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INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION



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evaluation

Review of the Status of Evaluation Recommendations, MAPs and Lessons Learned

Office of Evaluation and Internal Oversight

**OFFICE OF EVALUATION AND INTERNAL OVERSIGHT
INDEPENDENT EVALUATION UNIT**

**Review of
the Status of
Evaluation Recommendations,
MAPs and Lessons Learned**



**UNITED NATIONS
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION**

Vienna, September 2024

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Executive summary

This review provides a comprehensive overview of the Evaluation and Internal Oversight (EIO) Evaluation recommendations, Management Action Plans (MAPs), and Lessons Learned (LL).

It covers 16 strategic and country evaluations and 137 project evaluations conducted by EIO from 2018 to 2023. The purpose of this review is to reveal trends and patterns and to identify areas for improvement pertaining to acceptance, follow-up, and implementation of the evaluation results.

Key Findings

Only 282 out of 830 recommendations were implemented timely. The utilization of Lessons Learned post-issuance is not documented and therefore difficult to assess. This suggests a need for enhanced follow-up mechanisms and the better integration of evaluation insights into operational practice.

Areas for Improvement

- A. Management to institute a robust follow-up system with accountability measures to ensure the timely implementation of evaluation recommendations and Management Action Plans.
- B. Technical Cooperation (TC) Management to mainstream evaluation results into the formulation, appraisal, and approval process to close the gap in organizational learning and enhance the feedback loop.

1. Introduction

1. This report presents a review of the implementation status of evaluation recommendations, Management Action Plans, and a synthesis of Lessons Learned, from EIO evaluations. The review was conducted in line with the approved 2024-2025 EIO Work Plan.
2. In accord with the UNIDO evaluation policy, and priorities of knowledge building and organizational learning, the UNIDO Office of Evaluation and Internal Oversight reports regularly on UNIDO's evaluation activities, covering independent country evaluations, project evaluations, and strategic evaluations.

1.1 Background

3. Since 2020, EIO has required "Management Action Plans" (MAPs) in response to all strategic evaluations' recommendations.
4. For project evaluation recommendations, until 2022, the EIO approach for following up on the status of implementation of recommendations from evaluations had two steps:
 - Directly after the evaluation report was issued, a Management Response Sheet (MRS) was expected to be submitted to indicate acceptance/non-acceptance from relevant business owners.
 - One year later, the MRS was re-submitted to inquire about the current status of implementation (not started / ongoing / implemented).

After that second MRS status input, no further follow-up was conducted.

Since 2023, the MRS has been integrated into the final report, detailing acceptance, actions to be taken, responsible parties, and implementation. Consequently, the follow-up is now based on each recommendation deadline until the recommendation is implemented and closed.

1.2 Review purpose and scope

5. This review constitutes a meta-evaluation to verify the status of the implementation of recommendations issued in the period from 2018 to 2023. Similar reviews were conducted for the periods of 2016-2019¹ and 2017-2018².

¹ "UNIDO key recommendations: Lessons learned and strategic evaluation recommendations from strategic evaluations (2016-2019)", 2020. (available internally)

² "UNIDO evaluation recommendations tracking and database review – 2017-2018 results and analysis", 2019. (available internally)

6. The purpose of this review is to reveal trends and patterns in the data and to identify areas for improvement pertaining to acceptance, follow-up, and implementation of the recommendations and lessons learned.
7. The following data sets were considered:
 - a. Evaluation Recommendations issued from 2018 to 2023 regardless of its status and all other recommendations issued before 2018, where EIO has not received an update on the status of the recommendation.
 - b. Management Action Plans developed by UNIDO management in response to strategic evaluations registered and tracked on the TeamMate audit software platform.
 - c. Lessons Learned issued between 2018 and 2023.

