EVALUATION POLICY AND STRATEGY

Programme Planning
and Evaluation Unit (PPEU)

Programme Planning and
Operations Division (PPOD)

April 2014

UNITED NATIONS

ECLAC

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Contents

Acronyms

CPC   Committee for Programme and Coordination

ECA   Economic Commission for Africa

ECE   Economic Commission for Europe

ECLAC Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

ERG   Evaluation Reference Group

ESCAP Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

ESCWA Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

IMDIS   Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System

JIU   Joint Inspection Unit

M&E   Monitoring and Evaluation

OIOS   Office of Internal Oversight Services

OPPBA Office of Programme Planning, Budget, and Accounts

PPEU   Programme Planning and Evaluation Unit

PPOD   Programme Planning and Operations Division

PPRs   Programme Performance Reports

TORs   Terms of Reference

UNEG   United Nations Evaluation Group

UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund

A. Background and context

1. Purpose of the policy

The present document describes the policy and strategy for the practice of evaluation within the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). The purpose of the Commission's evaluation policy and strategy is to strengthen the evaluation function by maximizing transparency and coherence and ensuring high quality standards in its evaluations. It is hoped that this, in turn, will ultimately contribute to greater accountability, improved performance, and institutional learning within the Commission. The Commission's policy has been established in accordance with the Secretariat's rules and regulations on evaluation.[1] The ECLAC evaluation strategy outlines how this policy is put into practice, in accordance with guidelines established by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS).[2] The policy and strategy is also aligned with the norms and standards of evaluation established by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).[3]

2. Mandate of the Organization

The overall purpose of ECLAC is to promote the economic, social and environmentally sustainable development of Latin America and the Caribbean through continuous international cooperation, by undertaking comprehensive research and analysis of development processes and providing the relevant normative, operational and technical cooperation services in support of regional development efforts. The Commission's mandate derives from Economic and Social Council resolution 106 (VI), by which the Council established the Commission for the purpose of contributing to and coordinating action towards the economic and social development of the region and strengthening the economic relationships among the countries of the region as well as with other countries of the world. In 1996, by virtue of ECLAC resolution 553(XXVI), the Commission was instructed, inter alia, to collaborate with member States in a comprehensive analysis of development processes geared to the design, monitoring and evaluation of public policies and the resulting provision of operational services in the fields of specialized information, advisory services, training and support for regional and international cooperation and coordination.[4]

3. Institutional context of the evaluation function

The evaluation function within the United Nations Secretariat was largely shaped by the reform initiative launched by the Secretary-General to increase the effectiveness of the Organization's work, in part by strengthening its results orientation. This was spelled out in the Secretary-General's "Programme for Reform," presented to the General Assembly in 1997, which affirmed the need to transition from a focus on processes to a focus on results in the Organization's planning, budgeting and reporting, "*with the aim of shifting the United Nations programme budget from a system of input accounting to results-based accountability. […] The Secretariat would be held responsible*

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[1]   Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, Secretary-General's bulletin (ST/SGB/2000/8).

[2]   OIOS, *Inspection and Evaluation Manual: Guidelines for the conduct of inspections and evaluations in the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services,* March 2009.

[3]   UNEG, *Norms for Evaluation in the United Nations System, April 2005; Standards for Evaluation in the United Nations System,* April 2005.

[4]   ECLAC programme of work 2014-2015.

for, and judged by, the extent to which the specified results are reached."[5] This led to the institutionalization of results-based management (RBM) in the Organization.[6]

Subsequent reform efforts aiming to build on the 1997 initiative highlighted the importance of evaluation in helping the Organization to enhance its planning and budgeting system and strengthen its focus on results. In the September 2002 report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387), the Secretary-General stressed the need for a strengthened monitoring and evaluation system to allow the Organization to better measure the impact of its work. The operating procedure for the evaluation function within the United Nations Secretariat is outlined in the Secretary-General's bulletin entitled "Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation" (ST/SGB/2000/8).

4. Evaluation at ECLAC

Evaluation is an integral part of the work of ECLAC in all of its substantive areas and has contributed to effective programme planning, design and implementation. As an important accountability mechanism, it has enhanced the Commission's legitimacy and credibility. It has also helped ECLAC to ensure a results orientation in the activities it undertakes, and to identify the impacts of its interventions. Moreover, it has been an important driver of institutional learning, allowing ECLAC to replicate best practices and apply innovative approaches. Nonetheless, undertaking evaluations of the Commission's work has also involved significant challenges. First, the regional scope of its activities translates into results that are more widely dispersed in both geographic and sociopolitical terms, making them more difficult to isolate from other variables. Furthermore, given the nature of the Commission's work, focused on research, technical support, and coordination among Governments in the region, the scope of its impacts are broad and often indirect, adding to measurement challenges. This policy and strategy document is intended to address these challenges by introducing methods that help evaluators better measure the impact of the Commission's work and by establishing common principles and standards for evaluation processes, thereby improving the overall quality of its final products.

5. Outline of the policy and strategy document

This document details both the policy and the strategy of the ECLAC evaluation function. The background and context of the policy, described in this first section (section A) of the document, is followed by a review of key concepts and definitions in section B. Section C then outlines the objectives, scope and structure of the Commission's overall evaluation function, while sections D and E describe its guiding principles and norms. The institutional framework of the evaluation function, the evaluation process, and follow-up mechanisms are then detailed in sections F, G and H, respectively. The final section of the document presents the Commission's strategy for coordinating and sharing knowledge on its evaluation practice with other institutions within and outside the United Nations system.

