Evaluation Guidelines

SECOWE

Introduction

The objectives of these guidelines is to set the standards to be followed by SECO evaluations and to support staff from the Directorate of Economic Cooperation and Development (WE) in SECO to plan and undertake evaluations. These guidelines are also a reference for consultants engaged in evaluating WE projects and programs.

Unless specified otherwise, these guidelines use the terminology of the [OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management](#)

These guidelines are complementary to the Evaluation Policy of SECO/WE.

Inventory

1.   Fundamental concepts for evaluation

1.1.   Definition of evaluation

Evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should also provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of both recipients and donors[1].

An evaluation is different from an ex-ante assessment (e.g. appraisal, feasibility study, etc.) in the sense that it is assessing on-going or completed activities. It is also different from monitoring, which is a continuous process to observe or measure progress made in the implementation of a development intervention. Note that monitoring and evaluation are complementary; for example having a sound monitoring system facilitate the evaluation process.

Objectivity, impartiality and accuracy are key for evaluation. In other words, some standards need to be respected for an assessment to be qualified as an evaluation.

Standards for evaluation

Utility
The evaluation is oriented to the information needs of the intended users of the evaluation

Feasibility
The evaluation is conducted in a realistic, well-considered, diplomatic and cost-conscious manner

Propriety
The evaluation is conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of those involved in the evaluation, as well as those affected by its results.

Accuracy
The evaluation produces and disseminates valid and usable information

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The standards above have been elaborated in more details by the evaluation associations. As stated in the Evaluation Policy, SECO expects evaluations of its development interventions to adhere to the following standards:

- The Swiss Evaluation Society (SEVAL) standards in English, German or French

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[1] DAC/OECD Glossary

The SECO Program Officer commissioning and managing the evaluation is responsible for ensuring that these standards are being applied. Although professional evaluators should be familiar with the evaluation standards, remind them of the standards when discussing the contract.

1.2. Purposes of Evaluation

The SECO Evaluation Policy distinguishes two different purposes for an evaluation[3]:

- Accountability - to account for the results achieved with the resources allocated to the development intervention.

- Learning – to learn from experience by understanding whether a development intervention has worked or not and the reasons for its failure or success.

The purpose of the evaluation refers to the rational for doing the evaluation. If the purpose of your evaluation is accountability, this means that you are answering to somebody (your management, the Swiss parliament, the public, etc.) on the results achieved with the resources allocated. If the purpose is learning, you are trying to draw from experience to improve performance. The reason for identifying clearly the purpose of the evaluation is that the organisation of the evaluation will be different if your purpose is accountability or learning. For example, an evaluation focused on accountability is more likely to require a certain degree of independence between the evaluators and the responsible of the development intervention. An evaluation whose primarily focus is learning may require more active participation by stakeholders in order to draw from all experiences.

Please note that the purpose of an evaluation is not the same as the content of the evaluation; in other words, it is not because the purpose of your evaluation is focused on accountability that there will be no learning; idem, an evaluation focused on learning may have to look at the results achieved to understand for example in which conditions a development intervention may work or not.

It is expected that any evaluation whether focused on accountability or on learning will feed into the decision making process. An evaluation can lead to specific decisions on the design or implementation of the development intervention, decisions on whether to stop or continue a development intervention or strategic decisions on a certain types of development interventions (instrument).

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[2] These standards are being applied by the DAC members on a pilot basis for the moment.
[3] These categories correspond to the notions of **formative evaluation** (evaluation intended to improve performance, most often conducted during the implementation phase of the project during the implementation phase of projects or programs) and **summative evaluation** (evaluation conducted at the end of an intervention (or a phase of that intervention to determine the extent to which anticipated outcomes were produced. Summative evaluation is intended to provide information about the worth of the program); cf. OECD/DAC Glossary.

1.3. Categories of evaluations / reviews in SECO/WE

As stated in the Evaluation Policy, SECO/WE distinguish three different types of reviews/evaluations[4]:

- **Independent evaluations** are decided by the Oversight Committee, are commissioned and managed by the Evaluation Officer and are executed by external consultants.

- **External evaluations** are decided by the Head of Divisions, are commissioned and managed by the SECO Program Officer and executed by external consultants.

- **Internal reviews** are decided by the Head of Division and executed by the SECO Program Officer or by the project manager himself.

Classification under these three categories will also be used for evaluations undertaken jointly with other donors or partner organizations. For example, an evaluation undertaken by an independent evaluation unit of a partner organizations would be considered as an independent evaluation. Regarding internal reviews, one should stress that there is a large variety of ways and forms to undertake those reviews, including completion notes prepared by SECO Program Officers and reviews undertaken by the project manager and staff with support by an external consultant. While these guidelines primarily concern evaluation, they may also be used as a reference when undertaking internal reviews, depending on the modalities and content of the internal review. Note also that these guidelines do not apply to completion notes for which specific guidance exists.

