

CONCEPTS AND ISSUES IN EVALUATION

1.1 Introduction

The Handbook on Evaluation is intended to be a resource material for capacity development of government agencies in the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, and other organisations engaged in evaluation at state and national level. Considerable literature exists on the subject, which is undergoing rapid transformation continuously, both in conceptual and methodological terms and in application of

technology. This Handbook presents the existing set of resources on knowledge on evaluation and some useful practices in evaluation. The purpose of this Handbook is to introduce the reader to the basic concepts and methodologies used in evaluation in normal settings and guide in accessing more detailed information from the literature including the web resources. The content of this handbook has been drawn from various national and international sources, especially from the United Nations.

1.2 About this Handbook

The objectives of the Handbook on Evaluation include the following:

- To provide a basic understanding of the purposes, processes, norms, standards and guiding principles for planning, monitoring and evaluation;
- Help setting up an effective monitoring system with clear indicators, baselines, and targets;
- Providing knowledge of the essential elements of the evaluation process in general; help developing an evaluation plan;
- To enhance the results-based culture within government agencies and improve the quality of planning, monitoring and evaluation.
- Help managing, designing and conducting quality evaluations; and using evaluation for managing for development results, learning and accountability.



This Handbook is complemented by a Training Manual on Evaluation to serve the purposes of sensitisation and capacity building of the staff of different government agencies. Some of the material in the handbook has been repeated in the Training Manual to ensure consistency and making each of the documents comprehensive yet complementary to each other. Content for the Handbook has been extensively drawn from several documents developed by UN and other national and international agencies, which has been duly acknowledged in references and cited within the handbook. A specialised guide, *Managing Evaluations – A Step by Step Guide*, has also been developed to support government officials in charge of development programmes to commission and manage evaluations.

1.3 What is Evaluation?

Evaluation is very much part of human life and activity. A number of tasks we do in our daily life have an element of evaluation. For example, when we intend to purchase a house, we tend to weigh various parameters like price, location, number of rooms, closeness to facilities like school, market, etc. We weigh various alternatives before we take a decision. This process is very much part of evaluation and is similar to formative evaluation done in the process of evaluation.

There are several systematic methods and approaches developed that can be used to make informed decisions and judgements. Evaluation is undertaken before finalisation of decision, during and after a decision is implemented. A comprehensive evaluation is defined as an evaluation that includes monitoring, process evaluation, cost-benefit evaluation, and impact evaluation.

1.4 Defining Evaluation

Evaluation has been defined by different agencies/ experts differently but with the common underlying theme that it is a 'process undertaken to examine correctness or otherwise of an intervention and its impact'.

The OECD-DAC defined evaluation in simple terms as 'the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results'.

A more elaborate definition is given by UNICEF: 'An evaluation is an assessment, as systematic and impartial as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area, institutional performance. It focuses on expected and achieved accomplishments examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality, in order to understand achievements or the lack thereof. It aims at determining the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the interventions and contributions of key stakeholders. An evaluation should provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable, and useful, enabling the timely incorporation of findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes.'¹

1.5 Uses of Evaluation

Evaluation has several uses and is an important step in improving the projects and programmes of various organisations. The following are the important uses of evaluation:

- ✓ It is a means of problem verification
- ✓ It maximises utilisation of resources
- ✓ It identifies the strengths/weaknesses of the project
- ✓ It provides information for planning and re-planning
- ✓ It provides learning opportunities
- ✓ It provides satisfaction to the various stakeholders
- ✓ It provides an opportunity for problem-solving (strategy modification)
- ✓ It is a basis for maintaining and/or improving the existing strategy
- ✓ It measures the effectiveness of the project/ programme
- ✓ It is a check whether the project was implemented as per the detailed plan/design

¹TOOLKIT ON EVALUATION UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND/ EGYPT COUNTRY OFFICE, November 2008 UNICEF/ ECO/ SPME/2008/ Technical Paper 01/Toolkit UNICEF/ Egypt website: www.unicef.org.egypt

1.6 Evaluation Questions

All evaluators ask some key questions such as:

- Are we doing the right thing?
- Are we doing it right?
- Are there better ways of doing it?

The first question is about examining the rationale of the intervention being evaluated and assessing its relevance. The second question is about examining effectiveness in terms of assessing the results achieved and efficiency in optimising the use of resources.

The third question is for identifying alternatives that can improve interventions. Depending on the stage of implementation of an intervention the following questions are also raised by the key stakeholders:

- Have the objectives/outcomes been met?
- What systems were actually in place?
- How effective were strategies used to implement project activities?
- Were the needs met?
- Have the needs changed?
- What is the level of participation of various stakeholders?
- What lessons have been learned from the project?
- How can we use these lessons to improve the current and future interventions?

1.7 Evaluation Purpose

Defining the *evaluation purpose* is one of the most important tasks in the early stages of the evaluation. A clear and complete statement of purpose helps the formulation of evaluation questions, and makes it easier for external/internal evaluators to produce a study that is relevant, credible and useful.

The key questions relevant for evaluation purpose are:

- Why is the evaluation being conducted and at a particular point in time?
- What information is needed?
- Who will use the information?
- How will the information be used?

The purpose and timing of an evaluation should be determined at the time of developing an evaluation plan. This can be further elaborated at the time of drafting the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the evaluation.