6. Key documents

The evaluation policy and strategy of ECLAC is based on a number of background and guidance documents developed by the United Nations General Assembly, OIOS and UNEG. A list of the key documents consulted in the preparation of this document is provided in table 1 below.

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[5]   United Nations General Assembly, report of the Secretary-General entitled "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform" (A/51/950) (July 1997), p. 19.

[6]   The United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) defines results-based management (RBM) as follows: "A management strategy by which the Secretariat ensures that its processes, outputs and services contribute to the achievement of clearly stated expected accomplishments and objectives. It is focused on achieving results and improving performance, integrating lessons learned into management decisions and monitoring of and reporting on performance."

Table 1
Key background documents

Title	Description
United Nations General Assembly	
"Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform" (A/51/950), United Nations General Assembly, July 1997	The document outlining the original agenda for United Nations reform, presented by the Secretary-General to the United Nations General Assembly in 1997, introducing the concept of results-based management of United Nations activities.
"Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation" (ST/SGB/2000/8), Secretary-General's bulletin, 2000	Describes United Nations Secretariat-wide rules regarding the conduct of evaluations, including the proposed time frame, purpose and objectives, and the intended use of evaluation to inform future programme design and policy directives.
"Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387), United Nations General Assembly, September 2002	Plan outlined by the Secretary-General to further build on the original agenda for United Nations reform. The strengthening of the evaluation function is proposed as a key element necessary to improve the planning and budgeting system for United Nations activities to increase the focus on results.
Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)	
"Inspection and Evaluation Manual: Guidelines for the conduct of inspections and evaluations in the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services," OIOS, March 2009	Guidelines issued by OIOS outlining the processes to be followed in the planning and implementation of evaluations conducted within the United Nations Secretariat.
United Nations Development Group (UNEG)	
"Norms for Evaluation in the United Nations System," UNEG, April 2005	Norms for evaluation established by UNEG, applied commonly by entities throughout the United Nations system.
"Standards for Evaluation in the United Nations System," UNEG, April 2005	Standards for evaluation established by UNEG, applied commonly by entities throughout the United Nations system.

B. Key concepts and definitions

All definitions presented here are aligned with those of OIOS, as set out in its online *Glossary of Monitoring and Evaluation Terms*.[7]

> **Evaluation:**
>
> A process that seeks to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, effectiveness and impact of an ongoing or completed programme, project or policy in the light of its objectives and accomplishments. It encompasses their design, implementation and results with the view to providing information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into both executive and legislative decision-making process. Evaluation is often undertaken selectively to answer specific questions to guide decision-makers and/or programme managers, and to provide information on whether underlying theories and assumptions used in programme development were valid, what worked and what did not work and why.

1. Key evaluation definitions

(a) Output

A final product or service delivered by a programme or project to end-users, such as reports, publications, servicing of meetings, training, advisory, editorial, translation or security services, which a programme is expected to produce in order to achieve its expected accomplishments and objectives. Outputs may be grouped into broader categories.

(b) Outcome

The measurable accomplishment or result (intended or unintended, positive or negative) of a programme or project. In Secretariat practice, "outcome" is synonymous with accomplishment and result.

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[7]   OIOS, *Glossary of Monitoring and Evaluation Terms*. Available from http://www.un.org/Depts/oios/mecd/mecd_glossary/index.htm.

(c) Impact

The overall effect of accomplishing specific results. In some situations it comprises changes, whether planned or unplanned, positive or negative, direct or indirect, primary and secondary that a programme or project helped to bring about. In others, it could also connote the maintenance of a current condition, assuming that that condition is favourable. Impact is the longer-term or ultimate effect attributable to a programme or project, in contrast with an expected accomplishment and output, which are geared to the biennial time frame.

2. Relation to other ECLAC oversight functions

(a) Monitoring

A periodic assessment by programme managers and by OIOS of the progress in achieving expected accomplishments and delivering the final outputs in comparison with the commitments set out in the programme budget as approved by the General Assembly. This process provides assurance that the implementation of a programme or project is proceeding as planned. Monitoring differs from evaluation in that it is an ongoing exercise rather than a periodic one, and in that it tracks the progress of each programme component rather than undertaking an in-depth analysis of the programme's overall performance and impact. Finally, the results of monitoring exercises are used to fulfil reporting and management functions, while evaluation has an additional, broader objective of informing strategic planning decision-making and institutional learning processes.

(b) Audit

An exercise aimed at determining whether there is an adequate and effective system of internal controls to provide reasonable assurance with respect to: (a) integrity of financial and operational information; compliance with regulations, rules, policies and procedures in all operations; and safeguarding of assets; (b) the economic and efficient use of resources in operations and identifying opportunities for improvement in a dynamic and changing environment; and (c) effectiveness of programme management for achieving stated objectives consistent with policies, plans and budgets. While audit is centred on ensuring compliance with rules and regulations established by the given institution and programme under review, evaluation focuses more on the identification of challenges faced and successful practices for the purpose of improving overall organizational performance.

C. Objectives and scope of evaluation at ECLAC

1. Key objectives of evaluation

The evaluation function at ECLAC has three main objectives:

- **Accountability:** Evaluation at ECLAC constitutes an important mechanism for reporting to United Nations governing bodies, member States, donors, implementing partners and beneficiaries, and helps to communicate the Commission's key achievements. This process also enhances the legitimacy and credibility of the Commission's work supporting economic and social development in the region.