As a SECO Program Officer, you will be undertaking either external evaluations or internal reviews. Please note that an internal review is not less valuable than an external evaluation and an external evaluation is not less valuable than an independent evaluation. **They serve different objectives.** You may use an internal review to look in depth at a particular feature of a developmental intervention, to create consensus among project stakeholders when an intervention faces particular problems or to report on the results of an intervention and the lessons learned from the point of view of the program manager. An external evaluation may for example focus more on looking at results achieved through a development intervention or with a certain policy with a view to account for the results achieved and the use of resources.

1.4. Types of evaluations

Understanding the different types of evaluation will help you think and plan more strategically your evaluation. **The main types of evaluations can be classified according to:**

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[4] According to the OECD/DAC Glossary, a **review** is an assessment of the performance of an intervention, periodically or on an ad-hoc basis. The Glossary states that in some cases, **evaluation** may be used for a more comprehensive or in-depth assessment than a review; in other cases, it may also be that reviews and evaluations are used as synonyms. For the purpose of these guidelines, reviews or evaluations cover the same ground, but are distinguished by the responsibilities of those initiating and managing them.

.... the timing in the project cycle

- **Mid-term evaluation** - Evaluation undertaken during the implementation phase of the developmental intervention.

- **Final (or end-of-project) evaluation** – Evaluation undertaken towards the end of the developmental intervention.

- **Ex-post evaluation** – Evaluation undertaken after or long after the development evaluation has been completed.

The timing of the evaluation is going to influence the objectives of your evaluation. A mid-term evaluation will be particularly useful to assess whether a development intervention is being implemented as planned, whether adjustments are required and whether there are factors that are likely to influence the sustainability of the intervention. A final evaluation is very often used to demonstrate results though in fact, in many cases, it can only partially demonstrate those results as the time span for the results of the development intervention to fully take effect is too short, especially at outcome or impact levels (depending of the intervention itself). You may rather use final evaluation to draw on experience to plan a subsequent phase of the project. An ex-post evaluation is particularly appropriate to assess the results at the different levels achieved by a development intervention and its sustainability.

..... the organizations involved in commissioning the evaluation

- **Evaluation mandated by a single donor** – Evaluation conducted by a donor agency.

- **Joint evaluation** – an evaluation jointly conducted by different donor agencies and/or partner organizations.

Your role and work load will be fundamentally different if you are responsible for an evaluation focused on a SECO development intervention, if you are contributing to a joint evaluation between different donor agencies or if you are leading a joint donor evaluation. Think about it when planning the time and resources you will be allocating to this evaluation. As mentioned in the DAC/OECD Evaluation Glossary, there are various degrees of jointness, depending on the extent to which individual organizations co-operate in the evaluation process. Co-financed programs, sectoral programs or general budget support programs are particularly appropriate for joint evaluations. For those embarking in a joint evaluation, it may be useful to have a look at the [Guidance for Managing Joint Evaluation from the OECD/DAC Evaluation Series](#).

A SECO evaluation does not preclude consultation of other stakeholders on the evaluation design and process. For example, if the COOF has been involved in the follow-up of the project, it should also be involved in the planning and discussion of the evaluation. The same is true for other key partners and stakeholders in the intervention.

... the focus of the evaluation

- **Process evaluation** – Evaluation of the internal dynamics of implementing organizations, their policy instruments, their service delivery mechanisms, their management practices, and the linkages among these.

- **Project evaluation** – Evaluation of an individual development intervention designed to achieve specific objectives with specified resources and implementation schedules, often within the scope of a broader program.

- **Program evaluation** – Evaluation of a set of interventions marshalled to attain specific global, regional, country, or sector development objectives.

- **Country Program evaluation** – Evaluation of one or more donor's or agency's portfolio of development interventions, and the assistance strategy behind them, in a partner country.

- **Thematic evaluation** – Evaluation of a selection of development interventions, all of which address a specific development priority that cuts across countries, regions and sectors.

2. Evaluation criteria

The DAC definition of evaluation contains five criteria: relevance, effectiveness efficiency, sustainability and impact.

DAC EVALUATION CRITERIA

Relevance
The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donors' policies.

Effectiveness
The extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.

Efficiency
A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results.

Sustainability
The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed.

Impact
Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.

These criteria can be used for evaluating any form of development intervention, whether a project, a program, a country program, etc. Evaluating a development intervention against these five criteria should provide most of the information needed by a decision maker.

However, a specific evaluation may not need to cover all five criteria, depending on the purpose, the form or the timing of the evaluation. For example, it may be difficult for a final evaluation to assess the sustainability and impact of a development intervention, as this intervention is in the process of being completed. The decision to cover all or just a few criteria must be made explicitly when planning the evaluation.

What is exactly meant by relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact ?

2.1. Relevance

The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent
with beneficiaries' requirement, country needs, global priorities and partners'
and donors' policies.

Dimensions of relevance

- Assessing the relevance of a development intervention requires to assess the extent to which it responds to **the needs** and is also consistent with **the priorities, livelihood strategies** and the culture of the main **stakeholders** and **beneficiaries**.

