EVALUATION MANUAL

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

© Development Evaluation Unit 2018

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This is a PDF version of the web-based manual; original version is found on the internet: https://eoppiva.zapter.io/evaluationmanual2018

Some features in this web-based manual are not supported by Internet Explorer. It is recommended to use Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox as browser.

1 - Let's get started - Short introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Evaluation Manual

This manual offers guidance on how to commission, manage and implement evaluations of development cooperation activities funded by Finland. The objective is to ensure that the evaluations will be useful and of high quality. An evaluation is useful when it provides evidence on results and challenges, facilitates learning and provides tools for decision-making and future planning. In this context, quality refers to the Evaluation Norm of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) and to the norms and standards of development evaluation set by the OECD/DAC and the EU. The focus is on the MFA's "mainstream" evaluations, meaning **mid-term** and **final evaluations of individual projects and programmes**.

The manual provides guidance also to institutions and civil society organisations implementing development cooperation projects and commissioning their own evaluations. Regarding methodology, also other types of evaluative processes may be applied in case the evaluability of a programme is low, or if there is no need for a full-scale evaluation. Some alternative approached and methods are discussed in the Chapter 10 and additional information is also available e.g. at www.betterevaluation.org

For whom?

The manual is intended for:

- officials (evaluation managers, desk officers) who commission and manage evaluations, use the lessons learned from the evaluation results, and ensure accountability both in Finland and in partner countries and regional institutions; and
- experts who conduct evaluations.

The primary users of the manual are evaluation managers in different units of the MFA and their counterparts in the partner countries. Typically, evaluation managers also function as desk officers, responsible of the project or programme subject to evaluation. Primarily, the manual is aimed to be a tool for evaluations of projects/programmes supported by the MFA's various funding instruments, e.g. bilateral and regional cooperation, cooperation of civil society organisations (CSOs), institutional cooperation, and private sector cooperation. It provides guidance on commissioning and managing evaluations as well as for using evaluation results for learning and accountability purposes both in Finland and in the partner countries and in various partner organisations.

The manual also provides guidance and tools for the evaluators to help them ensure that the quality of evaluations meets the MFA's standards.

In addition, the manual provides helpful information for a broader range of stakeholders who are interested in the evaluation function of the Ministry, in the quality of evaluation and, ultimately, in the results of Finland's development cooperation and development policy.

What is new?

The manual has been developed into a web-based set of tools, providing easier access to additional information and practical templates needed in planning, implementation and reporting. The manual and its terminology is harmonised with the MFA's Evaluation Norm, as well as with the Manual for Bilateral Programmes. Updates on MFA's results based management (RBM) approach have been taken into account. The manual also provides guidance on quality assurance and on integration of the human rights based approach (HRBA) in evaluations. Alternative evaluative approaches are highlighted as well. Guidance on appraisals (ex-ante evaluations) has been moved to the Manual for Bilateral Programmes.

1.2 How to use the manual?

Browser

When using this web-based Evaluation Manual, it is recommended to choose **Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox as browser**. Internet Explorer does not support all the features of the manual.

Searching key words from the manual text

With the command ctrl + F ("find") single key words or phrases can be searched from the manual text. There is also a separate list of terminology in Chapter 1.3.

Content bar

By clicking the blue button in the upper left corner, a **detailed content of the manual** can be found. It will appear on the left hand side. By clicking the titles you can move to the chapter in question.

Structure of the manual

After the Chapter 1 Introduction, this manual is divided into two main parts: General Features of Evaluation and Evaluation Process. In the end of the manual, a set of templates and other tools as well as additional reading can be found.

Chapters 2–5 focus on the General Features of Evaluation, such as

- the evaluation function in the MFA
- the Evaluation Norm
- evaluation criteria and concepts
- how evaluations are conducted and what they comprise
- the role of evaluation in project cycle management

Chapters 6–9 describe the Evaluation Process step-by-step, providing

- practical guidance on evaluations contracted by the MFA, including a set of easy-to-use templates
- advice mainly for evaluation managers and evaluators.

Chapter 10 gives useful information on some **Alternative Evaluative Approaches and Methods**.

Chapter 11 provides Templates, Tools and Additional Reading.

1.3 Terminology

The terminology applied in the Evaluation Manual is based on common practice of international development cooperation. The terms applied by OECD DAC (Developement Assistance Committee) are used as the base for the terminology. Consequently, the terminology is harmonised with the MFA's Manual for Bilateral Programmes.

The terms project and programme are used interchangeably: “The term programme is used as an overall term to cover both projects and larger programmes, e.g. consisting of several projects or a great number of components, or covering a whole sector“ (Manual for Bilateral Programmes).

Stakeholder refers to persons, groups, authorities, civil society organisations and institutions participating in or affected by an intervention, including rights-holders, duty-bearers and other relevant parties.

Competent authorities refer to the MFA and the competent government representative of the partner country.

Development policy is used to refer to the priorities and principles of each government, be it in the form of a policy, strategy, government report, action plan or programme.

Bilateral cooperation refers to cooperation agreed between Finland and the partner country. According to the OECD DAC, bilateral aid represents flows from official (government) sources directly to official sources in the recipient country. In the budget of the Government of Finland, bilateral cooperation is included in the country-specific and regional development cooperation and covers programmes focusing on bilateral technical assistance.

Learn more from:

List of terminology applied in evaluation and project cycle management (Word)

2 – What is evaluation?

2.1 Definition of development evaluation

As systematic and objective as possible, evaluation is an assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. Evaluation refers to the process of determining the worth or value of the evaluated activity in relation to the set objectives. In its evaluations, Finland applies the principles and criteria of OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC).

Evaluation norm

Evaluations of Finland's development cooperation are regulated by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' internal norm 1/2015 on Development Evaluation. According to the norm, all development cooperation activities should be evaluated at least once during a project's funding period or financing cycle. The evaluation norm consists of guidelines on how evaluations are conducted in the MFA, and also gives advice on how to improve the quality of evaluations.

Learn more from:

OECD DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance (PDF)

OECD DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance (website)

Ministry for Foreign Affairs' internal norm 1/2015 on Development Evaluation (PDF)

2.2 Why is evaluation important?

The evaluation function of the MFA is responsible for ensuring that Finland's development cooperation is of **high quality.** As stated in the Evaluation Norm, evaluations are necessary both for **learning and accountability**: development evaluation serves the organisation-wide learning and improves the quality of development cooperation by producing independent and impartial, evidence-based knowledge of the activities. It is also essential for **transparency and openness** of development policies and for decision-making related to the use of development funding.

Learning is important within the MFA as well as within the partner organizations, beneficiaries and wider group of development practitioners. Evaluations may also provide interesting material for development research. Finally, evaluations provide important information to wider public on the usage of public development funding.

Learn more from:

Why we need evaluations? Role of evaluations in project cycle management (video lecture 1.1)

2.3 Evaluability

Success of an evaluation depends on **evaluability** of the subject, be it a project, programme or a policy.

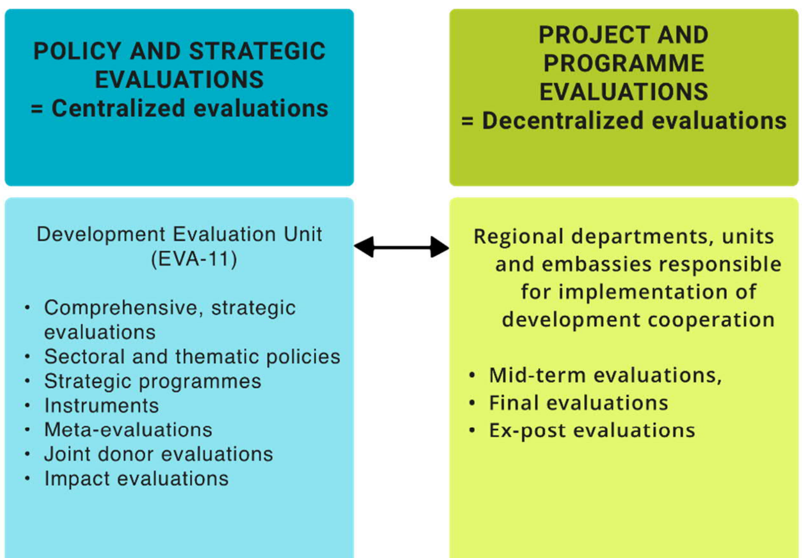
The Manual for Bilateral Programmes defines that "*Evaluation is part of the project cycle and it should be included in the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan and budgeted for during the formulation phase.*" Thereby, **thorough planning** already during the project preparation phase is essential for ensuring evaluability. But even more importantly, the project has to have a clear **theory of change**, **concretely defined objectives** (outputs, outcomes, impact) as well as **specific indicators with baseline values and targets** for each objective. These should be presented already in the Project Document, and further developed and concretised during the project's inception phase. Together, they provide the base for evaluability.

Whether the indicators provide the necessary data for evaluation depends also on the appropriateness and sufficiency of monitoring and reporting mechanisms as well as resources allocated for them. While providing data for day-to-day management, monitoring and reporting should also collect information and data for the future evaluations in a **systematic way**. High quality monitoring and reporting provides data both on the achievements as well as on deviations and their causes. **To sum up: without systematic monitoring and reporting, evaluability tends to be low.**

If the evaluability of a project, programme or policy is identified to be low, **other assessment methods** than traditional evaluation should be considered. Some alternative methods are presented in Chapter 10. More on ensuring evaluability is described in Chapter 5.5.

3 – Evaluation function and responsibilities

3.1 Evaluation function in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs



Evaluation function in the Ministry

Evaluations are managed in the Ministry through two mechanisms:

- Decentralised evaluations are project and programme evaluations, financed and managed by units and embassies responsible for country-specific or regional development cooperation projects and programmes. These evaluations are an essential part of each project cycle. Typically, these evaluations consist of mid-term and final evaluations.
- Centralised evaluations refer to comprehensive and strategic evaluations, such as evaluations of policies, country strategies, financing instruments, and wide thematic

programmes. They are managed by the Development Evaluation Unit (EVA-11). The unit is operationally independent and reports to the Under-Secretary of State responsible for development policy and development cooperation.

The Development Evaluation Unit is also responsible for the development of the evaluation function and for capacity building. It prepares guidelines, and provides evaluation training and Help Desk services. To support this, the unit also functions as the focal point for networking and cooperation internationally.