- **Managing for results:** Evaluation helps ECLAC managers plan programme objectives, activities and outputs for results and contributes to more efficient budgeting. Evaluations also allow managers to take stock of programme results and recognize strengths and weaknesses in the Commission's work processes. Ultimately, this exercise is essential to help identify the impacts of the diverse activities the Commission undertakes.

- **Learning, innovation and organizational change:** The lessons learned and recommendations derived from evaluations are critical in helping ECLAC managers identify effective practices and innovative approaches to be promoted in its future work. They also serve as key inputs in determining corrective action to be taken to improve the Commission's overall performance and effectiveness.

2. Structure of the evaluation function at ECLAC

The evaluation function at ECLAC is a subset of its overall monitoring and evaluation system. This system is structured around the typology of evaluations as defined by OIOS in its guidance document for evaluation in the United Nations system.[8] The Commission's self-assessments, prepared on the basis of programme results reported through the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS) (and equivalent to the mandatory internal evaluations described in the OIOS guidance document), make up its monitoring function, while all of its evaluations form part of a unified evaluation function.[9] Diagram 1 below outlines the organizational structure of the overall monitoring and evaluation system at ECLAC, indicating the distinction between the two functions.

ECLAC evaluations fall into two main categories: those that are conducted internally by the Commission itself and those that are conducted externally by entities outside ECLAC (see diagram 1). Within each of these two categories, some evaluations are mandated by the United Nations Secretariat (termed "mandatory evaluations"), while others are undertaken voluntarily, at the initiative of the Commission for its own internal purposes (termed "discretionary evaluations"). The evaluation policy and strategy at ECLAC is centred on the category of "discretionary internal evaluations", as these are commissioned and managed by the Commission.

Diagram 1
ECLAC monitoring and evaluation system [a]
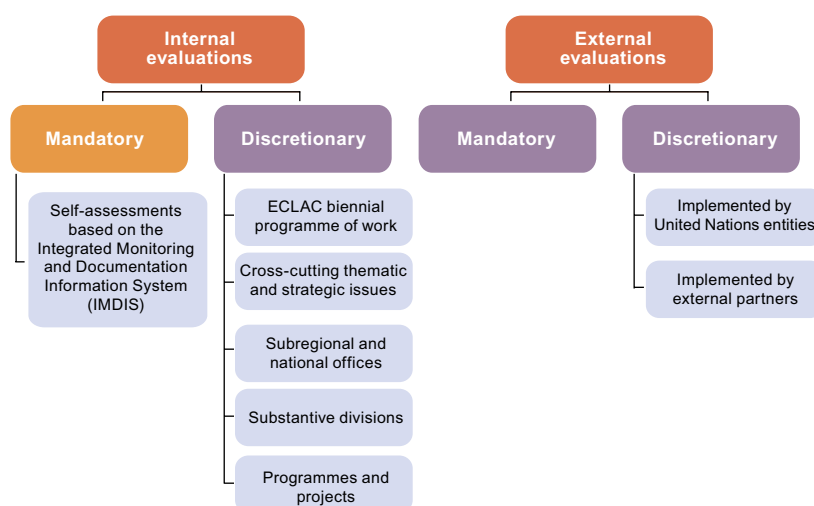
ª The category in orange refers to the Commission's monitoring function while the categories in purple correspond to its evaluation function.

3. Types of evaluation [10]

(a) Internal evaluation

Internal evaluations are planned and managed by the ECLAC Programme Planning and Operations Division (PPOD). In line with United Nations guidelines, ECLAC distinguishes between "mandatory" and "discretionary" evaluations.[11]

• **Mandatory internal evaluations** are compulsory assessments required by the Secretary-General. In ECLAC, they are undertaken by PPOD Programme Officers in coordination with the monitoring focal points in each

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[8]   OIOS, *Managing for Results: A Guide to Using Evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat,* June 2005.
[9]   The Commission's monitoring system is further outlined in its guidance document *Monitoring and Reporting through IMDIS: ECLAC guidelines,* June 2009.
[10] Definitions are based on the OIOS *Glossary of Monitoring and Evaluation Terms* (http://www.un.org/Depts/oios/mecd/mecd_glossary/index.htm) but have been adapted to the context of ECLAC.
[11] OIOS, *Managing for Results: A Guide to Using Evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat,* June 2005.

substantive division. These assessments, called Programme Performance Reports (PPRs), are issued once every two years and indicate the Commission's level of progress against expected accomplishments laid out in the results frameworks of its approved biennial programme budget. The information serving as a basis for the PPRs is aggregated through biannual reports of results recorded in the IMDIS tool. PPRs are submitted to the United Nations Department of Management, and also inform the report on the activities of the Commission, which is reviewed by the member States of ECLAC at its biennial sessions. The biennial PPRs, together with the regular IMDIS reporting process, constitute the monitoring function at ECLAC, and, while serving as input for evaluations of the Commission's programme of work, are not considered part of its evaluation function as such.