- Relevance involves assessing the consistency of the intervention with **the policies and priorities** of the partner country. This includes looking whether the overall objectives of the intervention are conform to existing policies, whether this policy represents a priority for the partner country and, for intervention targeted to the administration, the extent to which the design of the intervention and its implementation take into account the actual functioning of the administrative system.

- Relevance includes looking at **the technical adequacy** of the intervention, including in relation to the institutional environment.

- Relevance includes assessing the consistency of the development intervention with **SECO/WE strategic orientations**, including the main objectives of the specific instrument used and the country strategy.

- Relevance also involves assessing consistency with **other donors' interventions** (no risk of incoherence or duplication).

Comments

Relevance can also be understood as "are we doing the right thing ?".

Relevance has to be assessed in relation to the design and the implementation of the development intervention.

Given that government policies and priorities may change over time, the assessment of the relevance needs to take into account the changing environment.

Some pilot, innovative development interventions may not be consistent with existing priorities and policies of the beneficiaries, the partner country or the donor organisation. In this case, the evaluation should still assess the extent to which this development intervention responds to a need. In addition and even more importantly, the evaluation must assess whether this innovative intervention can be replicated or expanded. This will be the ultimate test for its relevance.

2.2. Effectiveness

The extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.

Dimensions of effectiveness

- Effectiveness focuses on assessing whether **the intended results** of the development intervention were achieved. Evaluating the effectiveness of an intervention involves understanding how the project contributed to these results, whether it was appropriately designed in relation to the expected results, what were the success factors, what was the weight of external factors, who were the beneficiaries of the intervention, etc. It contributes to institutional learning by making you understand what worked and under which conditions.

- Effectiveness aims at measuring the extents to which the objectives of the development intervention are being achieved, whether **at output, outcome or impact[5] levels**. Due to the difficulty of measuring effectiveness at impact level and depending on the purpose of the evaluation, it may be decided to focus the evaluation on outputs and outcomes only.

- Assessing the effectiveness of an intervention **at output level** requires to examine the extent to which the project/program activities have taken place and produced the expected outputs.

- Assessing the effectiveness of the intervention **at outcome and impact levels** requires a two step approach: (i) measuring the extent to which the objectives have been achieved and (ii) assessing the extent to which the changes can be attributed to the development intervention or to external factors.

Comments

Measuring effectiveness of an intervention requires some information, which is not always given. It is therefore necessary to have a strategy to address the lack of information.
- The program may lack a clear description of expected outputs, outcomes or impact. In this case, it is necessary to reconstruct the program logic of the intervention.
- Data on the situation before or at the beginning of the development intervention may be missing (no baseline) or incomplete. It may be possible in certain cases to reconstruct the data through document analysis (e.g. feasibility study, local statistics) and interviews, but this data may not be exhaustive or lack the necessary degree of precision.
- Data on the situation during implementation and after completion of the development intervention may also be missing, of low quality or incomplete (especially at outcome and impact levels). In this case, data collection may be integrated in the terms of reference of the evaluation.

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[5] The overall goal of the development intervention

2.3. Efficiency

A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results.

Dimensions of efficiency

- Efficiency is a relation between resources allocated to the project and the results achieved. The results are usually measured at output level, as outputs can easily be observed and measured and are in the control of the development intervention.

- Efficiency involves assessing the extent to which the intervention produced the intended results with an economical use of resources. It also involves assessing whether the same outputs could have been achieved with a different and more economical use of resources.

- Efficiency can also entail assessing whether outputs were efficient in achieving the intended outcomes (and ultimately impact).

- When assessing the economical use of resources, due consideration needs to be given to the quality of outputs resulting from the development intervention.

Comments

Measuring efficiency implies that the economic use of resources is assessed in comparison to a certain standard. If for certain projects/programs, such standards may exist (e.g. standard cost of 1 km of road), for many other development interventions, a comparable model does not exist. In this case, some criteria (e.g. cost of experts, overheads, administrative fees, etc.) must be identified and made explicit in the evaluation report when measuring the efficiency of the intervention.

2.4. Sustainability

The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed.

Dimensions of sustainability

- Sustainability looks at the longer-term effects of the development intervention. It assesses the extent to which the effects of the development intervention will continue after the withdrawal of the donor support.

- Sustainability focuses on the effect of the development intervention rather than on the intervention itself. Sustainability of a rehabilitated water supply facility will assess the extent to which beneficiaries continue to have access to clean water some time after the donor support is completed.

- Different time frame apply when assessing sustainability, depending on the development intervention (e.g. capacity-building program versus infrastructure rehabilitation).

- There are different aspects of sustainability, including financial sustainability, institutional sustainability, technological sustainability, etc. These different aspects have to be assessed when looking at the sustainability of an intervention.

Comments

- Sustainability depends to a large extent on the partner country priorities and ownership in relation to the objectives pursued by the development intervention.