1.3 Methodology

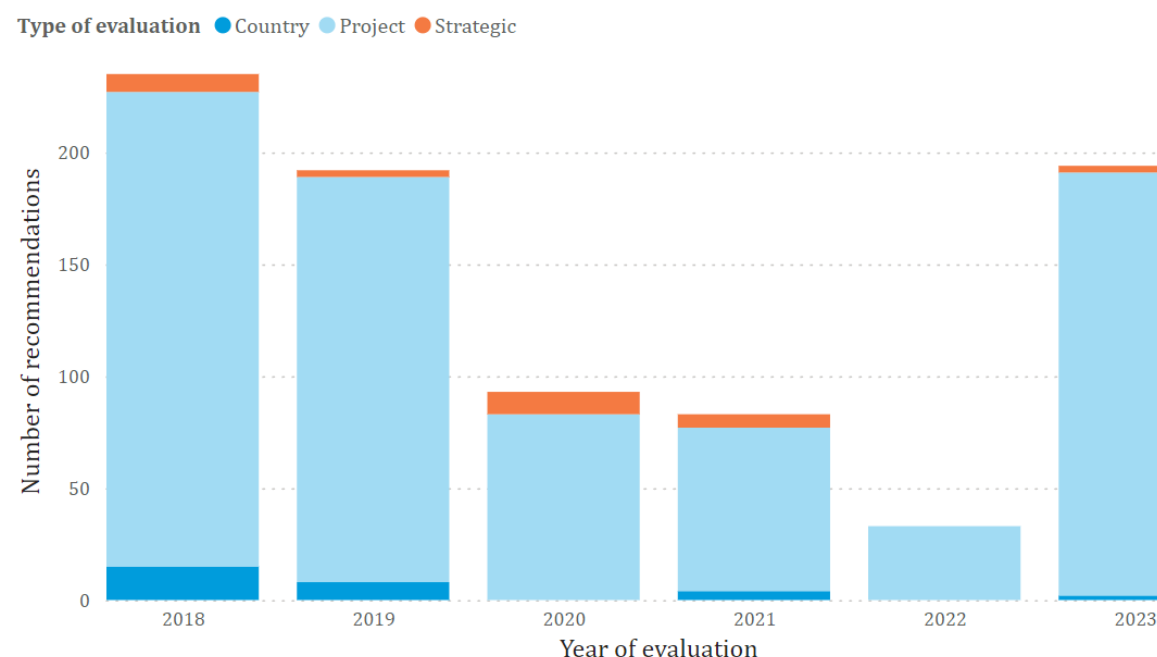
8. This review is based on the data of the following strategic and independent mid-term and final evaluations published from 2018 to 2023:
 - a. 36 evaluations from 2018, of which 3 were strategic.
 - b. 23 evaluations from 2019, of which 2 were strategic.
 - c. 14 evaluations from 2020.
 - d. 20 evaluations from 2021, of which 3 were strategic.
 - e. 16 evaluations from 2022, of which 4 were strategic.
 - f. 44 evaluations from 2023, of which 4 were strategic.
9. Besides assessing the implementation rate of recommendations, these were reviewed from the perspective of the underlying thematic priorities, relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ownership, region, and evaluation type linked with trend analysis.
10. This report also evaluates the implementation rate of recommendations due for closure by the end of April 2024 and reviews the status of Management Action Plans (MAPs). Introduced in 2020 for the country and strategic evaluations, the MAP review aims to analyse implementation rates and statuses, identifying discernible patterns related to types, categories, and user groups.
11. All lessons learned were reviewed from the perspective of their process dimensions, user groups, and SDGs.

2. Evaluation findings

2.1 Review of Recommendations

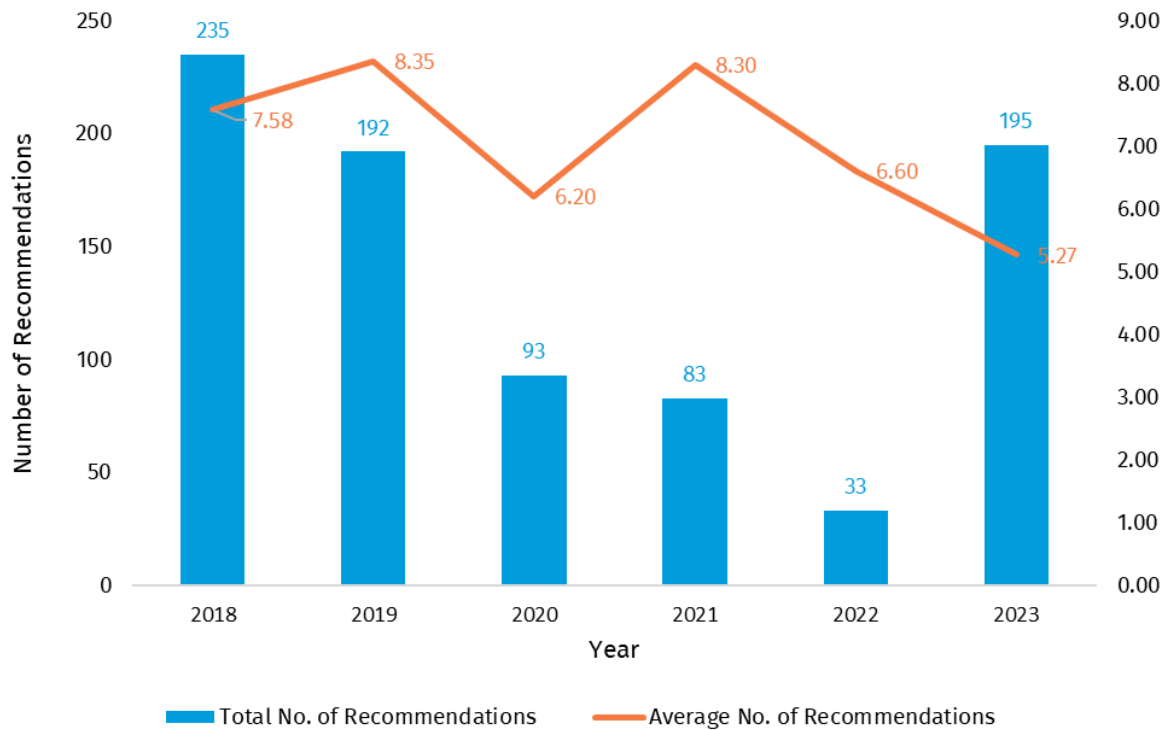
12. Visualizing the issued recommendations by year, a quantity diversion can be observed for the years 2020, 2021, and 2022 which would pertain to the operational challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. As shown in the chart below, UNIDO seized the moment of worldwide challenge and put more emphasis on evaluating strategic aspects of the organization's work. As a result, strategic evaluations accounted for 14 % of the total evaluations during the main pandemic years (2020-2022), compared to 8.7 % during non-pandemic years.

Figure 1. Count of Recommendations by Year of Evaluation.