- **Discretionary internal evaluations** are optional evaluations for which there is no reporting requirement at intergovernmental level. They are typically commissioned and managed by the Commission's PPOD and are carried out by external consultants. In some cases, ECLAC undertakes evaluations by agreement with (and with financing from) an external donor. Discretionary internal evaluations are generally submitted to the Executive Secretary, and in some cases, depending on their scope and relevance, they are also presented to the ECLAC member States. These evaluations differ from the reporting system undertaken through PPRs in that the assessments focus in greater depth on the Commission's overall performance in implementing results, with the objective of drawing conclusions and recommendations for improving its performance. ECLAC conducts its evaluations at five different levels of analysis: (a) the ECLAC biennial programme of work, (b) cross-cutting thematic and strategic issues, (c) subregional and national offices, (d) substantive divisions, and (e) programmes and projects. Discretionary internal evaluations constitute the entire portfolio of evaluations conducted by ECLAC and are therefore the subject of the present policy and strategy document.

(b) External evaluation

External evaluations are generally commissioned by a United Nations intergovernmental body and are undertaken by entities outside of ECLAC that have no influence over the design and implementation of the programme or project being studied. Just like internal evaluations, external evaluations can be either "mandatory" or "discretionary."

- **Mandatory external evaluations** are mandated by a United Nations intergovernmental body such as the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), functional commissions, regional and sectoral intergovernmental bodies and other technical bodies. They are managed and undertaken by an entity outside ECLAC, such as OIOS or the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), and are submitted to United Nations Member States as well as the Secretary-General. The purpose of mandatory external evaluations is to provide oversight and support decision-making in respect of the ECLAC programme of work, as well as to assist programme managers within the Commission in strengthening overall institutional performance.

- **Discretionary external evaluations** are requested by the Executive Secretary of ECLAC and conducted by United Nations entities outside the Commission (such as OIOS or JIU). They can also be managed by implementing partners of ECLAC such as United Nations entities or external donors, through the recruitment of an external evaluator. Depending on their scope and relevance, discretionary external evaluations are submitted to United Nations Member States, the Secretary-General, the Executive Secretary of ECLAC, and external donors. They have a strong role in supporting programme performance and decision-making at management level.

4. Scope of evaluations

The present document, as indicated above, focuses on discretionary internal evaluations at ECLAC. These evaluations address various dimensions of the Commission's work, categorized here according to five different levels of analysis:

- **ECLAC biennial programme of work:** At the broadest level of analysis, ECLAC may undertake evaluations aimed at assessing its entire programme of work over a two-year period, examining the extent to which its activities and results fulfilled its mandate and met the targets set for the biennium.

- **Cross-cutting and strategic issues:** ECLAC may undertake evaluations examining specific cross-cutting or strategic issues of relevance to its mandate and activities.

- **Subregional and national offices:** Evaluations may be undertaken to assess the Commission's performance at the subregional levels through its offices in South America, Central America and the Caribbean.

- **Substantive divisions:** ECLAC may undertake evaluations of its individual substantive divisions to examine the effectiveness of its work in its 14 subprogrammes over a given period.[12]

- **Programmes and projects:** The bulk of ECLAC evaluations are undertaken at the level of its individual projects, which are often implemented in partnership with other United Nations entities or external donors.

5. Evaluation criteria

ECLAC applies four main criteria in the analysis of its evaluations: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability (see table 2).[13]

Table 2
Evaluation criteria

Relevance	Efficiency	Effectiveness	Sustainability
The extent to which an activity, expected accomplishment or strategy is pertinent or significant for achieving the related objective and the extent to which the objective is significant to the problem addressed.	A measure of how well inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into outputs.	The extent to which a project or programme attains its objectives, expected accomplishments and delivers planned outputs.	The extent to which the impact of the programme or project will last after its termination; the probability of continued long-term benefits.

D. Guiding principles

Human rights, gender mainstreaming, regional cooperation and engagement, internal and inter-agency coordination, and participation and inclusion are the key principles guiding the ECLAC evaluation function. In practice, this means that all evaluations should incorporate these principles as lines of analysis in the evaluative process. More than that, however, ECLAC also seeks to ensure that the evaluation process itself applies these same principles, and that evaluations ultimately contribute to promoting and reinforcing them.

1. Human rights

Evaluations should always assess the extent to which the activities and products of ECLAC respected and promoted human rights, equity and justice, including whether ECLAC interventions treated beneficiaries as equals, safeguarded and promoted the rights of minorities, and helped to empower civil society. Moreover, the evaluation process itself, including its design, the collection of data, and dissemination of the evaluation report, should be carried out in alignment with these principles.

2. Gender mainstreaming

Evaluations should examine whether the design and implementation of the Commission's activities took the needs and priorities of women into account, whether they treated women as equal players, and whether they served to promote women's autonomy. In March 2013, ECLAC launched its gender mainstreaming strategy, which underlines the importance of incorporating gender considerations in its evaluation processes.[14]

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[12] ECLAC has a total of 14 subprogrammes: 1) Linkages with the global economy, integration and regional cooperation; 2) Production and innovation; 3) Macroeconomic policies and growth; 4) Financing for development; 5) Social development and equality; 6) Mainstreaming the gender perspective in regional development; 7) Population and development; 8) Sustainable development and human settlements; 9) Natural resources and infrastructure; 10) Planning of public administration; 11) Statistics; 12) Subregional activities in Central America, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Mexico; 13) Subregional activities in the Caribbean; and 14) Support for regional and subregional integration and cooperation processes and organizations.

[13] Definitions aligned with OIOS *Glossary of Monitoring and Evaluation Terms* (http://www.un.org/Depts/oios/mecd/mecd_glossary/index.htm).