Learn more from:

Evaluation function in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (website)

Development Evaluation Unit (EVA-11) (website)

3.2 Division of evaluation responsibilities in different types of interventions

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The management of different types of evaluations is summarised in the table below:

Type of evaluation	Responsible unit /Evaluation Manager	Comments
Programme and project evaluations	Unit responsible for the project/ programme	These evaluations are an essential part of MFA's results-based management (RBM) and project cycle management (PCM). This manual focuses on this type of evaluations. Projects and activities of limited financial value can also be evaluated as part of the larger entity to which they belong. In case a full-scale evaluation is not relevant, a mid-term evaluation may be replaced by a lighter and focused review (see Chapter 10 Alternative methods).
Evaluations of financing instruments	Development Evaluation Unit (EVA-11)	These evaluations are agreed upon with the Development Evaluation Unit when the instrument is developed or when a new funding period is launched. Evaluations are scheduled to support new financing cycles. When the

		management of the instrument is outsourced, evaluation requirements are included in the financing agreement.
Evaluations of development policies	EVA-11	These evaluations are agreed upon with the Evaluation Unit already during the preparatory phase, too. Monitoring and evaluability of the policies must be taken into account and written down in the policy paper. An evaluation is not a monitoring mechanism of the policy, but an assessment of its effectiveness.
Evaluations of funding channelled through international organisations	International partner organisation Unit responsible for the project/ programme	As for ODA-eligible organisations, their own evaluation functions are used whenever they meet internationally agreed principles and quality requirements. The unit responsible for managing the cooperation ensures that the financing proposal includes adequate evaluation. When needed, the responsible MFA unit may commission the evaluation, if agreed with the international organisation.
Evaluation of multi-bi projects	Unit responsible for the project/ programme	Multi-bi projects are evaluated in the same way as project evaluations. Based on the financing agreement, the evaluation can also be conducted by the host institution if its evaluation capacity meets the international quality requirements.
Evaluations of projects funded using specific funding instruments	Partner organisation managing the instrument Responsible MFA unit EVA-11	Evaluations of projects funded from specific funding instruments (e.g. for civil society organisations, institutional cooperation, and private sector cooperation) should be defined in the funding agreements. The evaluation may be commissioned by the agency managing the instrument, by the responsible unit of the MFA, or in case of evaluations focusing on a funding instrument, by EVA-11.

In addition, when needed, evaluations can be conducted on any objectives, themes, operating modalities and processes that are related to Finland's development cooperation, development policy and/or international commitments. Evaluations may also be conducted jointly e.g. with other donors or with CSOs. In such a case, one of the partners is nominated as the lead agency to manage the evaluation process.

4 – How to evaluate – Evaluation principles

4.1 OECD/DAC evaluation principles

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs applies the principles, standards and criteria of development evaluation agreed upon by the OECD/DAC and the EU. Accordingly, evaluation must be impartial, independent and credible. Usefulness, participatory approaches and partnerships as well as working jointly with other donors are also important principles for evaluations. The table below explains how the principles are applied in Finland's development evaluation:

Evaluation Principle	How to apply in practice
Impartiality and independence	• Evaluations are conducted by external experts who are selected through a competitive process, using transparent criteria • The Evaluation Unit is an operationally independent function under direct supervision of the Under-Secretary of State for development policy
Credibility	• Evaluation teams are formed by highly skilled, independent professionals • Conclusions and recommendations of evaluations are based on a sound and transparent analysis of findings, covering both successes and failures • Evaluation reports are made publicly available, e.g. through publishing them in the MFA's website • The competency of evaluation management in the MFA is ensured through continuous staff training
Usefulness	• Users of evaluation results are consulted during programming and planning of evaluations

	• Stakeholders have an opportunity to participate throughout the evaluation process • Programming of evaluations ensures that the results are available on time for decision-making • Writers of evaluation reports are familiar with the quality standards and guidelines concerning the contents of evaluation report, including clear structure and concise wording • The management response system entails that management report back on the implementation of the evaluation • Evaluation reports, including presentations and discussions, are widely disseminated
Participation of stakeholders	• Consultative process with the partner countries on evaluation timing and Terms of Reference (ToR) preparation, and wide dissemination of the evaluation results • Partner institutions and stakeholders are actively consulted in all phases of an evaluation • Finland supports evaluation capacity development for strengthening of national evaluation systems
Donor cooperation	• Joint evaluations undertaken particularly in joint programmes, such as sector programmes, budget support etc. • Donors are informed and consulted in upcoming programme evaluations • Donors give input to the evaluation process by holding joint meetings, participating in debriefings and commenting on evaluation results

Learn more from:

Evaluation principles and ethics (video lecture 1.2)

OECD/DAC Evaluation Principles (PDF)

OECD/DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation (PDF)

4.2 Evaluation ethics

Ethical considerations need be taken into account in the planning and implementation of any evaluation. The MFA endorses the OECD/DAC and UNEG (United Nations Evaluation Group) Norms and Standards on evaluation ethics. OECD/DAC defines evaluation ethics as follows: "Evaluators are ordained by professional and ethical guidelines and codes for conduct. These include integrity and honesty. Evaluators are also aware of gender roles, ethnicity, ability, age, sexual orientation, language, and other differences when designing and undertaking evaluations. Commissioners, evaluation managers and evaluators respect human rights and differences in culture, customs, religious beliefs and practices of stakeholder."

Role of evaluators and evaluation managers

A range of ethics-related problems may be encountered in evaluation processes. For example, vulnerable groups may be overpowered by stronger stakeholders; cultural traditions are not understood; evaluators discover illegal, unethical behavior; a stakeholder tries to manipulate evaluation's results, etc. To avoid this, all those engaged in designing, conducting and managing evaluations must observe the agreed ethical standards in order to ensure overall credibility and responsible use of power and resources.

Evaluators need to respect the right of institutions and individual informants to provide information in confidence. They must ensure that sensitive data is protected and that the sources cannot be traced. Evaluators must also validate the statements made in the evaluation report with those who provided the information. To sum up, the following considerations must be attended to in evaluations:

- Conflict of interest: upholding the principles of independence, impartiality, credibility, honesty, integrity and accountability
- Interaction with participants: engaging appropriately and respectfully with participants in evaluation processes, upholding the principles of confidentiality and anonymity; dignity and diversity; human rights; gender equality; and avoidance of harm
- Evaluation processes and products: ensuring accuracy, completeness and reliability; inclusion and non-discrimination; transparency; and fair and balanced reporting that acknowledges different perspectives
- Discovery of wrongdoing: discreetly reporting the discovery of any apparent misconduct to a competent body.

In practice, a strong human-rights sensitive approach needs to be applied. As practical guidelines, both the UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation and Ethical Guidelines provide relevant approaches and tools for evaluation ethics.

Learn more:

Evaluation principles and ethics (video lecture 1.2)

UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation (PDF)

UNEG Ethical Guidelines (PDF)

UNEG Norms and Standards (PDF)

OECD DAC Quality Standards (PDF)

4.3 Integrating human rights and cross-cutting objectives in evaluations

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Assessing the application of human rights based approach (HRBA) and the realization of cross-cutting objectives of Finland's development cooperation is essential for any evaluation. In addition, the human rights principles (non-discrimination and equality; participation and inclusion; and transparency and accountability) need to guide the evaluation process itself. The concepts of HRBA and cross-cutting objectives are explained in more detail in the Guideline for Cross-Cutting Objectives in the Finnish Development Policy and Cooperation and in the Manual for Bilateral Programmes.

Human rights, gender equality and non-discrimination in evaluations

Evaluations play a crucial role in examining to what extent the evaluated interventions benefit right-holders and have strengthened their capacity to claim rights as well as the capacity of duty bearers or other actors to fulfil their obligations and responsibilities. Evaluations can also shed light on how development processes occur and bring to light discriminatory structure and practices.

The UNEG Guidelines on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality includes practical tools for integrating human rights and gender equality into the preparation of the evaluation's Terms of Reference (ToR):

- **Evaluability study:** Determining the evaluability of **human rights and gender equality dimensions** of the intervention
- Stakeholder analysis: Identifying evaluation stakeholders – both duty-bearers and rights-holders - by using a matrix which helps to identify who the stakeholders are, what their role in the intervention is, what would be the gains from their involvement in the evaluation, how important it is for them to be part

of the evaluation process, at what stage of the evaluation they should be engaged, and in which ways and capacities stakeholders will participate.

- Integrating human rights and gender equality aspects into the standard DAC evaluation criteria.
- Framing the evaluation questions to assess how HR and GE have been integrated in the intervention's design and planning, implementation, and results achieved. Assessing the extent to which the intervention's indicators have been able to measure relevant HR and GE dimensions. If the existing indicators are not available or sufficient to support the assessment of HR & GE, specific indicators can be created during the evaluation planning stage. Please see 'UNEG Guidelines on Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality' (p.33-35) for more guidance on this.
- Selecting a strong multi-gender evaluation team with commitment to and competence in HR and GE. Examples of ethical behavior are also provided in the toolset.
- Selecting the right tools and methodologies for addressing HR & GE. An evaluation design which applies a mixed-method approach will usually be the most appropriate to generate an accurate and comprehensive picture of how HR & GE are integrated into an intervention. The tools and methods selected should ensure the inclusion of different stakeholders identified in the stakeholder analysis, allowing for active, free, meaningful participation by all.

Climate resilience and low emission development

In line with the Paris Agreement, Finland's cross-cutting objectives related to climate are climate resilience and low emission development. Climate change considerations need to be part of all evaluations. The objective is to provide lessons learned and best practices to enhance the integration of climate change mitigation and adaptation into Finland's development cooperation. Following questions can be used as guidance when formulating the Term of Reference for an evaluation:

Climate risks and impacts of climate change:

- How do climate risks and the impacts of climate change affect our development cooperation (e.g. partner country, project or other intervention) in the short and long term?
    - Consideration of gender, non-discrimination and human rights.
- How do we take these risks and impacts into account and prepare for them – both short and long term?
- How do we ensure the sustainability of the results of our development cooperation?

Impacts on climate:

- How do we ensure that our development cooperation does not cause adverse impacts on climate?

Opportunities and benefits of climate action:

- How does our development cooperation enhance climate change adaptation? How does it reduce vulnerability and strengthen climate resilience?

- How does it support the national/local adaptation and disaster risk reduction plans and strategies?
- How does our development cooperation mitigate climate change and facilitate the transition to low emission development/societies?
- How does it support the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)?
- How does it ensure that climate action is taken in synergy with the other sustainable development goals (SDG), avoiding negative trade-offs?
- How does it ensure that the transition to low emission and climate resilient development/societies is inclusive and just?

Learn more from:

Human Rights Based Approach in evaluations (video lecture 1.3)

UNEG Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in evaluation (PDF)

Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation (Better evaluation; website)

5 – Right timing – Programming of evaluations

5.1 Identifying the need and intended use of the evaluation

Project/programme evaluations (mid-term, final and ex-post evaluations) are usually initiated by the MFA unit that is responsible for bilateral development cooperation in the specific country or region. The partner country or a lead donor can also propose an evaluation particularly when joint financing mechanisms are used. The decision on commencing the evaluation should be discussed in the programme's steering committee (or a corresponding forum).

Issues to be discussed include:

- Why is the evaluation conducted? For what purpose will the evaluation results be used? Who will use the results? What do the users see as the most important issues in the evaluation?
- When should the evaluation results be available for use in planning and decision-making?
- What resources (finance, human resources) are needed? What will be the roles and responsibilities of the partners involved in the project/programme in managing the evaluation?
- Is it possible to conduct an evaluation jointly with the partner organisation? Does the partner have an interest in and the required capacity for a joint evaluation?
- What are the best ways to involve the stakeholders in the evaluation?

