degradation (LD) and sustainable land management (SLM)-related project factors in a synergistic way. Partnerships were developed, mostly during or shortly after sub-regional workshops, which were specifically planned by the project to involve sharing of experiences, best practices and on-going activities in sustainable land management among the participants thereby strengthening constructive partnerships at all levels.
74. Through the interaction that took place among all the stakeholders at the workshops, this project helped the formulation of SLM and LD priorities in pre-existing Sub-regional Action Programme (SRAPs) and Regional Action Programme (RAPs). Unfortunately, after the workshops, many institutional changes occurred (revised strategies and funding decision mechanisms) within the GEF which acted to reduce the impact and sustainability of new and existing project outputs over the long-term. The key outputs being a training handbook and multilingual Operational Guide/websites on the GEF OP15; this was to aid the development of project proposals and access to project funding from the GEF for SLM.
75. The **Dams and Development Project (DDP)** had, as its primary goal, the promotion of improved decision-making, planning and management on dams and their alternatives, building on World Commission on Dams (WCD) core values and strategic priorities and other relevant reference materials.
76. DDP promoted national dialogues in over twenty developed and developing countries. In Phase 2, which was the object of the evaluation, the DDP focused on promoting national dialogues in Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, and Uganda and a follow-up to conclude processes in Republic of South Africa (RSA), Nepal and Sweden that were initiated in Phase 1 of the project. Countries such as Nepal, RSA and Uganda were evaluated as being ahead of others in the advancement of national dialogue activities. All stakeholders agreed it was an effective mechanism for settling disputes on dams and their alternatives. However, consensus has not been reached and many stakeholders still hold entrenched positions on various aspects of dams and their alternatives.
77. The current level of country ownership of the project is rather limited and there is little sign that the project has so far led to any changes in national policies or decision-making involving dams and their alternatives
78. The overall goal of the project on **Conservation of Gramineae and Associated Arthropods for Sustainable Agricultural Development in Africa** was to document diversity of *Gramineae* (grasses) and associated insects in different selected agro-ecosystems and socio-economic surroundings, and their adjacent natural habitats in Ethiopia, Kenya and Mali; to understand the relationships between certain grasses and insects; and to develop and promote the practical application of this knowledge in self-regulatory pest management and sustainable agriculture.
79. The project managed to:
 - i) Observe and document diversity of *Gramineae* and their associated arthropods in selected agro-ecosystems and socio-economic surroundings, although the arthropods were essentially limited to insects and within insects to stemborers.

- ii) Develop self-regulatory pest management and sustainable agricultural practices utilizing diversity of *Gramineae* and associated arthropods, which were applied and partially evaluated in participating countries
80. The project raised public-awareness at all levels (including school children, farmers, and the wider scientific community) of the importance and values of biodiversity in general and of agro-ecosystems in particular. The project has sensitised farmers, stakeholders, institutions and policy-makers in this regard, established the foundations for further developments, and it is likely that impacts will accrue in the future. If adopted on a large scale, it will have the desired positive impact on the environment and in particular on the preservation of key arthropods, grassland flora, and indigenous agricultural management systems that promote self-regulatory pest management and sustainable agriculture.
81. The project did not establish formal agreements with policymakers and linkages with national programmes to address further implementation, although it did receive the interest of technical staff (staff of relevant Ministries and of the institutions involved in the project, both at individual and institutional level) and institutions, and it was reported that both technical staff and policy-makers showed interest in the project, and noted that in future programmes they will consider the best practices identified.
82. However, even though the information collected showed the potential of the technology identified, it did not provide conclusive results, especially for large-scale applications and these still need to be scientifically validated and applied to normal field scales and integrated, into local (specific) farming systems and practices.
83. Ecosystem approaches to Human Health referred to in the project entitled “**Improved Health Outcomes through Community-based Ecosystem Management: Building Capacity and Creating Local Knowledge in Community Health and Sustainable Development**” were termed the *Ecohealth* Framework. The project was implemented as an iterative development research framework/process where communities, stakeholders, research teams and policy- and decision-makers worked together for better understanding of concerted options for improved health promotion/disease control and prevention through sustainable ecosystems management.
84. The project succeeded in targeting knowledge generation and capacity building but was over-ambitious to aim at national policy influence under the constraints of limited resources and time. A focus on policy-making at the local level would have been more readily achievable and realistic as the evaluation found that municipalities and local governments had been more receptive and open to Ecohealth results and knowledge up-take in Central America and the Caribbean, West Africa and Middle East and North Africa.
85. Despite the decentralized and participatory design and implementation, some country field projects had few links to ongoing national programmes in the field of environment and health. An outstanding exception was the Honduras team that built strategic partnerships with local, national and international agencies and ministries. The project was even integrated into the national strategic plan of Chagas’ disease control and in a sub-regional control programme.
86. The project entitled “**Sustainable Conservation of Globally Important Caribbean Bird Habitats: Strengthening a Regional Network for a Shared Resource**” aimed at enhanced conservation of globally important sites for biodiversity in the Caribbean through strengthened local and national partnerships and increasing awareness of important bird

habitats among national and international networks of public and private sector stakeholders and decision-makers.

87. The project appeared to have achieved a rather mixed and uncertain level of success at the Development Objective level as performance indicators for this in the project's log-frame were poor and made it difficult to evaluate the level of achievement. Although the impact of the awareness-raising and education components of the Caribbean Bird project, in terms of changed attitudes and behaviours, could not be assessed directly and quantitatively, it is fair to say that without the GEF project tens of thousands of people in the Caribbean would not have been exposed to bird and site conservation issues. The fact that people were willing to express their opposition to, and take part in protests against, destructive mining practices in Cockpit Country, Jamaica suggests that awareness of the value of biodiversity had been raised locally and nationally in Jamaica through the project. In the Dominican Republic, members of the Jaragua Site Support Group (SSG) commented that they had observed a change in the behaviour of local people because of the awareness-raising activities.
88. There were, however, delays over delivery of several key outputs, particularly the national Important Bird Area (IBA) lists, which meant that there was insufficient time for significant impact on national policies, and advocacy work was limited. There was an assertion by project staff on all three islands that the project increased dialogue between partner NGOs and government officials although access to policy-makers varied between the islands during the project, and was most successful in the Bahamas, but what level of impact this had, and how sustained this will be, was difficult to judge.

2. Capacity to use Ecosystem Management tools

89. All the projects evaluated demonstrate that UNEP has been successful in delivering capacity building activities and developing tools for efficient ecosystem management. However, in common with many capacity building initiatives, it is difficult to assess the level and durability of project beneficiaries' awareness or the effect that knowledge and skills acquired will have within countries following project completion. Selected examples follow:
90. The BINU project was successful in promoting uptake of the framework of indicators by state agencies in national statistical reporting, university curricula and by the government ministries to varying degrees. The actual process of developing the respective national biodiversity indicator frameworks was highly valuable in itself (capacity building). In this context the terminal evaluation notes that measuring capacity continues to be a challenge in evaluation. Nonetheless, data gathered during this evaluation indicated that significant technical and institutional capacity had been built within each of the participating countries as a direct result of this project. The evaluation points out, however, that there was no pre-project baseline for comparison. The issue of concern is that this is happening in an ad-hoc form without any long-term sustainable strategy and the risk is that the process of maintaining this information source is highly dependent on one or a very few individuals.
91. As part of the project "Community Based Management of On-Farm Plant Genetic Resources in Arid and Semi-Arid Areas of Sub-Saharan Africa", capacity development was carried out throughout project implementation which targeted researchers, extension staff, farmers and policy makers. Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali and Zimbabwe have begun the process of integrating traditional knowledge on landraces in national policy initiatives leading to national decision-making strategies on plant genetic resources at policy levels in accordance with article 6b of the CBD on which the GEF is required to take action.

92. Conservation interventions for important grasses and associated insects were developed and promoted in the Conservation of Gramineae and Associated Arthropods for Sustainable Agricultural Development in Africa project. Best practices for conservation of *Gramineae* and associated insect diversity were identified and disseminated. The capacity of national agricultural research and extension systems in monitoring, protecting, and promoting biodiversity of *Gramineae* and associated insects was strengthened, and training in identification, collection and preservation of germplasm and specimens of plant and insects conducted.
93. The successful capacity-building efforts during the implementation of the Ecohealth project contributed significantly to creating a critical mass of Ecohealth experts, researchers, practitioners and, to a lesser extent, to more informed local decision- and policy-makers to sustain Eco-health approaches in the three regions. Viable regional Eco-health networks were also established and have great potential for further impact on the target regions and probably beyond.

3. National realignment of environmental programmes and financing to address prioritized degraded ecosystem

94. Analysis of terminal evaluations carried out in 2007 clearly show that achieving financial sustainability is a common risk or limiting factor if outcomes are to be sustained.
95. Although the DDP project established a model of multi-stakeholder approach to deal with contentious dam issues, there are very few developing countries that have committed significant financial resources in the national dialogue process.
96. The sustainability of the Ecohealth project outcomes was regarded as high with regard to capacity building, but external inputs are required to further sustain research activities. Some teams succeeded in leveraging substantial funding from other donors to implement further Ecohealth research. A “success” story occurred in Cameroon where the research team was granted 936,000 Euro by the European Water Facility to follow up on the Ecohealth project funded within the present project on participatory urban sanitation and health in particular, to scale out access to water and sanitation.
97. All eight terminal evaluations show that UNEP has consistently worked towards supporting governments to integrate ecosystem management approaches into development and planning processes. However none of the projects evaluated were able to convincingly claim to have achieved such policy change outcomes at the time of their evaluation.

C. Environmental Governance

98. One project related to environmental governance was evaluated in 2007: The project entitled “**Development of Issue-based Modules to support the coherent implementation of biodiversity-related Conventions – Phase I**” aimed at facilitating harmonized and coherent implementation of biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). This on-going project develops issue-based modules on crosscutting topics in order to create practical instruments to be applied to any crosscutting topic of any combination of MEAs; hence creating a comprehensive overview of the implementation requirements on a particular topic.
99. The project focuses principally on the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention) and the World Heritage Convention (WHC), though other treaties, such as the United Nations

Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the International Plant Protection Convention, are also addressed.

100. As the project is still on-going and in its initial phases, it is not possible to conclude at this stage whether the project will meet its primary objective. Achieving such harmonized implementation is a difficult task that may ultimately not be achieved by this project alone. The evaluation indicates however, that five modules were successfully developed (*i.* Biodiversity & Climate Change, *ii.* Inland Waters, *iii.* Invasive Alien Species, *iv.* Protected areas and *v.* Sustainable use) and that there is a wide range of actual and potential uses of these, by both State and non-State actors. These uses cover at least five areas of activity relevant to implementation of the biodiversity related MEAs: developing programmes, policies, laws and strategies; institutional development and change; reporting and monitoring activities; capacity and knowledge building; advocacy, awareness raising and diplomacy. These uses in turn suggest reasonable potential for the future achievement of the project's objective.

D. Harmful substances and hazardous waste

101. In 2007 only one project related to assessing, managing and reducing risks posed by chemicals and hazardous waste was evaluated.
102. The GEF project entitled “**Fostering Active and Effective Civil Society Participation in Preparations for Implementation of the Stockholm Convention (NGO-POPs Elimination Project) (IPEP)**” was implemented with the objective of developing capacities within Civil Society to face the challenges of implementing the Stockholm Convention - aimed at reducing and eliminating persistent toxic substances (PTS), enhancing public awareness about POPs and increasing civil society participation, involvement and interest in the Convention and related activities.
103. All countries involved in the IPEP project are parties to the Stockholm Convention and most of them have already ratified it, and therefore have an obligation to improve their legal and institutional framework in order to manage POPs. According to the National Implementation Plans they also need to improve their technical capacity in order to monitor POPs. However, many relevant institutions are still lacking this capacity.
104. Results of the project are commensurate with the objectives stated in the project document. However it is not clear to what extent IPEP outputs have influenced policy decisions and it is also difficult to assess the NGOs' contributions to the National Implementation Plans. In addition, due to difficulties in raising co-financing, international expert teams proposed as an output of the project were never established; support and assistance were provided to NGOs in a different manner.
105. Although it was too early to assess the impacts of IPEP, there were some indications that IPEP had, to a certain extent, achieved part of the goal for which it was implemented. Many of the participating NGOs that had experience in other issues such as climate change or AIDS have had their POPs-related capacity enhanced through IPEP. In total, more than 160 NGOs from 61 countries participated in IPEP.
106. As a global project, the socio-political risks vary according to the countries' context and relationship between the governments and the civil society. Furthermore, according to the terminal evaluation, IPEP was geared exclusively towards NGOs and the level of involvement

of national or local authorities was very low. The lack of private sector involvement in the project was also a matter of concern. NGO influence on governments was limited, especially where the National Implementation Plans (NIPS) happened before the IPEP project commenced. Despite the large number of policy briefs and policy recommendations produced in the context of IPEP activities in the different regions, there is little evidence, so far, that these have been considered during policy formulation and decision-making or in NIPs.

107. This terminal evaluation showed that UNEP is making efforts towards increasing capacities and financing to assess, manage and reduce risks to human health and the environment posed by chemicals. However it also informs the Agency that when working towards the new thematic priorities recently laid-out by UNEP, it is important that project managers and partners, including implementing and executing agencies and the Stockholm Secretariat, place a high priority on communication and outreach efforts to promote products and new information to government officials and policy makers.

E. Resource efficiency – sustainable consumption and production

108. One project relating to Resource Efficiency and Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) was evaluated in 2007, this being a mid-term evaluation. An additional evaluation related to SCP was the joint evaluation of the ongoing National Cleaner Production Centre programme with The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).
109. UNIDO and UNEP are cooperating in the promotion of Cleaner Production (CP). CP is a preventive environmental strategy that can be applied to processes, products and services to reduce environmental impacts and improve resource productivity. Established in 1994, the **UNIDO-UNEP Programme (CP Programme)** set out to build national CP capacities through the establishment of National Cleaner Production Centres/Programmes (NCPCs/NCPPs) in developing countries and economies in transition. In 2007, the Programme encompassed activities in 37 countries. UNIDO and UNEP view this CP Programme as a cornerstone of their activities to foster sustainable industrial development.
110. The joint evaluation on the UNIDO - UNEP Cleaner Production Programme found that, for policy advice, the degree of pro-activeness of each NCPCs/NCPPs differs quite significantly. Overall, there is an opportunity to expand the scope of policy advice beyond the traditional environmental policy domain, to cover economic and technology domains.
111. Cleaner Production is generally considered relevant by government, private sector and other stakeholders in host countries for the UNIDO-UNEP CP Programme. Several current global trends have caused the relevance of CP to rise, but the presence and significance of these trends varies largely between the host countries. The programme's principal achievement has been in; raising CP on the agenda of government and business, building capacity for CP, development of information materials, implementation of good housekeeping and low/intermediate technology options in selected companies, and promoting policy change in some countries.
112. Some CP technology investments have been facilitated through the programme, often by utilising available green credit lines and/or deployment of local engineering design and fabrication capacities. Overall, however, the programme has made little headway in transferring environmentally sound technologies either through the regular activities of the NCPCs or through specific CP technology transfer initiatives.