[14] *Strategy for Mainstreaming Gender at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2013-2017*, ECLAC October 2013.

3. Regional cooperation and engagement

ECLAC strives not only to respond to development needs in Latin America and the Caribbean, but also to serve as a forum and facilitator in building regional consensus and supporting public policy formulation to meet the challenges facing the region. It promotes multilateral dialogue, sharing knowledge and building networks at the global, regional and subregional levels. The Commission also seeks to promote intra- and interregional cooperation between the regional commissions and to collaborate with other regional organizations, particularly other United Nations entities. Moreover, the engagement and ownership of the Commission's partner countries within the region is essential to ensuring that its work is aligned with regional priorities, that its activities help build technical and institutional capacities, and that its impacts are sustainable. To this end, evaluations should examine whether ECLAC activities respond to these priorities and the extent to which its counterparts are involved in planning and implementation processes.

4. Internal and inter-agency coordination

Many of the Commission's programmes and projects are implemented in coordination with its subregional and national offices, or in partnership with other United Nations agencies, both at intra- and interregional level. Effective coordination in programme planning and implementation is critical to ensuring that resources are used efficiently and results are achieved. Evaluations should consider the extent to which ECLAC has coordinated its activities with its offices away from headquarters and with other United Nations partners.

5. Participation and inclusion

Assessments of the work of ECLAC should consider whether all stakeholders, including the United Nations, national counterparts, and beneficiaries were able to take active roles in project implementation and whether particular emphasis was given to the inclusion of minorities and vulnerable groups. Similarly, the evaluation process should involve all stakeholders, including programme managers and other implementing partners, in an inclusive manner in the evaluation design, data collection, and quality assurance process.

E. Norms

The Commission's norms for evaluation are aligned with those established by UNEG in its 2005 document entitled "Norms for Evaluation in the United Nations System". These have been adapted in this paper to the context of the evaluation function within ECLAC. Beyond norms established by UNEG, ECLAC also supports innovation and coordination as additional norms for evaluation.

1. Intentionality

The objectives and scope of evaluations should demonstrate a clear intent to improve the Commission's performance and contribute to institutional learning. Evaluations should be relevant, timely and practical so as to inform decision-making more effectively, and follow-up actions should seek to put into practice the evaluation's original purpose.

2. Impartiality

At all stages of the evaluation process, including design, planning, data collection and analysis, evaluators should ensure full impartiality in respect of the subject being evaluated. The evaluation analysis should be objective, taking the views of all stakeholders into account and reflecting the diverging opinions of all actors consulted.

3. Independence

In order to ensure the independence of the evaluation function, it should be fully transparent and free from undue influence. While evaluations at ECLAC are managed by its staff, measures are taken to maximize to the extent possible the independence of the evaluation function. The evaluation function is separate from other management functions within PPOD so as to ensure full discretion in the supervision of evaluations, and the Head of Evaluation has the authority to submit reports directly to the Executive Secretary. Moreover, ECLAC takes various measures to safeguard the independence of the evaluative process. For example, the function of ECLAC staff is limited to task management of evaluations and they never form part of the evaluation team itself. In addition, ECLAC contracts its evaluators externally, and their independence from the evaluation subject is considered a prerequisite for their selection. Additionally, ECLAC ensures that evaluators have editorial independence, demonstrate impartiality in their assessment and are given access to all relevant information on the subject of the evaluation.

4. Quality

ECLAC evaluations should meet the highest quality standards. Evaluation questions should be clearly established from the outset of the evaluation process, and data collection should be undertaken using appropriate and rigorous methodological instruments. The evaluation should clearly articulate its purpose, objectives and scope, and describe the data collection methods used as well as their limitations. Findings and conclusions should be presented in a clear and balanced manner, and recommendations should be specific and implementable.

5. Transparency

All stakeholders should be consulted in the evaluation process in order to create ownership and facilitate consensus. Terms of Reference (TORs), evaluation reports and management responses should be shared with all implementing partners and made accessible to the public.

6. Ethics

Evaluators must have personal and professional integrity. They must respect the right of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence and to verify statements attributed to them. Evaluators must be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs in the social and cultural environments in which they work, and should never discriminate in any way.

7. Innovation

ECLAC supports innovation in the development of data collection methodologies as well as in the dissemination and communication of evaluation findings. The Commission seeks to draw on the most up-to-date methods in its evaluations and continuously looks to pilot new approaches.

8. Coordination

In order to ensure that its evaluations are relevant to the work of the Commission, its methods are rigorous, its analysis is evidence-based, and its findings are useful, ECLAC endeavours to work in close coordination with donors, programme managers, and other implementing partners throughout the evaluation process. In addition, it seeks to strengthen ties to UNEG, other United Nations regional commissions, and evaluation institutions and networks within the Latin America and Caribbean region. Wherever possible, opportunities are sought to collaborate with other United Nations agencies in the implementation of evaluations.

F. Institutional framework

1. Institutional framework of the evaluation function

The Commission's evaluation function is situated within the Programme Planning and Evaluation Unit (PPEU) of PPOD. The PPEU Evaluation Team comprises a Chief of Unit, a Programme Officer and an Evaluation Assistant. The group operates under the overall supervision of the Director of the Division who, in turn, reports directly to the Executive Secretary of the Commission. The PPEU Evaluation Team is separate from other management functions in the Division so as to ensure, to the extent possible, independence in the evaluation function.