- Assessing sustainability of an on-going activity implies focusing on the likelihood that the effects of the intervention will be maintained over time. In most cases, it will be difficult to provide a positive answer at an early stage or before the intervention is completed. It may be more reasonable to focus the assessment on identifying any factors that may put at risk the sustainability of the intervention and when possible, the mitigating measures.

2.5 Impact

Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended,

Dimensions of impact

- Assessing impact involves measuring t**he totality of the effects** brought by a development intervention, including intended and unintended, positive and negative as well as short-term and longer-term effects. It is different from measuring effectiveness which focuses on measuring intended (and therefore positive) results.

- **Unintended effects** are effects that were not planned as a result of the development intervention. They can be positive (e.g. extension of the development intervention to a wider set of beneficiaries) or negative (e.g. environmental damages).

- The qualification of **positive versus negative effects** of an intervention requires a normative judgement. This judgement should be made clear in the evaluation.

- **Assessing impact is particularly difficult**. Identifying unexpected or negative effects of an intervention require some additional research. Baseline data on unexpected or negative effects is usually non-existent and the causality may be even more difficult to establish.

Comments

An evaluation focused on the expected results achieved at impact level is not an impact evaluation. An impact evaluation is a more in-depth assessment, looking at positive and negative, intended and unintended, short-term and long-term effects of a development intervention.

It is expected that only a few impact evaluations will be undertaken on SECO development interventions as such evaluations require important resources for their design and their undertaking. In general, impact evaluation should be considered when there are some questions over the adequacy of the instrument used, when there is strong pressure to assess the totality of the effects of an intervention (positive and negative effects, in particular) or when such an evaluation supports the development of a methodology for the assessment of a specific type of development interventions. It is strongly recommended that the Evaluation Officer be associated in the discussions over the design and undertaking of this type of evaluation, as methodology issues are particularly important for the success of such interventions.

3. The Evaluation Process

The evaluation process described below is typical for an external evaluation of a single development intervention led by a SECO Program Officer. Although processes may be different in case of joint evaluations, this chapter can still be used as a reference for certain key issues (e.g. TORs, reporting, management response, etc.). The same is true for internal reviews.

Annex 1 present a mapping of the main steps of this evaluation process.

3.1. Planning your evaluation strategically

STEP 1
The most important step when initiating an evaluation or a review is to identify its purpose and objectives:

- **If the purpose of the evaluation is lessons learning, then the specific objectives pursued with the evaluation** may be to understand better the extent to which the design or the implementation process of a development intervention have contributed to its success, to identify the failure or success factors, identifying the conditions in which this intervention can be successfully replicated, etc.

- **If the purpose of the evaluation is accountability, then the objectives may be to assess** whether the resources allocated to the intervention have resulted in the planned outputs, outcomes and eventually impacts and whether the resources have been spent efficiently.

The emphasise on the purpose and the specific objectives of the evaluation implies that undertaking an evaluation should not be a mechanical process[6]. Identifying at an early stage the purpose of the evaluation will influence the organisation of your evaluation and the evaluative questions you will include in the terms of reference. There is always a temptation to have the evaluation answering too many purposes or objectives. One should stress that you are unlikely to have sufficient resources for the evaluation to cover everything adequately. A focused and in-depth evaluation may bring more value to you that an all-embracing and superficial evaluation.

Do not use evaluation to promote a hidden agenda. An evaluation should only be initiated when it brings a value-added; in other words, do not plan an evaluation to support a decision you already have taken or to legitimize your views. If at the end of the evaluation process, you come to the conclusion that you already knew everything, then you have just spoiled your time and a significant amount of money.

STEPS 2-4
The identification of the main purpose and the objectives of the evaluation will help you determine **the users of the evaluation, the kind of information needed and the**

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[6] For example, it may not be necessary to have an evaluation just because a phase of the development intervention is closing and new funding is requested.

schedule for the evaluation. Identify the persons/institutions interested in the results of the evaluation so that their needs and interests are taken into account; the users may include the persons making decisions about the future of the object, the persons involved in the implementation of the development intervention or other parties interested in the evaluation such as the public. Narrow down the information that the evaluation will provide. If you try to do everything with a single evaluation and have only a limited budget, you are likely to be disappointed by the results. Demonstrating results of a development intervention or identifying lessons learned require adequate resources if the evaluation is to bring any value-added (that is providing additional information to the monitoring system of the development intervention or identifying lessons other than the ones everybody is aware of). In other words, distinguish between information that is indispensable and information that is nice to have. Note also that the time frame for the evaluation is key if the evaluation is to contribute to the decision making process.

STEP 5

Once these issues are clarified, you should be able to decide whether **an internal review or an external evaluation** is more appropriate. Be always clear what **type of evaluation** you are undertaking (mid-term, final or ex-post evaluation, SECO or joint evaluations, project, program or sector evaluation, etc.), as the type of evaluation is going to determine the scope of the evaluation, your role in the evaluation process or the evaluative questions.