5.2 Annual planning of evaluations

The departments and units engaged in development policy and development cooperation are responsible for preparing their respective evaluation plans for the decentralised evaluations (= project and programme evaluations). The evaluation plan covers the next year and shows an indicative plan for the subsequent two years. The plan is updated annually. A template for an annual evaluation plan is presented in the templates and tools. Here is an example of evaluation plan:

Unit	Country / area	Projects to be evaluated	Intervention code	Evaluation type	Timing	Notes
ALI-30	Zambia	Zambia Green Jobs Programme	28816501	Final Evaluation	2018	Partner has the evaluation responsibility
ALI-30	Mozambique	ADPP Mozambique	25916419	Mid-Term Evaluation	2017	Evaluation was completed in September

For the planning of centralized, large-scale evaluations, the Development Evaluation Unit consults departments, units and embassies and other development policy stakeholders to identify their needs on centralised evaluations. The Unit then compiles an annual, comprehensive evaluation plan of the Ministry, including both the decentralised and centralised evaluations, and forwards it to the Development Policy Steering Group (KEPO) for discussion. The final evaluation plan is then presented to the Under-Secretary of State for confirmation.

The comprehensive plan for centralised evaluations is binding in the first funding year. Changes in the decentralised evaluation plans must be communicated to the Development Evaluation Unit, and they must be confirmed in the next comprehensive plan.

The comprehensive evaluation plan is disseminated for information to the departments, units and embassies responsible for development cooperation. It is published at the MFA's external website in Finnish and an English summary is also provided. The plan is stored in the electronic archives.

Learn more from:

Planning of an evaluation (video lecture 2.2)

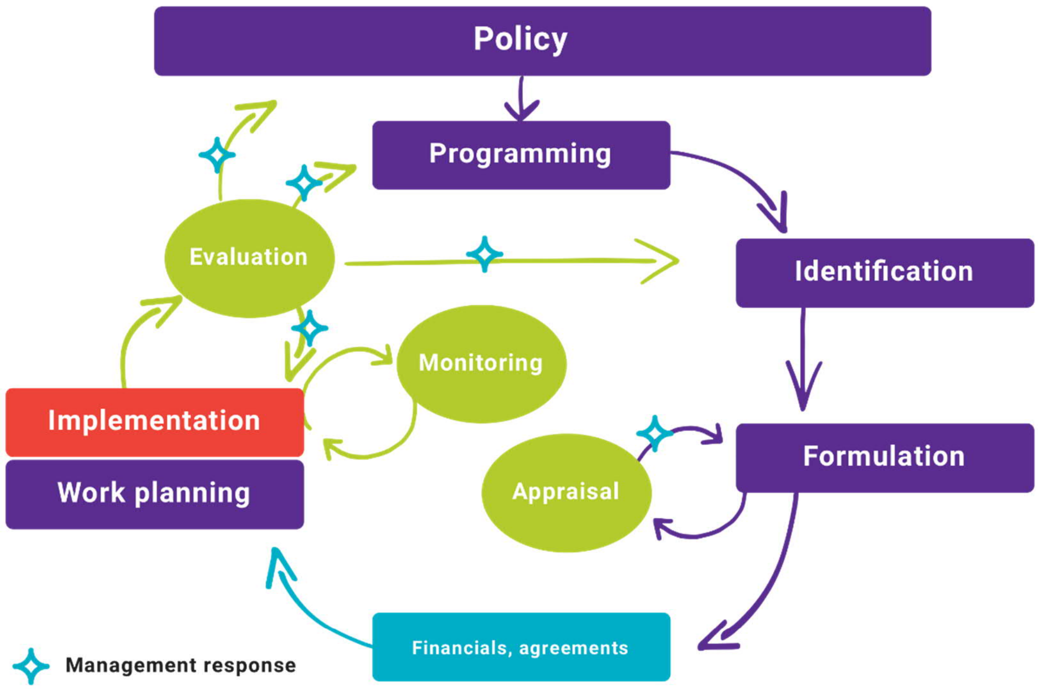
Templates and tools:

Annual evaluation plan (Excel)

Comprehensive evaluation plan of the MFA 2020-2022 (Word)

5.3 Evaluations in project cycle management

Project and programme cycle management facilitates continuous learning and evidence-based decision-making. Evaluation and systematic formal management responses on the implementation of evaluation results are key elements of these processes.



Evaluation in Project Cycle

In addition, several others processes and elements are needed to make a project/programme a learning process:

- Continuous planning throughout the project and programme cycle. Planning covers identification, programme formulation, and work planning during implementation.
- Establishment of a monitoring and evaluation system that feeds lessons learned into planning when experience is gained. This system consists of continuous monitoring by programme implementers, reviews addressing specific issues, and periodic independent evaluations.
- Flexibility in decision-making, allowing deviation from plans when justified by lessons learned. Programme steering committees, supervisory boards etc. are typical joint decision-making bodies.

The programme/project document provides the framework for continuous planning, for integrating lessons learned from monitoring and evaluation, and for structured decision-making. The targeted results are defined through a clear hierarchy of objectives (e.g.

Results Framework, Results Chain, Theory of Change) and measurable indicators. The establishment of baseline data at the start of implementation is a necessary starting point for assessing progress and ensuring evaluability of the project.

5.4 Ensuring evaluability

A project plan or a funding proposal must include an initial evaluation plan specifying the timing and types of evaluations for projects and programmes. In case feasible, small interventions may be evaluated as part of a larger thematic or more strategic evaluation. Early integration of an evaluation plan in the programme plan makes it also possible to conduct more systematic impact evaluations that require a specific design in programme implementation and monitoring.

The evaluability of interventions must be ensured in the plans/proposals, funding decisions and agreements, and in programme implementation and management arrangements. Evaluability requires the establishment of indicators with baselines and targets as well as systematic monitoring and reporting of results. The clarity of the programme's theory of change and/or results framework is also important for evaluability. The indicative plan for an evaluation must be included in the project document or financing proposal, or alternatively in the guidelines of an entire financing instrument.

It is important to think beyond an individual evaluation and bear in mind that evaluability should be an integral part of the life-cycle of project/programme. This is to ensure that all programmes are evaluated in accordance with the OECD/DAC principles and standards, even if additional processes, such as reviews or facilitated participatory self-assessments, may be conducted during the life-cycle of a project or programme.

The responsibility for evaluation may also be delegated to cooperation partners when the partners' evaluation capacity meets the international evaluation standards. Joint evaluations with other development donors or partners are also possible. When the unit responsible for financing of an intervention does not manage the evaluation itself but includes the evaluation in the agreement on implementation, it must assess the evaluation capacity of the partner already when making the financing proposal.

Human rights and gender equality can be integrated in the preparation of an evaluation in many concrete ways. An evaluability assessment of the programme helps in defining how well the HR and GE dimensions are integrated in its design and implementation. Depending on the results, different approaches are available to address evaluability challenges. In cases where the evaluability of HR and GE is weak, it is important to describe the reasons for this, to enhance stakeholder participation, to seek partners and supplementary documents providing useful information, to identify supporters and advocates, to analyse also negative effects on particular stakeholders, and to highlight challenges related to human rights and gender equality dimensions in the evaluation report.

Learn more from:

Better evaluation: Evaluability assessment (website)

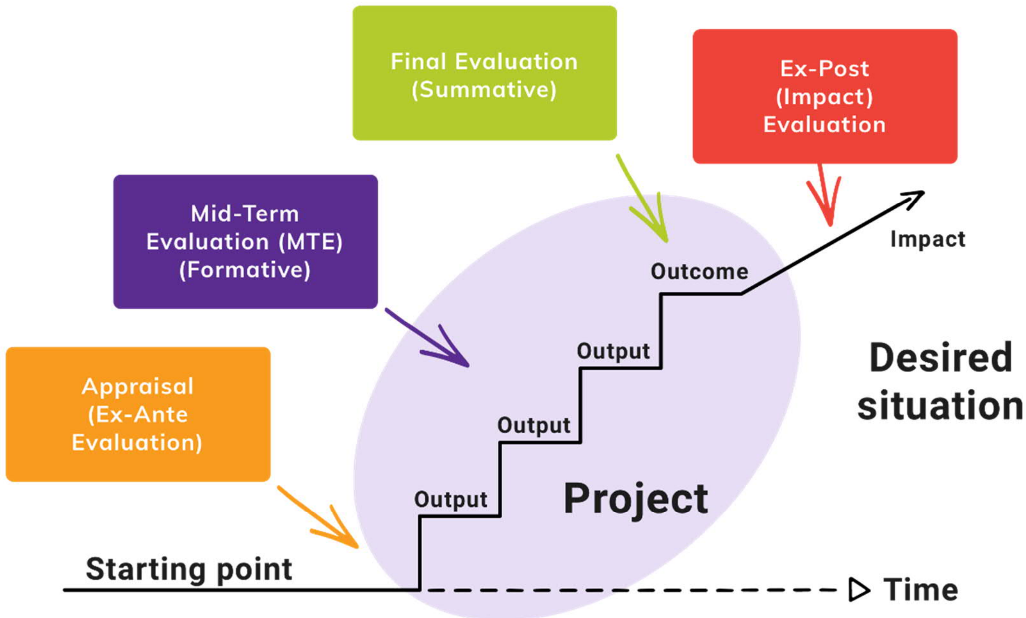
Better evaluation: Evaluability assessment checklist (Word)

UNEG Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in evaluation (Evaluability assessment, pp. 16-20, PDF)

5.5 Evaluations at different project phases

Three types of evaluations may be conducted during the life cycle of a project/programme.

- Mid-term evaluation (MTE) is an evaluation that is performed at the mid-term of a project/programme (e.g. in the end of the second year of implementation in a 4-year programme). This will ensure that the findings and recommendations of the MTE can be integrated into the implementation plans for the second half of the implementation period. Typically, a mid-term evaluation also gives recommendations on the continuation of the project with a new phase, or provides guidance on how to prepare an exit strategy.
- Final evaluation assesses the achievements of the programme in relation to its set objectives at the end of the implementation period. Final evaluations also summarise the lessons learned that may be useful for future programmes or feed into policy development. A final evaluation should be conducted at least 6 months before the end of the programme to integrate the lessons learned for improved sustainability.
- Ex-post evaluation refers to an evaluation that is carried out some years after the programme has been completed. An ex-post evaluation provides evidence on the longer-term impact and sustainability of the programme. Ex-post evaluations are sometimes referred to as impact evaluations. Since impact is often included as an evaluation criterion also in other evaluations, the MFA does not use the term impact evaluation exclusively when referring to ex-post evaluation.



Evaluations at different project phases

Appraisals (Ex-Ante evaluations) are conducted as part of the planning process whereby guidelines for appraisals are given in the Manual for Bilateral Programmes.

5.6 How much time is needed for an evaluation?

A sufficient amount of time is necessary for timely planning and conducting of an evaluation and for ensuring usability of the evaluation's results. The table below illustrates an indicative timeframe for the phases of an evaluation process, starting from identifying the need for evaluation and ending with the approval of the evaluation report. Cumulatively, the table indicates how much time is needed before the evaluation results are available for their intended use.

This example is for medium-size and large projects/programmes. Small projects may be evaluated within a shorter timeframe, but even with them the time for the inception and implementation phases should reflect the times indicated in the table. In case of complex evaluations (e.g. wide regional programmes), more time has to be allocated especially for the field work.