Diagram 2
Institutional structure of the evaluation function
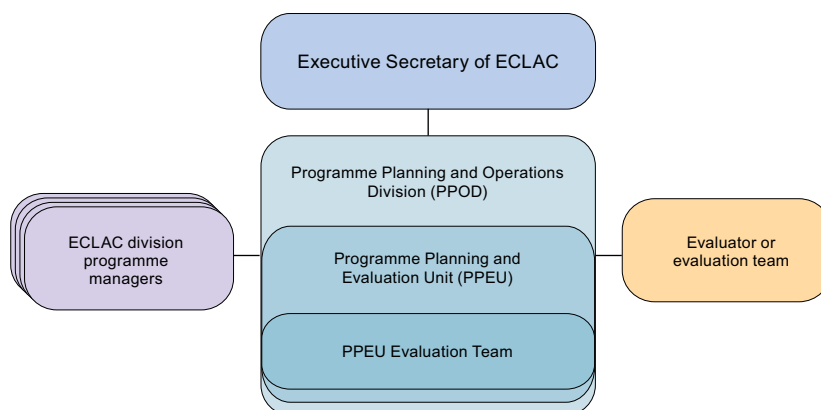
2. Roles and responsibilities

(a) Executive Secretary of ECLAC

The Executive Secretary of ECLAC carries overall responsibility for the Commission's programme of work, and is accountable to the Secretary-General, the United Nations Member States, as well as the States members of ECLAC. As part of his/her roles and responsibilities, the Executive Secretary:

- Approves the evaluation policy of ECLAC
- Oversees the selection of the Head of PPOD
- Approves the Commission's biennial evaluation plan before its submission to the United Nations Secretariat and General Assembly for final approval
- Reviews evaluation reports submitted by PPOD
- Approves management responses to evaluations
- Draws on evaluation recommendations to inform strategic decision-making regarding the Commission's programme of work

(b) Programme Planning and Operations Division (PPOD)

The evaluation function of ECLAC is carried out by the PPEU Evaluation Team under the overall supervision of the Director of PPOD. It implements all aspects of the evaluation function, with the following responsibilities:

(i) Evaluation planning and governance

- Develops and regularly updates the evaluation policy and strategy
- Develops and regularly updates evaluation guidelines
- Prepares the biennial evaluation plan and corresponding budget

- Submits evaluation reports to the Executive Secretary
- Periodically reports on the overall outcomes of the evaluation function
- Ensures that evaluation results feed into the Commission's programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting processes
- Incorporates evaluation findings in the Commission's organizational learning and knowledge management systems

(ii) Management of evaluations

- Commissions the evaluations
- Selects external evaluators based on a competitive selection process
- Manages the overall evaluation process and provides relevant information and documentation to evaluators
- Provides coordination with programme stakeholders and facilitates quality assurance of evaluations through joint review of evaluation deliverables
- Formulates the management responses to evaluations and coordinates the implementation of follow-up actions with the respective divisions

(iii) Communication and dissemination

- Regularly updates programme managers on planned evaluations, evaluations in progress, and the findings and follow-up actions of completed evaluations
- Regularly updates intranet and Internet sites on the evaluation function, providing access to the evaluation policy, guidelines, completed evaluation reports and their respective management responses, as well as other related up-to-date information on the evaluation function
- Establishes partnerships with evaluation networks and other associations active in the area of evaluation

(c) ECLAC division programme managers and other implementing partners

Programme managers in the various substantive divisions and subregional and national offices of ECLAC play an important role in the preparation, quality review and follow-up processes of evaluations and are formally represented in the evaluation process through the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG).[15] Specifically, they:

- Contribute input to the TORs of the evaluation
- Nominate representatives to the ERG
- Provide relevant information and documentation to evaluators and act as informants in the evaluation process
- Review the evaluation report for robustness of evidence and factual accuracy
- Implement follow-up actions in response to evaluation recommendations

G. The evaluation process

1. Resources

In addition to the human resources assigned to evaluation as part of the Commission's overall programme of work for each biennium, ECLAC aims to allocate some 3-5% of the total budget of each of its programmes and projects to evaluation. These programme and project evaluations, which constitute the bulk of the Commission's evaluative work, are therefore fully funded by its project budgets. Additional resources are set aside within PPOD to carry out ad hoc thematic or strategic evaluations. Evaluation costs generally include:

- Human resources
- External evaluator fees
- Travel of external evaluator and ECLAC staff
- Editing and translation of evaluation reports
- Equipment (including desks, computers, software and electronic data collection tools)
- Evaluation training needs

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[15] See page 19 and 21 for further details on the ERG.

2. Selection and planning of evaluations

One year before the beginning of each biennium, evaluation plans are delivered, along with programme budgets, to the Office of Programme Planning, Budget, and Accounts (OPPBA) in the United Nations Secretariat, after which they are formally submitted to the General Assembly for final approval. These plans indicate the topic, estimated cost and time frame of each evaluation. Evaluations of programmes and projects are selected based on their planned closure dates, while thematic and strategic evaluations are determined by PPOD in consultation with ECLAC substantive divisions and subregional offices, according to need and relevance in the given biennium. The evaluations submitted as part of the programme budgets are considered to be estimated plans rather than formal commitments, and adjustments are sometimes made to respond to changing conditions.

