GLOSSARY OF EVALUATION TERMS

The following terms are directly taken from the United Nations website for evaluation. Minor changes have been made to eliminate British spelling into standard American English. The location of this document is at:

http://www.un.org/Depts/oios/mecd/mecd_glossary/documents/evaluation _category.htm#formative

Accountability
Obligation for a manager of resources to demonstrate that work has been conducted in compliance with the established plans, budgets, rules and standards and to report fairly and accurately on performance results. It includes responsibility for the justification of expenditures, decisions or results of the discharge of authority and official duties, including duties delegated to a subordinate unit or individual. The effective discharge of accountability is predicated on clearly defined responsibilities, performance expectations, limits of authority, and clarity on how the exercise of responsibility and authority will be monitored and assessed. One of the main functions of monitoring and evaluation is to contribute to strengthening accountability by providing objective information on the veracity of a manager's reporting.
See also: "Audit". "Evaluation", "Inspection"

Activity
Action taken or work performed to transform inputs into outputs.
See also: "Input," "Output", "Result"

Analytical method
A means to process, understand and interpret data.
See also: "Data collection tool"

Assumption
Hypothesis about risks, influences, external factors or conditions that could affect the progress or success of a project or a program. Assumptions highlight external factors, which are important for the success of project or program, but are largely or completely beyond the control of management.
See also: "External factor", "Condition", "Effect", "Logical framework"

Attribution
A causal link between observed (or expected to be observed) changes and a specific intervention. Attribution refers to that which is to be credited for the observed changes or results achieved. With regard to attribution for the achievement of accomplishments /results, evaluations aim to ascertain a credible link between outputs and achieved accomplishments. In assessing this link, attribution takes account of the effects of other interventions that are independent of the effort being evaluated.
See also: "Contribution", "External Factor", "Causal Relationship"

Baseline
Data that describe the situation to be addressed by a program, subprogram or project and that serve as the starting point for measuring performance. A baseline study would be the analysis describing the situation prior to the commencement of the program or project or the situation following initial commencement of the program or project to serve as a basis of comparison and progress for future analyses. It is used to determine the accomplishments/results and serves as an important reference for evaluation.
See also: "Target"

Benchmark
Reference point or standard against which performance or achievement can be assessed. A benchmark often refers to an intermediate target to measure progress within a given period as well as to the performance of other comparable organizational entities.
See also: "Interim performance measures"

Beneficiary
The individual, group, or organization, whether targeted or not, that benefit, directly or indirectly, from the implementation of a program, project or output.
See also: "End-user", "Target group"

Bias
Anything that produces systematic error in an evaluation finding. Bias may result in over- or under-estimating the object of evaluation or assessment.
See also: "Attribution","Causal relationship", "Evidence"

Case study
The examination of the characteristics of a single case (such as an individual, an event, a program or some other discrete entity). A sample of multiple cases can also be examined to look for commonalities and to identify patterns. Case studies are often used to gather qualitative information in support of findings obtained through quantitative methods.
See also: "Qualitative data", "Lesson learned", "Learning"

Causal relationship
A logical connection or cause-effect linkage ascribed to the relationship between accomplishments/results and efforts to achieve them or between final results and their impact on the target beneficiaries. Generally the term refers to reliably plausible linkages.
See also: "Assumption", "Attribution", "Bias", "Evidence", "Logical framework", "Indirect effect"

Cluster evaluation
An evaluation of a set of related outputs, projects and/or programs or subprograms.
See also: "Evaluation"

Conclusions
Conclusions present reasoned judgments based on a synthesis of empirical findings or factual statements corresponding to specific circumstances. Conclusions point out the factors of success and failure of the evaluated projects and programs, with special attention paid to the intended and unintended results and impacts, and more generally to any other strength or weakness. Conclusions draw on data collection and analyses undertaken, through a transparent chain of arguments.
See also: "Finding", "Lesson learned", "Terms of reference"

Condition
The situation that exists, and that the evaluator seeks to describe and explain. Condition can describe how well a program is operating or the problem it is facing.
See also: "Finding"

Content analysis
A systematic approach to analyzing themes in audio, visual, electronic or print communication. Selected material is reviewed and assessed on the basis of predetermined criteria (such as the reflection of key messages, accuracy, prominence, and reference to sponsoring organization).
See also: "Data", "Data collection method"

Control group
A selected subgroup of beneficiaries who do not receive the same treatment, input or training, but share characteristics similar to the target group. Thus, differences between the control group and the target group can be measured and evaluated.
See also: "Target group"

Contribution
The link between the activities carried out by various organizational units to arrive at final products or services delivered to end-users to accomplish a desired result.
See also: "Attribution", "Causal relationship"