1.8 Evaluation Scope

The *evaluation scope* outlines the boundaries for the evaluation. Defining the scope helps in limiting the evaluation objectives within the defined boundaries.²

The scope defines:

- The unit of analysis for evaluation, such as a system of related programmes, policies or strategies, a single programme involving a cluster of projects, a single project, or a subcomponent or process within a project
- The time period or phase(s) of the implementation
- The funds actually expended vis-a-vis total amount allocated
- The geographical coverage
- The target groups or beneficiaries to be included

1.9 The Objectives of Evaluation

Every evaluation has several *objectives* which are clearly specified in the beginning. These objectives determine the coverage, methodologies adopted, target group, etc.

The following are the standard objectives of an evaluation:

- To improve management of programmes/projects and to ensure optimum use of resources
- To learn from experience and to improve the relevance, methods and outcomes of the programmes
- To strengthen the capacity of government agencies, NGOs and local communities to monitor and evaluate
- To meet the requirements of donors to achieve the agreed upon objectives

²ibid



- To provide information to enhance advocacy for policies, programmes and resources that improve the condition of people and the target group in particular
- To inform policy in the government/organisations
- To learn lessons from the work evaluated that can be applied elsewhere.

The above objectives may, however, differ from project to project based on the context in which the evaluations are designed and conducted.

1.10 Planning

Planning can be defined as the process of setting goals, developing strategies, outlining implementation arrangements and allocating resources to achieve those goals. Planning helps define what an organisation, programme or project aims to achieve and how it will go about it. Having a plan leads to greater effectiveness and efficiency. Planning helps avoiding crises and helps in efficient use of time and resources, both financial and non-financial resources.

1.11 Development Evaluation

Development Evaluation is a systematic evaluation in search for answers about development interventions and can be done at different times in the life cycle of an intervention.³ Development Evaluation, like normal evaluation, involves gathering, analysing, interpreting, and reporting information.

1.12 Performance-Based Evaluation

Performance-based evaluation is an assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of a planned, ongoing, or completed intervention. The aim is to determine the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of a programme, policy, or project so as to incorporate lessons learned into the decision-making process.⁴

1.13 Joint Evaluation⁵

A *joint evaluation* is conducted or sponsored by partner organisations. The aim is to ensure that the evaluation becomes an efficient learning tool, helps promote good governance, focuses on mutual obligations, enables the partners to be fully accountable, and lowers the transaction costs of separate evaluations. A joint evaluation can be methodologically conventional, and is not the same thing as a so-called participatory evaluation, where primary stakeholders and others are actively involved in the evaluation research process. Since a joint evaluation builds on the experiences of several organisations, it is likely to have a wider and, in some cases, more powerful impact than an evaluation commissioned by a single organisation.⁶

There are several variants of joint evaluations which are listed below in brief:

- **Classic joint evaluation:** Participation is open to all stakeholder agencies. All partners participate and contribute actively and on equal terms.
- **Qualified joint evaluation:** Participation is open only to those who qualify – through membership of a certain group (e.g., DAC, EU), or through active participation in the activity that is being evaluated.
- **Hybrid joint evaluation:** A hybrid joint evaluation can include a number of alternative ways of joint working:
 - Responsibilities are delegated to one or more agencies, while others take on a ‘silent partnership’ role.
 - Some components of the evaluation are undertaken jointly while others are delivered separately.

³ibid

⁴IDPET Module

⁵DFID Guidance Evaluation

⁶A useful discussion about joint multi-donor evaluations is provided in the OECD-DAC paper *Effective Practices in Conducting a Multi-Donor Evaluation*. Paris, 2001.

- Various levels of linkage are established between separate but parallel and interrelated evaluations.
- Joint activity means agreeing on a common evaluation framework and the responsibility for implementing individual evaluations is devolved to different partners.
- Research, interviews and team visits are undertaken jointly, but each partner prepares a separate report.

1.14 Internal and External Evaluations

In an external or independent evaluation the evaluators stand outside the evaluated activities and have no stakes in the outcome of the evaluation. An evaluation is regarded as independent when the organisation that formulates the evaluation questions and recruits the evaluators is also independent of the evaluated activity. Independent evaluations are based on a clear and categorical line of demarcation between those who conduct the evaluation and those who are the object of evaluation.

In the internal evaluations, evaluators are organisationally attached to the evaluated activities. In other respects external and internal evaluations tend to be similar. Both are based on a sharp distinction between the evaluators and the evaluated during research and both rely on conventional social science research methods. In internal evaluations, usually there are safeguards protecting the independence and integrity of internal evaluators. Though internal evaluations have less credibility, the internal evaluators tend to have a better understanding of the organisation to be evaluated than their external counterparts.

1.15 Participatory Evaluation

Participatory evaluation represents a further and more radical step away from the model of independent evaluation and is distinct from internal and external evaluation. In participatory evaluation the distinction between expert and layperson, researcher and researched, is deemphasised and redefined. Participatory evaluations are led by professionals as in the case of conventional evaluations but in

the former, evaluators are mainly facilitators and instructors helping others to make the assessment. In the latter, evaluators are hired to assess the merits of the intervention. Participation can be seen as an end in itself, as the right for people to have a voice in matters that significantly affect their interests. Participation helps mobilise local knowledge and makes development efforts more relevant and effective.

1.16 Evaluability Assessment

Evaluability assessment is a brief preliminary study to determine whether an evaluation would be useful and feasible. This type of preliminary study can also help define the purpose of the evaluation, identify what data resources are currently available and accessible, identify key stakeholders and clarify their information needs, and consider different methods for conducting the evaluation. This can save time and help avoid mistakes.

The steps in evaluability assessment can include:

- Reviewing intervention documents
- Identifying any modifications to the intervention
- Interviewing intervention managers and staff about the goals and objectives
- Interviewing stakeholders
- Observing the intervention
- Developing an evaluation model
- Identifying sources of data
- Identifying people and organisations that can implement any possible recommendations from the evaluation.