3. Competencies of the evaluator

Key competencies required by ECLAC for the assignment of a consultant to an evaluation include:
- A higher degree in a field relevant to the topic of the evaluation
- A minimum of five years' experience in conducting evaluations
- Work experience in the subject being evaluated
- Experience in the region(s) where the programme or project has been implemented
- Relevant language proficiency

While the large majority of evaluations are carried out by a single external evaluator with the support of ECLAC evaluation staff, teams composed of two or three consultants may be required for larger thematic and strategic evaluations. In these cases a Technical Expert and/or Research Assistant may be recruited in addition to the lead author of the evaluation.

4. Evaluation management structure – key actors

Diagram 3
Key actors in the evaluation process

**(a) Commissioner of the evaluation
(ECLAC Executive Secretary and PPOD Director)**

- Mandates the evaluation
- Provides the funds to undertake the evaluation
- Safeguards the independence of the evaluation process

**(b) Task manager
(PPEU Evaluation Team)**

- Drafts evaluation TORs
- Recruits the evaluator/evaluation team
- Shares relevant information and documentation and provides strategic guidance to the evaluator/evaluation team
- Provides overall management of the evaluation and its budget, including administrative and logistical support in the methodological process and organization of evaluation missions
- Coordinates communication between the evaluator/evaluation team, implementing partners and the ERG, and convenes meetings
- Supports the evaluator/evaluation team in the data collection process
- Reviews key evaluation deliverables for quality and robustness and facilitates the overall quality assurance process for the evaluation
- Manages the editing, dissemination and communication of the evaluation report
- Implements the evaluation follow-up process

**(c) Evaluator/Evaluation team
(External consultant)**

- Undertakes the desk review, designs the evaluation methodology and prepares the inception report
- Conducts the data collection process including the electronic survey and country visits to meet with programme stakeholders (when required)
- Carries out the data analysis
- Drafts the evaluation report and undertakes revisions
- Presents evaluation findings and recommendations to implementing partners

**(d) Evaluation Reference Group (ERG)[16]
(Composed of representatives of each of the implementing partners)**

- Provides feedback to the evaluator/evaluation team on preliminary evaluation findings and final conclusions and recommendations
- Reviews draft evaluation report for robustness of evidence and factual accuracy

**(e) Users of the evaluation
(United Nations Member States, ECLAC member States, ECLAC senior management, programme managers, implementing partners, programme beneficiaries, and the general public)**

- Constitute the audience for the evaluation
- May apply the information contained in the evaluation reports in similar or related work, for example, by adjusting programme design and work processes to improve overall effectiveness
- May communicate key messages within their organizations
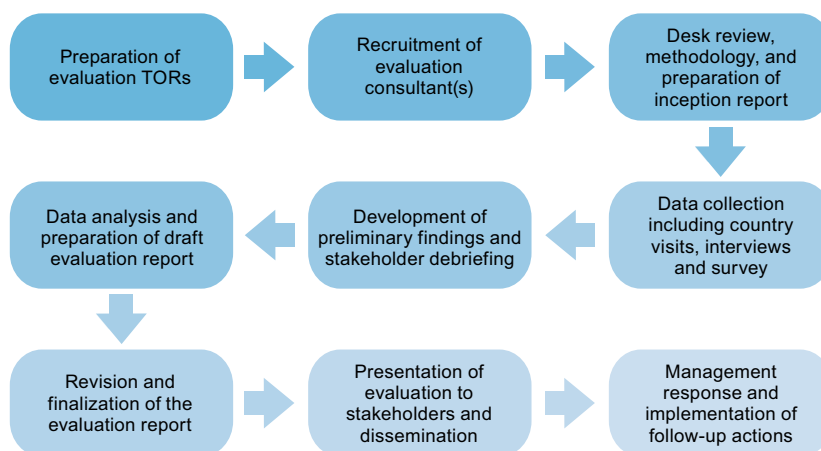
5. Timeline of the evaluation process

Evaluations are generally carried out over the course of three to six months, depending on their scope (project evaluations are generally shorter while thematic and strategic evaluations require more time). All evaluations are conducted in three main stages:[17]

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[16] The ERG represents the implementing partners in the evaluation process.
[17] The evaluation planning and implementation process is outlined in more detail in the document *Preparing and Conducting Evaluations: ECLAC guidelines*. Available from http://www.cepal.org/dppo/noticias/paginas/4/37534/ECLACGuidelines-Evaluation.pdf.

- **Inception:** PPEU prepares the evaluation budget, develops the TORs of the evaluation and conducts the selection process for the evaluator. Once the evaluator has been recruited, s/he undertakes a desk review, develops the evaluation methodology and prepares the draft inception report. The report is then finalized by the evaluator after review and feedback from the Task Manager.

- **Data collection and analysis:** In the data collection phase, the evaluator may undertake visits to ECLAC headquarters in Santiago, subregional or national offices, and/or to countries where the programme[18] is being implemented (when possible, accompanied by a task manager from the PPEU Evaluation Team). During these visits, the consultant conducts interviews with programme stakeholders, other implementing partners including Government officials, and programme beneficiaries. Country visits are often complemented by videoconference interviews with additional partners, as well as document reviews and an electronic survey. At the end of the data collection process, the evaluator presents the preliminary findings of the data collection process to all programme implementing partners in a debriefing session.