113. The evaluation showed that the sustainability of the programme's achievements in building CP capacity, implementing CP in companies and CP-promoting policies is generally high. It is, however, noted that the priority assigned to financial sustainability (or rather independence) of the NCPC as a national institution largely through income from services can become counterproductive to achieving sustained effects and impacts as measured by the programme's objectives.

F. Consumer choice towards resource efficient and environmentally friendly products

114. The UNIDO-UNEP CP Programme was successful in establishing CP initiatives in each host country and all were reported to be active. For the 18 countries visited it was confirmed that the NCPC had produced valuable outputs and outcomes in particular with regard to awareness raising, training, implementation of low and intermediate technology CP options and, in some countries, policy change. The UNIDO-UNEP CP Programme has, over time, expanded its scope to include new topics and tools, but a major weakness remains that these have essentially been '*added on*' instead of '*integrated into*' the key service areas and core CP concepts. A distinction needs to be made in '*specialisation*' (improving the rigour and depth of service delivery related to CP implementation, for policy and/or technology) and '*diversification*' (introducing services pertaining to topics related to CP, for Corporate Social Responsibility and/or Sustainable Consumption and Production). NCPCs will also have to adapt, and some have started doing so, to the fact that other national institutions have considerable CP capacities, so that the traditional CP services may no longer be appropriate and/or sufficient
115. Country visits demonstrated that each NCPC is unique in its institutional setting, activities and achievements, with considerable differences from the '*idealised*' NCPC as envisaged by the UNIDO-UNEP CP Programme and advocated by its management. The Programme has not yet demonstrated flexibility to sufficiently adapt its support to the specific needs and activities of the different countries and to enable different types of NCPCs to fulfil niche roles that are most appropriate and effective in their specific national contexts. The absence of programme-based funding has contributed to a scattered approach to networking and learning, with limited opportunities for capturing and advancing best practices and for strengthening and managing the network.
116. The evaluation shows that UNEP has consistently worked towards supporting governments integrate SCP approach into development and planning processes. However the project seemed not to have achieved such policy changes. Although work is being undertaken by UNEP to support the development of economic instruments and actions for resource efficient and sustainable products in poorer countries, the formulation and adoption of policies related to SCP still appears to be very low.

III. Analysis of Project Performance

117. In 2007, the Evaluation and Oversight Unit (EOU) conducted 18⁵ in-depth evaluations. The evaluations covered a number of thematic areas including biodiversity conservation; climate change; land degradation and ecosystems management. To measure the performance of projects, and to allow for comparisons across projects the EOU considered the following standardised evaluation parameters: achievement of objectives and results; sustainability of outcomes; achievement of outputs and activities; cost effectiveness; monitoring and evaluation systems; replication and catalytic role; implementation approach; country ownership; financial planning; UNEP supervision; and stakeholder involvement.
118. Seventy eight percent of the projects evaluated achieved a satisfactory rating⁶ (*moderately satisfactory* or better) and twenty two percent (four projects) were rated *moderately unsatisfactory*. In addition, 41% of the projects were rated as *satisfactory* for attainment of objectives and planned results, 55% were rated as *moderately satisfactory* and only one project evaluation expressed concern about the likely achievement of its impact. Sustainability of the project benefits was *moderately likely* or better in 70% of projects and *moderately unlikely* in about 30% of the projects. The projects performed best in the achievement of their outputs and activities: 60% were *satisfactory* and the rest *moderately satisfactory*. Most interesting was that over 85% of the projects either had a *satisfactory* or *moderately satisfactory* catalytic role or were very likely to be replicated.
119. However, there was concern on the standard of the monitoring and evaluation systems of the projects. Forty (40) % of the evaluated projects reported *moderately unsatisfactory* or *unsatisfactory* M&E systems and less than 20% were *satisfactory*. This is partly due to new and more rigorous standards for assessing M&E⁷ being applied to completed projects that pre-date such standards. The implementation approach, which is an analysis of the projects' framework adaptation to the changing conditions, was also *unsatisfactory* or *moderately unsatisfactory* in about 40% of the projects. The analysis is presented below for each evaluation parameter assessed and subsequently summarized in Table 4.

A. The Attainment of Objectives and Planned Results

120. Evaluations should assess the extent to which the project's major relevant objectives were effectively and efficiently achieved, or are expected to be achieved, and their relevance. The overall performance of approximately 95% of the projects was *satisfactory* to *moderately satisfactory* (see Figure 1)

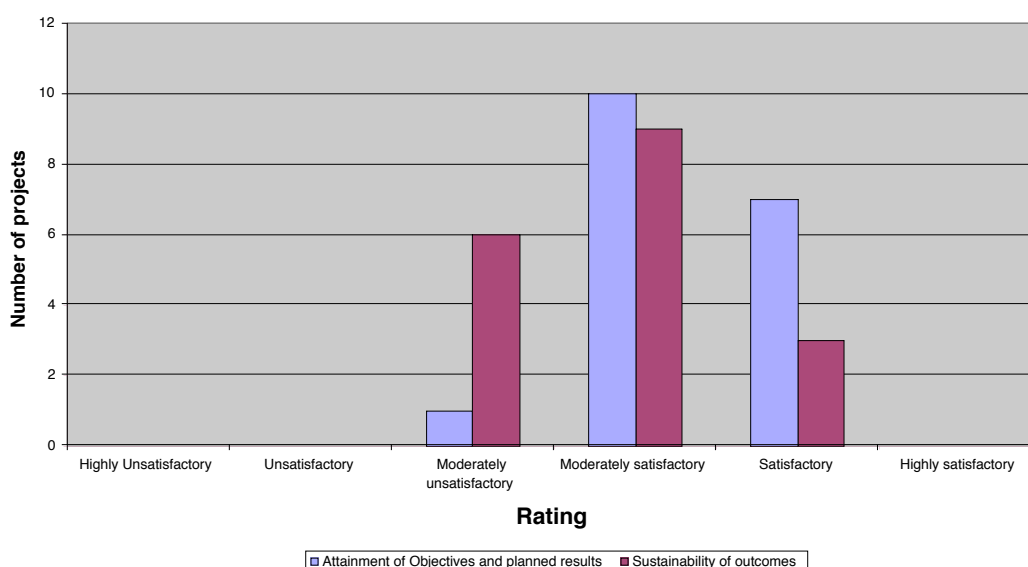
5 Nineteen in-depth evaluations were conducted in 2007 but one was a jointly implemented evaluation led by UNIDO and did not utilize the same evaluation and rating parameters as the remaining 18 evaluations.

6 All evaluation parameters are rated on a six point scale from 'highly satisfactory' through to 'highly unsatisfactory'.

7 The GEF approved its M&E policy in 2006, the standards it contains are applied in all EOU evaluations.

121. Most of the projects were overly ambitious in targeting knowledge generation, capacity building and policy influence under conditions of limited resources and time constraints. At the same time, a lack of capacity at the national and local levels hampered progress. National staff, trained at the start of projects, left during the life of the project in a number of cases and there were no strategies for staff retention and/or trainees to become trainers.
122. For most projects, it was too early to judge the impact. The lasting results depend highly on what will happen next with regard to the actions of the policy makers. The projects' work had improved the global dialogue and national processes, which, if continued, had potential for long-term impacts. Local implementation of projects and a growing level of involvement of stakeholders in project activities seemed to signal a high likelihood of eventual impacts.

Figure 1. Ratings for attainment of results and sustainability of outcomes 2007 (n=18)



B. Sustainability of Project Outcomes

123. Sustainability was assessed in terms of the risks to the continued long-term project-derived outcomes and impacts after the project funding ends. The four aspects of sustainability are; financial; socio-political; institutional framework and governance; and environmental sustainability.
124. Of the projects evaluated about 70% were 'likely' or 'moderately likely' to be sustainable (Figure 1.) Projects outcomes judged likely to be sustained, placed considerable emphasis on ensuring sustainability of project results and processes from the initial design stage. In general, these projects demonstrated effective multi-stakeholder approaches with wide consultations, which enhanced the potential for sustainability of the project benefits. Strong public awareness programmes helped to focus political will at local, national and/or global levels on environmental issues and increased the likely sustainability of project benefits.
125. The projects deemed as most likely to be sustainable secured financial resources for the continuation of activities, although in some cases this was for few countries or only for national rather than global activities. Projects with low risks to sustainability also established formal agreements with different organizations and industry for continuation of activities with diminishing support from UNEP.

126. In addition, projects that are likely to be sustainable often had an ‘exit strategy’ to help mainstream the project activities into the regular programmes of the relevant institutions and garner political support to ensure adequate resources from government budgets. To guarantee financial resources, projects had to involve relevant policy makers. Sometimes securing political support for the issue (rather than just the project) was crucial to ensuring adequate resources from government budgets.
127. With a number of projects, training activities resulted in increased capacities of staff but long-term additional benefits would only result with transfer of lessons learned in the pilots. “Brain drain” of individuals trained by projects, especially in the Caribbean region, undermined institutional sustainability.
128. In some cases, the project durations were too short to establish systems to enhance sustainability and efficiently implement the co-financing mechanisms. Projects active in countries in states of conflict, where government policies tend to channel most of the available resources to defence, were also not likely to be sustainable.

C. Achievement of Outputs and activities

129. This parameter requires an assessment of a project’s success in producing each of the programmed outputs, both in quantity and quality as well as usefulness and timeliness. It requires an assessment of the soundness and effectiveness of the methodologies used and, where necessary, the extent to which the project outputs produced have the weight of scientific authority/credibility, necessary to achieve the desired outcomes.
130. Over 60% of the projects satisfactorily delivered all their outputs and a few exceeded their original plans. The main challenge was the associated with dissemination of the outputs. The tremendous amount of knowledge generated by the projects required effective dissemination strategies that were generally lacking. This is a common problem and underpins the findings from many evaluations regarding the achievement of policy influence. UNEP projects often place more emphasis on delivering outputs than on the processes that can promote the use of such outputs to lead to the achievement of outcomes and objectives.

Table 2: Ratings for Achievement of Outputs and activities

Number of projects attaining specific rating					
Highly Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Highly Unsatisfactory
0	11	6	1	0	0

D. Monitoring and Evaluation

131. The evaluations assessed the quality, application and effectiveness of the project monitoring and evaluation plans and tools. Overall, the M&E systems in the projects were rated as *moderately satisfactory*: about 17% were ‘satisfactory’, 39% ‘moderately satisfactory’, 22% ‘moderately unsatisfactory’ and 22% ‘unsatisfactory’. This relatively low performance is partly due to new and more rigorous standards for assessing M&E being applied to projects that pre-date such standards.

132. In the projects that performed well, the M&E framework was part of the project design with a distinct budget. There was also an early development and agreement of the logical framework/ results-based matrix for such projects.
133. Projects that performed poorly frequently had insufficient budget allocations for M&E activities in the original budgets and there was often a failure to identify all the relevant M&E activities in the original project documents. Rudimentary M&E plans were prepared to monitor project progress using a steering committee, project reports and portfolio reviews and depended on simple frameworks to track project progress with no plan to collect information to measure the progress towards achievement of outcomes and impact. Some M&E arrangements resulted in duplication of efforts. Sometimes monitoring frameworks were complex and confusing and required indicator frameworks to be simplified. Generally, there were inadequate provisions for baseline measurements of project starting conditions, making assessment of project performance all the more challenging.

E. Replicability and the Catalytic role of projects

134. Replicability refers to the extent to which the approaches used and experiences gained could be applied in the design, and implementation of other similar projects. A catalytic role refers to the ability of a project to trigger similar activities. Sixteen projects were evaluated for this parameter and 6% were rated '*highly satisfactory*', about 13% were '*satisfactory*', over 65% were '*moderately satisfactory*' and about 13% were '*moderately unsatisfactory*'.
135. The projects rated as being '*satisfactory*' produced training materials and training packages with great transferability potential to other countries and regions. They had a replication plan articulating the methods and financial resources endorsed by the steering committee. Therefore, the potential for dissemination of the project experiences existed in a tangible form.
136. However, the projects rated as being weaker did not incorporate a replication strategy at the planning stage and there were no specific formal activities in the project plan to ensure replication - even where the potential existed. The projects did not explicitly address the challenge of ensuring replication or catalytic effects during implementation. They also had limited participation of representatives of government institutions or other potential 'replication agents' at the design stage.

F. Implementation Approach

137. The evaluations analysed three stages of implementation: the readiness and preparedness of projects for implementation; the approach of implementation and; the supervision and backstopping of UNEP. Although not all evaluations assessed all three areas, overall the performance of the projects was '*moderately satisfactory*'.
138. The most satisfactory projects had activities, which were timely and adequately implemented; activities also built on lessons learned as the projects unfolded. Timetables and work plans outlined in the project document enabled effective and efficient implementation, progress reports were prepared in a timely and satisfactory manner and the project governance system worked well. There was also good communication among project managers across countries.
139. A number of the difficulties encountered by the projects in early implementation stemmed from the initial project design. Several people had authored some projects proposals and

documents over long periods thus the projects came to represent an amalgamation of different initiatives and priorities, as well as adjustments to evolving requirements.

140. The ‘*unsatisfactory*’ projects could have benefited from more critical review and quality control in the logical framework design as projects planned unrealistic, complex and thematically diverse outputs and activities with limited resources. The identification of the roles and responsibilities of potential partners was not as comprehensive as it should have been.
141. In some cases, UNEP provided strong support at the project development stage but this reduced after project approval. Additional guidance during the project start-up phase would have helped the project management teams to be more efficient and effective in the early stages. There was also limited engagement of partners beyond the mandatory meetings and, in some cases, a formal project steering committee to oversee the project was lacking.

Table 3: Ratings for Assessment of Implementation of Projects

	Number of projects attaining specific rating					
	Highly Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Highly Unsatisfactory
Preparedness and readiness	0	0	3	3	1	0
Implementation Approach	0	3	6	4	2	0
UNEP Supervision	0	3	4	0	0	0

G. Country Ownership

142. This evaluation parameter is concerned with the relevance of the project to national development and environmental agendas, recipient country commitments, and international agreements. Of the projects evaluated about 30% were ‘*satisfactory*’, 50% ‘*moderately satisfactory*’ and about 20% ‘*moderately unsatisfactory*’.
143. The projects with high ratings for this evaluation parameter had political support and financial commitment from the governments. Countries where structures like national advisory committees were setup to play a key role in coordinating activities and ensure good governance had better ownership. The committees were instrumental in ensuring the integration of the project activities in the national budgets, programmes and policies. Nevertheless, and in some cases despite tremendous effort, it was questionable whether countries owned the process as there was little sign that the projects led to changes in national policies and decision-making.
144. Weak involvement of governments in the project execution led to insufficient linkage to national environmental agendas and strategies. This was partly due to a dependence on few government officials with limited time to commit towards project activities because of a large number of responsibilities. Sometimes individuals designed projects with few representatives from institutions; as a result, ownership of the project was largely at an individual level from the start.