Activity	Time needed in a mid-term evaluation	Time needed in a final evaluation
Identification of the evaluation need and preparation of the ToR, including programme's steering committee meetings and other consultations, and collecting key documents	1–2 months	1-2 months
Procurement for the evaluation, including tendering, selection and contracting	4–6 weeks	4–6 weeks
Inception phase; including collecting documents, desk study, planning of detailed methodology, logistical arrangements for field phase and approval of the inception report	1–2 months	1–2 months
Field phase; including data collection, recording of findings, elaborating initial conclusions and recommendations and arranging a debriefing session in the partner country	2–4 weeks	2–6 weeks
Reporting: Drafting of the evaluation report	3–4 weeks	3–6 weeks
Comments on the draft report by the MFA, partner country institutions, programme staff and other relevant stakeholders	2–4 weeks	2–4 weeks
Finalisation of the report and its submission to the MFA	2–3 weeks	2–3 weeks
Approval of the report by the MFA	2 weeks	2 weeks
CUMULATIVE SUMMARY OF THE TIME NEEDED (approximations)	5–9 months	6–10 months

5.7 Resource planning for evaluations

Resource planning is a critical issue in evaluation management. It includes the definition of required human resources (expertise), time allocations, management inputs, and the budget frame. The following principles should be considered:

- The expertise of an evaluation team needs to cover sectoral content issues, evaluation methods and management of evaluations as well as experience in the relevant country context.
- Combining international and local expertise is likely to provide complementarities and improve knowledge on local circumstances.
- Selecting a strong multi-gender evaluation team with commitment to and competence in human rights and gender equality is also important.
- Evaluations offer excellent learning opportunities for future experts, which is why a junior expert could be recruited as an additional resource in the team.
- Enough time must be reserved for handling management and administrative issues and quality assurance tasks as they are an essential prerequisite for high quality.

The evaluation budget should be large enough to cover all phases of the evaluation process and to enable sufficient time for field work as well as for application of multiple methods. Typically, an evaluation budget covers fees of the evaluators, travel costs, costs of evaluation workshops as well as translation and interpretation costs. It is also important that the responsible unit, embassy and partners allocate sufficient time for evaluation management and for dissemination of results. The rough time estimates for each step of an evaluation are presented above in chapter 5.1 "How much time is needed for evaluation".

Learn more from:

Planning of an evaluation (video lecture 2.2)

6 – Preparing the evaluation process

6.1 Roles and responsibilities in the preparation phase

During the preparatory process, the key stakeholders are the evaluation manager of the contracting unit, the Finnish embassy and the partner organisation(s) in the partner country, and the companies/institutions tendering for the evaluation. In case the project is supported by a company providing technical assistance (TA), it may help especially in compiling documentation.

The table underneath highlights the roles of the stakeholders in a typical programme/project evaluation. In addition to the stakeholders mentioned in the table, relevant advisers from the MFA are also involved, supporting the evaluation manager in the preparation of the Terms of Reference (ToR) and during the tendering process. If requested, the Development Evaluation Unit may provide advice in the preparation of the ToR.

- The country team/unit/embassy is responsible for the identification of the need and intended use of the evaluation. Consultations with the partner organisation(s) should be conducted earliest possible, e.g. in the programme's Steering Committee. After that, the evaluation manager bears the main responsibility for the preparatory work.
- A list of key documentation should be appended to the ToR for information to the interested evaluators so that they will be able to assess the amount of work needed for analysing the documentation.

Steps	Tasks	MANAGER	EMBASSY	EVALUATORS	PARTNERS	PROJECT
Identification of the need for the evaluation	Identification of the need for the evaluation and selection of the Evaluation Manager	M	P			
	Informing the stakeholders on the evaluation	M	P		P	P
	Consultations with the partner organisation(s)	P	M		P	
	Preparation of the ToR	M	P		P	

Terms of Reference	Dissemination of the ToR	M	P		P	
Contracting the evaluators	Preparations for the contracting (e.g. application of the framework contract or specific tendering): preparation of the tender documents, submission of the request to tender	M	P			
	Preparation of the tenders			M		
	Tender evaluation and selection of the evaluator(s)	M	(P)		(P)	
	Signing of the contract and the Non-Disclosure Agreement	M		P		
Compiling documentation	Compilation of documentation	M	P		P	P

M = Main responsibility / P = Participation in the process

6.2 Preparing the Terms of Reference (ToR)

The MFA prepares the Terms of Reference in close collaboration with its partners. Typically, the responsible project/programme desk officer in Helsinki or in the embassy acts as the evaluation manager and coordinates the ToR preparation. Relevant advisers for the topic should be consulted during the process. The final version of the ToR is revised and approved by the head of the unit.

The ToR set the main parameters for the evaluation. A basic outline of the ToR is presented as a template. For the evaluation team, the ToR provide a framework for conducting the evaluation as well as a reference point for quality assurance. The ToR describe the programme to be evaluated, define how and by whom the evaluation results will be used and what the priority objectives of the evaluation are.

The ToR should also provide general methodological guidance, both for data collection and analysis. They should also indicate what data are already available for the evaluation. The ToR also outline the evaluation process and time schedule and include reporting guidelines. They describe the quality assurance mechanisms of the commissioner and encourage the evaluation team to develop their own quality assurance mechanism. The essential expertise required to carry out the evaluation, and the budget frame are defined in the ToR, too. Otherwise, the detailed methodology and team composition should be left for the evaluators' discretion to be presented in their proposal (i.e. tender) and be further developed during the evaluation's inception phase.

Learn more from:

TOR and recruitement of evaluators (video lecture 2.3)

Templates and tools:

Terms of Reference for an Evaluation (Word)

Checklist: Quality of Terms of Reference (Word)

6.3 Defining evaluation questions

Evaluation questions (EQ) define the priority issues to be addressed in the evaluation. They are usually presented under the evaluation criteria (see the following chapter 6.4). A maximum of 12 key evaluation questions may be included in the ToR. While these questions specify the priority issues under each evaluation criterion, more detailed questions are elaborated by the evaluation team when the detailed methodology is prepared.

When defining the EQs, the following issues should be considered:

- The focus of the evaluation
- What evaluation criteria are applied
- Integration of HR and GE issues and cross-cutting objectives (CCOs) to the questions
- A manageable number of key evaluation questions (max. 12 key questions)
- Ensuring flexibility for raising emerging issues during evaluation.

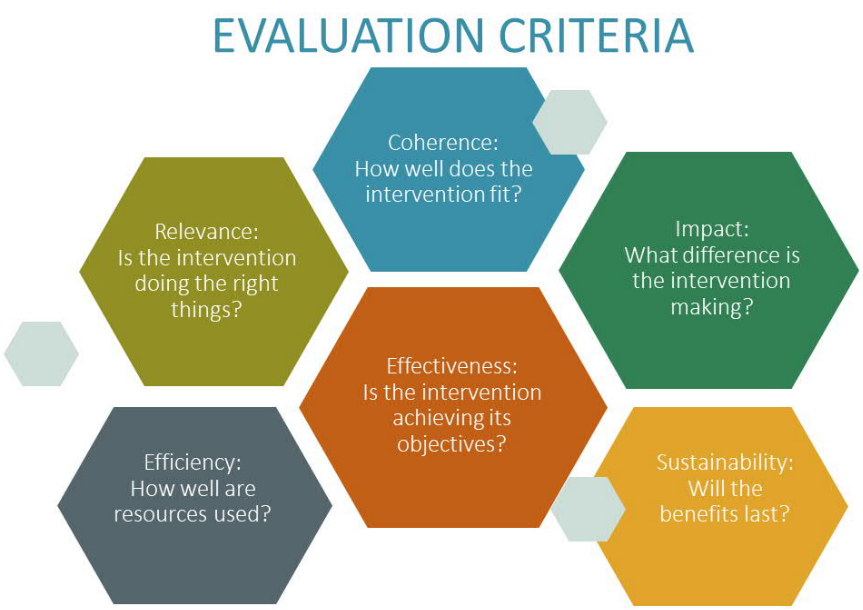
Learn more from:

Better evaluation: Specify the Key Evaluation Questions (website)

UNEG Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in evaluation (PDF; Framing HR&GE evaluation questions, pp. 29-32)

6.4 Using evaluation criteria

Typically, analyses in an evaluation are conducted against **evaluation criteria**. The criteria used in the MFA's evaluations are based on the OECD DAC evaluation criteria, and include **relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability**. Depending on the purpose and scope of the evaluation, the criteria may be modified to the evaluation's purpose, and also additional criteria may be added. For example, aid effectiveness (effectiveness of aid management and delivery) may be a relevant additional criterion.



Evaluation of human rights, gender equality and cross-cutting objectives should always be integrated into the criteria.

Examples of issues by evaluation criterion are presented in the table below:

Evaluation criterion	Possible evaluation issues / questions
Relevance: Is the intervention doing the right things?	To extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries' global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change. • Are the objectives and achievements of the project/programme consistent with the needs, priorities and rights of the stakeholders? o Needs, possibilities and rights of the final and immediate beneficiaries o Policies and development strategies of the partner country o Finland's development policy and its cross-cutting objectives • Have available development potentials been utilised in programme implementation? • Taking into account changes in the country context, is the programme strategy still relevant?
Impact: What difference does the intervention make?	The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects. • Is the programme contributing to its intended impacts? • What other impacts (intended or unintended / positive or negative) have emerged?
Effectiveness: Is the intervention achieving its objectives?	The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups. • To what extent has the programme achieved its anticipated outcome(s), or will do so in the future? • To what extent has the programme achieved its anticipated outputs and how have the outputs been taken into use? • Have the assumptions related to outcomes come true?
Efficiency: How well are resources being used?	The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way. • How well have the activities transformed the available inputs into the intended outputs, in terms of quantity, quality and time? • Can the costs of the intervention be justified by the achievements? • What is the quality of the management of the project?

	• Have the assumptions related to the institutional framework and resources beyond the programme's control been identified and realised? Are the risks appropriately managed?
Sustainability: Will the benefits last?	The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue. • Will the benefits produced by the programme be maintained after the termination of external support? Typically an analysis must cover the following aspects: • ownership/commitment • economic/financial considerations • institutional, technical and socio-cultural aspects • environmental sustainability. • Is there a relevant exit strategy and gradual handing-over plan in place and will it ensure sustainability? • To what extent has the programme advanced key factors needed to be in place for the long-term realisation of human rights and gender equality?
Coherence: How well does the intervention fit?	The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution. • External coherence: Is the intervention consistent with other actors' interventions in the same context? Does it add value while avoiding duplication of effort? • Internal coherence: Does the intervention create or strengthen synergies and interlinkages within the institution/government (policy coherence)? Is the intervention consistent with relevant international norms and standards?

The purpose of the evaluation criteria is to ensure that the evaluation assesses the programme comprehensively. If some criteria are left out, the reasons for this should be explained. Other criteria may also be added when it is relevant for the evaluation. For example, when evaluating humanitarian actions additional criteria may include appropriateness, connectedness, coverage, coherence and/or coordination.