The Evaluability Assessment can also serve a useful purpose in helping an intervention refocus its goals and develop performance indicators so it will be in a position to be evaluated at a later time.

1.17 Multi-Site Evaluations

Simultaneously evaluating interventions that have been implemented in a variety of locations is called *multi-site evaluations*. This type of evaluation provides information about the overall experience of the intervention as well as a deeper understanding about the variations. Sometimes interventions have different impacts because of differences in the setting, such as

strong intervention leadership or a community with active citizens. Stakeholders' participation is important since they can help the evaluator better understand the local situations.

The advantage of multi-site evaluation is that it is typically a stronger design than an evaluation of a single intervention in a single location. A multi-site evaluation can more credibly generalise across a larger population because it includes a larger sample and more diverse set of intervention situations. Overall findings, as well as consistent findings across interventions, provide stronger evidence of intervention effectiveness. The comparisons of the interventions within their contexts are likely to provide a range of lessons learned and strategies for dealing with a variety of situations. Best practices may also emerge from a multi-site evaluation. Conducting multi-site evaluations poses unique challenges. First, data collection must be as standardised as possible. The same data collected in much the same way is necessary to do meaningful comparisons. This requires well-trained staff, access to all sites, and sufficient information ahead of time to design the data collection instruments. It also assumes that the same data are generally available at every site. In addition, data need to be collected in order to understand differences within each intervention and their communities.

1.18 Cluster Evaluations

Cluster evaluations are similar to multi-site evaluations but the intention is different. Like multi-site evaluations, cluster evaluations focus on interventions that share a common mission, strategy and target population.

However, the evaluation is not intended to determine whether an intervention works or to assure accountability. It does not evaluate the success or failure of individual interventions nor does it identify interventions to be terminated. Its intent is to learn about what happened across the clusters and to ascertain lessons learned. Information is only reported in aggregate so that no one project is identified. Like multi-site evaluations, stakeholder participation is a

key element. Cluster evaluations differ from multi-site evaluations in that cluster evaluations are not concerned with generalisability or replicability. Variation is viewed as positive because individual projects are adjusting to their contexts, and is more focused on learning than drawing overall conclusions about programme quality or value.

While there is no specific methodology, cluster evaluations are more likely to use qualitative approaches to supplement any quantitative data collected. It is possible to think of these as multiple case studies, with sharing of information across cases through networking conferences as a significant characteristic of this approach. Like any evaluation, it is necessary to identify the evaluation questions, determine appropriate measures, develop data collection strategies, analyse and interpret the data and report the findings back to the stakeholders.

1.19 Rapid Assessment

Rapid assessments used in development evaluation, called rapid rural appraisals or participatory rapid assessments, are used to meet the demands for fast and low-cost evaluations mainly in developing countries. For example, the country may lack data to be used for baselines, may not have a complete listing of everyone in the population, may have a low literacy which means that questionnaires cannot be used, and have few trained evaluators. It may take a long time to gather and analyse data that the government has changed and the data are no longer useful.

It is generally described as a bridge between formal and informal data collection or as a 'fairly quick and fairly clean' approach rather than 'quick and dirty'. It is best used when looking at processes and problems.

Generally, it tends to use both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Observation of the intervention within its setting can provide clues as to how well the intervention is working.

Listening skills are essential. A key task is to identify people who have a range of experiences and perspectives, especially those who would most likely be overlooked in an evaluation. A small but highly

diverse group of informants can be very effective in obtaining a holistic view of the situation.

Rapid assessments must use more than one source of information but can use the same data collection and data analysis methods as any other evaluation. Typically, rapid assessments are small in scope: a few people in face-to-face data collection and a few locations.

To the extent that qualitative methods are used, it is important to take very clear and cogent notes. It also helps for the evaluator to maintain a journal to note observations, feelings, hunches, interpretations as well as any incidents that happen during the field visit.

A rapid appraisal is not limited to any particular method, but following a few principles will help. Conduct a review of secondary data before going into the field. Once in the field: observe, converse, and record. Maintain good notes throughout the process; not only for the report, but to help you make sense out of what you are learning.

Some strategies and lessons learned in doing rapid appraisals include:

- Use a diverse, multidisciplinary team
- Recruit both men and women as members of the team
- Recruit insiders, who have familiarity with the intervention and the local area, and outsiders, who will see things fresh
- Use small teams, rather than large teams, to maximise interactions
- Divide time between collecting data and making sense out of it
- Be willing to go where you need to: fields, market places, off the main road
- Be flexible and adaptable since new information can change the evaluation plan

1.20 Mapping

Mapping brings together members of the community in order to better understand the community and how the intervention fits (or does not) within the community. It is a useful tool in participatory evaluation or any approach involving stakeholders

because it provides them with a way to work together. At the same time, it increases everyone's understanding of the community.

The process of mapping is literally about drawing a picture of the community and placing the resources and assets in their locations. While this process probably has more applicability in planning interventions and in engaging citizens in a process that allows them to ultimately create a vision for what they wish to happen and a strategy for change, it can be used in evaluations.

1.21 Social Assessment

A *social assessment* is the main instrument used to ensure social impacts of development projects are taken into account. It is used to understand key social issues and risks and to determine the social impacts on different stakeholders. In particular, social assessments are intended to determine whether the project is likely to cause adverse impacts. Strategies can be put in place to mitigate those adverse impacts and these mitigation strategies can be monitored and assessed as part of the evaluation.

