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| **TOOL SUMMARY: EVALUATION QUESTION GUIDANCE** | |
| **Purpose** | Evaluation questions are developed to help:   1. Ensure that all project stakeholders have an opportunity to express what they would like to learn from the evaluation. 2. Determine evaluation priorities and objectives. 3. Focus the evaluation to ensure that it is feasible to collect the information required to fully answer the questions. 4. Ensure that the evaluator meets complies with the ToR and the needs of the project stakeholders through verification that each question was adequately answered. |
| **Information Sources** | 1. Project stakeholders, in particular project participants 2. Past evaluations of similar projects 3. Progress Reports 4. Visits with the target population 5. Baseline 6. Project proposal 7. OECD-DAC Evaluation Criteria 8. ALNAP Evaluating Humanitarian Action using the OECD-DAC Criteria 9. Project Design Workbook |
| **Who** | The evaluation manager works in a participative manner with the target population, partner and evaluator to establish the project evaluation questions. The process of choosing evaluation questions consists of two stages: brainstorming the possible evaluation questions from various sources and later, selecting the most critical questions that can feasibly be answered.   * The evaluation team (evaluation manager, partner, LWR PM and evaluator) will select from a comprehensive list (possibly generated through a brainstorming process) of the most critical questions that can be feasibly addressed. |
| **When** | For most projects, the evaluation questions are the first step in completing the Evaluation ToR. The evaluation objectives can be used to help create relevant and specific evaluation questions or the questions may assist in more clearly defining the evaluation objectives. Evaluation questions are decided early on in the process and inform the development of the methodology.   * A first draft of evaluation questions can be completed during the PLANNING stages (Detailed M&E Plan) and refined as the project progresses. * Evaluation questions should be finalized and included in the Evaluation ToR. The list of questions will be reviewed and revised in a collaborative process with the evaluation consultant and a final list will be agreed upon with all stakeholders before the de. |
| **Recommendations** | * + - If the process that you are currently using meets your needs, there is no need to make adjustments. However if you would like more guidance to inform your current process, this section provides guidance for identifying and selecting evaluation questions. * Guidance is also provided to evaluation mangers and the evaluation team, through the use of an evaluation question selection matrix, for choosing the most relevant evaluation questions. * The evaluation consultant then has the obligation to answer each question, and if it is not possible to answer all of them then an explanation why should be included as an annex to the evaluation report. |
| **Tips** | * The evaluation questions are an important way to determine if the evaluation consultant fulfills the requirements outlined in the Evaluation TOR.   + The evaluation questions should be linked directly to the purpose/objectives of the evaluation.   + All evaluation questions should be reviewed at each draft of the evaluation report and verified if the evaluation report properly answers each question. If a question is not answered, inform the evaluation consultant so that (s)he provides either an explanation or agrees to provide a more complete answer to the question. * Evaluations should ask both what happened, and why it happened. |

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| 1. BRAINSTORMING EVALUATION QUESTIONS |

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is done to be sure we are including all the various perspectives and dimensions of the project. During this stage, it is important to use various sources to create a list of possible evaluation questions that considers the project evaluation from various perspectives. What follows are possible criteria for choosing evaluation questions. However, depending on the nature of the project and the evaluation, the evaluation team will need to create additional, project specific criteria to the criteria provided here. For example, an evaluation after the first year could likely have different criteria than a final evaluation.

In addition to questions that come from the sources listed in the Tool Summary, also consider assessing the Chart of Suggested Evaluation Questions Table 1. These suggested questions can serve as a guide but the questions chosen by the partner, country teams and evaluator should be project specific.

* + If it is a mid-term/annual evaluation the questions will focus more on the effectiveness of the project so far and determine which changes need to be made.
  + If it is a final evaluation the questions will also look at effectiveness, but will also seek to know the outcomes of the project and draw conclusions about lessons learned.