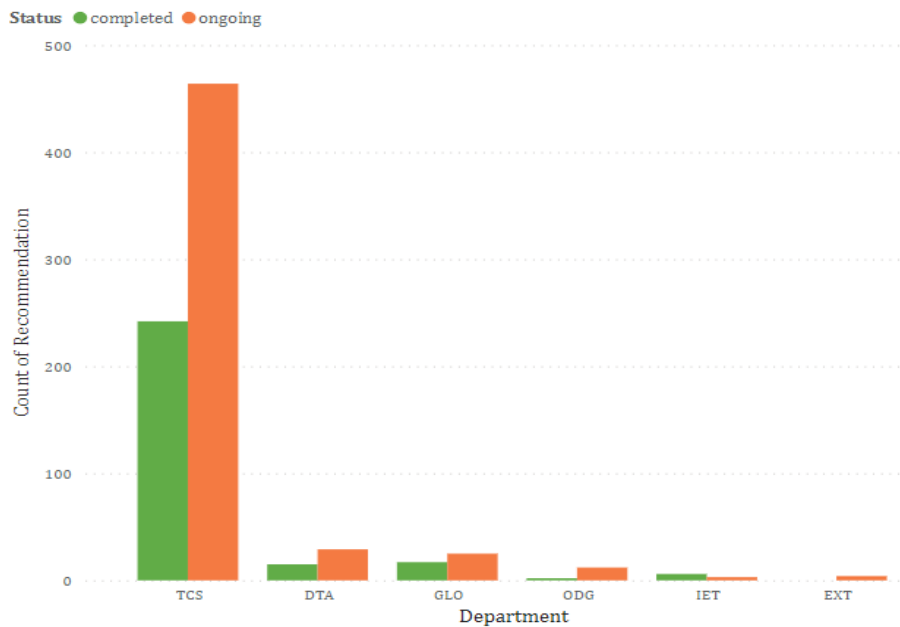
13. Out of 830 recommendations issued from 2018 to 2023, 59 (7.1%) count for country and strategic evaluations. From 2020 onwards, recommendations from strategic evaluations were addressed in the form of Management Action Plans.
14. By April 2024, out of 546 recommendations still due for implementation, for 393 (72%) of the final MRS feedback is overdue and 153 (28%) are ongoing (final input due during the course of 2024).
15. Seen from a reporting perspective, out of 182 evaluation reports published until the end of 2023, 5 reports did not include recommendations.
16. 282 (34%) recommendations out of the total 830 issued from 2018 – 2023 have been implemented, and two have been closed without implementation as stated in the respective MRSs.

Figure 2. Number of Recommendations per Year.



17. Figure 2 describes the correlation between the total recommendations issued per year and the average number of recommendations per report issued. It is observed that the total number of recommendations declined over the six-year period. Starting at 235 recommendations in 2018, there is a sharp decrease to 192 in 2019, followed by a further decrease to 93 in 2020. The number hits its lowest point in 2022 with just 33 recommendations before rising to 195 in 2023.
18. The line graph, which indicates the average number of recommendations, shows a general downward trend from almost eight recommendations per evaluation report to nearing five recommendations in 2023, with a peak of more than eight in 2021.
19. Analysing the reasons behind these fluctuations, we must consider that due to the constraints related to Covid-19, the evaluation function faced a particular challenge in conducting evaluations. The low point in 2022 reflects a shift in the organizational management of evaluations, leading to an increase in the number of projects evaluated in 2023 to address a backlog of issues.
20. Furthermore, from 2023, EIO emphasis was set on reducing the number of recommendations issued per report to focus on the main areas of concern and proper implementation arrangements.

Figure 3. Count of Recommendations by Department and Status.



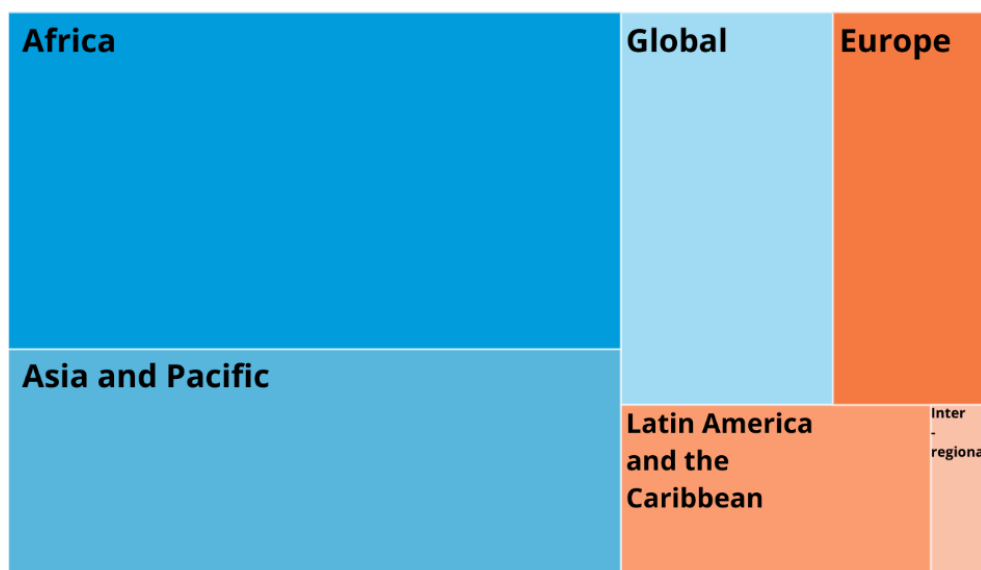
21. As shown in the graph above, the total count of recommendations for ongoing (on-track and feedback-overdue combined) recommendations (546) was higher than for completed ones (282). The Directorate of Technical Cooperation and Sustainable Industrial Development (TCS) accounted for 85% of the total recommendations issued from 2018 to 2023.
22. In a further step, we evaluated which recommendations could stop being tracked despite not being implemented, and which should remain on the implementation radar despite missed target dates and unknown statuses. We have decided to stop tracking all recommendations issued between 2013 and 2017 as they are no longer relevant. A total of 830 recommendations from 2018 to 2023 were analysed and 62 will continue to be tracked as their implementation is ongoing.
23. From the period reviewed (2018 to 2023), IEU decided to stop tracking 331 (84.2%) recommendations that are still registered as ongoing but are in fact overdue. For 150 recommendations, EIO has not received any input from the owners regarding acceptance or non-acceptance. For 181 accepted recommendations, clients did not provide an MRS update within the deadline. Consequently, we have decided to stop tracking these recommendations. Similarly, 58 non-completed recommendations from strategic evaluations issued prior to 2020, for which no final update was received, will no longer be tracked.