Lean more from:

Evaluation criteria (video lecture 2.1)

OECD DAC Evaluation Criteria (website)

OECD/DAC Adapted Definitions and Principles for Use (PDF)

OECD/DAC Revised and Updated Evaluation Criteria (PDF)

[UNEG Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in evaluation] (PDF; Evaluation criteria, pp. 25-28)

[ALNAP Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide] (PDF; Evaluation criteria, pp. 101-103)

6.5 Compiling background documentation

Availability of relevant background documentation is an important prerequisite for a successful evaluation. Relevant materials include policy and strategy documents as well as guidelines and documentation of the programme to be evaluated (plans, reports, former evaluations, etc.). A basic list of necessary documentation is presented in the following table:

Types of documents	Examples of relevant documentation
Documents defining the evaluation assignment	• Terms of Reference of the evaluation (ToR) • Instructions to Tenderers (ITT) • Consultancy contract • Relevant programme management and evaluation guidelines
General policy documents and guidelines	• Policies and strategies (donor and partner country) • Sectoral and thematic guidelines (donor and partner country) • Development plans of the partner country
Project-specific documentation	• Project Documents, Final Reports and evaluations from previous phases • Project Document and Appraisal Report of the present phase • Inception Report and updated results framework • Work plans and progress/annual reports, budgets and financial reports • Steering Committee minutes • Products related to the project (e.g. studies, training materials, manuals, etc.)
Documents from relevant peer projects etc.	• Specific reports, e.g. on best practices • Reports with relevant comparative data • Progress/Final reports

Compilation of documentation is one of the first tasks when an evaluation is planned and the process is started. Some of the documents are needed already during the preparation of the ToR, and a list of key documentation should be appended to the ToR. A more comprehensive set of documentation should be handed over to the evaluators no later than at the start-up meeting. During the implementation of the evaluation, the evaluation team itself is responsible for collecting additional documents and information.

It is good to note that some of the information needed for evaluations may be in the embassies or partner organisations. This is why the compilation of documentation should be started in time. Also statistical information may be needed from both the MFA and the partner country.

The background documents used in evaluations are in most cases either public documents or classified at protection level IV (meaning “restricted”; for authorised, official use only). The evaluation manager should pay special attention to information security, which is explained in more detail in chapter 6.6.

When Finland’s development cooperation is evaluated, some relevant material may only be available in Finnish. When this is the case, the evaluation team must have Finnish-speaking expert(s). The evaluation team should always have members with knowledge of relevant local language(s).

6.6 Information security in MFA evaluations

Ensuring information and data security is an important issue when managing and conducting evaluations. It can be done through good information management and data processing practices. The Government Information Security Management Board (VAHTI) has developed detailed guidelines for good information management and security practices.

It should be noted that all information materials (documents, other data) that are given to external evaluation consultants should be used only for the purpose of the evaluation in question. Consultants, who are assigned to carry out evaluations, may gain access to various kinds of official documents of the Ministry, its partners and other stakeholders. These documents or other data may include confidential business and trade secrets, or personal details. Having access to such information does not automatically entitle the consultant to read or process the information. A separate Non-Disclosure Agreement with the MFA must be signed by all team members. When the evaluation is closed, all classified documents must be returned to the MFA and copies of them destroyed using a procedure fulfilling the requirements set for the protection level in question. In the same way, electronic files must be erased from digital archives, workstations, servers and other equipment of the consultant. The evaluation manager is responsible for giving proper instructions to the consultant.

Important information security issues to be taken into account in evaluations:

1) Restricted or confidential information

- Information materials used and processed by consultants in the evaluation may include documents that are classified"restricted" (for official, authorised use) only. In the MFA, these documents are classified as "protection level IV", which means that the information in these documents is not public.
- In some occasions, the materials might include information classified "confidential" (protection level III). When dealing with IV and III level information, the handling instructions and requirements of the MFA and the Government Information Security Management Board must be observed.
- Confidential information (oral or written, including personal data) must never be transferred to third parties without the MFA's approval. After the evaluation, all restricted or confidential materials must be destroyed following procedures that fulfill the requirements set for the protection level in question and removed from the electronic systems.

2) Transferring MFA documents

- Classified documents are delivered to consultants in accordance with the relevant protection level requirements. A classified document must be distributed so that third parties cannot access protected information.
- Classified documents in an electronic format are always transferred by using secured, encrypted techniques. Information stored in external memory devices (USB flash drives and portable hard drives) or sent by email must be encrypted or secured with a password. This ensures that the information they contain is not disclosed to third parties even if the device is stolen or lost.

3) Handling and storing MFA documents

- Documents with a restricted or confidential marking must be handled and stored securely according to the level of protection and the instructions of the MFA. The consultant is responsible for the security of the documents when handling them outside the MFA.
- Public and classified materials should be kept separate.
- Electronic systems should be equipped with solutions that fulfill the requirements of each protection level. Information materials classified restricted (IV) cannot be stored in any cloud services (such as Dropbox or Google Drive)
- Web-based translators such as Google Translator cannot be used to translate restricted or confidential documents or parts of them.

Learn more from:

Instructions on Implementing the Decree on Information Security in Central Government (PDF)

Templates and tools:

Non-Disclosure Agreement (Word)

6.7 Best practices of recruitment of evaluators

In case the MFA or its partner organisation does not have any relevant framework agreement for acquiring external evaluators, a tendering process is carried out in accordance with the relevant legal requirements on public procurement, applying the MFA's guidelines and instructions on tendering. The tendering process and tender evaluation criteria are described in the Instructions to Tenderers (ITT).

The following best practices may be applied in tendering:

A. Expertise of the evaluation team: The quality of an evaluation depends largely on the expertise of the evaluation team. Typically, the following skills and knowledge are needed:

- Evaluation expertise: Evaluation methods, managing the evaluation process, competence in analyses and reporting
- Substance-related expertise: Expertise related to the content of the evaluation. Expertise in integrating cross-cutting objectives (especially human rights and gender equity, and in case relevant climate change) into evaluations is also important.
- Experience of the local context: Profound knowledge of the country/region, including familiarity with sectoral institutions and cultural expertise.
- Minimum requirements could include language skills and a certain level of education, typically Master’s degree in a relevant field for the key team members.

B. Team composition: Instead of defining the team composition in the ToR, the tenderers should be encouraged to identify their best teams with the required skills and experience. For the Team Leader, solid experience in evaluation and team management is an obligatory requirement, but otherwise the composition of the team may vary. Involvement of **local experts** is usually essential in understanding of the local context. It is also recommended to include a **junior expert** in the evaluation team for capacity building of future evaluators. The junior expert also provides a highly useful extra resource for the team.

C. Tender evaluation criteria: In practice, when selecting the evaluation teams, the tenderers pay particular attention to compliance with the tender evaluation criteria specified in the ITT. Therefore, establishing the tender evaluation criteria and their relative scores is an effective way to influence the quality of the tenders. Typically, in a project-specific evaluation the criteria may be the following:

- Expertise of the team (50–70% weight): Evaluation expertise, substance-related expertise, expertise in CCOs, country/regional expertise.
- Description of the methodology (20-40% weight): Understanding of the objectives and scope of the evaluation, relevance of the proposed methodology, reporting plan. Higher weight should be applied when looking for innovative evaluation methods.
- Experience of the company/organisation (0–10% weight): Experience of related assignments (e.g. a minimum of three related references), quality assurance; in large-scale evaluations also financial capacity. In case the minimum requirements already ensure sufficient capacity from the company, the criterion may be dropped out.

Altogether, the requirements stated in the ITT (and ToR) should allow for flexibility in the methodology and team composition whereby the tenderers may utilise their specific experiences and skills as well as expert networks.

In case the **real-time evaluation approach** (see Chapter 10) is applied, the evaluators will be contracted for the whole project phase. This facilitates the mobilisation of resources early enough and saves administrative resources, and enables long-term learning on the project also within the evaluation team.

7 – Implementing the evaluation and reporting

During the implementation process, the key stakeholders are the evaluation manager of the contracting unit, the embassy, partner organisation(s) in the partner country, and the company/institution contracted to conduct the evaluation and its evaluation team. In case the project is supported by a technical assistance (TA) consultant, it is involved in several steps of the evaluation process.

The table underneath highlights the roles of the stakeholders in a typical programme/project evaluation.

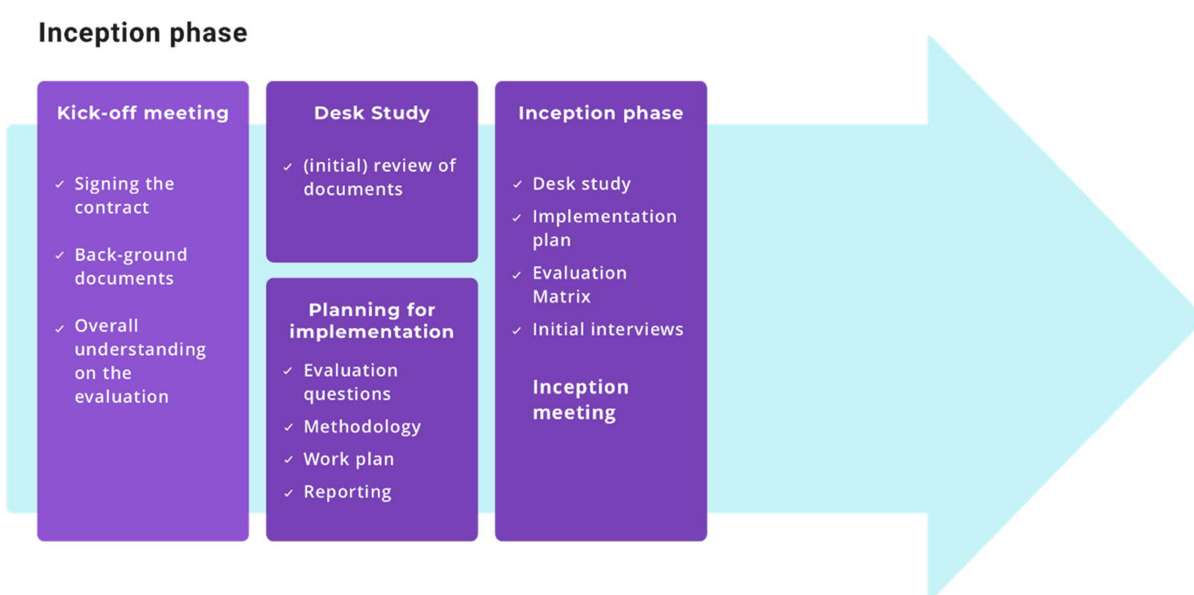
Steps	Tasks	MANAGER	EMBASSY	EVALUATORS	PARTNERS	PROJECT
Signing of the contract	Preparation and signing of the contract	M		P		
Start-up meeting	Start-up meeting	M	P	P	P	
	Letter of introduction on the evaluation	M				
	Handing over documentation	M	P		P	P
Inception Phase	Desk study and interviews in Finland	P		M		P
	Preparation of the draft Inception Report			M		
	Review/commenting of the draft Inception Report	M	P		P	
	Inception meeting to discuss the Inception Report	M	P	P	P	
	Finalising the Inception Report			M		
	Logistical arrangements for the field phase		P	M	P	P
Field phase	Briefing meeting in the beginning of the field phase		M	P	P	
	Field work as defined in the Inception Report		P	M	P	P
	Debriefing meeting at the end of the field phase	P	M	P	P	
Reporting	Preparation of the draft Evaluation Report (data analyses, preparation of the report, internal quality assurance)			M		
	Review and commenting of the report, MFA's quality assurance	M	P		P	P
	Finalising the Evaluation Report			M		
	Processing the management response	M	P		P	
	Dissemination of the report	M	P		P	P

M = Main responsibility / P = Participation in the process

In addition to the stakeholders mentioned in the table, relevant MFA's advisers participate in the process by supporting the evaluation manager and by reviewing the reports. To ensure that all parties get the same messages, online meetings should be organised for partners in other locations. Regarding the field phase, the evaluation team organises the logistics, meetings etc. If agreed during the inception phase, also the project team may assist in the logistical arrangements. If necessary, the embassy may assist in arranging meetings with the partner ministries and other key donors.