The three pillars of social assessment are:

Social Development Issues

- Identify adverse social impacts
- Assess capacity
- Participation
- Indigenouness, gender, family structures, social relationships

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Mitigation measurement (assessing how well strategies worked that were designed to mitigate any adverse impact of the policy, project, or programme)

Social Assessment Tools and Approaches

- Stakeholder analysis
- Gender analysis
- Participatory Rural Appraisal
- Observation, interviews, focus groups
- Mapping, analysis of tasks, wealth ranking
- Workshops: Objective-oriented project planning



1.22 Evaluation Synthesis

An evaluation synthesis is a useful approach in situations where many other evaluations about a particular intervention have already been done. This might be most useful in looking at similar interventions addressing a similar issue or theme. It is useful when the evaluation seeks to find out the overall effectiveness of an intervention.

The following steps are usually followed for doing an evaluation synthesis:

- Specify the questions
- Gather the studies
- Develop criteria for choosing studies
- Organize and implement a reviewing strategy
- Redetermine the appropriateness of the synthesis method
- Perform the synthesis
- Report the findings

When the results of many studies are combined, it is possible to make general statements about intervention (and even policy) impact. Let's say we find eight studies of a pre-natal intervention that measures birth weight as their outcome measure. Based on our criteria, we include five in the evaluation synthesis. In four of the five studies there is an increase in the birth weight. We would conclude that overall, the pre-natal intervention has a positive impact.

One advantage of an evaluation synthesis is that it uses available research, making it cheaper to do. It also creates a much larger base for making an assessment of intervention impact: more people and more data. It is possible to be fairly confident in making general statements about intervention impact.

The challenges are in the ability to locate all relevant studies and permission to use the data. There is some risk of bias in selecting studies. The criteria for selection must be stated explicitly. An evaluation synthesis can be qualitative as well as quantitative.

1.23 Theory-Based Evaluation⁷

Theory-based evaluation attempts to address the problems associated with evaluating comprehensive, community-based initiatives and others not well suited to statistical analysis of outcomes.

Theory-based evaluation starts with a premise that every social programme is based on a theory which is explicit or implicit. By understanding this theory one can develop a programme logic model which can then become the basis for evaluating medium- and long-term outcomes. Tracking and documenting these outcomes will help the staff assess the impact and even allow staff to modify the theory based on the learnings during its implementation. This approach provides important information and insights in implementing similar other complex initiatives.

Advocates of this theory believe that all outcomes and evaluations may not be amenable to statistical analysis and in such situations by combining outcome data with an understanding of the process that led to those outcomes, we can learn a great deal about the programme's impact and its most influential factors.

1.24 Swot Analysis⁸

A SWOT analysis (Strengths – Weaknesses – Opportunities – Threats) is a strategy analysis tool. It combines the study of the strengths and weaknesses of an organisation, a geographical area, or a sector, with the study of the opportunities and threats to their environment. As such, it is instrumental in development strategy formulation.

The aim of the analysis is to take into account internal and external factors, maximising the potential of strengths and opportunities, while minimising the impact of weaknesses and threats. A SWOT analysis is usually prepared through meetings with the stakeholders or experts concerned with the strategy.

⁷W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Evaluation Handbook 1998

⁸EC, Europe Aid Cooperation Office, (2006), EVALUATION METHODS FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION'S EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE, EVALUATION TOOLS, VOLUME 4, http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/index_en.htm

A SWOT analysis can be used to identify possible strategic approaches. Although originally designed for planning, this tool is used in evaluation to ensure that the implemented strategy is appropriate to the situation described in the analysis. Thus, it may either be used for:

- *Ex ante* evaluations, in order to determine or check strategic approaches (such as in the drafting or evaluation of Country Strategy Programmes)
- Intermediary evaluations, in order to check the relevance of the programmes under evaluation, and if required, their coherence
- *Ex post* evaluations, in order to check the relevance and coherence of the strategy or the programme. Especially if this task was not undertaken during the development of the strategy or the programme

The sequence, and the way to determine and study the four components (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats), may greatly differ.

Study of the Strengths

Strengths are positive internal factors that are controlled by the organisation, or the country, and which provide foundations for the future.

Study of the Weaknesses

In contrast to the strengths, weaknesses are negative internal elements, which are controlled by the organisation, and for which key improvements can be made.

As SWOT analysis is based on the participants' judgement, it is subjective and qualitative by nature. If the study of the strengths and weaknesses needs to be developed, two complementary tools can be used: resources audit and analysis of best practice (comparison within a country between what works and what is lacking, with respect to specific indicators).

Study of the Opportunities

Opportunities are the external positive possibilities which can be taken advantage of in the context of contemporary strengths and weaknesses. They are

often beyond the influence of a country, or at the margins (for example, the evolution of international consumers' taste concerning one of the country's commodities, the improvement of the economy in a 'client' country, the increase of Internet trade).

Study of the Threats

Threats are difficulties, impediments, or external limitations which can prevent or impede the development of a country, or a sector (for example, the industry). Threats are often beyond the influence of a country, or at its margin (for example, consumers avoiding national products which are economically important for the country, large increases in energy prices, general decrease in the development assistance).

The Advantages and Limitations of the SWOT Tool

Advantages

- It quickly underlines the adequacy (or inadequacy) of a strategy, in relation to the problems and issues under consideration.
- In evaluation *ex ante*, it supports decision-making and the incorporation of strategic approaches within the evaluation.

Limitations

- Even when the tool is well conceived, it remains subjective. Consensus should be found prior to completion of the analysis.
- Distinguishing between internal and external factors may sometimes be challenging.
- Similar to all tools that result in a matrix, SWOT analysis is reputed to be simplistic in approach.