Figure 4. Count of Recommendations by Year.

YEAR	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2018 -2023
TOTAL	235	192	93	83	33	194	830
Completed	111	99	19	23	11	19	282
% implementation rate	47.23	51.56	20.43	27.71	33.33	9.79	31.68

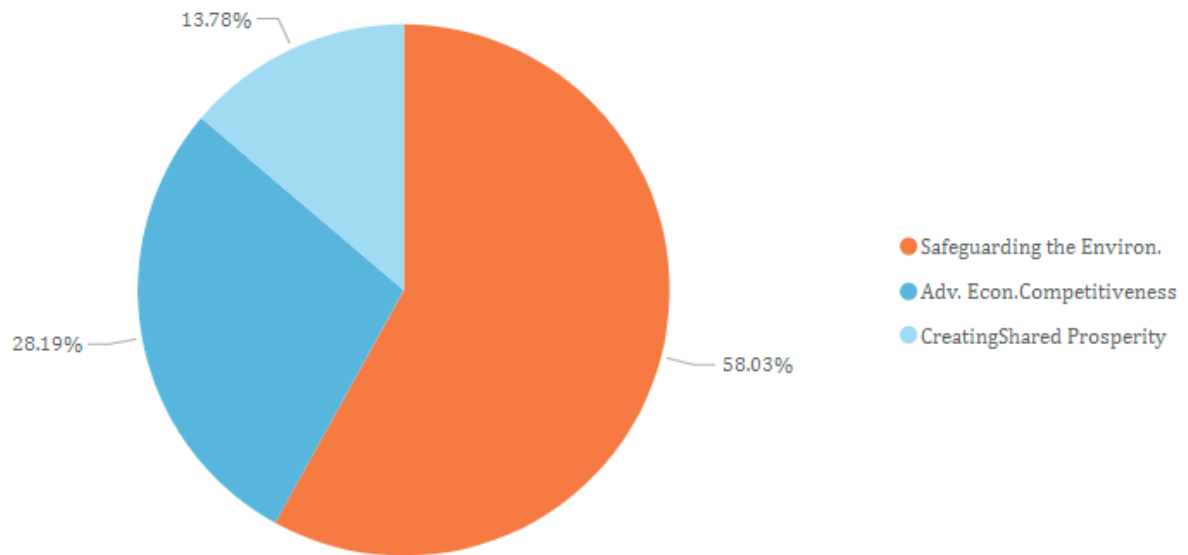
24. The overall implementation rate from 2018 to 2022 is 41,35%, indicating that less than half of the recommendations issued were completed during these years. This trend highlights significant challenges in maintaining consistent and high completion rates over time and calls for a stronger implementation approach and mechanism. Recommendations issued in 2023 are not considered in this rate, as implementation is mostly due in 2024.

Figure 5. Count of Recommendations by Geographical Region.



25. Figure 5 visualises all recommendations issued from 2018 to 2023 by continent. As shown, evaluation projects from Africa, Asia, and the Pacific account for more than half of the total recommendations cohort. Apart from continents, the UNIDO Open Data platform includes project locations as Global and Inter-Regional. Figure 5 does not consider implementation rates. Our database shows, that Latin America and the Caribbean lead the completion rate with 66%. Recommendations issued under the category Inter-regional, e.g. Evaluation on SWITCH-MED, reported a completion rate of 57%, followed by Europe with 46%. Recommendations issued for projects in Africa count an implementation rate of 37%, followed by recommendations addressed globally with 36% (e.g. Evaluation on ITPO programmes, Evaluation on Global Eco-Industrial Parks Programme (GEIPP)), and Asia with 27%.

Figure 6. Distribution of Recommendations by Thematic Area.