H. Stakeholder Involvement

145. This evaluation parameter requires an assessment of information dissemination efforts, consultation processes and “stakeholder” participation. Over 40% of the projects were ‘*satisfactory*’ of which 14% were rated ‘*highly satisfactory*’.
146. ‘*Satisfactory*’ projects had extensive stakeholder consultation processes during project design and mapped out the key stakeholders. Key stakeholders were included in the steering committee, they raised public awareness, used the project website for dissemination/contact with stakeholders and project staff frequently traveled to the project sites to conduct meetings, public hearings and hold discussion. They also held ‘round tables’, workshops and public events, and produced documentation and publications. Project staff also actively maintained contact and solicited views of political stakeholders. Countries with a strong local project team often had good involvement of local stakeholders in many activities.
147. However, projects that involved their stakeholders much later, used a top-down approach to planning, and /or had insufficient ongoing involvement of some key stakeholders were often rated poorly. Some of these projects had assumed in the project document that the partners were sufficiently established and had experience in implementing large projects, which often proved not to be the case. The selection of their partners was also not as comprehensive or as sufficiently inclusive as it should have been.

I. Financial Planning and Management

148. Evaluation of financial planning requires assessments of the quality and effectiveness of financial planning and controls of financial resources throughout a project’s lifetime. About 50% of the projects were either ‘*satisfactory*’ or ‘*highly satisfactory*’ and about 20% were ‘*moderately unsatisfactory*’ or ‘*unsatisfactory*’.
149. The ‘*highly satisfactory*’ projects established excellent financial management structures and had rigorous systematic internal audits. ‘*Unsatisfactory*’ projects had poor budget presentations that were difficult to understand. There were unacceptable delays in the provision of financial information, problems of wrong bank account numbers, fund transfers not received, and delays in sending financial reports. All these hampered smooth financial administration and efficient project implementation.

Table 4: Summary of projects ratings based on evaluation parameters.

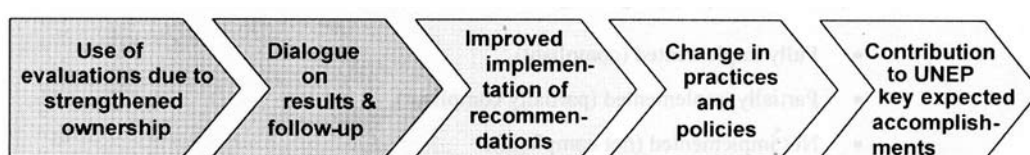
Parameter	Highly satisfactory	Satisfactory	Moderately satisfactory	Moderately unsatisfactory	Un-satisfactory	Highly unsatisfactory
Attainment of Objectives and planned results	0	7	10	1	0	0
Sustainability of outcomes	0	3	9	6	0	0
Achievement of Outputs and activities	0	11	6	1	0	0
Cost effectiveness	0	3	5	2	0	0
M&E	0	3	7	4	4	0
Catalytic Role/ Replicability	1	2	11	2	0	0
Preparedness and Readiness	0	0	3	3	1	0
Country Ownership	0	5	9	4	0	0
Stakeholder Involvement	1	6	6	4	0	0
Financial Planning	2	7	5	1	3	0
Implementation Approach	0	3	6	4	2	0
UNEP Supervision and backstopping	0	3	4	0	0	0
Overall Rating	0	5	9	4	0	0

150. *EOU recommends that UNEP set targets for the overall performance of projects. For example, the GEF requires that the performance of at least 75% of projects should be independently evaluated as ‘moderately satisfactory’ or better.*

IV. Compliance with evaluation recommendations

151. The Evaluation and Oversight Unit promotes operational improvements in UNEP projects and programmes through the identification of appropriate recommendations in evaluations and through a compliance procedure for their implementation. According to a recent study by UNEG⁸, in 1996 UNEP became one of the first UN agency evaluation functions to introduce a process to monitor and promote compliance with evaluation recommendations.

Figure 2: Purpose of an evaluation recommendation compliance process



152. This procedure provides support for, and follow-up on, recommendations of evaluations conducted within the organization and requires that the implementation status of formal evaluation recommendations be reported to EOU by programme and project managers. Despite some improvements in the level of compliance with evaluation recommendations by some divisions over the past years, a number of problems with the existing compliance process have become apparent:

- Project/programme managers do not always complete the required ‘implementation plan’ as requested
- Project/programme managers do not always update progress in the implementation of evaluation recommendations
- Recommendations can remain unimplemented (but tracked by EOU) for several years, often beyond their useful ‘lifetime’ for operational relevance.
- Compliance with evaluation recommendations has not been used as a performance measure by UNEP Senior management.
- Levels of compliance with evaluation recommendations have not been publicly disclosed across UNEP.

153. In 2007, EOU developed a revised compliance procedure designed to enhance the efficiency of the compliance process and to provide greater ‘incentives’ for compliance by project and programme staff through the public disclosure of compliance rates by UNEP Divisions and by tracking compliance for a defined period of time (18 months). The new procedure will be applied from March 2008. In parallel, EOU has improved the guidelines given to evaluators

⁸ UN Evaluation Group (2008). Management response and follow-up to evaluation recommendations: Overview and lessons learned. Evaluation Quality Enhancement Task Force.

and EOU professional staff on what attributes a high quality recommendation⁹ should possess. These attributes are stressed in evaluation Terms of Reference and are applied in EOU's evaluation quality control processes.

A. Summary of the updated recommendation compliance procedure.

154. Following the completion of an evaluation, an **implementation plan** must be prepared by the responsible officer of the project/programme as soon as the finalised evaluation report is sent by EOU. A **one month deadline** for submission of the proposed implementation plan is imposed from the date EOU sends the final evaluation report.
155. The implementation plan specifies whether a recommendation has been accepted, how the recommendation will be implemented, who is responsible for its implementation, the date by which the implementation of the recommendation is expected to be completed, and what actions have already been taken (if any). Where a recommendation is rejected by the project/programme management, an explanation must be provided as to why the recommendation cannot be implemented and, where appropriate, an alternative course of action will be specified.
156. If an implementation plan has not been received by EOU within the specified one month period, this is recorded as **non-compliance for all recommendations** specified in the evaluation report (see below). After the implementation plan has been completed, EOU will follow-up with the substantive office on the status of implementation of recommendations at six month intervals and report on the levels of compliance to the Deputy Executive Director. This is done in September and in March every year.
157. At each assessment point, the progress in implementing agreed recommendations, as recorded by the responsible staff in updates to the implementation plan, is assessed. On the basis of the evidence provided in the implementation plan progress updates received, recommendations are deemed to be:
 - Fully implemented (compliant),
 - Partially implemented (partially compliant),
 - Not implemented (not compliant).
 - No further action required (if events overtake what is planned)
 - When a recommendation has been fully implemented it will be recorded as such and 'closed', no further follow-up is required. All other recommendations will remain 'open'.
158. When a recommendation has **reached the third assessment point** (i.e. after 18 months) it will automatically be recorded as 'closed'. The status of implementation of the recommendation will also be recorded at this time¹⁰ and no further changes to this status will be made. If EOU does not receive an updated implementation plan prior to the compliance assessment process, any remaining recommendations are 'closed' with the level of compliance unchanged from the previous assessment point.

9 EOU requires evaluation recommendations to: (i) define the issue or problem to be addressed; (ii) be feasible to implement within the timeframe and resources available; (iii) be commensurate with the available capacities of project/programme team and partners; (iv) be specific in terms of who would do what, how and by when; and (v) contain results-based language (i.e. a measurable performance target)

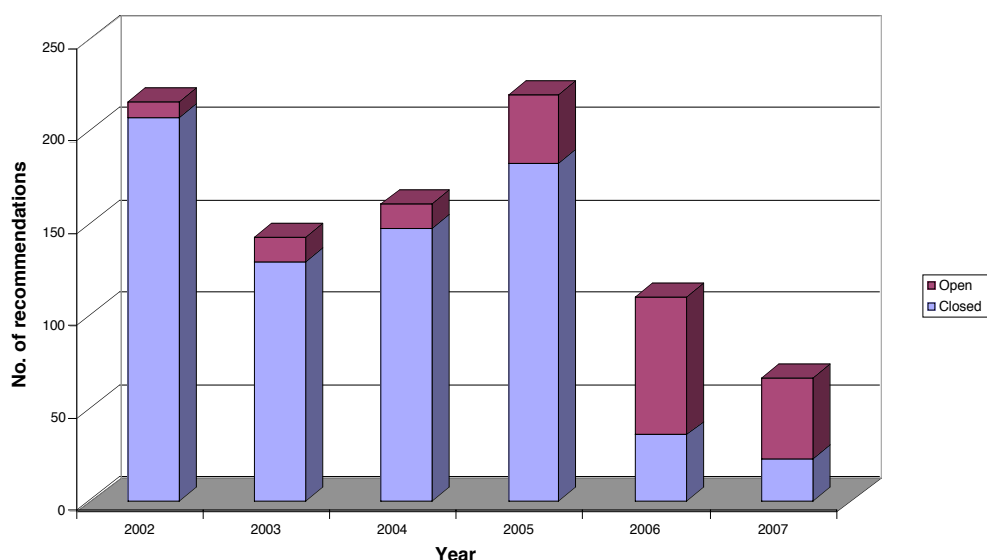
10 Therefore recommendations reaching the third assessment point can be recorded as: 'compliant-closed', 'partially compliant-closed', 'no further action required-closed', or 'not compliant-closed'

159. Any recommendations from mid-term evaluations that were not fully implemented after three assessment points will be considered in the terminal evaluation of the project/programme and incorporated into the terms of reference accordingly.

B. Overview of compliance with subprogramme and project evaluation recommendations 2002–2007

160. As a prelude to the introduction of the new recommendation compliance procedure, the level of compliance with evaluation recommendations was examined for the period 2002-2007.
161. The Evaluation and Oversight Unit conducted a combined total of 98 subprogramme and project evaluations between 2002 and 2007, which resulted in 918 recommendations being issued. As of December 2007, a total of 632 recommendations (68 per cent) had been fully implemented (compliant-closed) and 80 (9 per cent) were partially implemented (partially compliant). A total of 109 recommendations (12 per cent) were not implemented and as such were deemed 'not compliant'. Overall, 77 per cent of recommendations have been either fully or partially implemented. During the 2007 reporting period, a total 407 recommendations were considered. This total was comprised of 258 recommendations brought forward from prior years and 149 recommendations issued in 2007. The Evaluation and Oversight Unit deemed 191 (47%) of recommendations considered in 2007 to be fully implemented (compliant-closed).

Figure 3: Status of evaluation recommendations by year of issuance (2002-2007).



C. Recommendation compliance status 2002 – 2007, by UNEP Division

162. Twenty two (20%) projects evaluated between 2002 and 2007 **did not respond to EOU's request for an implementation plan** with respect to evaluation recommendations. Of that total, 13 of the requests were issued more than two years ago. Nineteen of the twenty two projects failing to prepare a management response were from DGEF representing 38% of the fifty projects for which recommendations were issued. The remaining three projects were from DTIE and represent 23% of the 13 projects for which recommendations were issued.

163. Evaluation recommendations that remain open and that were issued before September 2006 (18 months prior to the commencement of the new procedure) will be recorded as ‘not compliant-closed’ and no longer tracked for compliance. The relevant division managers of the specific projects will be informed. In 2007 eighteen (18) implementation plans were requested, and ten (66 percent) responded by providing a management responses in the required format. **Ten projects (44 percent) did not provide an implementation plan** and recommendations from these projects will be recorded as ‘closed-not compliant’.
164. One subprogramme (Division of Regional Cooperation) and two projects prepared an implementation plan following an evaluation but have not provided updates on the implementation status of evaluation recommendations for more than two years.
165. UNEP Divisions show quite variable levels of compliance with evaluation recommendations (Table 5). DELC shows the highest levels of compliance with evaluation recommendations¹¹; whereas DEPI, DTIE and DGEF need to make considerable improvements in their overall levels of compliance. Nevertheless, if compliance is examined in relation to the number of projects for which recommendations were issued, in terms of the average number of recommendations remaining open per project, then DCPI, DTIE and DEWA perform least well with 5.0, 3.9 and 3.9 respectively.

Table 5: Number of evaluation recommendations issued and numbers of those that have been closed and deemed fully compliant by UNEP Division 2002-2007

Division	Number of Evaluation recommendations issued 2002-2005 and (number of projects)	Number of recommendations remaining open Dec 2005 and (cumulative % Compliance)	Number of recommendations remaining open in Dec 2006 and (cumulative % Compliance 2002-2006)	Number of recommendations remaining open Dec 2007 and (cumulative % Compliance 2002-2007)	Average number of recommendations per project remaining open
DCPI	28 (2)	2 (93 %)	12 (74 %)	10 (72 %)	5.0
DRC	23 (5)	11 (52 %)	9 (61 %)	7 (70 %)	1.4
DEPI	28 (5)	14 (50 %)	23 (43 %)	17 (58 %)	3.4
DEWA	103 (8)	47 (54 %)	44 (57 %)	31 (70 %)	3.9
DTIE	56 (13)	11 (80 %)	51 (47 %)	51 (47 %)	3.9
DELC	214 (20)	166 (22 %)	45 (79 %)	18 (92 %)	0.9
DGEF	253 (50)	196 (23 %)	148 (50 %)	173 (50 %)	3.5

166. The following graphs show the evaluation recommendations issued each year between 2002 and 2007 for each division. The compliance over time with these recommendations is shown. As a cohort of evaluation recommendations is implemented, so the number of recommendations remaining ‘open’ reduces (ideally to zero).

11 A large number of recommendations relating to DEC evaluations were targeted at governments. These recommendations were forwarded to the relevant governments and, since the compliance responsibility of DEC ended with informing such governments, the recommendations were deemed to be ‘compliant-closed’ from the DEC perspective.