STEP 6

Once you have made up your mind on the type of evaluation, identify **the stakeholders** you will involve in the evaluation process at headquarters or country level and decide how to associate them. Identify the different stakeholders, whether you need differentiated involvement from them and which are the steps in the evaluation process where you will require their involvement. Be aware that the earlier you involve the different stakeholders in the evaluation process, the more likely that they will accept the results of the evaluation. Distinguish between consultation (you will have the final say) and participation (the stakeholders must reach consensus), taking into account the purpose and objectives of your evaluation. Finally, define the modalities (consultation/discussion of documents, country workshop, accompanying group, comments on the draft report, etc.).

The Paris Declaration recognizes the need to associate **partner countries** also in relation to evaluation. A partner in a ministry may have the same interest as the donor agency in assessing the results of an intervention. In addition, in many partner countries, evaluation units are being set up and may constitute valuable partners in the undertaking of independent evaluations.

Check list for the strategic planning of the evaluation

- What is the purpose of the evaluation ?   ⇒ STEP 1
- What are the specific objectives of the evaluation ?   ⇒ STEP 1
- Who is going to use the results of the evaluation ?   ⇒ STEP 2
- What key information should the evaluation provide ? ⇒ STEP 3
- When is the information needed ? ⇒ STEP 4
- What should be the form of the assessment: internal review or external assessment, participatory or expert-driven ? ⇒ STEP 5
- Who are the stakeholders interested in the evaluation process and how should they be involved ?   ⇒ STEP 6

3.2. Preparing the terms of references

The terms of reference are key for **the quality of the evaluation**. If the terms of reference lack clarity, you are unlikely to receive the expected information and recommendations. Therefore, spend sufficient time preparing the terms of reference. A standard format for the terms of reference is strongly recommended (see box below).

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Standard format for the terms of reference

- Title of the evaluation
- Purpose of the evaluation
- Description of the intervention
- Scope and focus of the evaluation (including evaluative questions)
- Evaluation methods and process
- Deliverables
- Schedule
- Evaluation team qualifications
- Budget

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STEP 7 Preparation of TORs should start with **a review of the project/program documents**, in particular revisiting the logic behind the intervention. This should help to understand the intervention itself and its history, including adjustments made in relation to the original design and any implementation issues that may have influenced the results. The review should also enable you to identify the expected results of the development intervention at output, outcome and impact levels (e.g. as laid out in the logframe) and the information available from the monitoring system on these results. Discuss also with other stakeholders who have been involved in the intervention to be sure you did not miss any events or issues that may have influenced the design or implementation of the intervention itself. This document review as well as the preliminary discussions with other stakeholders will enable you to integrate in the TORs all the information required on the intervention as well as to provide adequate briefing to the evaluators, once they are selected.

STEP 8-9 The **scope of the evaluation** will define the intervention that is being evaluated and for which period. The **evaluative questions** will define **the focus of the evaluation**. Spend sufficient time on formulating these questions as they are key for the success of the evaluation. Here are a few tricks: (i) ask only the questions that satisfy the purpose and objectives identified for the evaluation[7], otherwise it will loose its focus (ii) the five criteria – relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact - provide you with a framework to think about the evaluative questions; depending on the purpose of the evaluation, decide whether you need an answer in relation to all of the five criteria or a few of them; (iii) formulate questions that are evaluable; (iv) state you questions as clearly as possible and try to find a balance between asking very specific questions or very vague questions: in the first case, the evaluators capacity to address issues that they may find relevant will be limited; in the second case, the evaluators will have difficulties understanding what information you are looking for.

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[7] Remember : Qui trop embrasse mal étreint.

STEP 10 At this point, you should be able to further specify **the evaluation method and processes.** You should in particular pay attention to the following issues: (i) Is the program logic sufficiently clear or does it need to be reconstructed ? (ii) What is the likely method for this evaluation and what does it involve in terms of data gathering and analysis ? (iii) What information is already available to conduct the evaluation, is any data collection necessary, what is the quality of existing data ? (iv) What will be the evaluation process itself, including for example document reviews, desk studies, missions, case studies in different countries, consultation workshop with main stakeholders, etc ? The clarification of these issues should help you define more precisely the evaluators' tasks, including reconstruction of the program logframe[8], further elaboration on methodological issues, data collection, etc. Finally, while deciding on these issues, make sure that the methods and processes chosen will not unduly burden the interviewed persons and other stakeholder involved in the evaluation process or that they may lead to unethical practices.

STEP 11 Specifying in the TORs **the deliverables** in detail is necessary. Determine whether an inception report is necessary; an inception report can be considered, especially if the evaluation task is large or complex, if you want to be sure the evaluation team has understood the task ahead, if further clarifications on the methodology are required, etc. Also specify when an interim report or case study reports are to be delivered. Examine the extent to which workshops could facilitate the evaluation process. Specify the expected length of the report. Regarding the format of the final report, it is expected that evaluations will respect the following standard structure, unless there are good reasons for not doing so.