Cost-benefit analysis
A specialized analysis which converts all costs and benefits to common monetary terms and then assesses the ratio of results to inputs against other alternatives or against some established criteria of cost-benefit performance. It often involves the comparison of investment and operating costs with the direct and indirect benefits generated by the investment in a project or program.
See also: "Cost-effectiveness", "Efficiency"

Cost-effectiveness
Comparison of the relative costs of achieving a given result or output by different means. It focuses on the relation between the costs (inputs) and results produced by a project or programme. A project/programme is more cost effective when it achieves its results at the lowest possible cost compared with alternative projects with the same intended results.
See also: "Cost-benefit analysis"

Criteria
The standards used to determine whether or not a program or project meets expectations.
See also: "Objective"

Data
Specific quantitative and qualitative information or facts that are collected.
See: "Data collection tool", "Data collection method", "Data source"

Data collection method
The mode of collection to be used when gathering information and data on a given indicator of achievement or evaluation. Collection methods include the review of records, surveys, interviews, or content analysis.
See also: "Methodology form"

Data collection tool
Instrument used to collect information for use in performance assessment, self-evaluation and external evaluation. Examples are mail, telephone, in-person and web-based surveys, direct or participatory observation, interviews, focus groups, expert opinion, case studies, literature search, and content analysis of internal and external records. The data collection tools must be strong enough to support the findings of the evaluation.

Data source
The origin of the data or information collected. Data sources may include informal and official records, individuals, documents, etc.
See also: "Methodology form"

Effect
Intended or unintended change caused directly or indirectly by the delivery of an output, project or program.
See also: "Assumption", "Attribution"

Effectiveness
The extent to which a project or program attains its objectives, expected accomplishments and delivers planned outputs.
See also: "Result", "Impact"

Efficiency
A measure of how well inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into outputs.
See also: "Effectiveness", "Impact"

End-user
Recipient of an output or accomplishment.
See also: "Stakeholder", "Beneficiary"

Evaluability
Extent to which an activity or a program can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion.
See also: "Evaluation", "Terms of reference"

Evaluation
A process that seeks to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, effectiveness and impact of an ongoing or completed program, 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 the decision-making process. Evaluation is often undertaken selectively to answer specific questions to guide decision-makers and/or program managers, and to provide information on whether underlying theories and assumptions used in program development were valid, what worked and what did not work and why.
See also: "Cluster evaluation", "Ex-post evaluation", "External evaluation", "Formative evaluation", "In-depth evaluation", "Internal evaluation", "Joint evaluation", "Meta-evaluation", "Participatory evaluation", "Project evaluation", "Self-evaluation", "Strategic evaluation", "Summative evaluation", "Thematic evaluation"

Evaluation scope
A framework that establishes the focus of an evaluation in terms of questions to address, the issues to be covered, and defines what will be analyzed and what will not be analyzed. The scope defines the parameters of the evaluation and is presented in the "Terms of Reference".
See also: "Terms of reference"

Evaluation team
Group of specialists (and in the case of the HNI, designated staff members) responsible for the planning and conduct of an evaluation. An evaluation team produces the evaluation report.
See also: "Evaluation", "Terms of reference"

Evaluator
An individual involved in all stages of the evaluation process, from defining the terms of reference and collecting and analyzing data to developing findings and making recommendations. The evaluator may also be involved in taking corrective action or making improvements.
See also: "Evaluation team"

Evidence
The information presented to support a finding or conclusion. Evidence should be sufficient, competent and relevant. There are four types of evidence: observations (obtained through direct observation of people or events); documentary (obtained from written information); analytical (based on computations and comparisons); and self-reported (obtained through, for example, surveys).
See also: "Assumption", "Attribution", "Bias", "Causal relationship", "Indirect effect"

External factor
Event and/or condition that is beyond the control of those responsible for an activity but that has an effect on the success or failure of the activity. It may be anticipated in the form of assumptions or they may be unanticipated.
See also: "Assumption", "Attribution", "Causal relationship", "Logical framework"

External evaluation
An evaluation performed by entities outside of the program being evaluated.
See also: "Evaluation", "Internal evaluation", "Mandatory external evaluation",
"Discretionalry external evaluation"

Facilitator
A person who helps members of a group to conduct an evaluative meeting and achieve
the result for which they came together. A Facilitator should have no vested interest in
the outcome of the meeting, nor dictate its substance.
See also: "Results-based management (RBM)", " Participatory evaluation"

Feedback
A process consisting of the transmission of relevant information from monitoring and
evaluation exercises to targeted users so as to facilitate learning and decision-making.
Such information usually comprises findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons
learned.
See also: "Lesson learned", "Learning", "Best practice"

Focus group
A group of individuals having some common interest or characteristics, brought together
by a moderator, who uses the group and its interaction as a way to gain information about
a specific or focused issue.
See also: "Data collection method", "Facilitator"