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| **Table 1.** | **Chart of Suggested Evaluation Questions** |
| **Suggested Criteria (OECD-DAC Criteria)** [[1]](#footnote-1) | **Possible Evaluation Questions** |
| **Relevance/Appropriateness:** is concerned with assessing whether the project is in line with local needs and priorities (as well as donor policy). Appropriateness is the tailoring of humanitarian activities to local needs, increasing ownership, accountability and cost-effectiveness accordingly.[[2]](#footnote-2) | * What is the project’s relevance to the social, economic, political and natural environmental context in which it is operating? * What is the project’s relevance to LWR’s PAZ/ sector strategies (when/if identified)? * What is the project’s relevance to LWR’s Strategic Objectives? |
| **Efficiency:** measures the outputs – qualitative and quantitative – achieved as a result of inputs. This generally requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving an output, to see whether the most efficient approach has been used. | * Was the project implemented precisely as the design specified? Were there deviations that may have jeopardized project performance? Or, if there were deviations were they a logical response to external factors or needed for project success? * Did the project implementation team have sufficient management capacity (organizational, financial, project-focused) to achieve project outcomes? |
| **Effectiveness:** measures the extent to which an activity achieves its purpose, or whether this can be expected to happen on the basis of the outputs. Implicit within the criterion of effectiveness is timeliness. | * How effective was the baseline? * How well did the project meet its indicator targets? * Did the project achieve the outcomes set out in the logframe of the project proposal? (If any) * How effective was the process of accountability to all stakeholders, especially project participants? * How effectively did the project incorporate the most appropriate stakeholder participation? * To what extent does LWR’s accompaniment contribute to project effectiveness? |
| **Impact:** looks at the wider effects of the project – social, economic, technical, and environmental – on individuals, gender- and age-groups, communities and institutions. Impacts can be intended and unintended, positive and negative, macro (sector) and micro (household). | * What were the changes/effects that took place that were specified by the logframe (positive and negative)? * What were the changes/effects that took place that were NOT specified by the logframe (positive and negative)? * What are the perspectives of project participants on the immediate and intermediate effects? Quotes provide important evidence of participant perspectives. * What are the perspectives of partner staff on the immediate and intermediate effects? Quotes provide important evidence of partner perspectives. * What are some additional evaluation questions that will provide the greatest chances for learning from the project? |
| **Sustainability:** looks at the long term effects the project may have on/within the target population. It seeks to determine if the impacts identified are temporary or if they may be sustained in the longer term. | * How well did this project perform against the larger PAZ/sector or program goals? * How did the nature and quality of relationships and partnerships change? * What made the project sustainable? (E.g. structural changes, commitment by participants to continue activities or benefits, new resources, external stakeholder support, enabling policy environment?) * What are some stories that document shifts in power relationships (male-female, LWR-Partner, NGO-community members, government-community, buyers-sellers etc.) as a result of project participation? * What are the perspectives of project participants on the sustainability of the outcomes? Quotes provide important evidence of participant perspectives. * What are the perspectives of partner staff on the sustainability of the outcomes? Quotes provide important evidence of partner perspectives. |
| **Cross Cutting Themes/Additional Evaluation Areas** | * Did the project perform a gender analysis? How effectively did the project implement gender-based programming? * What are other important expected results of the project? (These results should be made explicit during the project design so that an evaluation can fairly assess them.)   + Empowerment?   + Risk management?   + Integration of approaches? Capacity building of partner org/CBO?   + Participation of local government?   + Coordination with peer organizations/CBOs?   + Coordination between field and HQ? |

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| 2. SELECTING EVALUATION QUESTIONS |

After completing the brainstorming process it is important to consider the following questions as they will help ensure the relevancy of the questions, thus reducing the time needed to select the final set of questions.

**1. *Who would use the information? Who wants to know? Who will be upset if this evaluation question is dropped?***Evaluate the importance of the question based on a balance of interests among the partner, LWR, the participants and other stakeholders and how they would use the information. Is this something that the local government office would like to add to its statistical database? How useful is that to participants, the partner and LWR?

* The Evaluation Use Matrix can help answer who are the key evaluation stakeholders and how they will/can use the results from the evaluation.

**2**. ***Would an answer to the question provide information that is already available? Or would the answer tell us something new?***Do we already know the answer through reports and field visits?

***3. Is it important in this case to validate existing data?*** Sometimes the evaluation serves as an opportunity to validate information collected throughout the project’s implementation.

***4. Would the answer to the question yield important information that would influence future decision making?***Important questions are those whose answers will help provide information that might inform decision making. They may address areas that LWR, the partner or the participants consider problematic and with limited resources, would prioritize. In particular, priority should be given to critical questions of continuing importance (PAZ, sector strategy questions). Would the answer to this question be nice to know? Or would it be something we must know?

**5. *Would the scope or comprehensiveness of the evaluation be seriously limited if this question were dropped?***If so, keep it, if possible. On the other hand the evaluator, PM, partner and other stakeholders should consciously consider the issues of breadth versus depth in their selection of evaluation questions.

**6. *Is it feasible to answer this question, given available financial and human resources, time, methods and technology?*** Limited resources may mean many important questions are not able to be answered. Better to eliminate them early rather than become frustrated that it’s not feasible.

**EVALUATION QUESTION SELECTION MATRIX**

The matrix below can help in selecting evaluation questions based on set criteria. The criteria below are only a sample, and if the evaluation manager and the partner have additional criteria they find more appropriate to the project, the most relevant available criteria should be used to make the selection. The number of questions should reflect the scope of the evaluation, or in some cases be used to help determine the scope of the evaluation. Too many questions without adequate time and resources can lead to superficial conclusions. A more exhaustive list of key evaluation questions can be included in the evaluation TOR, however, they should be reduced to the most relevant and most feasible questions during the finalization of the TOR with the selected evaluation team. The finalized questions will be document as an annex to the Evaluation ToR. (See page 6 of the Evaluation ToR Guidance)

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| **Would the evaluation question…** | **Evaluation Questions**  (Each number below represents the specific questions that are being considered.  If it’s more useful, substitute key words from each question for the numbers provided below.) | | | | | | | | | | |
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **9** | **10** | **11** |
| Be of interest to the partner, LWR, or other key stakeholders? |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Would it reduce present uncertainty? |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Influence decision making by the partner, participants or LWR? |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Be of long-term, not short-term interest? |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| If comprehensiveness is important, would the question be critical to the evaluation’s scope? |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Be answerable in terms of |  | | | | | | | | | | |
| a. Financial and human resources? |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| b. Time? |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| c. Available methods and technology? |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

1. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). 2010. *DAC Guidelines and Reference Series: Quality Standards for Development Evaluation*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. These definitions were borrowed directly from ALNAP-Overseas Development Institute. 2006. *Evaluating humanitarian action using the OECD-DAC Criteria.* London. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)