1.25 Monitoring

Monitoring and Evaluation can help an organisation to extract, from past and on going activities, relevant information that can subsequently be used as the basis for programmatic fine-tuning, reorientation and planning. Monitoring is by far the most important responsibility of any Programme Manager. Monitoring is part of programme and project management not an addition to it.



Monitoring is important for the following reasons:

- Assesses progress against set objectives/outputs
- Supervises implementation
- Assesses effectiveness of implementation strategies
- Identifies and documents critical milestones
- Identifies new issues and/or unforeseen circumstances that may be obstacles
- Identifies necessary corrective measures (strategy modification)
- Identifies positive aspects of the programme for re-enforcement
- Verifies information first-hand for immediate feedback
- Strengthens relationships between collaborators (funders, implementers, beneficiaries)
- Serves as a motivation to implementers and beneficiaries
- Provides an opportunity to verify whether resources are being used effectively (cost effectiveness)

- Identifies differences between knowledge and practice and aids in planning training accordingly
- Provides updates for stakeholders

Monitoring answers the following questions;

- Are projected outputs being met?
- Are we heading in the right direction?
- Are we in good time?
- Are the indicators appropriate?
- Did we identify the correct problem and has this problem changed?
- Are the intervention strategies appropriate to the target population?
- What can be improved in our project?
- Are we utilising resources efficiently?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of our project?

Following are the monitoring mechanisms generally used in the monitoring process by the management.

General steps for implementing monitoring

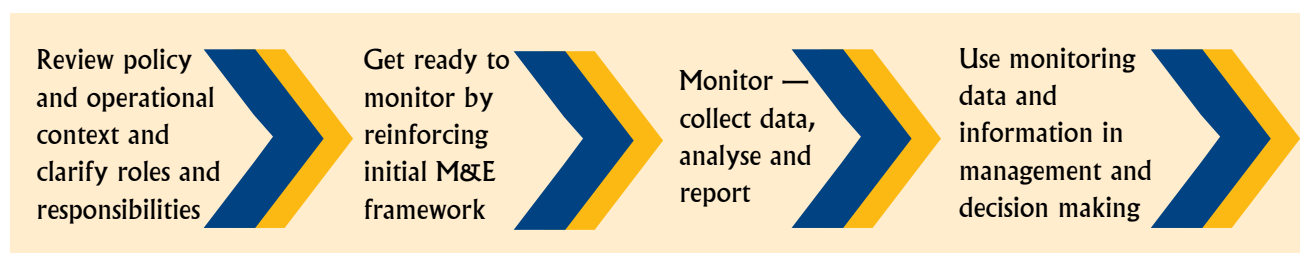


Table 1.1: Selecting the right mix of monitoring mechanisms

Reporting and Analysis	Validation	Participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual project report (APR) ▪ Progress and/or quarterly reports ▪ Work plans ▪ Project/Programme delivery reports and combined delivery reports ▪ Substantive project documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Field visits ▪ Spot-check visits ▪ External assessments/ monitoring ▪ Client surveys ▪ Evaluations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outcome groups ▪ Steering committees/ mechanisms ▪ Stakeholder meetings ▪ Focus group meetings ▪ Annual review
<p>< Learning takes place through all monitoring tools or mechanisms ></p>		

1.26 Monitoring and Evaluation⁹

Monitoring and evaluation are often used together as M&E but they are not the same and are in fact complementary to each other. *Monitoring* is a continuous internal process, conducted by supervisory staff, to check on the progress of development interventions against pre-defined objectives and plans – ‘keeping the ship on course’. *Evaluations* normally take place when a project or programme is midway or has finished. The evaluation will answer specific questions related to the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the completed development activity. Impact is assessed in terms of intended and unintended, positive and negative effects, and whether these can be attributed to the project or other forces operating in the same context. Evaluations uncover wider lessons that can be applied elsewhere. Both monitoring and evaluation are meant to permit more effective decision-making, including decisions to improve, reorient or discontinue the evaluated intervention or policy and decisions about wider organisational strategies or management structures. Monitoring and evaluation create a valid evidence base for making informed programming decisions.

1.27 The Distinction Between M&E and other Oversight Activities

Like monitoring and evaluation, **inspection**, **audit**, **review** and **research** functions are oversight activities, but they each have a distinct focus and role and should not be confused with monitoring and evaluation.

Inspection: Inspection is a general examination of an organisational unit, issue or practice to ascertain the extent it adheres to normative standards, good practices or other criteria and to make recommendations for improvement or corrective action. It is often performed when there is a perceived risk of non-compliance.

Audit: Audit and evaluation again are two distinct functions. Audit is an assessment of the adequacy of management controls to ensure economical and efficient use of resources; the safeguarding of assets; the reliability of financial and other information; the compliance with regulations, rules and established policies; the effectiveness of risk management; and the adequacy of organisational structures, systems and processes. Audit evolves in the structured universe under the control of management; Audit also checks if the results declared by management as achieved were indeed achieved. Evaluation is more closely linked to learning, while audit focuses on compliance. Evaluation engages stakeholders and has to respond to factors of broad socio-political nature.

Reviews and Evaluation: Reviews such as rapid assessments and peer reviews are distinct from evaluation and more closely associated with monitoring. They are periodic or *ad hoc*, often light assessments of the performance of an initiative and do not apply the due process of evaluation or rigour in methodology. Reviews tend to emphasise operational issues. Unlike evaluations conducted by independent evaluators; reviews are often conducted by those internal to the subject or the commissioning organisation.