7.2 Inception phase

When the evaluators have been selected and an evaluation is launched, the stakeholders responsible for the intervention to be evaluated should be contacted immediately in writing and provided with information about the composition of the evaluation team, tentative schedule, need for additional background documentation, preliminary information of future stakeholder consultations and field visits. All stakeholders are requested to support in the collection of materials and in practical arrangements for the evaluation.



Steps and tasks of implementing an evaluation

When the MFA is the commissioner of the evaluation, the inception phase covers the following steps:

1) Start-up meeting

The Evaluation Manager arranges a start-up meeting for the evaluation team. Its purpose is to facilitate the preparation of the evaluation during the inception phase as well as to ensure that all key stakeholders have a shared understanding on the evaluation. The start-up meeting can be face-to-face or virtual. The sector adviser(s) and the adviser(s) specialising in the cross-cutting objectives should be invited to contribute. Virtual participation of the embassy and the key partner organisations should also be arranged. A model for Start-up Meeting Agenda is presented in the templates.

Typical issues on a start-up meeting agenda include:

- Logistical and administrative issues to facilitate smooth implementation of the evaluation (communication, schedules, roles and responsibilities, support provided by the embassy and/or evaluated project, reporting, quality assurance issues, dissemination and communication of evaluation results, and contractual issues); and
- Substance-related discussions on the evaluation based on the ToR and the evaluation proposal.

A comprehensive set of relevant background documents is given to the evaluators at the latest during the start-up meeting (explained in detail in Chapter 6, paragrapgh 6.5). The background documents used in evaluations are in most cases either public documents or classified at protection level IV. Classified documents of the MFA must be handled with care as advised in the Guidelines for information security. Also, other confidential information might be used (e.g. on private companies, personal information) and therefore it is a good practice to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement with the evaluators. Information security aspects are explained in more detail in chapter 6.5.

The Inception phase consists of a desk study review of the documents, development of a detailed evaluation methodology and work plan, and logistical arrangements for the field phase. Relevant MFA officials and other stakeholders in Finland may also be interviewed at this stage.

2) Inception report

The results of the inception phase will be presented in the Inception Report. The aim is to ensure that the evaluation team, the MFA and the partner institutions hold a shared understanding of the key issues. The inception report consists of two parts:

1. Initial findings and conclusions of the desk study; and
2. Further elaboration of the methodology, evaluation questions, work plan and reporting plan, including

- detailed evaluation questions based on the ToR;
- further elaboration of the methodology (data collection, data analysis) to be applied and justification for choosing the methods;
- a detailed work plan for the evaluation and a clear division of labour (i.e. who is doing what);
- a list of major meetings, interviews and other consultation processes and the institutions/persons to be consulted;
- reporting plan, including the first outline of the final report; and
- any other issues to facilitate the evaluation process, including required inputs from the MFA, the embassy and the partner institutions.

The Inception Report should also include an assessment of the **evaluability**. If problems are identified, relevant measures to improve evaluability should be presented.

3) Evaluation Matrix

The evaluation issues, questions, indicators for assessment and data sources will be presented in an evaluation matrix (see below an example) attached to the Inception Report.

Criteria in the ToR (e.g.)	Evaluation questions in the ToR	Detailed evaluation questions	Indicators for the questions	Source of data and/or method for data collection
Relevance				
Impact				
Effectiveness				
Efficiency				
Sustainability				
Coherence				

The purpose of structuring the evaluation questions into a matrix is to make sure that all relevant issues will be covered in the evaluation, thereby securing a full coverage of the requirements of the ToR. The matrix is also a quality assurance mechanism for the evaluation process.

Main instruments and tools for the methodology are designed during the inception phase (e.g. checklists or semi-structured interview questions, possible questionnaires for surveys, templates for facilitated self-evaluation, etc.).

4) Inception Meeting

The inception report is submitted to the MFA. A face-to-face or an online inception meeting with the evaluation team, the evaluation manager, the MFA, the embassy and partner institution should be organised to discuss the desk study results, proposed approach, methodology, work plan and reporting plans. The sector advisers and the adviser specializing in the cross-cutting objectives should be invited to contribute. The MFA unit commissioning the evaluation approves the Inception Report before the field work can be launched.

The inception phase is an investment in a systematic preparation of the evaluation, guided by the needs of the users of the evaluation results. It is therefore necessary to allocate sufficient time for this phase. Depending on the size and content of the programme, it is estimated that 15–20% of the time used for an evaluation should be allocated for the inception phase. Timewise, in a typical project evaluation, a minimum of one month should be reserved for the inception phase. In complex evaluations two months are needed.

Prior to the field work, the evaluation manager prepares a Letter of Introduction for the evaluation team to describe the purpose of the evaluation and to facilitate the evaluation team when they approach the partner organisations.

Learn more from:

Inception phase (video lecture 3.1)

Templates and tools:

Start-up Meeting Agenda (Word)

Inception Report and Evaluation Matrix (Word)

Non-Disclosure Agreement (Word)

Letter of Introduction (Word)

7.3 Field phase: data collection and analysis

Briefing meeting in the field

The evaluation team must hold a briefing meeting with representatives of the embassy of Finland and the partner institution, and other relevant stakeholders at the beginning of the field phase. The meeting should focus on the objectives, approach and work plan of the evaluation, and inform the evaluation team about substance issues, recent developments and stakeholders to be consulted. Specific human rights and cultural features in the country may also be briefed when informing on the code of conduct. It is important to reach a common understanding of the roles of the evaluation team, the embassy and the partner institution. The programme for meetings, interviews/consultations and project site visits will be agreed upon, as well as the date for the debriefing workshop and arrangements.

Already during the initial planning of the evaluation, and at the latest during the inception phase, the embassy should help the evaluation team in the identification of relevant stakeholders. If needed, the embassy may organise high-level meetings with the partner ministries, and the embassy representative may also attend any meetings organised with high or senior level officials in the partner institution to officially introduce the evaluation team. The embassy may assist in other situations by giving further advice.

Otherwise, the evaluation team is responsible for the practical arrangements of meetings, logistics etc. The evaluated project may also support the arrangements if agreed upon during the inception phase.

Data Collection and Analysis

During the field phase, the evaluation team collects additional documents (e.g. government and donor reports, policy documents, statistics, studies, budgetary information etc.) that complement the documentation of the desk study that was undertaken before the field phase.

Ideally, the baselines for key outcome and impact indicators are defined when the programme is planned and further developed during its inception phase. The availability of baseline data is a key factor to successful evaluation, particularly when the impact of a programme is evaluated. In many cases, however, important baseline data is lacking. It is then the task of the evaluators to develop a methodology for assessing the baseline situation afterwards, for instance by applying participatory methods for assessing the stakeholders' baseline situation and by using secondary data, such as national statistics, institutional records, and reports and studies by other stakeholders.

The main methods for data collection should be identified and instruments designed during the inception phase. The methodology should be further elaborated by the evaluation team during the field phase, if some methodology is found to be invalid in practice, or if new issues requiring additional analyses are identified. The team should use qualitative and quantitative methods and special emphasis should be placed on disaggregating data so that it allows for gender analysis and integrating the human rights approach into the analysis.

Participatory approach is a leading principle especially when using qualitative methods. Beneficiaries need to be meaningfully involved in the discussions on the successes, issues and challenges on the programme implementation and usage of the developed systems. They can provide valuable information on the lessons learned and ideas for improving the implementation. The methods of participation need to be tailored to the context and participants. For example, ensuring gender balance and working with disabled persons or minorities may require specific methods and arrangements.

Appropriate instruments and tools need to be designed for selected methods. The main instruments should be pre-tested before using them in practice (e.g. questionnaires). Semi-structured interviews are recommended instead of unstructured ones, because in free interviews there is a risk that relevant topics are left out or forgotten. Open questions and/or checklists help the interviewers to make sure that all relevant topics and issues are covered, but flexibility is needed to enable also discussions on topics not foreseen beforehand. The timing and venues for focus group meetings and round-table discussions should enable participation of all key stakeholders. Ensuring gender equity and participation of disabled persons and other vulnerable groups may require specific arrangements. Often, also interpretation needs to be arranged, especially when consulting final beneficiaries.

Reporting on the progress of the evaluation should be agreed upon in the start-up meeting when the evaluation is launched. Typically, an initial briefing session with the embassy and key partner institutions is held in the beginning, and a final debriefing session in the end of the mission.

Templates and tools:

Examples of quantitative and qualitative methods (Word)

Learn more from:

Better evaluation: Collect and retrieve data (website)

UNEG Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in evaluation (PDF; Collecting and analyzing HR&GE data, pp. 39-41)

7.4 Debriefing on the initial evaluation results

The evaluation team must allocate sufficient time for the analysis and validation of the initial findings made during the field mission. The first output of the process is a summary of initial findings to be presented in the debriefing/validation workshop at the end of the field work. During this process, the evaluation matrix, which includes criteria, evaluation questions and indicators, is used as the checklist to ensure that all evaluation issues are covered.

The evaluation team presents the initial findings to the embassy, partner institution and other stakeholders in the debriefing workshop/meeting at the end of the field phase. The purpose is to get feedback on the validity of the initial findings. The debriefing gives an opportunity for stakeholders to confirm, correct, complete or challenge the information that the team has collected. However, the team decides on what information is used in finalising the evaluation report. Adequate time, at least half a day, should be reserved for the debriefing workshop to facilitate an in-depth debate of the initial evaluation results. A virtual link to the MFA in Helsinki is recommended to ensure that all key stakeholders get the same message.

7.5 Reporting phase

The evaluation report

The ToR defines the expected maximum length of the evaluation report. As a rule of thumb, the report should not be longer than between 20–40 pages (plus Annexes).

Clear analyses that link the findings, conclusions and recommendations form the basis for using the evaluation for future planning and decision-making, e.g. for preparing a management response on the evaluation. Findings must flow logically from the analysis of the data, showing a clear line of evidence (findings) to support the conclusions. Thereby, conclusions are substantiated by findings and analysis. Recommendations and any lessons learned follow logically from the conclusions.

Structure of the report

Basic Outline for an Evaluation Report is given in the templates.