Formative evaluation
Sometimes known as interim evaluation, it is conducted during implementation phase of
projects or programs to improve their performance. Formative evaluations may also be
conducted for other reasons such as compliance, legal requirements or as part of a larger
evaluation initiative. It is intended for managers and direct supporters of a project.
See also: "Evaluation"

Goal
The higher-order aim to which a program is intended to contribute: a statement of longer-
term intent.
See also: "Objective", "Accomplishment", "Result "

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 program or project helped to bring about. In others, it could also
connote the maintenance of a current condition, assuming that that condition is favorable.
Impact is the longer-term or ultimate effect attributable to a program or project, in
contrast with an expected accomplishment and output, which are geared to a shorter
timeframe.
See also: "Effect", "Evaluation", "Ex-post evaluation"

Indicator
A measure, preferably numerical, of a variable that provides a reasonably simple and reliable basis for assessing achievement, change or performance. A unit of information measured over time that can help show changes in a specific condition.
See: "Logical framework", "Results-based management (RBM)", "Methodology form"

Indicator of achievement
Used to measure the extent to which expected accomplishments have been achieved. Indicators correspond to the expected accomplishment for which they are used to measure performance. One expected accomplishment can have multiple indicators.
See also: "Expected accomplishment", "Performance management", " Performance measure"

Indirect effect
The unplanned changes brought about as a result of implementing a program or a project.
See also: "External factor", "Assumption"

Input
Personnel, finance, equipment, knowledge, information and other resources necessary for producing the planned outputs and achieving expected accomplishments.
See also: "Output "

Interim performance measures
Data collected for the indicators of achievement during the short term. They are used as benchmarks to determine whether progress is being made towards the intended results.
See also: "Performance measure", "Baseline", "Target".

Internal evaluation
Evaluation that is managed and/or conducted by entities within the program being evaluated. There are two types of internal evaluation, namely:
(1) Mandatory Internal Evaluation (Self-assessments)
(2) Discretionary Internal Evaluation (Self-evaluation)
See also: "External evaluation", "Self-evaluation", "Mandatory internal evaluation/Self-assessments", "Discretionary internal evaluation/self-evaluation", "Accomplishment account", "Results-based management (RBM)"

In-depth evaluation
Refers to the scope of the evaluation and is not to be considered a category or type of evaluation. Both internal and external evaluation can be "in-depth" when they take a comprehensive and broad-ranging review of the work of a program or organizational entity. In-depth evaluation can be undertaken by external entities or by program managers. The objective is to make recommendations that will help the Senior Managers, to formulate decisions aimed at increasing the overall relevance, effectiveness and impact of the programs of the HNI.
See also: "Evaluation", "External evaluation", "Internal evaluation"

Learning
Reflection on experience and results of monitoring and evaluation to identify how a situation or future actions could be improved and then using this knowledge to make actual improvements. This can be individual or group-based – the latter would be considered "organizational" learning when it transcends the group and becomes part of the corporate knowledge base. Learning involves documenting experiences, the process of synthesis and the application of lessons learned to future actions.
See also: "Feedback", "Best practice"

Lesson learned
Generalization derived from evaluation experiences with programs, projects or policies that is applicable to a generic situation rather than to a specific circumstance and has the potential to improve future actions. A lesson learned summarizes knowledge at a point in time, while learning is an ongoing process.
See also: "Best practice", "Learning"

Logical framework
Management tool (also known as a logframe) used to identify strategic elements of a program or project (objective, expected accomplishments, indicators of achievement, outputs and inputs) and their causal relationships, as well as the assumptions and external factors that may influence success and failure. It facilitates planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a program or project.
See also: "Budget fascicle", "Results-based management (RBM)"

Methodology
A set of analytical methods and techniques appropriate for evaluation of the particular activity. It could also be aimed at collecting the best possible evidence needed to answer the evaluation issues and analytic questions.
See also: "Baseline", "Benchmark", "Data", "Data collection tool", "Indicator", "Terms of reference"

Methodology form
A set of fields developed and incorporated into reportage for each indicator of achievement that allow for program participants to identify and document elements of the indicators that will be measured during the evaluation. The form helps identify data sources, determine data collection and verification methods, fix the periodicity of measurements, create or identify a presentation format and identify external factors that could distort or influence measurements. This should be done early in the design process to ensure proper data collection and reporting of results.