Research and Evaluation: *Research* is a systematic examination completed to develop or contribute to knowledge of a particular topic. Research can often feed information into evaluations and other assessments but does not normally inform decision-making on its own.¹⁰

While evaluation does use research tools, its utilitarian focus is on results and their relevance. Evaluation should not be perceived as a function seeking theoretical knowledge in the same way as fundamental research does. Evaluation is more about understanding the achievement, relevance and sustainability of impacts and benefits for both the purpose of organisational learning and oversight. Evaluation and research contribute to the knowledge agenda.

⁹ DFID, Guidance on Evaluation and Review for DFID Staff, Evaluation Department, July 2005

¹⁰UNEG, ‘Norms for Evaluation in the UN System’, 2005:<http://www.unevaluation.org/uneqnorms>

Linking Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation:¹¹

Planning is necessary for clear articulation of intended results and means of achieving results from which the need for monitoring arises. Careful monitoring and necessary data collection is a precondition for successful evaluation. Monitoring facilitates evaluation, but evaluation uses additional new data collection and different frameworks for analysis. Monitoring and evaluation of a programme will often lead to changes in programme plans including changes or modifying data collection.

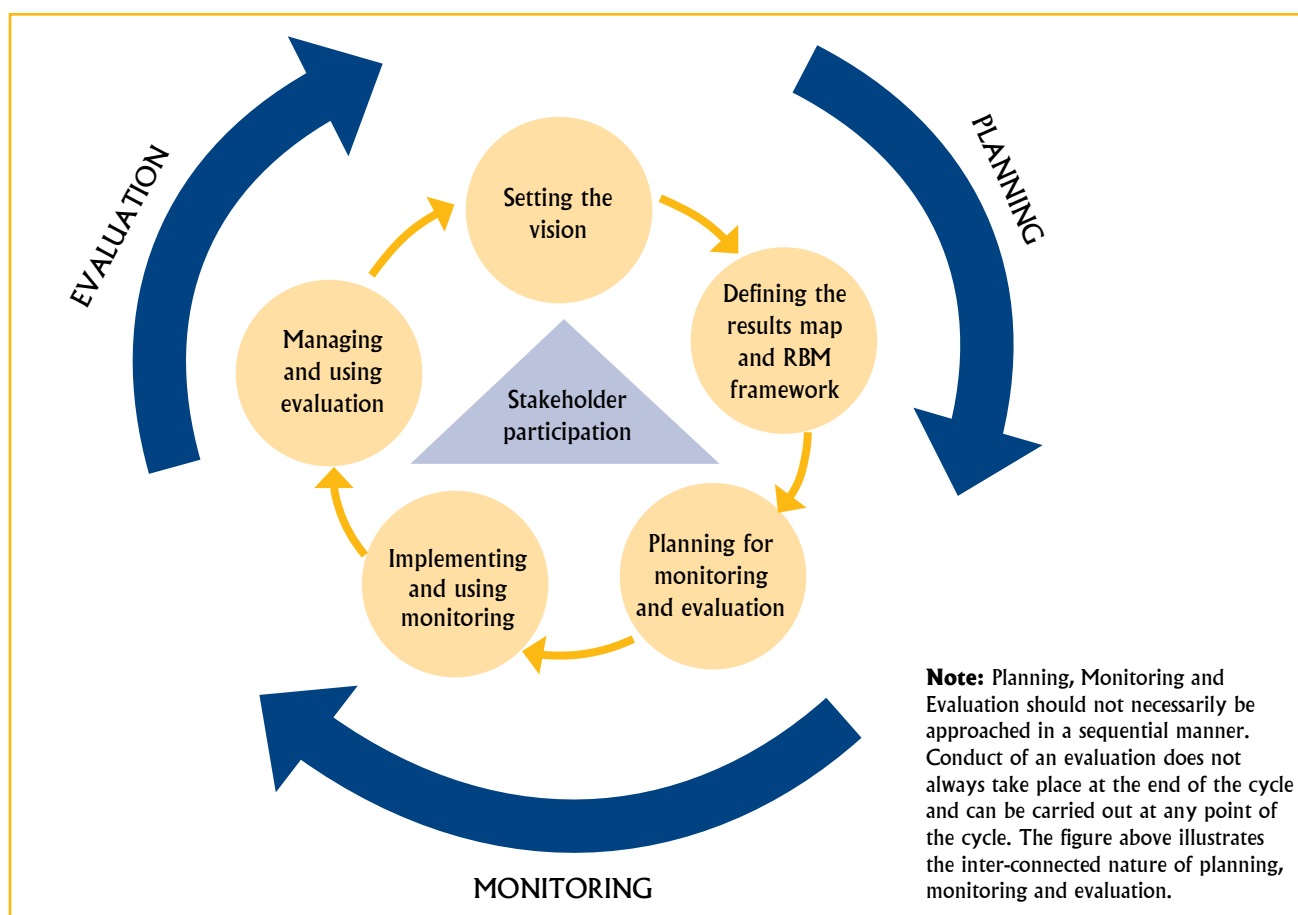
1.28 Results-Based Management (RBM)

In Results-based Management (RBM), planning, monitoring and evaluation come together.¹² RBM is defined as ‘a broad management strategy aimed at achieving improved performance and demonstrable

results’ and has been adopted by many multilateral development organisations, bilateral development agencies and public administrations throughout the world.