Figure 4. DCPI - Compliance with evaluation recommendations 2002–2007

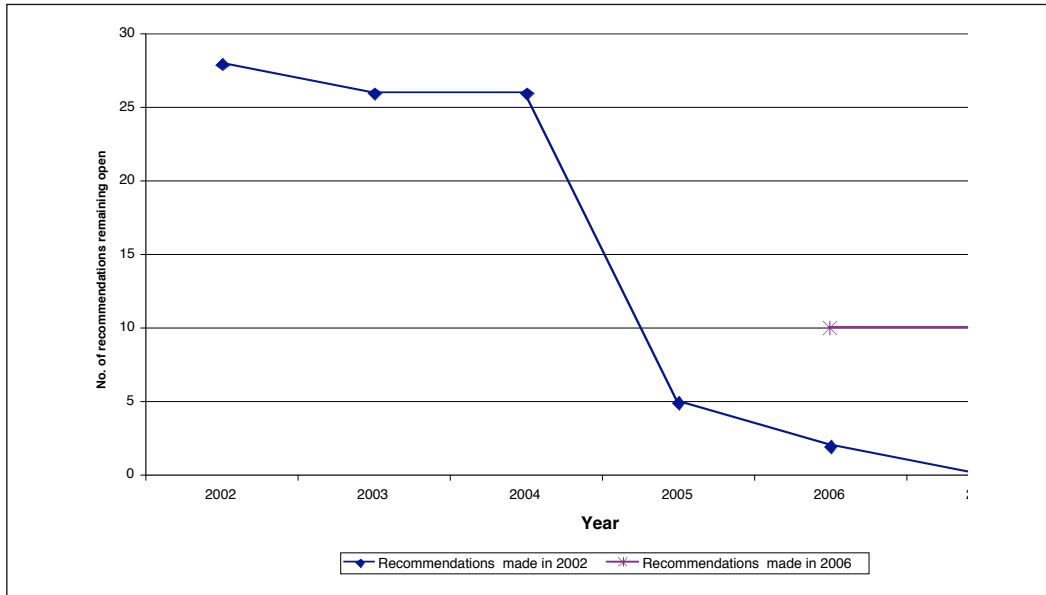


Figure 5. DRC – Compliance with evaluation recommendations 2002–2007

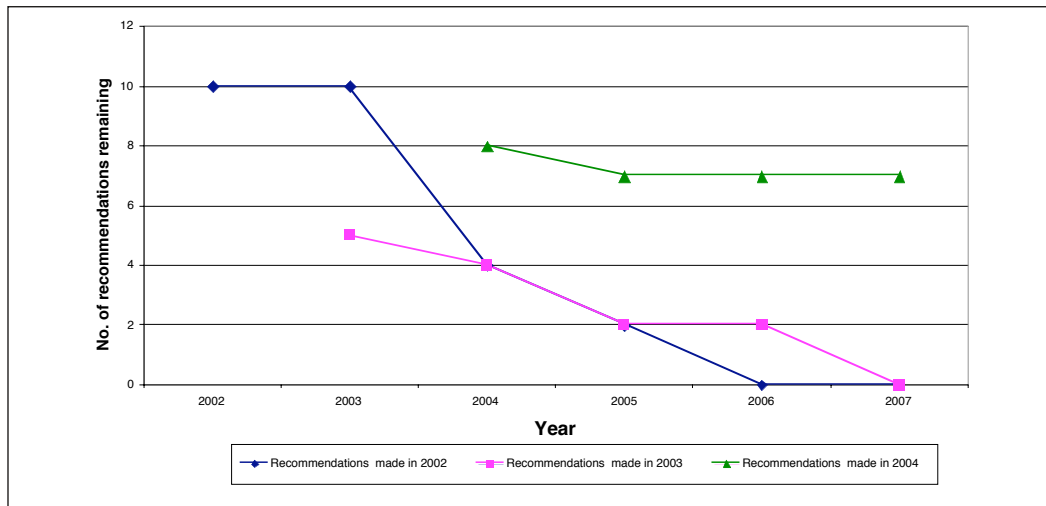


Figure 6. DEPI – Compliance with evaluation recommendations 2002–2007

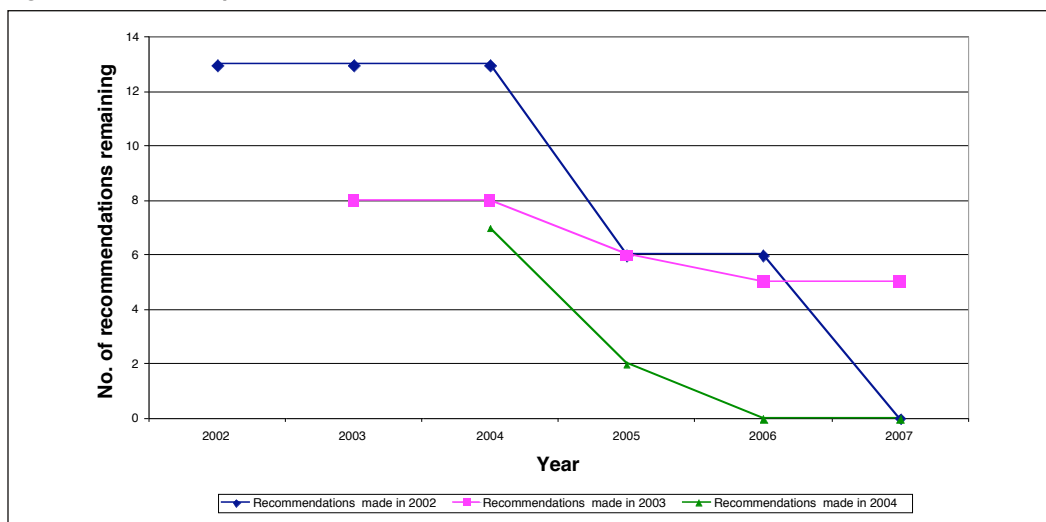


Figure 7. DEWA - Compliance with evaluation recommendations 2002–2007

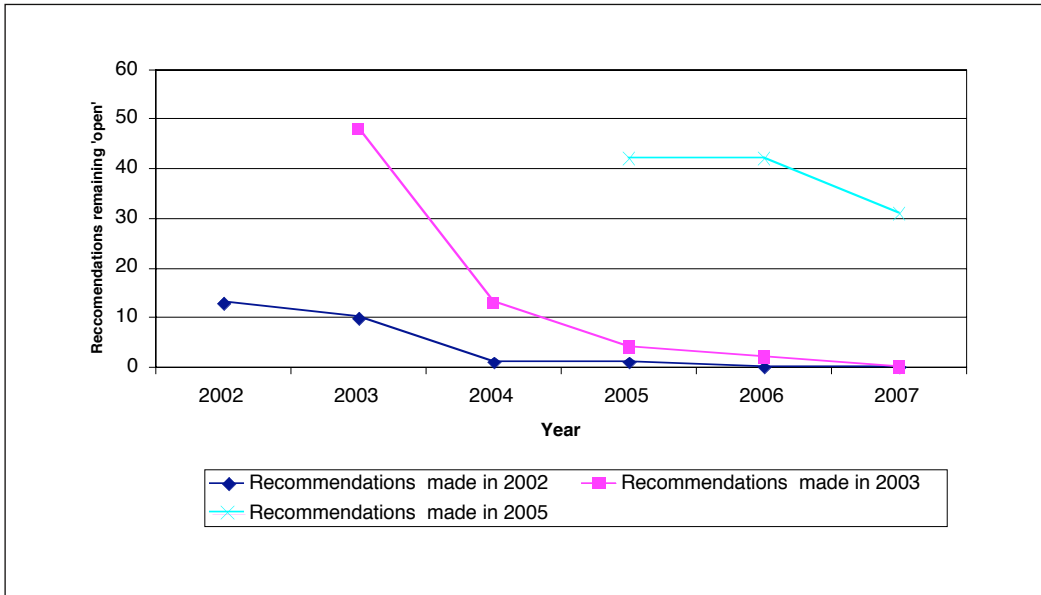


Figure 8. DGEF – Compliance with evaluation recommendations 2002–2007

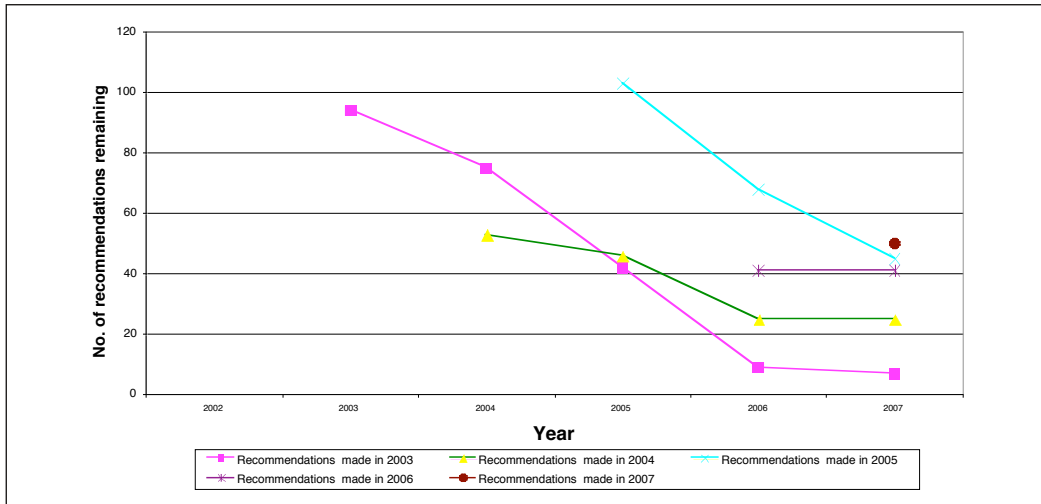


Figure 9. DTIE – Compliance with evaluation recommendations 2002–2007

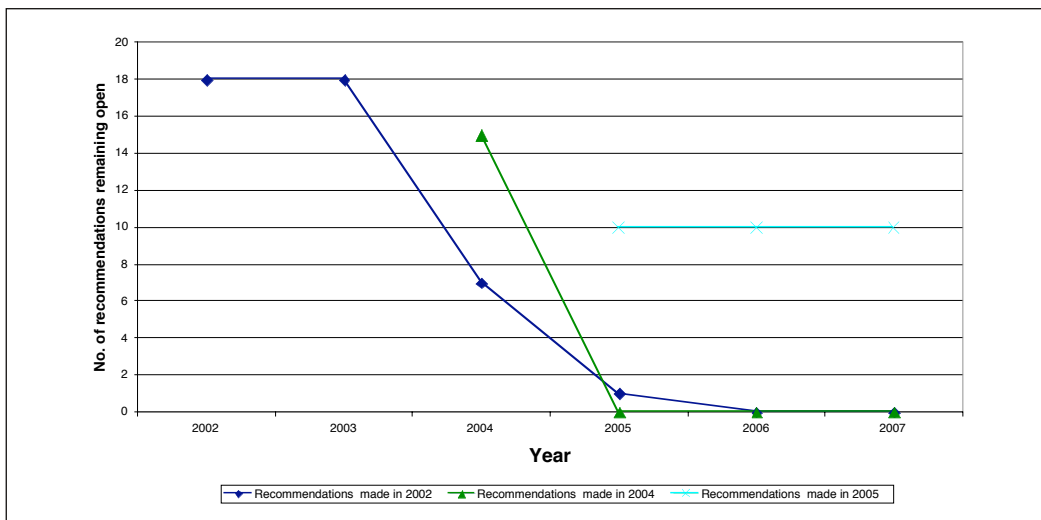
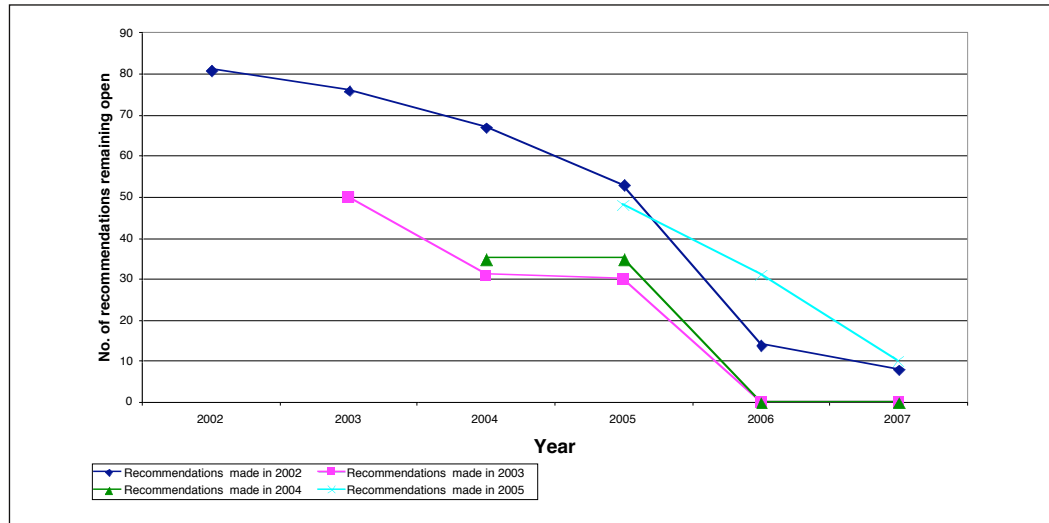


Figure 10. DELC – Compliance with evaluation recommendations 2002–2007



D. Implementation Status of recommendations issued in 2007

167. Of the recommendations issued in 2007, sixty seven recommendations were derived from nine project evaluations out of the total of 17 evaluations conducted in 2007. Of that number, the Evaluation and Oversight Unit deemed 20 recommendations (30%) to have been fully addressed (compliant), 21 recommendations (31%) to have been partially implemented (partially compliant) and 23 (34%) are yet to commence implementation (not compliant). Recommendations from the remaining eight project evaluations conducted in 2007 are yet to reach their first assessment point, which will occur in March 2008.
168. In summary, EOU has revised the evaluation recommendation compliance process for implementation in 2008. EOU will disclose the levels compliance with evaluation recommendations within UNEP. Such compliance needs to be improved in several UNEP Divisions. *EOU strongly suggests that the level of compliance with evaluation recommendations be adopted by UNEP Senior management as a performance measure at Divisional level.*

V. Priority setting for Evaluation: Developing a strategic evaluation portfolio

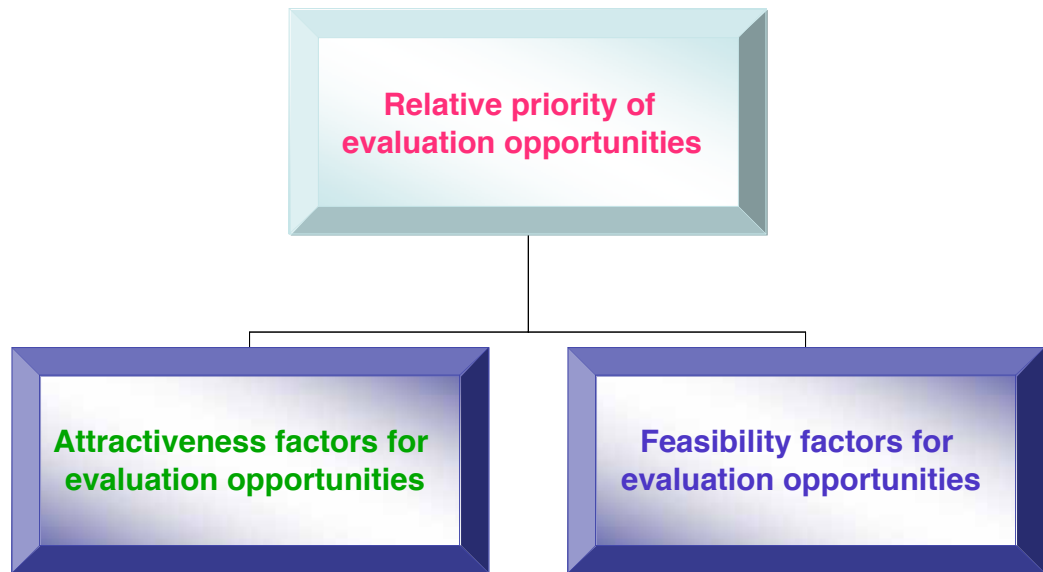
A. Introduction

169. Resources are scarce and best use should be made of them to deliver against the core evaluation purposes of (i) providing evidence of results to meet accountability requirements and (ii) promoting operational improvement and learning. To this end, the Evaluation and Oversight Unit has developed a method for analysing and prioritising potential evaluations to improve the selection of a portfolio of activities that will lead to the greatest pay-off to the organization. The method establishes the relative priority of ***‘evaluation opportunities’*** against criteria that directly relate to the primary purposes of the evaluation function.
170. A range of benefits are expected to accrue from the application of this thorough, quantitative priority setting process. These include:
- Enhancing the relevance of evaluations to the wider UNEP agenda
 - Providing structured justification for allocating funds to evaluation activities
 - Promoting more transparent, predictable decision-making
 - Enabling realignment of evaluation priorities with changing needs and circumstances
 - Improved credibility with stakeholders
 - Providing a clear direction and sense of purpose to evaluation staff
 - Documenting a clear framework for the development of the Agency’s evaluation portfolio.
171. This priority setting method was developed by EOU staff in late 2007 and was presented at the AGM of the UN Evaluation Group in April 2008. Feedback received from UN and Multilateral Development Bank evaluation professionals suggested that it is of general utility to the wider international evaluation community.
172. The method has been applied in EOU’s annual work planning for 2008 to help ensure that the extremely scarce evaluation resources, that EOU has the freedom to allocate, are used to their best advantage and the relative importance of the mandatory evaluations that from the overwhelming majority of EOU’s evaluation work plan, are better understood.