Objective
Description of an overall desired achievement involving a process of change and aimed at meeting certain needs of identified end-users within a given period of time. A good objective meets the criteria of being impact oriented, measurable, time limited, specific and practical. The objective is set at the next higher level than the expected accomplishments.
See also: "Goal", "Expected accomplishment", "Logical framework"

Outcome
A synonym for an accomplishment or a result best represented by a changed human behavior or belief.
See also: "Accomplishment", "Expected accomplishment", "Logical framework", "Result", "Results-based management (RBM)"

Outlier
A subject or other unit of analysis that has extreme values. Usually outliers are excluded from statistical tabulations because they are considered unrepresentative or unreliable.
See also: "Data"

Output
A final product or service delivered by a program or project to end-users, such as reports, publications, servicing of meetings, training, advisory, editorial, translation or security services, which a program is expected to produce in order to achieve its expected accomplishments and objectives. Outputs may be grouped into broader categories.
See also: "Logical framework", "Additional output", "Discretionary action"

Project
Planned activity or a set of planned, interrelated activities designed to achieve certain specific objectives within a given budget, organizational structure and specified time period. See also: "Program"

Project evaluation
Evaluation of an individual project designed to achieve specific objectives within specified resources, in an adopted time span and following an established plan of action, often within the framework of a broader program. The basis of evaluation should be built into the project document.
See also: "Evaluation"

Project document
A formal document covering a project, which sets out, inter alia, the needs, results, outputs, activities, work plan, budget, pertinent background, supporting data and any special arrangements applicable to the execution of the project in question.
See also: "Project evaluation", "Project/Program cycle management"

Proxy indicator
Proxy indicator is used when it is difficult to identify direct indicators to measure the result. Proxies are indicators that may tell us indirectly whether a result has been achieved.
See also: "Indicator of achievement", "Causal relationship", "Indicator", "Data"

Qualitative data
Information that is not easily captured in numerical form (although qualitative data can be quantified). Qualitative data typically consist of words and normally describe people's opinions, knowledge, attitudes or behaviors.
See also: "Data"

Quantitative data
Information measured or measurable by, or concerned with, quantity and expressed in numerical form. Quantitative data typically consists of numbers.
See also: "Data"

Rating system
Forming and validating a judgment on the relevance, performance and success of a program or project through the use of a scale with numeric, alphabetic and/or descriptive codes.
See also: "Data"

Relevance
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.
See also: "Evaluation"

Reliability
Consistency or dependability of data and evaluation judgments, with reference to the quality of the instruments, procedures and analyses used to collect and interpret evaluation data. Evaluation information is reliable when repeated observations using similar instruments under similar conditions produce similar results.
See also: "Evaluation"

Result
The measurable accomplishment/outcome (intended or unintended, positive or negative) of a program or project.
See also: "Accomplishment", "Expected accomplishment", "Outcome", "Effect", "Impact", "Results-based management (RBM)"

Sample
The selection of a representative part of a universe in order to assess parameters or characteristics of that universe. Random sampling is the selection of a group of subjects (the sample) from a larger group (the population or universe), so that each individual or other unit is chosen entirely by chance.
See also: "Universe", "Data"

Self-monitoring
Ongoing assessment by the head of a department or office of the progress in achieving the expected accomplishments and delivery of outputs.
See also "Results-based management (RBM)", "Monitoring"

Stakeholder
Organizations, organizations, groups or individuals who have a direct or indirect role and interest in the objectives and implementation of a program or project and its evaluation. In participatory evaluation, stakeholders assume an increased role in the evaluation process as question-makers, evaluation planners, data gatherers and problem solvers.
See also: "End-user", "Beneficiary"

Survey
Systematic collection of information from defined respondents through the administration of a structured questionnaire in person, by telephone, by mail, or by web. A survey can be administered to the universe of all respondents or to a sample of that universe.
See also: "Sample", "Data"

Synthesis
The process of identifying relationships between variables and aggregating data with a view to reducing complexity and drawing conclusions.
See also: "Data"

Target
A specified objective that indicates the number, timing and location of what is to be achieved.

Target group
The main beneficiaries of a program or project that are expected to gain from the results of that program or project. They are closely related to its impact and relevance.
See also: "End-user", "Beneficiary", "Stakeholder"

Triangulation
The use of three or more methods to conduct an evaluation or substantiate as assessment. By combining multiple data sources or methods evaluators seek to overcome the bias that comes from single informants and single methods.
See also: "Data", "Evaluation", "Bias", "Best practice"

Universe
A group of persons (or other subjects of study) that the evaluation wishes to describe or generalize about. Also called "population".
See also: "Data", "Sample"

Validity
The extent to which the data collection methods or tests accurately measure what they are supposed to. Valid evaluations are ones that take into account all relevant factors, given the whole context of the evaluation, and weigh them appropriately in the process of formulating conclusions and recommendations.
See also: "Data"

Variable
In evaluation, refers to specific characteristics or attributes, such as behaviors, age, or test scores, that are expected to change or vary. For example, the level of adolescent drug use after being exposed to a drug prevention program is one variable that may be examined in an evaluation.
See also: "Methodology form"