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[8] in case of complex programs or in cases of an evaluation covering similar projects in different countries, the program logic may be difficult to reconstruct and the task may therefore been given to the evaluators

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<p align="center" style="color:red; font-style:italic; font-size:1.4em;">Standard Report Structure</p>

- Content page

- Acronyms and abbreviations

- Acknowledgements

- Executive summary

- Introduction
  Purpose and objectives of the evaluation
  Scope of the evaluation, short statement on the evaluation methods used

- Description of the development intervention
  Context of the intervention, including policy and institutional context
  Description of the intervention and the intervention logic and the implementation arrangements

- Findings
  Presentation and interpretation of the factual evidence in relation to the evaluative questions.

- Conclusions
  Assessment by the evaluators of the intervention results against the expected results (as identified at the planning stage or as reconstructed by the evaluators).

- Lessons learned
  Lessons that may have implication for the future of the development intervention or may be relevant for wider application.

- Recommendations
  Proposals for improvements for the client and users of the evaluation.

- Annexes
  TORs,
  List of stakeholders consulted
  Detailed description of the evaluation process and methodology: description of the evaluation process, the methodology used (including any limitations of this method), information sources (including any data issues), stakeholders participation and consultation.

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STEPS 12-13 At this stage, you should be able **to draw a budget (unless a budget is already planned in the project budget) and specify the key dates** of the evaluation process. Evaluator qualifications and use of international versus local consultants should also be specified (see next section).

Finally, note that **the language of the TORs** is going to influence (i) the capacity of the partners to comment on the TORs and (ii) the range of consultants available for the evaluation. It is therefore advisable to draft the TORs in the official language (e.g. Spanish, English or French) of the program/project partners.

STEP 14 **Consultation on the TORs** with your colleagues is always helpful. Consultation of the stakeholders of the development intervention is strongly advised, as this will facilitate the

acceptability of the evaluation results. In case of a development intervention implemented in a country with follow-up by the COOF or the Embassy, a preliminary consultation with these institution is required before approval of the TORs. In the case of joint evaluations, either with donor agencies or partner countries evaluation units, take some time for finding an agreement on the TORs. Final approval of the TORs is the responsibility of the Head of Division.

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Check list for the preparation of the TORs

- Review the project/program documents   ⇒ STEP 7
- Define the scope of the evaluation   ⇒ STEP 8
- Prepare the evaluative questions   ⇒ STEP 9
- Further specify the evaluation methods and processes ⇒ STEP 10
- Define the deliverables ⇒ STEP 11
- Draw the budget ⇒ STEP 12
- Specify the schedule for the evaluation ⇒ STEP 13
- Consult the TORs with your colleagues and others ⇒ STEP 14

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3.3.   Identifying the evaluation team

STEP 15   Once the budget and the TORs are approved, you may start recruiting the evaluation team. Check **procurement rules** as restricted or international bidding may be required depending on the evaluation budget. Be also aware that the best teams of consultants have tight schedules and may not be immediately available for the evaluation.

STEP 16   As mentioned earlier, the TORs should specify clearly **the expected qualifications** of the evaluators, including technical, evaluation and language skills. When deciding upon the qualifications, one need to decide whether technical skills or methodological skills should be recruited. The ideal situation is to combine both by having an evaluation expert that will work on the methodological issues and a technical expert that will bring the knowledge and experience of the subject to be evaluated. However, for budget reasons, it may not always be possible. In this case, take into consideration the purpose of your evaluation: for example, if your evaluation aims at lessons learning, a technical expert may have a comparative advantage over a methodological expert in identifying lessons and drawing recommendations. If the evaluation aims at demonstrating the results, the credibility of the methodology will be key in the demonstration of results. In this case, you may privilege an evaluation expert who already has some experience in assessing similar issues. Another option is to select a technical expert and plan a few days for a methodological expert to help on methodological issues.

STEP 17   Decision on the integration of **international versus local consultants** in the evaluation team has to be made in relation to the desired profile of the evaluation team. The decision regarding the selection of international or local consultants need to take into consideration issues such as the extent to which a highly specialized expertise is required, whether this expertise exists locally and the importance of the knowledge of the local context. Note that this last element, knowledge of the local context, is key for the realism and relevance of the

evaluation: the integration of local consultants in the evaluation team facilitates access to such knowledge.

STEP 18   When recruiting consultants for the evaluation, the knowledge of the Swiss economic cooperation is sometimes considered to be an important selection criteria. However, this criteria is likely to lead to the selection of consultants who are relatively close to SECO/WE – there may therefore be a risk that the consultants will not to be too critical in order to get other contracts in the future or that they may have been involved at one stage or the other in similar interventions. For an external evaluation, **the distance of the consultants** to SECO/WE is essential for the credibility of the results. In addition, the lack of knowledge on the Swiss cooperation can be addressed by adequate briefing. Finally note that international consultants or Swiss consultants working in non-development related fields may instead bring a broader experience or knowledge on the subject evaluated.