B. Priority setting methods

173. Priority setting methods that use a framework similar to the one set out below have been successfully applied at a variety of levels — national (e.g. in New Zealand), institutional, programme and project (e.g. CSIRO Australia and some CGIAR centres). The method requires the definition of a set of criteria and indicators to determine the relative attractiveness and feasibility for a set of mutually exclusive potential evaluations which we term ‘evaluation opportunities’.

Figure 11. The Attractiveness and feasibility framework for priority setting



174. The ‘Attractiveness’ criteria address important characteristics of evaluation opportunities that relate directly to the evaluation purposes of providing accountability and promoting operational improvements. The main factors that affect the ‘**Attractiveness**’ of an evaluation opportunity were defined as:

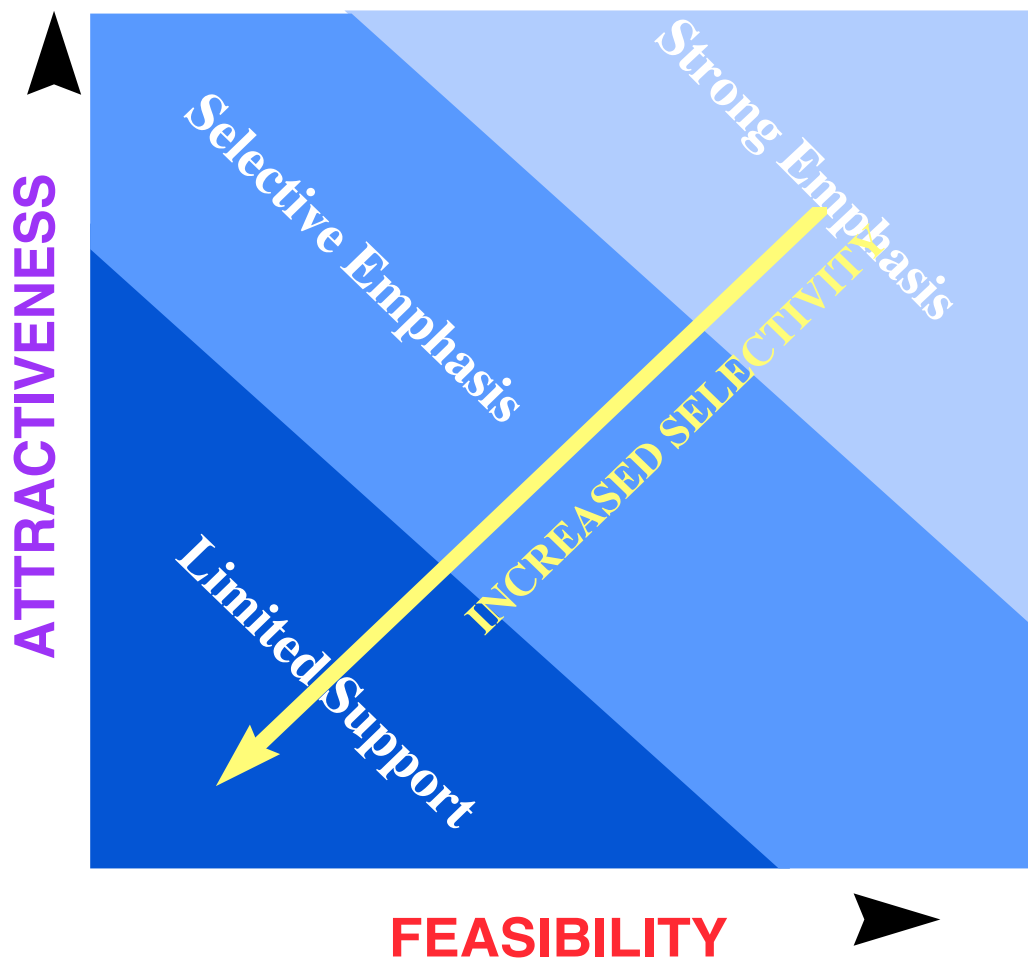
- The consistency of the evaluative topic with organization’s strategic direction
- The primary results focus of the evaluation (distance along impact pathway - from activities to impacts)
- The magnitude and distribution environmental benefits from the intervention likely to be assessed at the time of the evaluation
- The potential importance of the evaluation opportunity for resource mobilization
- The number of uptake events required, the directness of the impact pathway and length of lag times for maximum impact to be achieved from an intervention
- The ease of attribution to the project/programme of the effects evaluated and the existence of adequate baselines/counterfactuals and/or performance monitoring information
- The timing of the evaluation opportunity relative to project or programme operations
- The likelihood that operationally relevant findings or lessons will be applicable to other UNEP projects /programmes
- The potential of a project/programme to implement adaptive management, or mitigate known risks to project performance

175. The ‘Feasibility’ criteria address issues relevant to the implementation of the evaluation itself, and were defined as:

- The level of technical/evaluative capacity required and the associated availability of consultants
- The level of oversight capacity required for management and quality control of the evaluation opportunity
- The level effort required in the design of the evaluation approach
- The simplicity of the evaluation methods needed

176. The overall focus in determining the relative priorities for evaluation is the **‘return to UNEP from investment in evaluation’**. The overall return is higher, when both ‘attractiveness’ and ‘feasibility’ are high. As ‘attractiveness’ and ‘feasibility’ both decline, so too does the ‘return to UNEP’, and so the selectivity in choosing among evaluation opportunities increases.

Figure 12. Selectivity of evaluation investments using attractiveness and feasibility factors



C. Evaluation opportunities

177. The 2008 EOU work plan lists approximately 60 planned evaluations. Rather than assess the relative priorities for all evaluations, a sampling approach was used. The aim was to apply the priority setting framework to a sample of planned evaluations that is broadly representative of the entire work plan. All six planned management studies/thematic evaluations were included in the sample. The remaining project/portfolio evaluations were then categorized by thematic area according to the strategic framework of UNEP, using SIT’s ‘dominant purpose test’. Project/portfolio evaluations were then sampled from within each thematic area to give, as far as possible, a balance between mid term and terminal evaluations and single country, multi-country/regional project approaches. The selections also aimed to achieve a balance across geographic areas.

Table 6. Planned project/portfolio evaluations for 2008, and numbers sampled for priority setting classified by UNEP thematic areas

UNEP Thematic area	N° of evaluations 2008 work plan	N° evaluations sampled
Climate Change	9	3
Disaster and Conflict	1	1
Ecosystem Management	20	5
Environmental Governance	6	1
Harmful Substances	6	2
Sustainable Consumption and Production	12	3
Total	54	15

The '*evaluation opportunities*' considered in the priority setting exercise were:

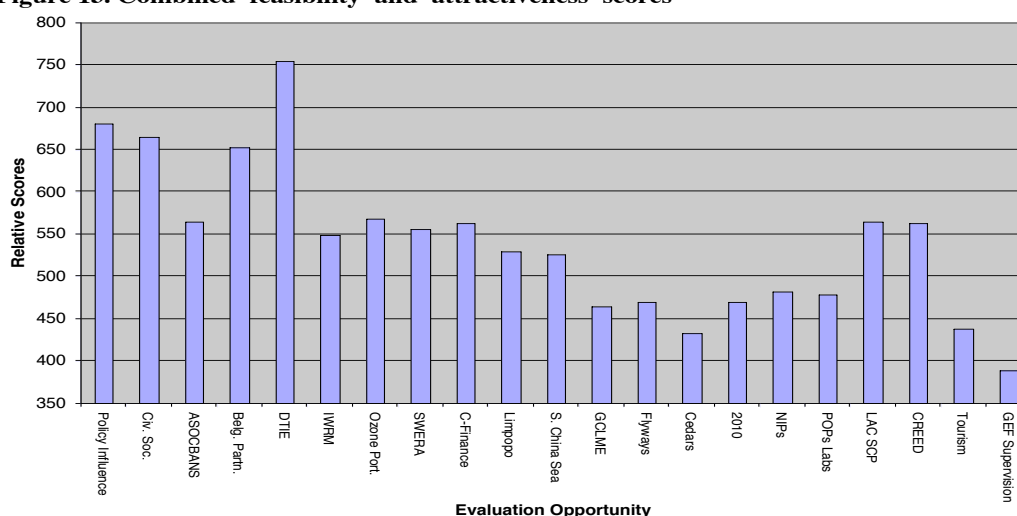
1. UNEP influence study on the Global Environment Policy Agenda (Chemicals)
2. A Study of the Civil Society Programme of UNEP
3. New Arrangements for the ASCOBANS Secretariat
4. Final Evaluation of the Belgium-UNEP partnership
5. Evaluation of UNEP SubProgramme 4 - The Division of Technology, Industry and Economics
6. Quality of Project Supervision in DGEF
7. UNEP TE Achieving the Johannesburg Plan of Target of "TWRM and Efficiency Plans by 2005
8. GEF MSP TE Ozone Portfolio
9. GEF FSP TE Solar and Wind Energy Resource Assessment (SWERA)
10. UNEP TE Using Carbon Finance to Promote Sustainable Energy Services in Africa (CF-SEA)
11. GEF MSP TE Sustainable land use planning for disaster preparedness in the lower Limpopo Basin
12. GEF FSP TE Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand
13. GEF FSP MTE Guinea Current LME- Combating Living Resource Depletion and Coastal Area Degradation
14. GEF MTE African/Eurasian Flyways - Enhancing Conservation of the Critical Network of Sites of Wetlands Required by Migratory Waterbirds
15. GEF MSP TE Cedar Forests in the Mediterranean Region- Development of an Action Plan for Integrated Management of Forests and Assessment of Insect Infestation
16. GEF MSP MTE Building the Partnership to deliver the Global 2010 Indicators
17. GEF FSP TE Development of National Implementation Plans for the Management of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)
18. GEF MSP TE Assessment of Existing Capacity and Capacity Building Needs to Analyse POPs in Developing Countries
19. UNEP Implementation of a Regional Programme of Sustainable Production and Consumption in Latin America and the Caribbean
20. UNEP China Rural Energy Enterprise Development (C-REED)
21. GEF MTE Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity through Sound Tourism Development in Biosphere Reserves in Central and Eastern Europe

178. Each 'evaluation opportunity' was then independently scored by EOU evaluation professionals for each of the various 'attractiveness' and 'feasibility' factors using a scoring matrix¹² listing the criteria and providing indicators that correspond to the different scores. A mini Delphi approach was used and the reasons for differences in scores between professionals and of each criterion for each 'evaluation opportunity' were discussed. The evaluation opportunities were then re-scored and the averages for each evaluation opportunity provide the basis for the analyses that highlight the relative priorities for 'evaluation opportunities'.

D. Analysis and discussion of the evaluation portfolio for 2008

179. The combined scores for each 'evaluation opportunity' across all factors, provides a measure for assessing the relative priorities associated with EOU's 2008 work plan in terms of the likely benefit accruing to UNEP from their successful completion.

Figure 13. Combined 'feasibility' and 'attractiveness' scores



180. Figure 13 shows that the highest ranking overall evaluation priorities in the 2008 work plan are the thematic and management studies. These aggregated scores yield overall priorities but do not allow an interpretation of those priorities with respect to the different purposes evaluations can serve. To gain an understanding of these issues, different attributes of the 'evaluation opportunities' are examined in more detail.

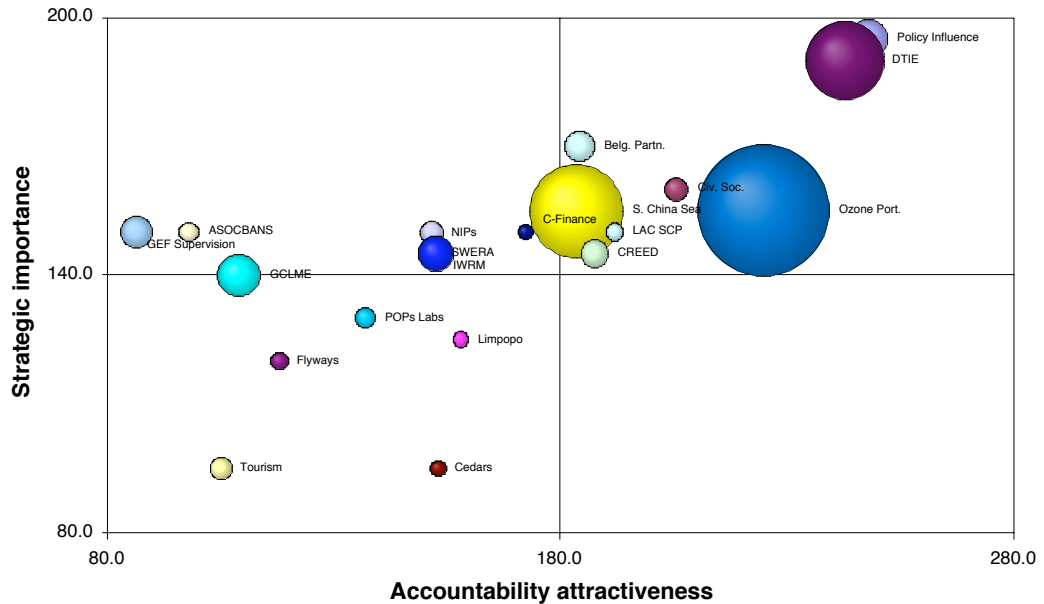
E. Strategic importance

181. Some project or programmatic activities in the UNEP work programme have greater relevance to the future strategy of the organization as compared to others. Evaluations of projects/programmes of high strategic importance will be of greater potential utility to the organization to improve future operational performance as compared to projects or programmes that are unlikely to feature in the future work of the organization. Providing evidence in terms of results (outcomes influences and impacts) achieved in the areas of future

12 See M.J. Spilsbury, S. Norgbey, C. Battaglini and J. Kitakule-Mukungu. (2008). Priority setting for Evaluation: Developing a strategic evaluation portfolio. Special Paper Number 3. United Nations Environment Programme Nairobi, Kenya. http://www.unep.org/eou/Special_Studies/Specialstudies.asp.

strategic importance to UNEP enhances accountability by providing credible evidence to support the organization’s ‘track record’. Figure 14 shows the relative priorities for evaluation opportunities with respect to their ‘strategic importance’ — how well evaluation opportunities are aligned with the strategic focus of UNEP and their ‘accountability attractiveness’.