- **Report drafting:** The stakeholder debriefing is followed by the preparation of the draft evaluation report, which the evaluator submits to PPEU within approximately one month of completing the data collection process. The draft report is then reviewed by both the PPEU Evaluation Team and the ERG, whose comments are addressed by the evaluator in the revision process. Once the final report has been submitted to PPEU, the evaluator formally presents the evaluation findings to all programme implementing partners. The report is then sent for editing and translation, and is uploaded on the ECLAC intranet and Internet sites.

Diagram 4
Steps in the evaluation process

6. Evaluation products

The following deliverables are developed as part of the evaluation process:

- Inception report including a programme background, proposed methodology, evaluation questions and stakeholder mapping
- Methodological tools such as electronic surveys and interview guides
- Presentation of preliminary findings
- Draft and final evaluation report and presentation of key findings
- Evaluator's revision matrix
- Follow-up action plan
- Annual briefs to programme managers
- Summary of evaluation results in the biennial report on the activities of the Commission

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[18]   The use of the word "programme" refers to all activities, projects or programmes undertaken by ECLAC as part of its biennial programme of work.

7.   Quality assurance mechanisms

ECLAC uses several means to ensure the highest standards of quality in its evaluations.

(a) Guidelines and methodological data collection tools: All ECLAC evaluations are carried out in accordance with evaluation guidelines developed by PPEU. These guidelines outline the evaluation process, key evaluation criteria and questions, as well as the format and content of deliverables, including the TORs, inception report, presentation of preliminary findings, the report of the evaluation and the follow-up action plan.

(b) Evaluator competencies: ECLAC follows a defined set of criteria for the experience and qualifications required in the selection of the evaluator.[19]

(c) Review of evaluation deliverables: The task manager provides continuous guidance and feedback to the evaluator throughout the evaluation process and reviews all evaluation deliverables, including the inception report, methodological data collection tools, presentations to implementing partners, and the draft and final evaluation report. ECLAC programme managers in the respective substantive divisions also provide continuous feedback to the task manager and evaluator.

(d) Evaluation Reference Group (ERG): An ERG, composed of a representative of each programme implementing partner, is a formal panel set up to provide feedback on the evaluation's preliminary finding and review the draft evaluation report. Comments by all panel members are consolidated by PPEU and submitted to the evaluator, who addresses them in the revision process as well as through a response template.

H. Use of evaluation findings and recommendations

1.   Dissemination of evaluations

Once each evaluation report has been finalized, a stakeholder meeting is organized via videoconference, in which the evaluator presents the key findings and recommendations of the evaluation to all programme implementing partners. Evaluations are then uploaded on the Commission's Internet and intranet sites. Moreover, evaluation results are summarized in the biennial report on the activities of the Commission, as well as during annual strategic planning meetings with substantive divisions and offices away from headquarters.

2.   Follow-up

Following completion and distribution of the evaluation, the Programme Planning and Evaluation Unit (PPEU) convenes a meeting with all substantive divisions involved in implementing the programme to formulate a management response and identify key follow-up actions for each evaluation recommendation. All participating divisions are then asked to report yearly on their implementation of those actions for a period of two years. PPEU concludes the process at the end of the cycle, and participating divisions are urged to incorporate relevant activities of the process into their respective work programmes.

ECLAC communicates information on the evaluation follow-up process within the Commission in various ways. The first document, the management response, is approved by the Executive Secretary of the Commission and is published on the Commission's external website together with the evaluation report. The second document, the follow-up action plan, is shared with all divisions and uploaded to the ECLAC intranet site. Action being taken as part of ECLAC follow-up processes and the respective outcomes are also summarized in the biennial report on the activities

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[19]   See section G, item 7 for a full list of evaluator competency criteria.

of the Commission. In the case of programmes or projects being implemented in partnership with an external donor, follow-up action plans are shared with the relevant counterpart at both the beginning and the end of the process.

Furthermore, ECLAC places great weight on the importance of institutionalizing the results of evaluation follow-up processes within the Commission as a whole. To this end, the outcomes of these processes are discussed with all divisions at their annual strategic planning meetings and are taken into account in the preparation of the ECLAC biennial programme of work.

I. Coordination and knowledge-sharing on evaluation

1. United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)

ECLAC is an active member of UNEG, where its involvement is mainly centered around normative work, building national and regional evaluation capacity, and knowledge management for evaluation.

2. United Nations regional commissions

The evaluation findings of ECLAC are discussed during annual meetings of the chiefs of programme planning divisions from all five United Nations regional commissions (ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCWA and ESCAP).[20] Moreover, in 2012, all regional commissions jointly established an interregional monitoring and evaluation focal points network with the overall purpose of ensuring effective communication and information-sharing across regional commissions on the use and practice of monitoring and evaluation in each organization. This network will serve to enhance the sharing of resources and experience in evaluation, and its alignment, where possible, with practices, norms and standards of the United Nations Department of Management, UNEG and OIOS. In 2013, the TORs for this group were being finalized and the network's first activities were being planned.

3. United Nations evaluation networks

ECLAC participates in a number of United Nations evaluation networks, including the "MyM&E" network led by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) with other partners, as well as the UNDP-led network "EVALUN-LAC" for evaluation in the Latin America and Caribbean region. Both these networks bring together experts throughout the United Nations system to conduct webinars and online discussions on various topics of interest within the practice of evaluation.

4. Global and regional evaluation networks

In addition to its current participation in evaluation networks across the United Nations, ECLAC also plans to widen its cooperation on evaluation to further networks and associations outside the United Nations system, both in the Latin America and Caribbean region and globally.

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[20] Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).