Evaluations during COVID-19

Adjusted Terms of Reference   (June 2020)

This is an *adjusted standard term of reference for evaluations in UNDP, taking into account the impact of COVID-19* on evaluations, including consideration for COVID-19 situation assessment within countries, impact and restrictions on evaluations, alternative approaches, methodologies and considerations to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on evaluations.

The original guidance can be found in Section 4 of the UNDP evaluation guidance, page 12.

Underlying this guidance is a principle of "do no harm", and a consideration that the safety of staff, consultants, stakeholders and communities is paramount and the primary concern of all when planning and implementing evaluations during the COVID-19 crisis.

1. **Background and context.** This section states clearly what is being evaluated and should concisely detail social, economic, political, geographic and demographic factors at the time of the evaluation (and not only at the time of programme/ project design); addresses what the evaluation aims to achieve and whom it will serve; and details the main achievements/results/issues of the project under evaluation. The TOR should also specify the evaluation approach that is being commissioned.

    NOTE: Include details (a paragraph) on the impact of COVID-19 both on the country as a whole (number of cases, deaths, lockdown dates etc.) as well as the impact on the implementation of the project/ programme/ outcome being evaluated, if any.

2. **Evaluation purpose, scope and objectives.** These detail why the evaluation is being conducted, who will use or act on the evaluation findings and recommendations, and how they will use or act on the results. The scope and objective give the parameters and focus of the evaluation. Gender equality and women's empowerment and other cross-cutting issues need to be included in the scope of the evaluation.

    NOTE: Detail any COVID-19 project or programme interventions that should be included in the scope of the evaluation. In the case of reprogramming detail how the implementation and interventions of a project or programme may have been impacted by reprogramming.

3. **Evaluation criteria and key questions.** These include specific questions to be answered through the evaluation that are relevant to the project, intervention or outcome being evaluated. Questions can be detailed here and broadened and agreed further by the evaluation team through the inception report. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability can be

used to frame the questions.[1] Key questions should be clear, well defined and manageable. At least one evaluation question should address the issue of gender.[2]

> **NOTE: Detail COVID-19 specific questions as needed or recognise the impact of COVID-19 and limitations on the projects and programmes in the guiding evaluation questions.**

4. **Methodology.** A suggested overall approach and methodology can be given along with possible data sources and collection methods, but this should be flexible and allow for refinement with the evaluation team once engaged. Methodologies for addressing gender-specific issues as well as inclusion of the SDGs should be requested.

> **NOTE: Outline any adjusted evaluative approaches/ methodologies that may be needed to implement the evaluation effectively, including safety guidance, extended desk reviews, primary use of national consultants and virtual stakeholder meetings and interviews by evaluators. Link available guidance as required. This should also be detailed in the inception report.**

Additional Suggested Text:

As of 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic as the new coronavirus rapidly spread to all regions of the world. Travel to the country has been restricted since XX/XXXX and travel in the country is also restricted. If it is not possible to travel to or within the country for the evaluation then the evaluation team should develop a methodology that takes this into account the conduct of the evaluation virtually and remotely, including the use of remote interview methods and extended desk reviews, data analysis, surveys and evaluation questionnaires. This should be detailed in the Inception report and agreed with the Evaluation Manager.

If all or part of the evaluation is to be carried out virtually then consideration should be taken for stakeholder availability, ability or willingness to be interviewed remotely. In addition, their accessibility to the internet/ computer may be an issue as many government and national counterparts may be working from home. These limitations must be reflected in the evaluation report.

If a data collection/field mission is not possible then remote interviews may be undertaken through telephone or online (skype, zoom etc.). International consultants can work remotely with national evaluator support in the field if it is safe for them to operate and travel. No stakeholders, consultants or UNDP staff should be put in harm's way and safety is the key priority.

A short validation mission may be considered if it is confirmed to be safe for staff, consultants, stakeholders and if such a mission is possible within the evaluation schedule. Equally, qualified and independent national consultants can be hired to undertake the evaluation and interviews in country as long as it is safe to do so.

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[1] Access at: http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm
[2] We recommend that relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability are covered to ensure the full scope of an evaluation. If the commissioning unit chooses not to use one or more of the criteria, this should be explicitly stated in the terms of reference including the reasons for the omission.

5. **Evaluation products (key deliverables).** This provides details of the key products to be produced: (a) evaluation inception report including a workplan and evaluation schedule; (b) draft evaluation report for comment; (c) audit trail detailing how comments, questions and clarifications have been addressed; (d) final report (addressing comments, questions and clarifications); and (e) presentations and other knowledge products.

    NOTE: Include a provision for the impact of COVID-19 on the production of deliverables and any reduced payment for consultants should this occur.

    Suggested additional text

    In line with the UNDP's financial regulations, when determined by the Country Office and/or the consultant that a deliverable or service cannot be satisfactorily completed due to the impact of COVID-19 and limitations to the evaluation, that deliverable or service will not be paid.

    Due to the current COVID-19 situation and its implications, a partial payment may be considered if the consultant invested time towards the deliverable but was unable to complete to circumstances beyond his/her control.

6. **Evaluation team composition and required competencies.** This details the specific skills, competencies and characteristics required of the evaluator or each member of the evaluation team.

    NOTE: More detail on management structures and implementation if some evaluators are to operate remotely, such as international consultants. Include a provision for experience in implementing evaluations remotely.

7. **Evaluation ethics.** Evaluation consultants will be held to the highest ethical standards and are required to sign a code of conduct upon acceptance of the assignment. UNDP evaluations are conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) ['Ethical Guidelines for Evaluations'](#).

8. **Management and implementation arrangements.** These describe the organization and management structure for the evaluation and define the roles, key responsibilities and lines of authority of all parties involved in the evaluation process. Implementation arrangements are intended to clarify expectations, eliminate ambiguities and facilitate an efficient and effective evaluation process.

    NOTE: Detail the role of UNDP in supporting the implementation of remote/ virtual meetings. An updated stakeholder list with contact details (phone and email) will need to be provided by the Country office to the evaluation team.

9. **Time frame for the evaluation process.** This should detail the number of days available for the evaluation assignment and the assignment of days across the evaluation team. The TOR should also detail the evaluation timetable including dates for: (a) the start of the evaluation; (b) the evaluation deliverables; (c) fieldwork and data collection; and (d) evaluation completion.

    NOTE: Flexibility and delays should be included in the timeframe for the evaluation, with additional time for implementing evaluations virtually recognising possible delays in accessing

10. **Application Submission process and basis for selection.** This details the structure and application procedures, supporting documents, submission documents and the criteria for the review of applications.

11. **TOR annexes.** These provide links to supporting background documents and more detailed guidelines on evaluation in UNDP:
    - Intervention results framework and theory of change.
    - Key stakeholders and partners.
    - Documents to be reviewed and consulted.
    - Evaluation matrix template.
    - Outline of the evaluation report format.
    - Code of conduct forms.

    NOTE: All complete documentation should be made available to the evaluators. A pre-evaluation evaluability assessment should be undertaken and gaps in documentation and data identified and filled prior to the recruitment of an evaluation team and the start of the evaluation.