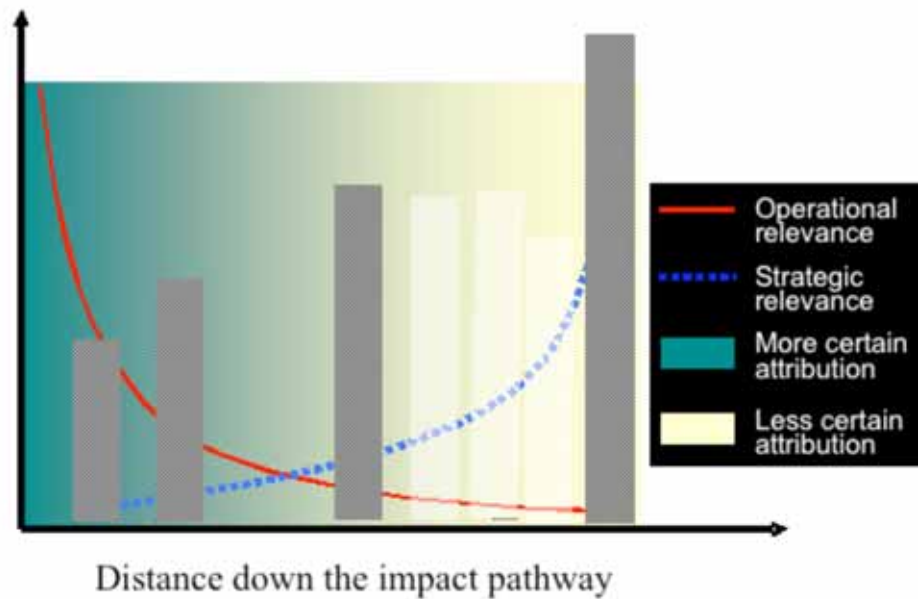
Figure 14. Strategic importance versus accountability attractiveness of ‘evaluation opportunities’



Note: The diameter of the plotted points is proportional to the estimated cost for each evaluation opportunity.

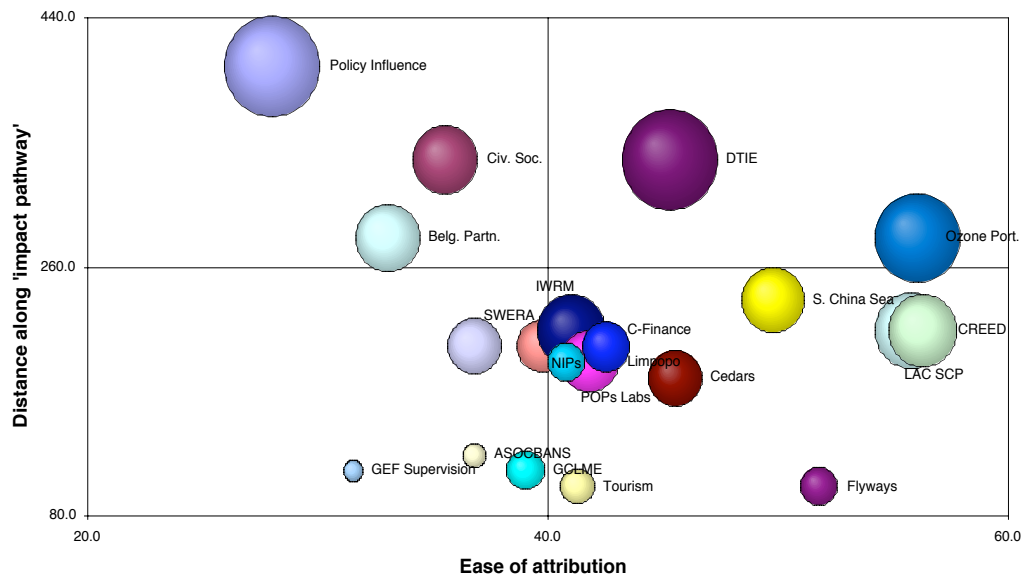
182. The graph highlights, in the top right hand quadrant, the evaluations that are most likely to deliver findings that assess outcomes, influences and impacts of UNEP work in areas of strategic significance. These represent the priorities with respect to the accountability purpose of the evaluation function of UNEP. The top priorities are the proposed evaluation of the ‘policy influence’ of DTIE’s Chemicals subprogramme element and the overall subprogramme evaluation of DTIE. In general, few project-level terminal evaluations are ranked as high priority. Exceptions include the GEF Ozone Portfolio terminal evaluations and the terminal evaluation for the GEF South China Seas Project.
183. Results Focus of the Evaluation (Distance down the ‘results chain’ or ‘impact pathway’). There is a trade-off between the level at which an evaluation is focused in terms of results (outputs, outcomes, influences or impacts), and its utility for ‘accountability’ or ‘operational efficiency/ learning’ purposes. For example, an evaluation that aims to assess long-term impacts will usually only take place long after a project or programme has ended and whilst such an evaluation may have a high utility for accountability purposes, it will be of little relevance for the purposes of improving the ‘operational efficiency’ of that particular project or programme (because it has ended). However such evaluations may generate some lessons for future programme/projects of a related nature.

Figure 15. The tradeoff between accountability and operational improvement / learning - against time and distance along the 'impact pathway'



184. Conversely, an evaluation that takes place during project/programme implementation will be likely to have high utility for the purposes of 'operational improvement' (adaptive management) of that project/programme but is likely to be too soon in the life of the intervention to assess the intended impacts. There is, therefore, a trade-off between the time/speed of delivery of evaluation findings and their operational relevance to the entity being evaluated. For example, a mid term evaluation of a project or programme will typically yield larger benefits in terms of suggestions to improve project implementation (course-correction/adaptive management) than would an evaluation of the same project at its completion.
185. The 'results focus' of an evaluation also includes the nested trade-offs of 'attributive ease' versus 'lack of impact knowledge' (see Figure 15 above). Assessing outcomes shortly after completion of an initiative might be easier in terms of establishing attribution of any effects to the intervention, but real impacts will often be yet to accrue. Conversely, an impact assessment some time after project/programme completion might be better able to measure changes in impact-related metrics but attribution to the original intervention may be more challenging due to the passage of time and the lack of adequate baselines/counterfactuals to mitigate the difficulty of separating out the effects of other events and actors.
186. It is also instructive to examine the 'attractiveness for accountability' (Figure 16) by plotting the scores for evaluation opportunities in terms of their distance down the impact pathway, against the corresponding ease of attribution, for the causal effects evaluated. The score for the magnitude and scale of effect likely to be assessed at the time of the evaluation is represented by the diameter of the points plotted. This graph offers the prospect of identifying any 'low hanging fruits' i.e. evaluations that are likely to demonstrate environmental results that are more readily attributed to UNEP interventions. The 2008 work plan shows no such evaluations.

Figure 16. Attractiveness of 'evaluation opportunities' for accountability purposes.



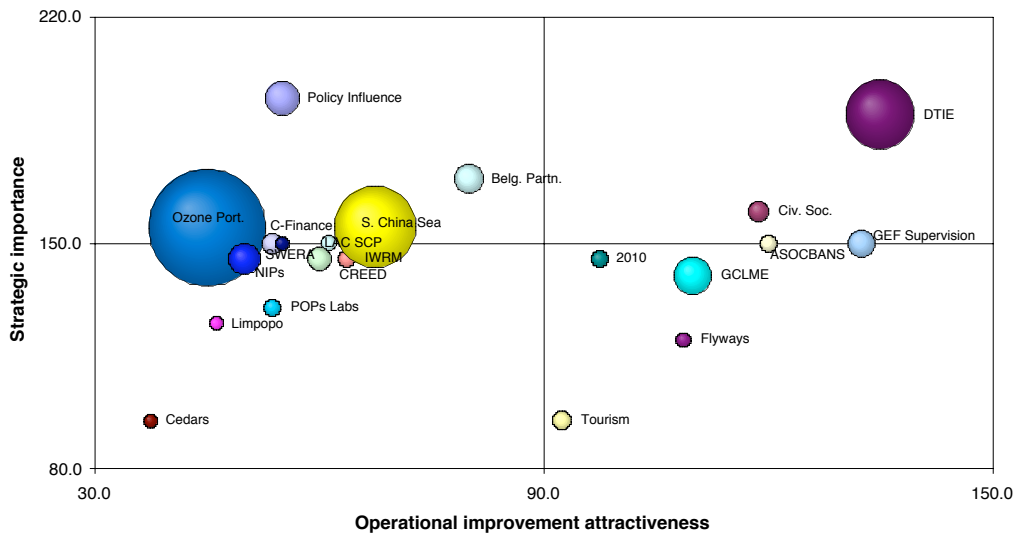
Note: The diameter of the plotted points is proportional to the scores for the magnitude and distribution of benefits likely to be assessed at the time of the evaluation

187. The policy influence evaluation, the DTIE subprogramme evaluation, and the GEF Ozone portfolio evaluation all scored similarly for the magnitude of benefits likely to be assessed. However, whilst the 'policy influence' evaluation of DTIE's Chemicals subprogramme element is regarded as the most attractive in terms of its 'results focus' it also presents the greatest challenges in terms of attribution. In contrast, the Ozone portfolio evaluation has the most favourable attribution score because of the linkage between reduction and elimination of Ozone Depleting Substances (a performance measure of projects in this GEF portfolio) and environmental benefits of avoided damage to the Ozone layer. The GEF Ozone portfolio evaluation is the highest priority evaluation when assessed against these criteria.

F. Operational improvement

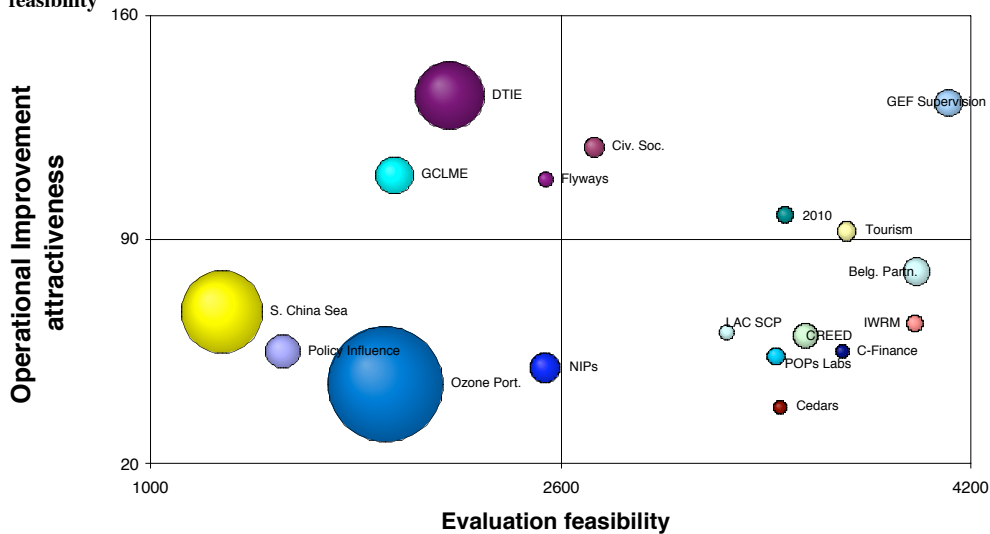
188. If we examine evaluation priorities in terms of the likely contributions to operational improvement in UNEP, a different pattern emerges. Mid-term evaluations or evaluations of ongoing projects and programmes tend to score higher because evaluation findings are likely to feed back directly into management and implementation. The DTIE Subprogramme evaluation emerges as the highest priority evaluation against the criteria of 'attractiveness for operational improvement' combined with 'strategic importance'.

Figure 17. Strategic Importance & ‘attractiveness for operational improvement’



189. However, if EOU were to place the emphasis on securing ‘quick wins’ in terms of learning and operational improvement, then we would look at the priorities in terms of ‘Operational improvement return’ and plot the combined scores for ‘attractiveness for operational improvement’ against the scores for the factors that relate to ‘evaluation feasibility’(Figure 18). The plot shows that evaluation of ongoing projects/programmes is more ‘attractive’ than those that have ended or are nearing completion. The evaluation of GEF project supervision being the most ‘feasible’ and the most likely to yield significant ‘operational improvement’ benefits. **This suggests that this planned evaluation could be of greater benefit to UNEP if its scope were extended to also examine the quality of supervision of non-GEF UNEP projects.** Figure 18 also shows that those projects that are executed by UNEP score more highly than those projects that are executed by a third party (as is the case for several of the GEF evaluations), because in this latter case, operational improvements within such a project are not likely to be directly captured by UNEP - but by the executing agency. However, the ‘attractiveness for operational improvement’ may still be significant if the project is similar in nature and focus to others that feature in the Agency’s work programme.

Figure 18. ‘Attractiveness for operational improvement’ versus ‘evaluation feasibility’

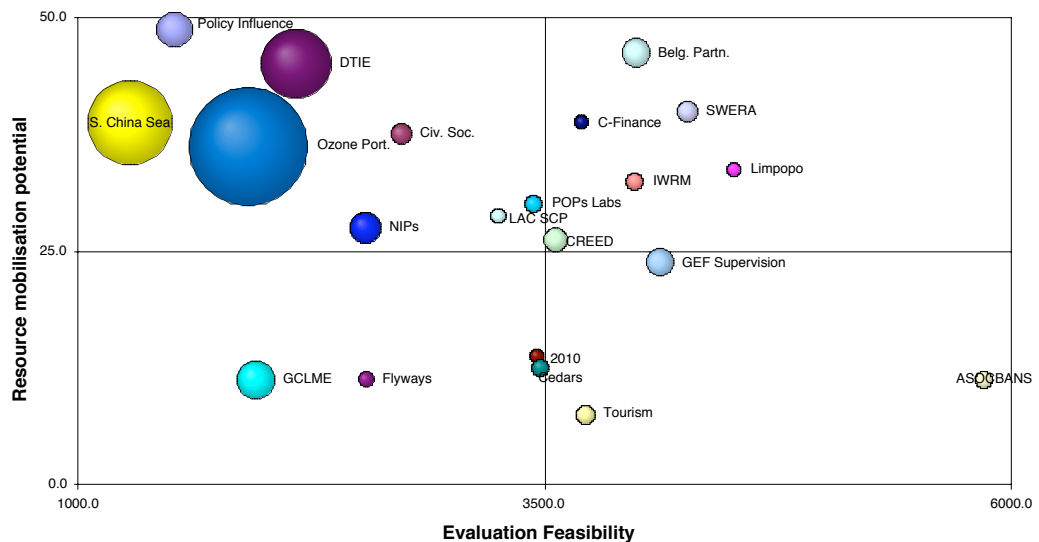


Note: The diameter of the plotted points is proportional to the estimated cost for each evaluation opportunity.

G. Resource Mobilisation

190. Evaluation findings can play an important role in helping to secure financial resources for UNEP. If we examine the 2008 EOU work plan in terms of the potential of the ‘evaluation opportunities’ to contribute to resource mobilization with respect to the ease with which the evaluation can be conducted – the combined ‘feasibility’ factors, several patterns can be observed. Project evaluations that focus on course correction and operational improvement often have a more limited potential for use in resource mobilization efforts – as the resources still remain in the project and the major achievements have often yet to be realised (Figure 19). By contrast, evaluations that are likely to provide evidence of effective UNEP performance in achieving important outcomes and influences, that have (or are likely) to generate tangible environmental benefits, can contribute greatly to resource mobilization efforts. This is especially so when the focus of the evaluation coincides with the funding priorities of important donors. In the case of GEF projects, completion of a high quality terminal evaluation that suggests that continued investment in the project (or its follow-up phases) is merited, is essential for securing continued GEF financial support.