- The report includes an **Executive Summary** that provides an overview of the report, including a summary table on the main findings, conclusions and recommendations as well as a summary of any overall lessons.
- **Introduction chapter** explains the evaluation's rationale, purpose and objectives, scope and main evaluation questions.
- The broader working environment and its influence on the performance of the programme is described in the **Context chapter.**
- The report also gives an overview of the programme that was evaluated, including a description of its objectives, implementation strategies, and resources for implementation.
- **Findings** include the quantitative and qualitative data, facts and evidence based on the evaluation questions and related indicators. The data obtained from the findings illustrate the programme's progress and achievements and the encountered problems.
- **Conclusions** are the evaluators' assessment of the performance of the programme. This chapter helps to understand the successes or failures of the programme.
- **Recommendations** propose improvements, changes, and actions to remedy problems in performance or to capitalise on strengths. The recommendations should clearly specify the responsibilities and schedules for actions.
- **Lessons learned** are the evaluation's general conclusions for wider application and use, e.g. proposals on policy developments.
- Annexes of the report include the ToR, relevant detailed data analysis (main findings are presented in the main text), lists of sources of information, including the names of people who were interviewed and documents reviewed, and the programme implemented in the field phase.

Altogether, the report should include clear analysis covering findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned, including a clear logical distinction between the stakeholders and their roles, including both final beneficiaries and involved institutions.

Preparing a high-quality evaluation report

The evaluation team prepares the draft evaluation report after the field mission. The evaluators complete the analysis of data collected during the evaluation process. Relevant feedback received from the partner institutions and stakeholders in the debriefing workshop is accommodated in the report. The output of this process is the draft evaluation report. The quality of the draft evaluation report is assessed according to the evaluator's internal quality assurance mechanism adopted for the evaluation. It is then submitted to the MFA for official comments. The evaluation manager then sends the report to the embassy, which then collects comments from the partner institutions and the embassy itself. If programme implementation has been supported by a consulting company, it is also asked to give feedback on the report. Other stakeholders may also be invited to give their comments.

The quality of the evaluation report is assessed against:

- the ToR and the evaluation questions further elaborated during the inception phase
- the reporting system agreed with the evaluation team during the inception phase and
- the OECD/DAC and EU standards for evaluation report.

The comments on the draft evaluation report should focus on correcting factual mistakes and misunderstandings by the evaluation team, but not on the interpretations and conclusions of the team as long as their analysis is based on evidence.

The draft report with the received comments is discussed in the steering committee meeting or in an ad hoc meeting organised for this purpose. The comments are then compiled by the MFA. The MFA then sends the compiled written comments to the evaluator. Having received the official comments in writing, the evaluation team produces the final evaluation report. The evaluator's remarks and observations addressing the comments may require re-analysing parts of the data and revising related chapters in the final evaluation report. The report is then submitted to the MFA for formal approval. After this, the MFA and the local partner(s) disseminate the evaluation results to all stakeholders and the evaluation report is also published on the MFA's website.

Learn more from:

Reporting (video lecture 3.3)

Templates and tools:

Outline for an Evaluation Report (Word)

Checklist: Quality of Evaluation Report (Word)

8 – Quality assurance

8.1 Ensuring high quality of evaluations

To ensure the high quality and usability of an evaluation, systematic quality assurance (QA) needs to be conducted; both by the commissioner of the evaluation (e.g. unit of the Ministry) and by the organisation/company contracted for the evaluation. In practice, QA should be conducted during the preparatory phases (preparation of the Terms of Reference and contracting of the evaluators) as well as during the review of reports (Inception Report, Interim Report, Final Draft Report).

8.2 Quality assurance during the preparatory phase

During the **preparatory phase**, the following actions may be applied by the evaluation's commissioner and by the evaluators:

1) Commissioner of the evaluation (=evaluation manager) may ensure and improve the quality of the evaluations in advance by:

- Defining clearly the **intended use and users** of the evaluation;
- Setting **clear priorities** and formulating clear and prioritised evaluation questions in the ToR (max 12 EQs);
- Allocating **resources** (time & money) according to objectives established in the ToR, or adjusting their level to the available resources;
- Requesting the evaluators to sign the Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) and to follow **data security rules** all the time;
- Appointing an **evaluation reference group** to support the evaluation and review the reports (relevant advisers and experts);
- Requesting the evaluation team to determine the **quality assurance mechanism** and related resources in the tender and in the evaluation plans;
- Working in close **cooperation with the partner institutions** from the outset.

In major evaluations, also an **external assessment (peer review)** on the draft evaluation report phase may be conducted to help the evaluation team to enhance the quality of the evaluation, and in case of serious weaknesses in the evaluation, to provide independent evidence of poor performance in the grievance process. In this case, the evaluation manager contracts the peer reviewer(s).

2) Evaluators and their companies should conduct their own quality assurance during the preparatory phase by:

- Selecting a **QA team or person**: The QA team/person must have extensive experience of managing evaluations as well as expertise in the key subject matters, including cross-cutting objectives.
- Allocating **time for the QA processes**: Typically, in a project evaluation work allocation for QA varies from 4 to 8 working days. The QA should also be included in the evaluation's budget.
- In case possible, the evaluator's QA person should already review the initial evaluation plan presented in the evaluator's tender.

Templates and tools:

Checklist: Quality of Terms of Reference (Word)

Checklist: Quality of Evaluation Report (Word)

Non-Disclosure Agreement (Word)

8.3 Quality assurance during the implementation of the evaluation

Throughout the evaluation's implementation process, special attention must be paid to quality assurance. All agreements on an evaluation must contain clear stipulations on quality assurance. In addition, the MFA may commission an **external peer review** at any phase of an evaluation. This review on the quality may be utilised to guide the evaluation process and, when necessary, to terminate the process and disbursements in case the quality of the evaluation does not meet the requirements.

To ensure the quality and usabililty of evaluations, a r**eference group** may be established during the preparation of an evaluation, which includes representatives of the users of evaluation results and possible external experts. The establishment of a reference group promotes participatory management and collaborative learning.

During the evaluation's implementation phase, **the MFA** manages the quality of an evaluation by**:**

- Organising **validation of findings** at the end of the field mission (de-briefing workshop);
- Conducting **systematic quality assurance of the reports**; the Checklist: Quality of Evaluation Report can be used for this purpose;
- Working in close **cooperation** with the partner institutions from the outset;
- If a more objective quality assessment of the report is needed, the Ministry may also organize a **peer review process** in the draft report phase

Evaluators may manage the quality of evaluations during implementation by:

- Selecting a **QA team or person** and allocating **working time for the QA**. Typically, 4 to 8 days should be reserved for the QA in a project evaluation.
- Investing in the inception phase by conducting a desk study of documentation and preparing a detailed evaluation plan and methodology, including a detailed evaluation matrix. **The QA of the evaluation team should review the Inception Report** and assess especially the initial findings (based on initial interviews in Finland and the desk study of documentation) as well as the proposed approach and methodology, and propose improvements as relevant.
- Making the QA available for consultations in case support is needed during the implementation of the evaluation.
- Conducting a **QA review of the draft evaluation report** against the requirements defined in the ToR and the Inception Report. The QA team or person may also consult the evaluation team to clarify justifications for the findings and recommendations. Based on the QA review, concrete recommendations should be given to the evaluation team on additional surveys (in case of weak data or evidence), improved analysis, or when the findings and recommendations are presented.

Templates and tools:

Checklist: Quality of Evaluation Report (Word)

8.4 When quality does not meet standards

If the quality of the evaluation process or the final report does not meet the required standards, the commissioner of the evaluation should make a written notice complaining the quality of the service and thereafter starting a formal reclamation process based on the consultancy agreement if still needed.

MFA has a guideline for the complaining process to be followed as well as a reclamation form (in Finnish). Other organizations may also have their own formal reclamation processes to follow. However, the complaining process follows usually the following steps:

1. When the commissioner observes a lack of quality of the outcomes of the evaluation, or has concerns on the evaluation process, he/she may give a **written notice** for the consultant as soon as possible.
    - The notice should explain the concerns and give a period of time for correcting the pointed quality issues. In case a peer review on the evaluation has been conducted, it can also be used as an evidence for the lack of the quality. It is important that there is evidence of quality concerns before starting a more formal reclamation process.
2. If the consultant has not been able to improve the quality of the report up to the standards, or correct the pointed anomalies on the service or the evaluation process in the given time, the commissioner may then make an **official reclamation on the quality of the evaluation** (MFA officials may use the reclamation form of MFA, found in Arkki, HEL7M0297-20).
3. The severity of the quality problem as well as its implications to the usefulness of the evaluation report may vary case by case. The reclamation may just ask the consultant again **to correct the quality** in a given time and/or request certain level of **compensation** and/or insist the **cancellation of the contract**. Depending on the discretion of the commissioner the compensation may range from withholding the last payments to claiming back of majority of the paid fees. When analyzing the reasons of the problem, also the role of the commissioner must be counted in to the analysis.
4. In case of complaint is related to the quality of the evaluation report and it does not fulfill the required standards, the final report **should not be published**. However, the report can be discussed normally within the project management, and in the limits of the credibility of the report, **make management decisions as deemed reasonable.**

Templates and tools:

Checklist: Quality of Evaluation Report (Word)

Guideline for complaining process (PDF; in Finnish)

9 – Dissemination and use of evaluation results

9.1 Roles and responsibilities in dissemination and using evaluation results

The last step of the evaluation process is dissemination of the evaluation's results and preparation of the management response. The relevant MFA units, the embassy, the partner organisation(s), the implementing agency of the project and the TA consultant are responsible for the dissemination of the evaluation results whereas other stakeholders, such as other donors, projects with synergies, as well as the academia, should be given an opportunity to learn from the experiences. The evaluation report shall be published on the website of the Ministry to enable wider learning.

The management response serves as the basis on which definitive decisions upon the evaluation's recommendations are made. The programme's Supervisory Board (or other high-level decision-making body) is the key platform for decision-making. The Steering Committee (or related) guides the implementing agencies on how the decisions should be taken into account. The implementing agencies, on their part, operationalise the decisions and monitor their implementation.

Steps	Tasks	MANAGER	EMBASSY	EVALUATORS	PARTNERS	PROJECT
Dissemination of evaluation's results	Dissemination of the report	M	P		P	P
	Archiving	M				
	Publishing at the MFA website	M				
Management response	Decision making upon the evaluation's recommendations	M	M		M	
	Processing of the decisions into operational plans		P		P	M

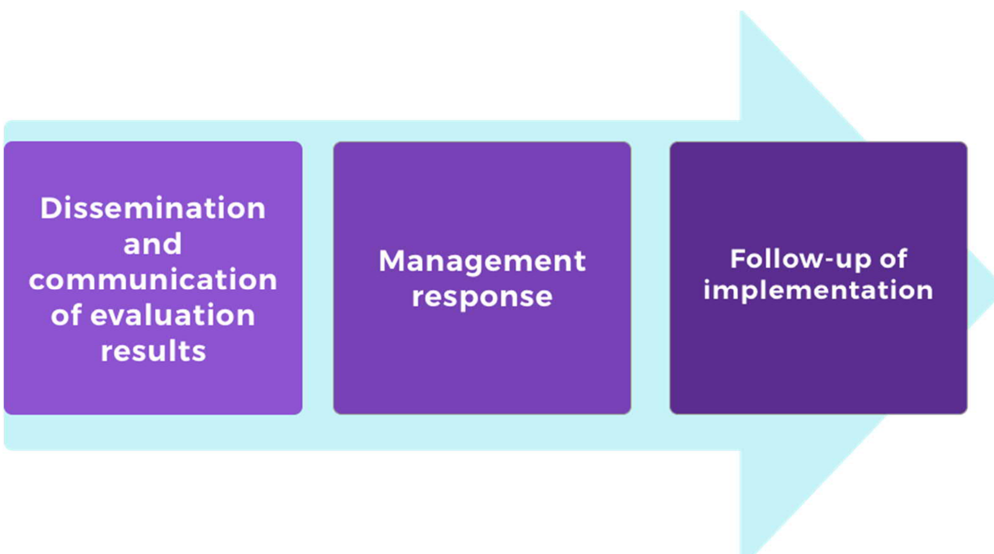
	Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the decisions	M	P		P	M

M = Main responsibility / P = Participation in the process

In case of policy- or instrument-level evaluations, MFA is responsible for processing of the decisions in operational plans. To learn more on management response, see also **Chapter 8.4**.