Ideal RBM is an ongoing process in that there is constant feedback, learning and improving. Under RBM, existing plans are regularly modified based on the lessons learned through monitoring and evaluation, and future plans are developed based on these lessons. The lessons from monitoring are also discussed periodically and used to inform actions and decisions. Evaluations should be done for programmatic improvements while the programme is still ongoing and also inform the planning of new programmes. This ongoing process of *doing, learning and improving* is what is referred to as the Results-based Management (RBM) Life-cycle Approach.¹³

Figure.1: Results-based Management (RBM) Life-cycle Approach



¹¹Source: Adapted from UNEG, ‘UNEG Training—What a UN Evaluator Needs to Know?’, Module 1, 2008

¹²UNEG, ‘The Role of Evaluation in Results-based Management’, 21 August 2007. Available at:http://www.unevaluation.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=87.

¹³UNDP 2009

1.29 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

The M&E Framework refers to a set of activities/ functions agreed to among the key stakeholders at the end of the planning stage and carried out systematically. This framework serves as a road map for monitoring and evaluation. An M&E Plan clarifies the activities needed to monitor and evaluate, persons responsible for monitoring and evaluation activities, timing of monitoring and evaluation activities, methods to be adopted for M&E, resources required and committed for the purpose.

The need for an M&E framework is recognised in both programmes and projects. Therefore both programmes and projects usually develop M&E frameworks in their planning stages.

The project-level M&E framework should cascade from the programme-level M&E framework and could contain more detailed information on monitoring and evaluation tasks that apply specifically to respective projects. Conversely, the programme-level framework builds upon the project-level frameworks. Monitoring and evaluation activities should be seen as an integral component of programme and project management. They take place throughout the programme and project cycles and should be reviewed and updated regularly.

In general, the **M&E framework** has following components:

1. **Narrative component** – this describes how the partners will undertake monitoring and evaluation and the accountabilities assigned to different individuals and agencies. It also lists the existing monitoring and evaluation capacities and an estimate of the human, financial and material resource requirements for its implementation.
2. **Results framework** – this should be prepared in the planning stage.

3. **Planning matrices for monitoring and evaluation** – these are strategic and consolidate the information required for monitoring and evaluation for easy reference.

Evaluation Culture: Evaluation culture can be described as a set of values and attitudes supporting systematic evaluation to improve the functioning of the organisation on a continuous basis. It is found that very often the evaluation function is weak in organisations, not because of lack of technical capacity, i.e., evaluation practices, but due to a weak evaluation culture.

To strengthen the evaluation culture and function within an organisation, the following enabling elements should be in place:¹⁴

- Leadership should support and commit to evaluation function as a priority strategy for making the organisation efficient, effective and accountable.
- In an organisation undergoing major changes, evaluation is a fundamental function for producing the knowledge needed to support advocacy and social mobilisation.
- Allocation of human and financial resources is important for quality evaluations. Experts suggest that it would be better to focus on a few high-quality evaluations of genuine relevance to an organisation rather than many low-quality evaluations that lie ignored on the desk of some specialised people.
- An organisation that is risk-tolerant encourages innovation and risk-taking. Risk tolerance doesn't mean that the organisation should accept any mistake committed, but that it should allow staff to take calculated risks.

1.30 Cost of Evaluation Programmes

Often at the senior management levels there is a perception that evaluation is expensive and unnecessary as implementers know what is right

¹⁴UNICEF 1999

or wrong with their programme/project with their experience and wisdom. However, in reality, a systematic evaluation, whether internal or external, is much more objective than the subjective perceptions of the individuals whose information/data is not objective. Hence the cost of evaluation needs to be treated as investment rather than a cost. Further, this cost can be tailored to the needs of the programme and availability of resources. Cost of evaluation usually differs due to sample size, complexity of the programme/project, number of outcomes to be evaluated, etc. Use of technology is making evaluations both time- and cost-effective.

1.31 Why is there Resistance to Monitoring and Evaluation?

Usually it is found that there is a resistance to monitoring and evaluation in organisations, including government agencies, for the following reasons:

- Lack of appreciation of the role of monitoring and evaluation
- Fear of finding mistakes
- Fear of failure

- Lack of transparency and accountability by project managers
- Lack of knowledge and skills in monitoring and evaluation
- Cost of re-designing the overall project
- Resistance to change by entire project staff
- People are overwhelmed by more work
- Lack of time
- Restrictive budgets (lack of funds to accommodate monitoring and evaluation)
- Poor project design
- Frequent transfers of implementers
- Fear of piracy by external evaluators
- Stakeholders not asked about evaluation

1.32 Common Challenges in Evaluation

Development evaluations face several challenges. Overcoming these challenges is important to promote evaluation culture in organisations. Following are some of the key challenges to development evaluation and possible approaches and strategies to face these challenges.

Table 1.2: Challenges in evaluation

S.No.	Challenges	Strategies to face the challenges
1	Variation in implementation and environment across different sites	An intervention may have been implemented in quite different ways to suit the different contexts in different geographic areas. It is useful to compare the theories of change for each site. In particular, identify whether different sites are using the same theory about how change happens or whether they are using different change theories altogether (e.g., increasing people’s knowledge about their entitlements to services in one site vs. reducing barriers to service access – such as user fees – through advocacy in another).
2	Heterogeneous impacts	Development interventions may not work equally for all. In addition, the success of an intervention is often affected by the quality of implementation. To check the average effect as well as differential effects it requires gathering evidence about the quality of implementation and data about contextual factors that might affect impacts, including participant characteristics and the implementation environment.
3	Diverse components	A programme might encompass a diverse range of projects, and yet an overall evaluation of the impact of the whole programme is needed. It can be helpful to develop an overall theory of change for the programme, bringing together different components. Sometimes it is possible to do this in the planning stage, but, especially where projects or components have varied over time, this might need to be done retroactively.
4	Long time-scales	Often the intended impacts will not be evident for many years, but evidence is needed to inform decisions before then (e.g., on whether or not to launch a subsequent phase or replicate the model elsewhere). A theory of change can identify intermediate outcomes that might be evident in the life of an evaluation. In some cases, research evidence can be used to fill in later links, and estimate likely impacts given the achievement of intermediate outcomes. Consideration should also be given to the expected trajectory of change – when impacts are likely to be evident.
5	Influence of other programmes and factors	The impacts of development interventions are heavily influenced by the activities of other programmes and other contextual factors that might support or prevent impacts being achieved. For example, cash transfers that are conditional on school attendance will only lead to improved student achievement in situations where schools are teaching students adequately. It is possible to identify these other programmes and contextual factors as part of developing a theory of change, to gather evidence about them and to look for patterns in the data.