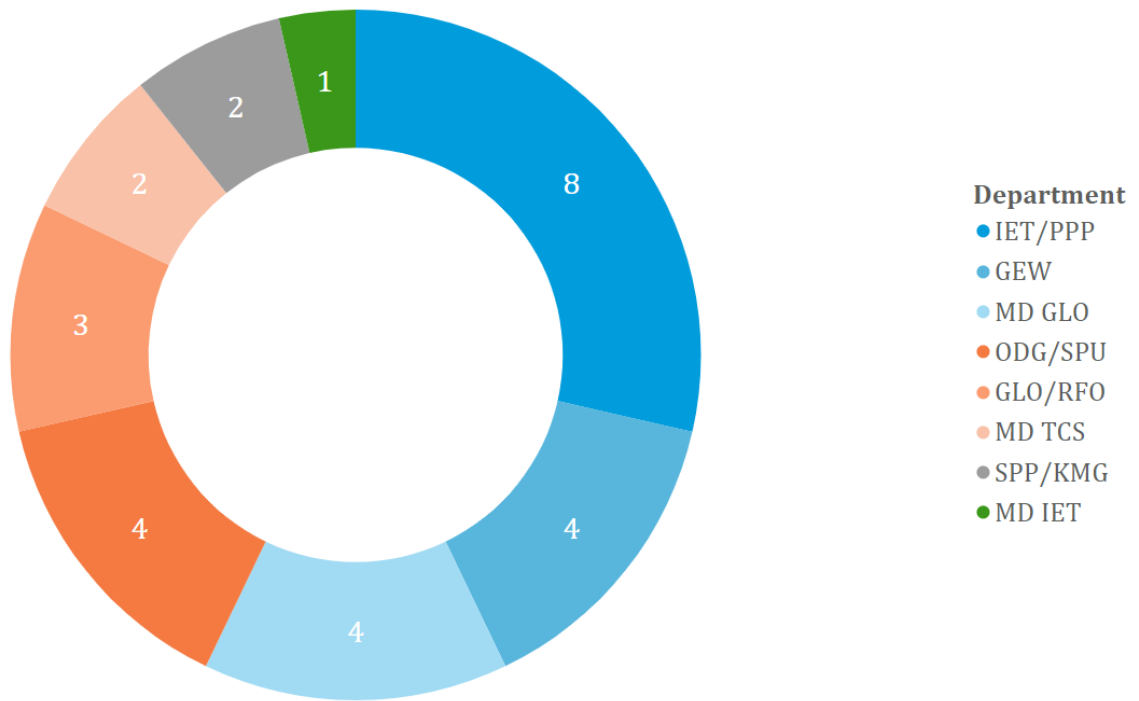


26. UNIDO's project portfolio is distributed in the three thematic priority areas of Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development (ISID): Creating Shared Prosperity, Advancing Economic Competitiveness, and Safeguarding the Environment. Recommendations and lessons learned from 2018 to 2023, focus mainly on supporting the implementation of safeguarding the environment.

2.2 Evaluation Management Action Plans

27. Figure 7 shows a breakdown of the total 28 MAPs by owner, issued since 2018.

Figure 7. Count of Management Action Plans by Department.



28. By August 2024, 6 out of 28 Management Action Plans agreed by management with IEU were implemented. 10 MAPs are overdue in the waiting line for a new owner and target date due to either internal UNIDO restructuring or staff retirement. Another six MAPs are set to be implemented within the current year, and six more in 2025. Due to the ongoing restructuring of the organization, MAP owners often change before the agreed actions can be implemented. Figure 8 summarizes the overall implementation status, Figure 9 details the information on current MAPs.

Figure 8. Management Action Plan Implementation Rate.

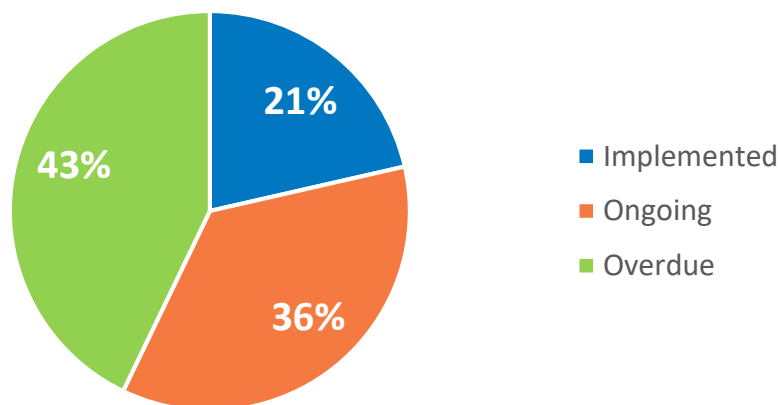


Figure 9. Count of Management Action Plans by Status.