Figure 19. Attractiveness for resource mobilization versus the feasibility of evaluation opportunities



Note: The diameter of the plotted points is proportional to the estimated cost for each evaluation opportunity.

H. Conclusion

191. Whilst applying a rigorous priority setting approach helps considerably with the development of an evaluation portfolio that can maximize the returns to the organization, with respect to the primary purposes of the function, **tactical investments in some evaluation activities** will still be necessary. Such investments may waive the normal requirements for ‘evaluation opportunities’ to be of high strategic importance, or to make significant contributions to the organization’s accountability or operational efficiency. For example, they may be evaluations undertaken to meet specific external requirements or to fulfil a specific request from management or to enhance the professional credibility of the Agency’s evaluation function. Evaluation managers should use the priority setting method as a tool to analyse the ‘portfolio’ of evaluation investments, not to unilaterally ‘filter out’ evaluation opportunities with lower potential.
192. For the key evaluative purpose of demonstrating accountability, and in the context of ‘results-based management’, there are obvious advantages to preferentially selecting UNEP ‘success

stories' when investing scarce resources in an evaluation portfolio. Focusing accountability-oriented evaluations entirely on cases where causal linkages to outcomes and impacts are readily established (high attributive ease) has pragmatic appeal but would tend to limit evaluations at UNEP either to studies that focus 'early' in the impact pathway (on outputs and immediate outcomes) or restrict accountability-oriented evaluations to a minority of cases where attribution issues are straightforward. Since much of the Agency's work seeks impacts via indirect impact pathways often linked to policy change processes, this would yield an unbalanced evaluation portfolio and enshrine a tendency to 'shy away' from the greatest challenges in results-based evaluation and impact assessment. It would also result in much of the Agency's investment in evaluations lacking sufficient focus on initiatives aimed at generating environmental benefits. Whilst the evaluation function will strive to link UNEP activities to quantification of environmental benefits – this is only likely to be possible (due to the considerable attribution difficulties) for a small proportion of activities in the work programme of UNEP.

193. It should, however, be noted that an earlier study on evaluation demand in UNEP showed that the demand for accountability-oriented evaluations is high and not currently well-matched either with the capacity or the level of resources required by the evaluation function of UNEP to deliver them¹³. 'In-house' evaluation functions often face criticisms that their evaluations are heavily biased by self-serving motives and this acts to increase the level scepticism with which evaluation findings are regarded by external audiences unless the evaluation function has a high level of independence in the organization, a track record of disclosing negative as well as positive evaluation findings is established, and the organization subjects its evaluations to rigorous peer review processes.
194. In contrast, operational improvements and institutional learning (feedback) that result from evaluation findings are (by definition) also 'self serving' but this is frequently perceived favourably by donors and other external stakeholders and can help foster perceptions, and the reality, of UNEP being a 'learning organization'. Operational improvement and learning are important reasons for investing in evaluation and should therefore be a consideration in the selection of a balanced portfolio of evaluation studies.
195. In practice, whilst it is very informative to understand the relative priorities of different evaluations on the EOU work programme, the overwhelming majority of evaluations the unit currently undertakes are mandatory and their costs are not fungible – the evaluation budgets reside in the project/programme budgets and not with EOU. Therefore, there **is currently little scope to link this priority setting approach to resource allocation decisions** under current arrangements for the evaluation function in UNEP. The bulk of evaluation resources are linked to project-level evaluations and therefore the returns to UNEP from investment in evaluation are falling well short of their potential maximum.
196. Assuming that EOU will, at some future juncture, be at liberty to decide among competing evaluation alternatives, this priority setting method will allow EOU to develop a strategic approach to the development and maintenance of a rolling portfolio of evaluations. The findings indicate that the greatest pay-offs to UNEP will come from evaluations that focus on the assessment of outcomes, influences and impact of ongoing programmatic activities that are closely aligned with the strategic priorities of UNEP.

13 M. J. Spilsbury, S. Norgbey, G. Rauniyar and C. Perch. (2006). Internal and external needs for evaluative studies in a multilateral agency: matching supply with demand in UNEP. Evaluation and Oversight Unit Special Paper Number 1. United Nations Environment Programme Nairobi, Kenya.
http://www.unep.org/eou/Special_Studies/Specialstudies.asp

VI. Observing Patterns in Lessons Learned from Evaluation

A. Introduction

197. Be it at the project, programme, institutional or policy level, one true measure of EOU's long-term performance will be determined by assessing how knowledge derived from evaluations can bring about positive change. To this end, the evaluation function can help inform new thinking with knowledge from past experiences and present the 'bigger picture' gained through systematic collection of evaluative information across the organization. It can promote operational improvements through compliance with evaluation recommendations and foster effective utilisation of 'lessons learned'. The real value-added of evaluation "lessons" is captured when they are considered and then integrated into programme/project operations, planning and design.
198. UNEP Evaluation and Oversight Unit (EOU) maintains a database of lessons derived from evaluations conducted since 1999. The articulation of lessons is standard requirement for all UNEP evaluations, however, 'lessons' presented in evaluation reports are often of highly variable quality and sometimes of limited utility. In addition, even when high quality lessons are developed, they are seldom communicated effectively to their intended audience. 'Lessons learned' should more accurately be regarded as 'lessons to be learned'.
199. In common with many organizations, lessons derived from evaluations have had limited success as a feedback mechanism for programme/project design and implementation within UNEP. Two broad problems underlie this observation:
 - a) Lessons are poorly formulated (low quality); and
 - b) Processes to promote dissemination and uptake of lessons are weak.
200. Many so-called lessons lack the essential attributes. A high quality lesson should; (i) succinctly specify the context from which it is derived, (ii) establish its relevance beyond that context (where it will be applied and by whom) and (iii) suggest some prescription or action. Although lessons are derived from a specific situation, they are intended to have wider relevance. However, lessons are frequently regarded as one-off findings that lack supporting information from other sources and, as such, often have lower credibility among potential users. On the other hand, lessons that are supported by 'triangulated' evidence command greater credibility and foster greater confidence in the significance and potential utility of the lesson among their potential users.
201. Clearly, producing high-quality lessons is necessary but not sufficient to maximize their potential utility. Relying on passive dissemination approaches, e.g. by simple dissemination of evaluation reports, is a common but not very effective method of promoting their uptake. As a result, many lessons are destined to be archived in underutilised databases or to languish,

unheeded, in evaluation reports. Greater emphasis on enhancing the credibility and, building the ‘ownership’, of lessons is required. A variety of complementary communication and ‘outreach’ processes are needed to enhance the uptake of lessons by their intended users.

202. These problems and issues provided the motivation for EOU’s work on ‘lessons learned’. In order to enhance the quality of lessons, improve their utilisation, and to aid the dissemination and communication to both internal and external audiences, EOU has developed a ***Framework of Lessons from Evaluation***.
203. Firstly EOU’s professionals reviewed the contents of the UNEP EOU lessons database applying a working definition of ‘what constitutes a lesson’ and eliminating low quality ‘lessons’. Secondly, a framework of common problems, issues and or constraints to which evaluation lessons relate was developed using ‘Mind-mapping’ software and ‘problem tree’ techniques. Then the remaining high quality evaluation lessons were systematically classified within in the Lessons Framework¹⁴.
204. Approximately two hundred and sixty lessons from evaluation studies produced between 1999 and 2007 were reviewed. Nearly 50% of all lessons analysed failed to satisfy the criteria. Many so-called lessons were re-classified as evaluative findings or conclusions, because their authors (usually independent evaluation consultants) had frequently failed to articulate clear prescriptions or ‘application domains’. Lessons that failed these criteria were deleted from the EOU lessons database and those that remained were referenced with a unique lesson identification number.
205. The large number of deletions from the lessons database prompted EOU to more clearly specify the requirements for drafting lessons in our standard evaluation guidelines in early 2007, and to use these same criteria in the quality control and feedback rubric applied to all EOU evaluation reports.

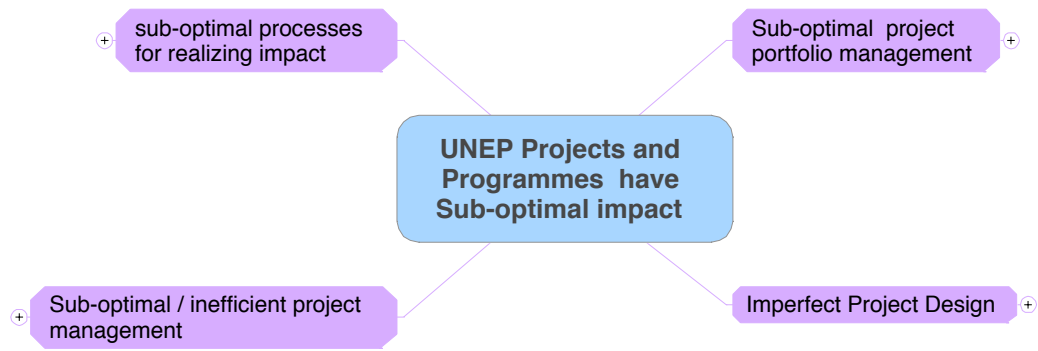
B. The Framework of Lessons from Evaluation

206. EOU applied a ‘problem tree’ approach to develop the lessons framework. At the outset, the process of developing a problem tree starts with a statement about the main problem to be investigated. In this case, and since the bulk of the Agency’s lessons are derived from evaluations of UNEP projects or subprogrammes, the central problem was defined as:

“UNEP projects and programmes have sub-optimal impact”.
207. This central problem addresses the ultimate purpose of lessons learned and, of course, could be readily applied in the context of operational improvement in UNEP. Problem tree analysis proceeds by further identifying the causes of the central problem and establishes a hierarchy of such causes, from those most immediate to the central problem, down to the fundamental causes.

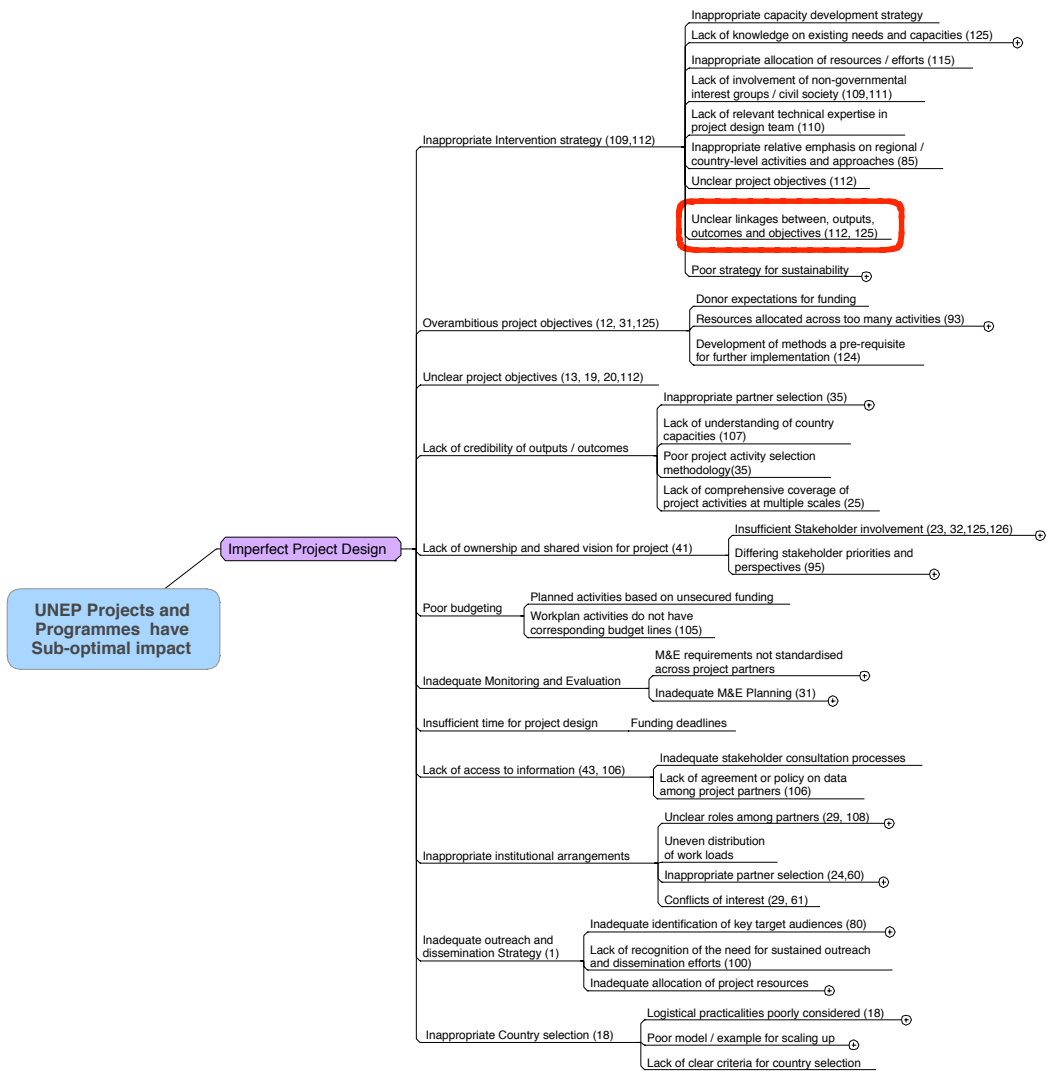
¹⁴ Full details of the approach and methods used are available in: “Lessons Learned from Evaluation: A platform for sharing knowledge.” Special Paper Number 2. United Nations Environment Programme Nairobi, Kenya. http://www.unep.org/eou/Special_Studies/Specialstudies.asp

Figure 20. Framework of Lessons Learned of UNEP showing the central problem and the first level, or 'cornerstones', of causal problems.



Each 'cornerstone' cluster is further subdivided into causal problems (see Figure 21).

Figure 21: The 'Imperfect Project Design' 'cornerstone' and two causal levels below, with their lesson identification numbers. More distal levels of the framework are not shown.



208. In the example shown in Figure 21¹⁵, the problem ‘*Inappropriate intervention strategy*’ currently has nine causes associated with it. One of these causes is listed as ‘*Unclear linkages between outputs, outcomes and objectives*’. This cause is associated with Lesson numbers 112 and 125 in the UNEP EOU database of lessons learned. Lesson 112, for example states:

“It is critical that the internal logic of the project be very clearly spelled out in the project document and that the strategic linkages between outcomes and objectives are made very clear. Those implementing or supervising a project are frequently completely different people from those who developed the project. The Project Document needs to be a self-explanatory, stand-alone document.”¹⁶

209. As more lessons from evaluations are generated and classified, more causes for the problem ‘*Inappropriate intervention strategy*’ in the ‘project design’ cluster may be identified or new instances of previously identified problems may occur. In the former case, a new ‘branch’ of the problem tree would be created and in the latter case the new lesson would be referenced alongside other lessons by adding its unique lesson reference number. The framework has been further developed within a computer application so that there are software ‘hyperlinks’ between the framework and the full text of the lessons contained within the database. This application is currently in pilot form and EOU intends to develop this further as a web-based application.