S.No.	Challenges	Strategies to face the challenges
6	Resource constraints	Existing evidence (in the form of programme documentation, baseline data and official statistics) may have gaps, and there may be few resources (in terms of funding, staff time or access to specialist technical expertise) to collect the types of evidence needed for quality impact evaluation. For a specific evaluation, when existing evidence is scarce and there are few resources to gather additional evidence, key informant interviews from diverse informants may provide sufficient data, including reconstructing baseline data. Planning ahead for impact evaluation can reduce resource constraints by building in sufficient resources at the design and budgeting stage, and/or strategically allocating evaluation resources across interventions so that they are concentrated more on a smaller number of more comprehensive evaluations of strategically important interventions.
7	Controlling the quality of the evaluation process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide for peer review of evaluation designs and draft evaluation reports ▪ Give staff in the agencies and programmes that have been evaluated the opportunity to respond to draft evaluation findings ▪ Provide for periodic, independent, external reviews of agency's evaluation activities ▪ Regularly review the work of evaluation contractors and provide oversight of evaluation contractors' work, including reviews of evaluation designs and draft evaluation reports. ▪ Place primary responsibility for data quality on the programme managers and staff who oversee data collection
8	Selecting and training evaluators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keep a panel of evaluators and evaluation agencies ready much before evaluation is initiated ▪ Do not compromise on payment of suitable remuneration to the evaluators ▪ Getting skilled, trained evaluators is an important prerequisite for quality evaluations ▪ Programme evaluators most need logical, systematic approaches to their work ▪ Ability to apply such approaches can be found in people with many different backgrounds
9	Maintaining standards and ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure that evaluation criteria are relevant and evaluation findings are available in time ▪ Ensure that their data and conclusions are valid ▪ Determine in advance what requirements apply to a particular evaluation ▪ Informed consent is a useful ethic to be followed in field work

S.No.	Challenges	Strategies to face the challenges
10	Getting evaluation findings used to improve programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make sure that the evaluation findings become available in a timely manner ▪ Involve potential users in developing the evaluation questions ▪ Ask major stakeholders such as programme officials to review an early version of the report with its preliminary findings ▪ For major evaluations, arrange for a prestigious advisory committee that reviews the evaluation design and later the preliminary findings ▪ Make sure the report is well written, is clear, and contains some form of executive summary ▪ Offer briefings on the evaluation findings – both to programme managers and staff members and to other agency officials ▪ When appropriate, offer recommendations or options for redesigning agency management systems or incentive systems, developing agreement on key indicator, or creating performance partnerships ▪ Develop a dissemination plan for use after the report has been released, viz. journal articles, Webinars, op-ed pieces, blogs, and the like ▪ Performance monitoring can and should be considered an important subset of programme. Evaluation information on outcomes from a performance monitoring system often raises questions as to why the outcomes are as good or bad as they are ▪ Availability of regularly collected outcome information also has the potential for encouraging small-scale randomised controlled experiments

(Sources: *Introduction to Impact Evaluation*, Patricia J. Rogers, RMIT University (Australia) and *Better Evaluation; Evaluation South Asia*, UNICEF (2008); *Evaluation Challenges, Issues, and Trends*, Harry P. Hatry, Kathryn E. Newcomer and Joseph S. Wholey)

1.33 Making best use of Evaluation

Evaluations are sometimes feared and avoided for various reasons. One usual point of argument against evaluation is that evaluation diverts resources away from the programme and burdens the programme staff with additional work. It is also argued that evaluation results, if negative, make programmes look bad thus give negative publicity. Further, it is also pointed out that when monitoring is done regularly there is no need for evaluation.

However, in support of evaluation it can be argued that the proportion of resources spent on evaluation is very meagre and the burden on staff is only for a limited period and that too can be minimised if systems are streamlined in the organisations. Further, the shortcomings and gaps identified during evaluation are useful for corrective action and improvement of organisational/programme performance, hence should be welcomed. If the corrective actions are successful they will improve the performance and image of the organisation.

To maximise the benefits from evaluation, organisations need to invest time and effort in planning programmes and integrate evaluation into all ongoing programme activities. Besides, the managers

need to fully involve and show their commitment to evaluation and make it an inclusive exercise by involving everyone in the process.

Box1: Lessons from the OECD-DAC on evaluation

- Base development policy decisions on evidence
- Make learning part of the culture of development co-operation
- Define a clear role for evaluation
- Match ambitions with adequate resources
- Strengthen programme design and management systems
- Ask the right questions and be realistic about expected results
- Choose the right evaluation tools
- Work together
- Help strengthen partner country capacities and use them
- Act on evaluation findings
- Communicate evaluation results effectively
- Evaluate the evaluators

Source: Evaluating Development Activities:12 Lessons from the OECD-DAC, OECD 2013