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Check list for the selection of the evaluation team

- Check the procurement rules ⇒ STEP 15
- Decide on the balance between technical and methodological skills and specify the required skills ⇒ STEP 16
- Decide on the balance between international and local experts ⇒ STEP 17
- Pay attention to the distance of the consultants to SECO/WE ⇒ STEP 18

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3.4.   Launching and organising the evaluation

Once the team is recruited, the briefing of the evaluators and the organization of the logistics are important for a smooth and timely evaluation process

STEP 19-21 The **briefing session** is an important moment in the evaluation process. Prepare it before hand to be sure that the key information will be provided to the evaluators. **Documents** on the development intervention, general documents on SECO/WE and an open list of key people to interview should in particular be prepared. Discuss at length with the evaluators **the terms of reference** to make sure that there is a clear understanding of what is expected. If there are any sensitive issues linked to this evaluation, it is the moment to address them.

STEP 22   The briefing session is also an important moment to recall **the ethical principles** to be followed by the evaluators, including sensitivity to gender, beliefs, manners and customs of all stakeholders, protection of rights and welfare of participants in the evaluation, anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. The evaluation itself must be conducted with integrity and honesty and evaluation team members should have the opportunity to dissociate themselves from particular judgements and recommendations – any unresolved differences of opinion within the team should be acknowledged in the report. More information on ethic standards can be found in [SEVAL Standards](#).

STEP 23 Discuss **the logistics** to clarify your role and that of others in the logistics arrangements. Specify the mission dates of the consultants and check with the COOF and the Embassy whether these missions dates are suitable (e.g. certain countries have non-mission period). Make it clear to the evaluators that they are working as a team.

3.5. The evaluation is taking place

Relax…. the evaluation team must be able to work freely and without interference. But be there in case there are some clarifications required by the evaluators or some logistical support is needed.
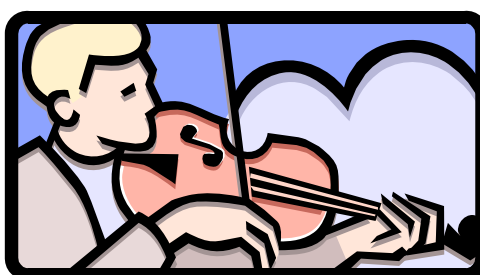
3.6. Commenting the draft report and receiving the final report

STEP 24 Before commenting the report, **distribute** it to other persons in SECO who will be also providing comments. Fix an early deadline for receiving their comments so that you will have sufficient time to provide the evaluators with a consolidated version of the comments. As the SECO Program Officer in charge of the evaluation, you are the one responsible for the quality of the comments provided to the evaluators. Clarify also with the evaluators (if not specified in the TORs) to which other stakeholders they should send the draft report for comments.

STEP 25 **Commenting the draft report** is key for the quality of the evaluation, but must be done in a way that does not influence the evaluators' judgement on the subject evaluated and thereby jeopardize their independence. Three main aspects of the draft report should be commented.

1. Is the report presented in adequate format, language and style ?

The report should be well structured to enable the reader to find the key information. The executive summary should provide an overview of the report, highlighting the main conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned. The report should also be concisely- and well-written with a logical flow. The language should be

precise, neutral and readily understandable to the intended readers of the report. Sources of information should be indicated.

2. Does the report answer the questions of the TORs?

Remember that many people will only be reading the executive summary, so its quality is essential. The executive summary should in particular provide a clear understanding of what has been learned from the evaluation, including the main findings, conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations.

For the core report, the sections on findings, conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations are the core of the report. The findings section is where the factual evidence in relation to the evaluative questions is presented. The evidence needs to be organized and analyzed – presenting the factual evidence is not about throwing around raw data. The findings should include a balanced presentation of strengths and weaknesses so as to provide a complete and fair assessment of the development intervention. The conclusions should clearly draw on the findings and evidence presented in the report. Any value judgement made by the evaluators must be clearly explained and the standards used to judge the results must be made explicit. The recommendations should be actionable proposals. A specific effort should be made so generalization of conclusions contribute to realistic lessons learned applicable for wider use. Finally, the recommendations of the report should be limited in number, clear and feasible. Contextual factors should be taken into account across the findings, conclusions, lessons learned and particularly recommendations, if the evaluation is to be realistic.

3. Are there any factual errors?

It is important to bring to the attention of the evaluators any factual error that you may have identified. Differentiate between factual errors and differences in judgements.

If your comments change fundamentally the draft report, ask the evaluators for a new revised draft, so that you can further comment it and be sure that the report will meet your expectations at the end of the process.

STEP 26 Once you receive **the final report**, check again its quality and verify that your comments have been integrated as appropriate.

3.7. Preparing the management response

STEP 27 As stated in SECO/WE Evaluation Policy, **a management response** should be prepared as soon as the final evaluation report is received. Don't wait too long or the management

response will no longer be relevant. In case of joint evaluations with other donors, a joint management response should be prepared.