#	Evaluation	Target Date	Status	Owner
Formulation, appraisal, and approval function (2020)				
1	Develop a TC Guidance Framework	Q1 2021	⊖	MD TCS
2	Revised FAA Policy	Q1 2021	⊖	MD TCS
3	Training Programme and Plan	N/A	☑	MD IET
4	RRFP ToRs Update	Q4 2020	⊖ ?	ODG/SPU
Investment and Technology Promotion Offices' Network (2021)				
5	ITPO Network Policy Framework	Q1 2023	⊖ ?	MD GLO
6	ITPO Strategic Plan	Q1 2023	⊖ ?	MD GLO
7	ITPO Work Plan	Q1 2023	⊖ ?	MD GLO
8	Monitoring and Reporting	Q1 2023	⊖ ?	MD GLO
UNIDO Policy (2015) and Strategy (2016-2019) on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (2021)				
9	Acceleration Plan	N/A	☑	GEW
10	GMSB work plan	N/A	☑	GEW
11	Guidance and Tools	N/A	☑	GEW
12	Training Programme	N/A	☑	GEW
Independent thematic evaluation. UNIDO medium-term programme framework (MTPF) 2018-2021 (2022)				
13	Operationalisation and alignment with MTPF	Q1 2025	~ ?	ODG/SPU
14	Guidance, tools, and operational issues	Q2 2023	⊖ ?	ODG/SPU
15	Clarify the organizational structure vs. MTPF	Q1 2025	~ ?	ODG/SPU
The Programme for Country Partnership (PCP) in Peru (2023)				
16	Decision on PCP in Peru	N/A	☑	GLO/RFO
Independent Evaluation of the UNIDO PCP Framework (2023)				
17	Harmonize country programmatic approaches and coordination function	Q3 2023	⊖ ?	GLO/RFO
18	Review and formulate an approach for better leveraging Private Sector Partnerships	Q4 2023	⊖ ?	GLO/RFO
Knowledge Management in UNIDO (2024)				
19	Develop a strategic framework for KM	Q2 2024	~	MD COR
20	Develop a KM Policy	Q4 2024	~	MD COR
Private Sector Partnerships (2024)				
21	Engagement Framework	Q4 2025	~	IET/PPP
22	Risk Narrative	Q4 2024	~	IET/PPP
23	Business Partnership Policy	Q3 2025	~	IET/PPP
24	Partnership Culture: Guidelines, Tools, Training	Q4 2025	~	IET/PPP
25	Partnership Focal Point Network	Q4 2025	~	IET/PPP
26	Improved internal & external Communication Strategy	Q4 2024	~	IET/PPP
27	Partnership Engagement Approach	Q4 2024	~	IET/PPP
28	Partner relationship management IT system - CRM tool	Q4 2024	~	IET/PPP

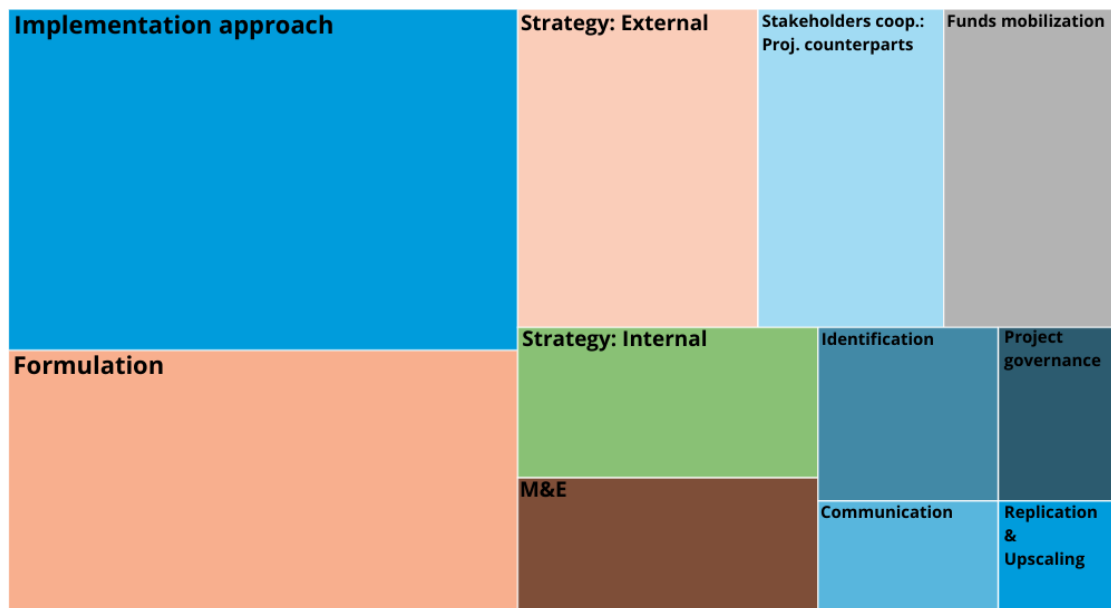
- ☑ Implemented
- ~ Ongoing
- ⊖ Overdue
- ? New owner and/or target date TBC

29. As shown in Chart 8 above, many owners have overdue MAPs by August 2024. The Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women Unit implemented its four MAPs entirely, RFO has closed one of its three MAP responsibilities, and IET implemented one MAP, while eight others from PPP are ongoing. The open MAPs originate from the following strategic evaluations: three from “Formulation, appraisal, and approval function”, four from “Investment and Technology Promotion Offices' Network”, three from “UNIDO medium-term programme framework (MTPF) 2018-2021”, two from “UNIDO PCP Framework”. In 2024, two MAPs for “Knowledge management in UNIDO” and eight for “Private Sector Partnerships” have been added.

2.3 Evaluation Lessons Learned

30. A Lesson Learned is an observation from a project or program experience that offers valuable knowledge by identifying clear causal factors and effects. These insights focus on specific designs, activities, processes, or decisions and indicate how they can reduce deficiencies or build successful sustainable practices. Within results-based management, lessons learned can help to sharpen management practice, close knowledge gaps, and inform future planning, and policymaking.
31. From 2018 until the end of 2023, a total of 404 lessons learned have been issued, in country, project, and strategic evaluations. Internally, UNIDO IEU categorizes lessons learned into the following process dimensions: internal and external strategy, communication, formulation, funds mobilization, identification, implementation approach, monitoring and evaluation, project governance, stakeholders' cooperation, and upscaling.

