

NEC 2024 ABSTRACT

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Title of the abstract	The role of Young and emerging evaluators in UN evaluation: lessons learnt for strengthening national evaluation capacities.
Conference session	<input type="checkbox"/> Stream A. Responsive National Evaluation Systems <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Stream B. Inclusive National Evaluation Systems</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Stream C. Future Driven Systems and Approaches
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Preferred format:	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Formal presentation (maximum 10 minutes)</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Participation in a panel discussion where the experience can be shared <input type="checkbox"/> Participation in an interactive session where the example can be shared, without a formal presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____
I will need to apply for bursary support, if selected.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Language to be used for presentation	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>English</u> <input type="checkbox"/> French <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese

Abstract Text (max. 500 words)

The United Nations Secretary General's "Our Common Agenda" highlights the importance of meaningful youth engagement in policy and decision-making to achieve sustainable development goals and rejuvenate the UN workforce. In the lead-up to the 2024 Summit of the Future, assessing youth involvement in UN decision-making and the role of young and emerging evaluators (YEEs) in shaping the future of UN evaluation is crucial. Despite various UN agencies' efforts to support YEEs through internships, mentorships, and training programs, such as the 2018 initiative by UNFPA, UNV, and EvalYouth, YEEs continue to face significant barriers.

During the 2023 UNEG AGM, a Working Group on YEEs was established to promote their meaningful engagement in evaluation across UNEG members. The mapping is one of the first group's exercises, its findings will inform the strategic planning of the group, as well as determine actions to further institutionalise and mainstream meaningful engagement of YEEs in UNEG agencies.

Objectives: To identify the number, distribution, roles, entry points, and diversity of YEEs from 2015 to 2023, as well as to take stock of support across six dimensions: leadership, engagement practices, advocacy, communications, human resources, and financial resources. It also seeks to identify opportunities and challenges faced by YEEs, document good practices and lessons learned, and propose suggested actions for institutionalising and enhancing YEEs engagement.

Methodology: The mapping exercise used a participatory system mapping approach with a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods:

- 1,312 documents from 62 UNEG agencies¹ were analysed within the desk review, including evaluation policies, manuals, reports, etc.
- Four focus group discussions with 20 YEEs maintained gender balance and included professionals with varied engagements from eight UN agencies.
- Thirty-two key informant interviews were conducted with evaluation professionals from 23 UN agencies, ensuring diverse representation across nationalities, office levels (HQ, regional, national), and years of professional experience. KII targeted senior evaluators (20) and YEE from UN agencies and regions not presented in the focus groups discussions.
- An exploratory survey in three languages, received 52 responses from 23 countries and 40 nationalities, representatives of 24 UN agencies.

Conclusions: While individual UN agencies are perceived as more open to youth involvement by both YEEs and senior evaluators, compared to the UN system as a whole, these efforts are hindered by organisational and financial constraints. There is a gap in aligning youth inclusion efforts across organisational functions. Although many agencies include youth as a stakeholder group in their strategic programme documents, only a few incorporate youth-focused efforts into evaluation strategies.

Although, in UNEG agencies, YEEs typically represent less than 20% of evaluation employees². Both YEEs and senior evaluators agree on the significant value YEEs bring to the evaluation process. Young evaluators emphasise their passion, mobility, and fresh perspectives, while senior evaluators recognize YEEs innovative ideas, tech skills, and diverse viewpoints. Both groups concur that YEEs' energy, creativity, and tech-savviness are vital for innovating and enriching evaluations. Despite

¹ All UNEG members and observers according to [UNEG website list](#) (March 2024): CTBTO, DCO, DGACM, DMPSC, DPI, DPPA, DPKO, ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP, ECWA, FAO, GEF, GCF, IAEA, ICAO, ICC, IFAD, ILO, IMO, IOM, ITC, OCHA, OLA, OPCW, OHCHR, OIOS, PAHO, PBSO, UNAIDS, UNECA, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCAP, UNESCO, UNESCWA, UNCDF, UNCTAD, UNDESA, UNDP, UNDSS, UNFPA, UN-HABITAT, UNHCR, UNITAR, UNICEF, UNICRI, UNIDO, UN JIU, UNOCT, UNODC, UNOSSC, UNRWA, UNSDG, UNU, UNV, UNWOMEN, WFP, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO with exception to the WorldBank due to distinct operational scopes and evaluation practices.

² Including both external and internal employees.

appreciating diverse experiences and development opportunities, YEEs encounter barriers such as high entry requirements, intense competition, and underutilization of their skills. Few organisations have incorporated entry-level positions for YEEs. However, minimum experience requirements, often without maximum limit, tend to attract more experienced candidates. This practice limits opportunities for less experienced evaluators and hinder the start of their careers. Furthermore, while most agencies have shifted from unpaid to paid internships, acknowledging the value of young professionals, unpaid internships still exist in headquarters.

While internal YEEs are typically highly engaged throughout the evaluation process, many agencies engage external youth superficially. This is often manifested in creating formal spaces for participation without granting actual decision-making power. Additionally, dedicated budgets for external youth engagement are rare, which limits their meaningful participation and skills development.

Proactive individual managers play a crucial role in fostering meaningful youth involvement in the evaluation process. They provide mentoring, support training, support YEEs visibility and facilitate their inclusion into decision making. This role is especially important in mitigating broader organisational limitations such as the absence of formal internship or fellowship structures, budget constraints, or lack of previous engagement practices for YEEs in the office.

By integrating lessons learned from UN agencies, national evaluation systems can better align youth inclusion efforts across organizational functions, ensuring that youth-focused strategic programming extends to evaluation strategies. This alignment can promote equity and inclusivity in national evaluation processes, ultimately contributing to more robust and effective evaluation systems.