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Why prepare a management response ?

A management response creates transparency by stating which recommendations are considered relevant and useful by SECO/WE. This is particularly important:

- **For the institutional memory in SECO/WE** – Even if you know why you are not retaining certain recommendations, it will be helpful for your successor to understand why certain recommendations were not considered relevant and therefore not implemented.
- **For the other stakeholders involved in the intervention** – It helps them to understand the position of the funding agency.
- **For SECO management** – It enables management to have a clear vision on the position of the division regarding the accuracy of the evaluation or the recommendations made by the evaluators and judge whether they agree with one or the other.
- **In Switzerland, for the public, academic institutions, parliamentarians and other interested stakeholders –** It shows that evaluations are not just done for a legitimization purpose but that they are useful and used by the public administration.

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The management response should have **three parts**:
- (i) an overall statement regarding the evaluation itself, especially its accuracy and usefulness
- (ii) a statement on the most important recommendations in management's views;
- (iii) a response for each of the recommendations made, including an indication of the timetable for the implementation of the recommendations (can be included in an annex). If certain recommendations are rejected or implemented in a different manner, the management response should specify the reasons for doing so.

The management response is **a SECO position**. It does not preclude you from consulting other interested stakeholders when preparing it, as it will facilitate the subsequent implementation of recommendations. The COOF or the Embassy should be consulted in the preparation of the management response, if it is involved in the implementation of the operation.

STEP 28 he management response should be signed:
- By the Head of Division for evaluations on development intervention in his/her area of responsibility;
- By the Head of Operations for evaluations on development interventions involving different operational divisions;
- By the Head of WE for major thematic or country program evaluations.

3.8. Disseminating the evaluation

STEP 29-31 Although this is the last step of the evaluation process, dissemination of the evaluation and the management response should be thought through at an early stage, as a successful **dissemination strategy** is likely to increase the likelihood of the use of the evaluation results. Be aware that dissemination is not limited to the distribution of the report, but that there are a variety of approaches that can support the dissemination and use of the results. These include dissemination workshops, conferences or information to media. Think how you can use subsequent missions or meetings to discuss the findings and recommendations of the evaluation. Depending on the evaluation, it may make sense to ask the evaluators to support or follow the implementation of the recommendations. If you feel this evaluation is particularly rich in terms of information and lessons learned, organize a BBL with the colleagues of your division, other WE divisions, the Evaluation Officer or SDC colleagues.

There is no standard list for the distribution of the report (and the management response) and the distribution can be made on paper or by email. You need to send the report at least to the stakeholders of the evaluated intervention, your head of division and the SECO/WE evaluation officer. Think also about sending the evaluation to other colleagues in other donor agencies who are working on related topics.

STEP 32 External evaluations and management responses should be made available on SECO internet. It is the responsibility of the Evaluation Officer to post the evaluation reports and the related management response on the internet. In case, the Head of Division requests an exception for the publication of the evaluation report, a decision will be taken by Management, following a discussion with the Head of Division, the Evaluation Officer and Management. Regarding posting of evaluations undertaken by partner organizations, a reference to their website will be made.

The End......

Annex 1 – Overview of the main steps of the evaluation process

| *Planning your evaluation strategically* | → | *Prepare the terms of reference* | → | *Identify the evaluation team* | → | *Launch and organise the evaluation* | → | *Comment the draft report* | → | *Prepare the management response* | → | *Disseminate the report* |

STEP 1
Define the purpose and the objectives of the evaluation

STEP 2
Identify the users of the evaluation

STEP 3
Define the information that the evaluation will need to provide

STEP 4
Specify the schedule for the evaluation

STEP 5
Decide the type of evaluation (incl. internal review or external evaluation

STEP 6
Identify the stakeholders in the evaluation process, including in relation to the partner countries

STEP 7
Review the project / program documents

STEP 8
Define the scope of the evaluation

STEP 9
Prepare the evaluative questions

STEP 10
Further specify the evaluation methods and

STEP 11
Define the deliverables

STEP 12
Draw the budget

STEP 13
Specify the schedules of the evaluation

STEP 14
Consult you colleagues and others

STEP 15
Check procurement rules

STEP 16
Define the expected qualification of the team members, including the balance between technical and methodological skills

STEP 17
Decide on the balance between international versus local consultants

STEP 18
Pay attention to the distance of the consultant to SECO/WE

STEP 19
Organise your briefing session

STEP 20
Prepare the documents

STEP 21
Discuss the terms of references with the evaluators

STEP 22
Recall the ethical principles to be followed

STEP 23
Discuss the logistics

STEP 24
Distribute the draft report for comments

STEP 25
Comment the draft report

STEP 26
Check that your comments have been integrated in the final report

STEP 27
Prepare the management response

STEP 28
Have the management response signed

STEP 29
Think strategically about dissemination

STEP 30
Distribute the draft report

STEP 31
Send the report to the Evaluation Officer

STEP 32
The evaluation report is posted on internet