C. Utility of the Lessons Framework

210. The lessons framework, as a whole, is greater than the sum of its parts because each lesson can be interpreted in the context of the entire collection of lessons. Lessons that relate to a common problem can be readily identified and this adds to the credibility and potential utility of a lesson by documenting experience derived from independent sources (an evaluation of a different project/programme) that often identifies similar prescriptions - a form of triangulation. However, in some cases, lessons linked to a similar problem provide prescriptions that are counter posed. This also represents ‘value-added’ as it highlights that for some problems the corresponding solutions might be highly context-specific and suggests that such lessons should be applied with great caution.

211. The framework of lessons allows:

- Quick identification of issues and problems that frequently feature across UNEP evaluations. Usually such information is disaggregated in large databases or in disparate reports;
- Multiple lessons to be clustered around commonly occurring issues (or ‘root causes’), providing ‘triangulation’ for commonly articulated lessons;
- Lessons to be associated with more than one issue or problem - rather than applying a mutually exclusive (taxonomic) classification approach to lessons;
- Patterns across lessons to be observed and commonly occurring problems across a project portfolio to be identified;
- Potential solutions to common problems to be compared and;
- Uptake of lessons to be more effectively promoted

¹⁵ For a figure showing the entire lessons framework see http://www.unep.org/eou/Special_Studies/SpecialStudies.asp

¹⁶ Lesson from the Mid-Term Evaluation of the UNEP UNDP GEF Project “Botswana, Kenya and Mali: Management of Indigenous Vegetation for the Rehabilitation of Degraded Lands in Arid Zones of Africa” GF/2740-03-4618

D. Patterns in Evaluation Lessons

212. The lessons framework reveals a number of patterns in evaluation lessons collated over time. Generally for every lesson that relates to an operational project/programme management problem or a problem in achieving project/programme outcomes, there are usually corresponding 'project design' issues. Key users for evaluation lessons are, therefore, not only the 'operational' managers, but also those involved in the design of the future work of UNEP.
213. The key project/programme design problems that are highlighted in the lessons of numerous evaluation reports include:
- Lack of ownership and shared vision due insufficient stakeholder consultation processes during the design process;
 - Inappropriate institutional arrangements for project/programme implementation due to unclear definition of roles among partners and poor partner selections;
 - Inappropriate intervention strategies due to lack of knowledge of existing needs and capacities, poor engagement of stakeholders and shortcomings in the technical expertise of project design staff
 - Overambitious or unclear project objectives and poor project/programme 'intervention logic';
 - Poor strategies for sustainability of project/programme outcomes;
 - Weak designs for Monitoring and Evaluation; and;
 - Inadequate outreach and dissemination strategies
 - Insufficient attention to project processes aimed at achieving effective policy influence
214. The largest proportion of evaluation lessons focus on issues and problems that relate to 'project/programme management and implementation'. The most common 'problem clusters' identified were:
- Delays in project implementation due to slow recruitment of the project team
 - Poor project coordination due to inadequate/ineffective communication and unclear roles among partners
 - Poor fund management due to poor tracking and coordination of project expenditures
 - Inadequate dissemination and outreach due to poor use of available dissemination methods
 - High transaction costs due to insufficient use of local experts
 - Poor understanding and execution of M&E
215. With respect to achievement of outcomes, especially policy influence and impacts, the problems most commonly encountered, for which lessons were articulated, were:
- Lack of ownership and legitimacy for project outputs/outcomes caused by lack of adequate stakeholder participation/representation
 - Lack of ownership and legitimacy for project outputs/outcomes caused by consensus-based multi-stakeholder decision processes that avoided difficult but important issues
 - Lack of a 'critical mass' of effort caused by too many different project activities/initiatives being pursued in a limited timeframe
 - Lack of sustainability for project outcomes due to inappropriate institutional arrangements and/or lack of engagement with long-term initiatives.

216. The complete 'lessons framework' that highlights the full set of problems to which evaluation lessons refer is available on EOU's website: (http://www.unep.org/eou/Special_Studies/Specialstudies.asp)

E. Conclusions

217. The exercise of reviewing the lessons in UNEP prompted EOU to specify more clearly the requirements for drafting lessons in our standard evaluation guidelines. It also prompted incorporation of these same criteria in the quality control and feedback processes applied to all EOU evaluation reports. By applying more stringent quality control on evaluation lessons we have reduced both the volume of information and significantly raised the overall quality and relevance of lessons in the database and lessons framework.
218. The framework of lessons learned provides a means to visualise all lessons at once, and to see how different clusters of lessons relate to one another. It is intended to be a user-friendly way of presenting and storing information in relation to lessons from evaluation. Its problem-oriented nature is intended to provide a more intuitive and interactive 'user interface' to the usual databases of lessons that are commonly collated by evaluation units. We regard the framework of lessons from evaluation as useful 'platform' for both collating and disseminating lessons. The approach EOU developed has been favourably reviewed by the UN Evaluation Group and the GEF Evaluation Office and has potential for adaptation and application by professional evaluators in a wide range of organizations.
219. A common feature of most evaluation feedback is that it tends to be supply driven, with the evaluation unit 'pumping out' information on the assumption that someone will use it. Though inevitable to some degree, it is generally acknowledged as a common weakness. It can be argued that the greatest learning occurs during the course of the evaluation itself through presentations and workshops to debrief and discuss findings.
220. For this reason, EOU intends to place greater emphasis on the provision of early feedback. It is therefore recognised that the framework of evaluation lessons will need to be used within the context of interactive 'face-to-face' communication with project/programme managers if evaluation lessons are to truly become 'lessons learned'.

Annexes

I. Terms of reference for the 2007 annual evaluation report

1. The evaluation function is governed by United Nations General Assembly resolutions and UNEP Governing Council decisions.¹⁷ It serves to provide strategic advice to the executive director, the deputy executive director and the UNEP senior management group; to contribute to policy formulation through evaluations and management studies; to contribute to effective management by proposing solutions through the analysis of evaluation results; and to facilitate the engagement of the Governing Council and the secretariat in systematic reflection and programme review.

I. Objective and scope

2. The annual evaluation report is prepared as an intercessional document of the Governing Council and serves as part of the UNEP input to the Secretary-General's report on evaluation to the General Assembly. The report provides stakeholders such as Governments, UNEP senior management and UNEP partners with an evaluative assessment of UNEP programme performance in 2006. The main objective of the annual evaluation report is to assist UNEP to improve its programme performance through an evaluation of relevance, effectiveness, results achieved and lessons learned.
3. The 2007 report will be based on data provided in one in-depth subprogramme evaluation, 18 in-depth project evaluation reports and two special studies undertaken in 2007. In addition, the report will contain the status of implementation of the recommendations contained in the 2000–2007 project evaluations..

II. Methods

4. The report will assess the following aspects:

A. Relevance and appropriateness

5. To determine the relevance and appropriateness of evaluated activities implemented by UNEP within its mandate (the Nairobi Declaration (1997)), taking into account General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972, the Malmö Declaration (2000) and Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (2002) by:
 - (a) Assessing the relevance of achievements made in conducting environmental assessments and providing policy advice and information;
 - (b) Determining the relevance and appropriateness of progress made in promoting the

¹⁷ General Assembly resolutions 37/234, 38/227, 40/240 and 42/215; General Assembly regulations and rules governing programme planning, the programme aspects of the budget, the monitoring of implementation, and the methods of evaluation of 1982, revised April 2000; UNEP Governing Council decisions 12/12, 13/1 and 14/1.

- development of international environmental law and the implementation of international norms and policies;
- (c) Assessing the relevance of contributions made towards strengthening the role of UNEP in the coordination of environmental activities in the United Nations system and as an implementing agency of the Global Environment Facility;
 - (d) Determining the relevance and achievements of activities aimed at raising greater awareness and facilitating effective co-operation between all sectors of society;
 - (e) Determining the relevance and contributions of activities aimed at providing policy and advisory services in key areas of institution-building to Governments and other institutions.

B. Effectiveness and efficiency

6. To review the overall performance of evaluated activities by:
- (a) Evaluating the ratings given to the following aspects of project implementation:
 - (i) Achievement of objectives and planned results;
 - (ii) Attainment of outputs and activities;
 - (iii) Cost-effectiveness;
 - (iv) Stakeholder participation;
 - (v) Country ownership;
 - (vi) Implementation approach;
 - (vii) Financial planning;
 - (viii) Replicability;
 - (ix) Monitoring and evaluation;
 - (b) Reviewing the rating given to the status of achievements and risk in self-evaluated projects;
 - (c) Identifying and distilling lessons learned and good practices that will improve future delivery of project activities;
 - (d) Providing policy and programme recommendations based on a systematic review of project recommendations.

C. Results and impact

7. To determine the results and impact of the evaluated activities in building capacity in the following areas of work:
- (a) Conducting assessments and providing environmental information;
 - (b) Developing international environmental law and regimes;
 - (c) Monitoring and fostering compliance with existing conventions and international agreements;
 - (d) Coordinating environmental activities and supporting institution building;
 - (e) Awareness-raising and co-operation between all sectors and establishing linkages between the scientific community and policymakers.

D. Sustainability

8. To determine the sustainability of the evaluated activities in the following areas:
 - (a) Enabling environment: whether there are political and regulatory frameworks in place which support the continuation or replication of activities and whether social sustainability has been achieved by, for example, mainstreaming project activities;
 - (b) Financial sustainability: effectiveness of financial planning and resource mobilization activities to enable the continuation of activities and objectives;
 - (c) Institutional capacity: whether there are adequate systems, structures, staff, expertise, and so forth, in place to continue the activities.

E. Methods

9. The analysis and conclusions contained in the report will be based on the following:
 - (a) Desk review of in-depth evaluation reports;
 - (b) Desk review of desk evaluation reports;
 - (c) Desk review of implementation plans and management response to the recommendations of the annual evaluation reports from 2000 to 2006;
 - (d) Review of relevant UNEP publications and other documents;
 - (e) Interviews with UNEP staff.
10. In accordance with the participatory approach that the Evaluation and Oversight Unit has adopted for conducting its evaluation work, issues will be raised and clarifications will be sought from relevant divisions and offices and the draft annual report will be circulated to divisions for their views and comments.

F. Structure of the report

11. The report should comprise the following sections:
 - (a) Introductory sections: foreword by the executive director, introduction by the chief of the Evaluation and Oversight Unit, executive summary and introduction itself;
 - (b) Subprogramme evaluation;
 - (c) In-depth project evaluations;
 - (e) Evaluative studies in UNEP;
 - (e) Status of implementation of recommendations;
 - (f) Lessons learned and key recommendations.

G. Timeframe

12. The draft report is scheduled to be ready for the review of UNEP divisions and other offices by 1 June 2008. The results of the consultations with UNEP offices should be reflected in the final draft report to be ready by 15 June 2008. The English version of the report is planned to be available in July 2008, and the translated copies of French and Spanish shortly thereafter.

H. Resources

13. The 2007 annual evaluation report will be produced with the internal resources of Evaluation and Oversight Unit, mainly drawing on a team of one professional and one administrative assistant under the overall guidance of the chief of the Evaluation and Oversight Unit. The editing, translation and production will be done by the Division of Conference Services of the United Nations Office at Nairobi.

II. List of evaluations and studies included in 2007 annual evaluation report

1. Evaluation of the Partnership Programme (PP) between the Netherlands Ministry for Development Cooperation and UNEP, By Mr. Bob Munro, February 2007
2. Mid-Term Evaluation for the UNEP/DGEF project GF/2712-03-4627 on “Development of a Wetland Site and Flyway Network for Conservation of the Siberian Crane and Other Migratory Waterbirds in Asia”, by Mr. John Howes, February 2007
3. Mid Term Evaluation of project GF/4040-01-12 – Technology Transfer Networks, by Franck Klinckenberg, April 2007
4. Mid-Term Evaluation UNEP Collaborative Centre on Water and Environment (UCC-Water), FP/CP/2010-02-01, By Mr. Ruhiza Jean Boroto, April 2007
5. Mid-Term Review ‘Addressing Land-Based Activities in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO), GF/6030-04-11, By Dr. Lynn Jackson, April 2007
6. Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF project ‘Biodiversity Indicators for National Use (BINU)’ GF/1020-02-01, By Mr. Joshua Brann, June 2007
7. Mid-Term Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF project ‘Strengthening the Network of Training Centres for Protected Area, Management Through Demonstration of a Tested Approach, GF/3010-05-04, By Mr. Paul Grigoriev, June 2007
8. Mid-Term Evaluation of the UNEP/DGEF project GFL-2328-2711-04-4788 - ‘Building Scientific and Technical Capacity for Effective Management and Sustainable Use of Dryland Biodiversity in West African Biosphere Reserves’, By Mr. Jean-Joseph Bellamy, September 2007
9. Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/DGEF project GF/4040-04-22 ‘Building Sustainable Commercial Dissemination Networks for Household PV Systems in Eastern Africa, By Mr. Taric de Villers, September 2007
10. Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/DGEF project GF/2010-03-06 ‘Protection of the North West Sahara Aquifer System (NWSAS) and Related Humid Zones and Ecosystems, By Mr. Serge Puyoo, September 2007
11. Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF project GF/1030-03-02 “Global Support to Facilitate the Early Development and Implementation of Sustainable Land Management Programmes and Projects under the GEF Operational Programme Number 15, By Professor Klaus Kellner, October 2007
12. Terminal Evaluation of UNEP’s Dams and Development Project DU/CP/3010-01-17, By Mr. Francis Muthuri, October 2007
13. Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF project GF/2010-01-14 -‘Community-Based Management of On-Farm Plant Genetic Resources in Arid and Semi-Arid Areas of Sub-Saharan Africa, By Mr. Franck Attere, November 2007

14. Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/DGEF project GF/1030-01-05 “Conservation of Gramineae and Associated Arthropods for Sustainable Agricultural Development in Africa” GFL/2328-2711-4345, By Mr. Luca Fornasari, November 2007
15. Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP project MT/2010-01-16 ‘Improved Health Outcomes through Community-Based Ecosystem Management: Building Capacity and Creating Local Knowledge in Community Health and Sustainable Development’, By Mr. Hammou Laamrani, December 2007
16. Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/DGEF project GF/1020-03-02 ‘Sustainable Conservation of Globally Important Caribbean Bird Habitats: Strengthening a Regional Network for a Shared Resource’, By Mr. Nigel Varty, December 2007
17. Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP project on “Development of Issue-Based Modules to Support the Coherent Implementation of Biodiversity-related Conventions Phase I”, By Ms. Ingrid Barnsley, January 2008
18. Joint Independent Evaluation of the UNIDO-UNEP Cleaner Production Programme, UNIDO-UNEP, Rene Van Berkel, Johannes Dobinger, Matthias Meyer, Hans Schnitzer, January 2008
19. Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP-UNIDO GEF Project: “Fostering Active and Effective Civil Society Participation in Preparations for Implementation of the Stockholm Convention”, Nee Sun Choong KWET YIVE, March 2007.

Special Studies

1. Lessons Learned from Evaluations: A Platform for Sharing Knowledge, Special Study Papers No. 2, United Nations Environment Programme, January 2007
2. Priority setting for Evaluation: Developing a strategic evaluation portfolio, Special Study Papers No. 3, April 2008

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