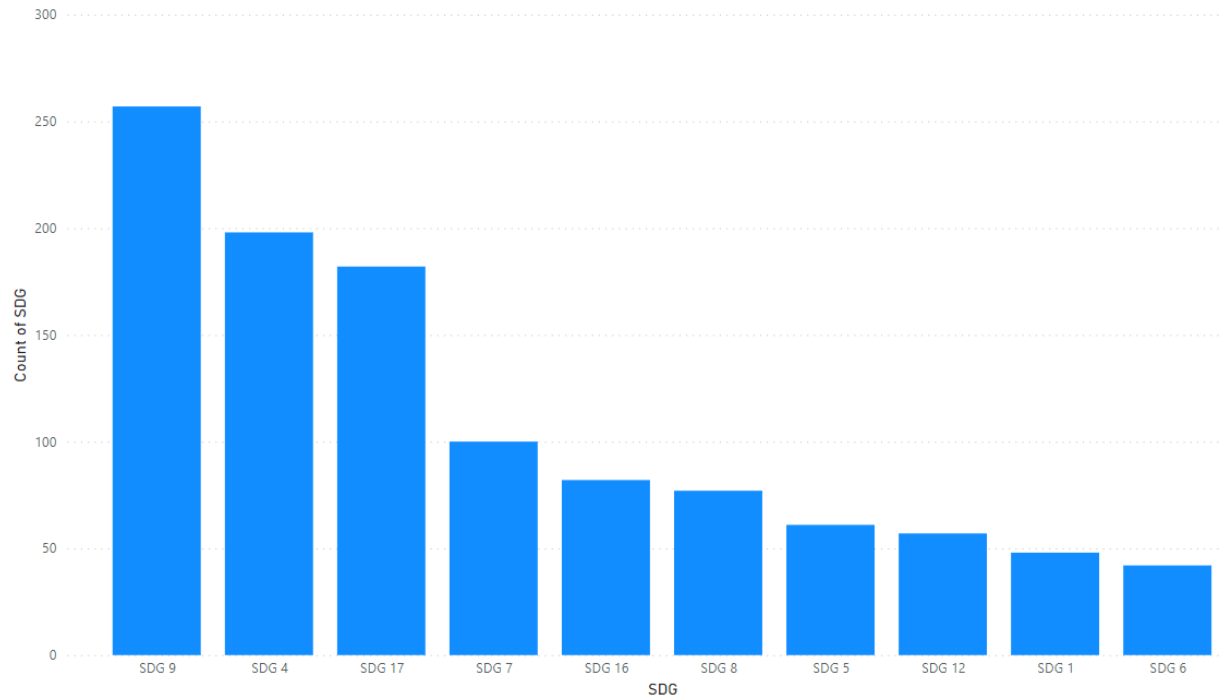
Figure 10. Count of Lessons Learned by Process Dimension.



32. Figure 9 above represents the process dimensions addressed in lessons learned filtered from evaluations. The sizes of the boxes represent the quantity of lessons learned in each category. Most lessons learned related to the “Implementation approach”, indicating that it is a focus area for project management. The “Formulation” was the second group in size, implying it as another critical area recognized during the evaluation process. Further learning importance is set on external project strategy, stakeholders' cooperation – especially project counterparts such as implementing partners, and funds mobilization.
33. Given the emphasis on implementation approach and formulation, it suggests that operational aspects of projects are critical areas for learning for the organization. The presence of lessons in external and internal strategy also indicates that engagement with stakeholders and internal strategy formulation is key for successful project outcomes.

34. The given data implies a balanced focus on improving both external and internal processes.

Figure 11. Count of Lessons Learned by SDG.



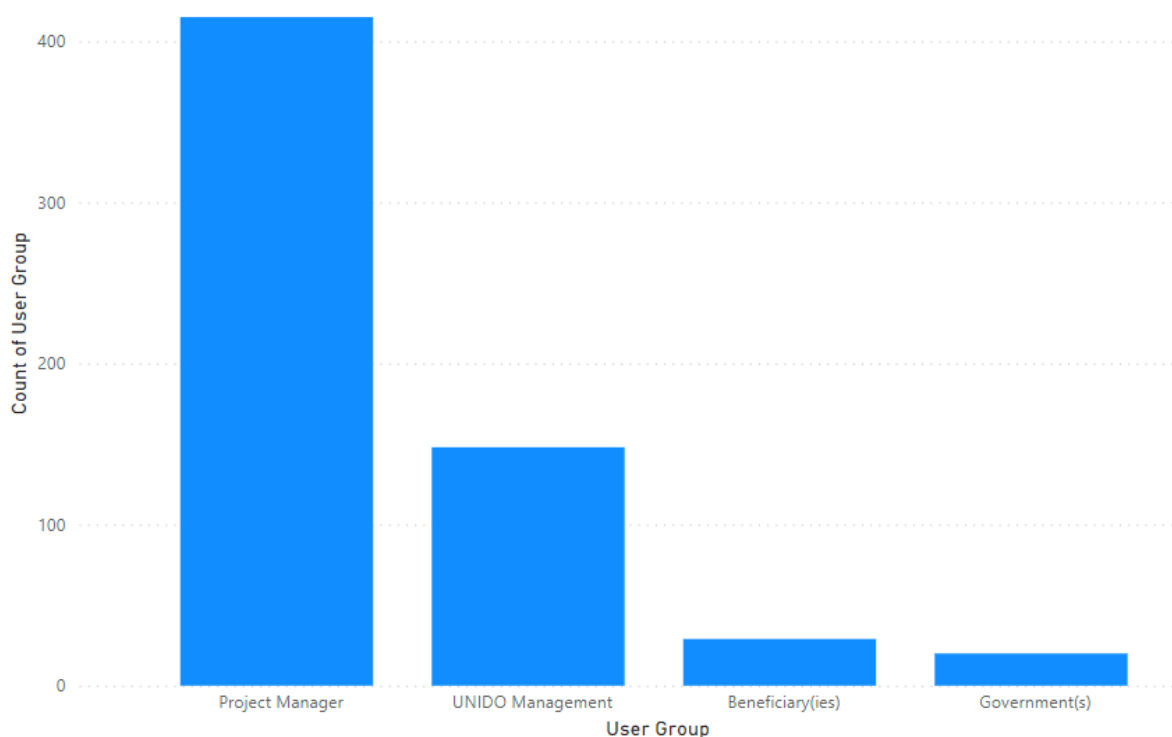
35. Figure 10 visualizes the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to lessons learned from independent evaluation reports. The 'Count of SDGs' on the y-axis represents the number of lessons learned in which the SDG is addressed, while the x-axis lists specific SDGs by order of occurrence. From this chart, we can deduce that SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) has the highest number of mentions, underlining the significant focus on this area in the organizations' lessons learned. SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) also have a high frequency of mentions, suggesting that knowledge and partnerships are prominent themes in the evaluation reports.

36. SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) have a moderate level of mentions, which could point to these areas being regularly but perhaps not predominantly considered in project evaluations.

37. SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 1 (No Poverty), and SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) are mentioned less frequently. Although these areas are addressed, they are less applicable in the context of the evaluations performed.

38. It is important to note that the quantity of lessons learned per SDG indicates the organization's strategic emphasis on specific SDGs. This focus might reflect the organization's strategic priorities and the nature of the projects undertaken during the evaluation period, which were designed and formulated several years prior (e.g., projects evaluated in 2018 were designed around 2015). It also considers global trends and needs at the time of project design, which may require greater attention to particular goals.

Figure 12. Count of Lessons Learned by User Group.



39. The chart above (Figure 11) shows the distribution of lessons learned from independent evaluation reports categorized by their main user groups. The 'Count of User Group' on the y-axis indicates the number of lessons learned, and the x-axis lists the user groups.
40. The Project Managers group has the highest count, with over 350 lessons learned relevant to them. This suggests that project managers are the primary audience for the insights gained from evaluations, likely because they are responsible for the implementation and day-to-day management of projects.
41. The next significant category, with about 150 lessons learned, is for the management of UNIDO. This indicates that a considerable amount of evaluative feedback is relevant for higher-level strategic decisions and organizational improvements.
42. The Beneficiaries (of the implemented UNIDO project) group has a relatively lower count, around 50 lessons learned, indicating that while beneficiaries are considered in the evaluation process, the lessons are less frequently directed towards them. This may indicate that terminal evaluations often lack evidence for direct impact, limiting transferable lessons for these stakeholders. Consequently, UNIDO might need to invest more resources into post-project impact evaluations to gather such evidence. Governments also have a smaller number of lessons learned directed at them, like the beneficiaries group. This may reflect that while government stakeholders are integral to the scale-up of project results and broader impact of projects, the actionable lessons for their direct use are less relevant in a project dimension aspect.

43. The data suggests that UNIDO's evaluations learnings are primarily operational, focusing on project management and organizational strategy. This emphasis is evident in the analysis of lessons learned by process dimension (Fig.9) and aligns with IEU's definition, which highlights preparation, design, and implementation factors affecting performance, outcome, and impact. Consequently, the lower emphasis on beneficiaries and governments is not surprising. To address this, UNIDO may need to alter the current Lessons Learned (LL) process-focus and expand it to include topics relevant to these groups, such as impact, sustainability, and scale-up of results. This could also enhance engagement and communication with both stakeholder types.

3. Conclusions

44. In conclusion, this comprehensive review of the implementation status of the Evaluation recommendations, MAPs, and Lessons Learned reveals a pattern of **dedication to continuous improvement** despite the considerable challenges encountered. The synthesis indicates a proactive stance in aligning with UNIDO's strategic objectives, notably during the unpredictable waves of the global pandemic. However, it also underscores the necessity for heightened rigor in the timely execution of Management Action Plans and the incorporation of Lessons Learned into future project designs. It is commendable that a number of recommendations have been fully implemented, displaying the organization's commitment to enhancing project performance and sustainability. Nevertheless, the persisting **backlog of overdue MAPs and the recommendations without a due status update** invite for an organizational introspection and a recalibrated approach towards a more agile and responsive evaluation mechanism. It is imperative that UNIDO galvanizes its collective efforts, streamlines its processes, and **invests in knowledge management systems** to effectively close the loop of evaluation feedback and to catalyse the transformational change that UNIDO envisages. By doing so, the organization will not only ensure accountability but also foster a culture of reflective practice that embraces both triumphs and trials as essential stepping stones toward the overarching goal of inclusive and sustainable industrial development.
45. MAP implementation rate is very low. The organization has the potential to decrease the implementation timeframe.

4. Annex

4.1 List of internal documents reviewed

- ✓ [2024 Database of Recommendations and Lessons Learned](#) (UNIDO internal access only)
- ✓ Open IEU MAPs as of TeamMate+ software
- ✓ [Lessons learned from evaluations: Search tool](#) (UNIDO internal access only)