9.2 Dissemination and communication of evaluation results

The OECD/DAC standards emphasise that evaluation results should be presented in an accessible format and be systematically distributed internally and externally to facilitate follow-up actions and ensure transparency. The evaluated programme's implementing agencies and relevant local partners are the key stakeholders for dissemination.



The following issues should be considered when planning the dissemination:

- Different languages need to be taken into account and translations provided as needed.
- Clearly written highlights may be processed and published on the programme’s website for more grass-root level partners.

- In case there are additional interested parties in the wider development community, for instance within the academia, CSOs and/or the private sector, it is important to identify them and communicate the findings to them to maximise wider learning.
- Systematic dissemination, storage and management of the evaluation report must be ensured to provide easy access to all interested partners, to reach target audiences, and to make the best possible use of the lessons learned.

Storing evaluation reports

Documents related to evaluation are stored in the Ministry's case management system, AHA-KYT system. A guideline for storing evaluation reports is available in the tools.

Publicity of the results

In principle, all evaluation reports of the Ministry are public and they are published on the MFA website on project and programme evaluations. The head of the unit commissioning evaluations revises the quality of evaluation reports and gives a permission to publish the reports.

Reports can also be published on other relevant websites, for example partners' websites, under Creative Commons License, in order to promote openness and public use of evaluation results. The publishing of evaluation results and reports and the communication of development evaluations are based on rules concerning public access to documents as well as the Instructions on Implementing the Decree on Information Security in Central Government. Transparency and openness of development cooperation are promoted also through evaluations according to Finland's International Aid Transparency (IATI) commitments. A guideline for publishing evaluation reports is available in the tools.

Disseminating and communicating evaluation results

Dissemination of evaluation results is not limited to the distribution of the evaluation reports. At the end of the evaluation, a presentation session is organised for the relevant stakeholders. The evaluation report (or highlights from the evaluation) may also be presented on the project's /programme's website, and local media may be used for sharing lessons learned. An online seminar (= webinar) may be arranged if appropriate; it is a good way to ensure that all stakeholders have a possibility to follow the presentation of the evaluation results. In more comprehensive and strategic evaluations are finalised, public presentation events are organised. These events are communicated to targeted groups but also to wider public by open invitations on the MFA's website. The results are presented by the members of the evaluation team. Both the units responsible for the evaluations and embassies are encouraged to organise dissemination seminars, including video or online conferencing to reach a broad range of stakeholders. The Development Evaluation Unit can support in organising dissemination.

In dissemination, the following principles should be applied:

- Using multiple dissemination methods and products according to target group;
- Using simple terminology and clear language;
- Framing of key communication messages at the start of the drafting of the evaluation report;
- Honesty (sharing only positive results equals to not being transparent and credible);

To ensure systematic dissemination which takes into account all relevant stakeholders, a **communication plan** should be prepared to guide the dissemination. The plan should define the issues, stakeholders, forms/methods and schedules of dissemination activities.

Annual summary reports

The Development Evaluation Unit prepares an annual summary report of development evaluations, highlighting their main results and decisions made. The report is widely disseminated to stakeholders, including to the Development Policy Committee and the Committee on Foreign Affairs of Parliament. The Development Evaluation Unit may also prepare a summary of the results of development evaluation during the Government term.

The evaluation reports commissioned by the MFA country departments are archived in the MFA and distributed to the partner institutions and other stakeholders in the partner countries. The Development Evaluation Unit compiles information of completed programme evaluations on an annual basis.

Learn more from:

Best practices for disseminating and communicating evaluation results (video lecture 4.1)

Creative Commons Licence (website)

International Aid Transparency IATI (website)

Instructions on Implementing the Decree on Information Security in Central Government (PDF)

Templates and tools:

How to store evaluation reports in AHA KYT system (Word)

Publishing evaluation reports on MFA website (Word)

Dissemination and communication plan (Word)

9.3 Management response

The OECD/DAC standards require that recommendations are systematically responded to and that action is taken by the body to which each recommendation is addressed. This includes a formal management response and defining a follow-up mechanism for the decisions.

All development evaluations carried out in the MFA are responded to by a management response. The management response defines to what extent the management of the MFA needs to react to the recommendations internally and to what extent together with partners. A basic model for a project evaluation management response is given in the templates.

Management responses that apply to centralised evaluations, which concern strategic issues and often the MFA and the Foreign Service as a whole, are prepared according to the consultation requirements included in the MFA's internal rules and regulations. The Development Evaluation Unit facilitates the process as the secretariat.

The results of project and programme evaluations are handled in relevant steering committees and advisory boards. The decisions are recorded for monitoring in an unequivocal manner. The follow-up is done in the context of the programme's monitoring and reporting framework.

The responsible units integrate the management responses done by partners or joint evaluations in the plans and monitoring processes.

Follow-up of implementation

All agreed follow-up actions are tracked to ensure accountability for their implementation. The internal norm of the MFA on development evaluation stipulates that the results of programme evaluations should be discussed in the programme's steering committee (or similar decision-making body). The decisions on the implementation of the evaluation results (management response) are clearly recorded for monitoring. Implementation is reported regularly as an integral part of programmes' progress reporting.

Learn more from:

Management response process in the MFA (video lecture 4.2)

Templates and tools:

Management response for project evaluation (Word)

10 – Alternative evaluative approaches and methods

10.1 Alternative evaluative approaches and methods

This evaluation manual mainly describes evaluations as traditional intensive assignments, either as mid-term or as final or end-of-phase evaluations. Depending on the issue and purpose or need of the evaluation, also other evaluative processes may be applied.

Review is an assessment with a more limited focus than a full-scale evaluation. In case the evaluability of a project is low, or if there is no need for a full-scale evaluation, a specific review may be commissioned. Reviews can be thematic or Management Reviews. Reviews normally examine the programme's efficiency and the extent to which the programme develops in relation to the planned outputs and outcome (effectiveness), but does not cover all aspects of an evaluation. A review should also define potential areas for improvements. To some extent, reviews may also examine relevance, sustainability and lessons learned. Reviews may update risk assessments conducted earlier during the formulation and inception phases. A Management Review can also be a management action for problem solving used as a fast-track measure to gain information on a certain aspect of the programme. The Management Reviwe provides an opportunity to further analyse information collected through monitoring, address problems faced during implementation, reflect on the implications, and discuss appropriate management action in order to support effective implementation.

Real-time evaluation may be conducted as a process where the evaluators are contracted already when the project is starting. In this method, the evaluators may support the project through the following actions:

- During the project's Inception Phase, the evaluators may support the development of the project's monitoring and reporting systems by e.g. facilitating the

development of the detailed results framework, especially its indicators, and through supporting the establishment of the baselines for the indicators.
- During the implementation process, the evaluators may facilitate self-evaluations conducted e.g. prior to preparation of each annual plan.
- In addition, the evaluation team may conduct also independent mid-term and final / end-of-phase evaluations.

This method may improve the development of the project's results framework into a more functioning monitoring tool as well as ensure that the evaluators really know the developments in the project. The support to the project becomes continuous, which may greatly improve the project's learning curve. However, in this method the evaluators also become parties of the implementation which may risk their independence. To ensure sufficient impartiality, the team leader of the mid-term / final evaluations may be a person not involved in the facilitation processes part of the real-time evaluation.

Facilitated self-assessment is an evaluative process conducted by the project's implementers themselves, supported by a professional evaluation facilitator. In this method, the facilitator develops the methodology and templates for the self-assessment and facilitates the process, whereas the actual assessment is conducted by the project team. Representatives of relevant beneficiaries may also be invited to participate in the process. In practice, the method may be applied through the following actions:

- The facilitator develops the methodology and assessment templates, based on a quick review of the project documentation. The results framework may be applied in developing the structure of the assessment. The facilitator also instructs the project team on preparatory work (e.g. collection and review of documents, context analysis, review of external developments, etc.).
- The actual self-assessment may be conducted in a 2-3 day workshop. To gain best benefits of the assessment, next planning processes (e.g. preparation of the next annual plan) should proceed after the self-assessment.
- The reporting on the self-assessment may be compiled by the facilitator, or the project team itself may take the responsibility of reporting, based on the facilitator's guidance.

The key benefit of this method is that it greatly increases learning among the project team. With facilitation challenging critical thinking, the team itself identifies the key success stories as well as issues requiring remedial action. The key risk of the method is the fact that some issues are not seen/understood by the ”insiders”; therefore the facilitator's role is crucial in challenging the project team to truly self-critical assessment. There may be also a tendency to avoid open discussion on problems; again the facilitator's role is to ensure systematic and self-critical assessment by developing the methodology and by challenging the team's thinking.

The facilitated self-assessment method may also be applied as one method in an external evaluation. As the only method to be applied, facilitated self-assessment is relevant mainly in small projects, e.g. in CSO projects, where the costs of an external evaluation would be disproportional, as compared to the total project budget.

Joint evaluations may be considered in cases where small related projects may be grouped into a wider evaluation. Also joint evaluations with other donors may be relevant, especially in cases where several donors support the same sector in a country. In this case, one of the donors should be selected as the lead agency to be responsible for the management of the evaluation process.

Peer review may also function as an evaluative process, especially if the peer review includes a two-way analysis process providing recommendations for both parties of the peer review. This method may be relevant especially in CSO programmes consisting of related projects in several countries.

Learn more from:

Field phase (video lecture 3.2)

11 – Templates, tools and additional reading

Annual evaluation plan (Excel)

Terms of Reference for an Evaluation (Word)

Outline for an Evaluation Report (Word)

Checklist: Quality of Terms of Reference (Word)

Checklist: Quality of Evaluation Report (Word)

Start-up Meeting Agenda (Word)

Inception Report and Evaluation Matrix (Word)

Non-Disclosure Agreement (Word)

Letter of Introduction (Word)

How to store evaluation reports in AHA KYT system (Word)

Publishing evaluation reports on MFA website (Word)

Dissemination and communication plan (Word)

Management response for project evaluation (Word)

Guideline for complaining process (PDF; in Finnish)

Examples of quantitative and qualitative methods (Word)

List of terminology applied in evaluation and project cycle management (Word)

All templates, tools and checklists are also found on the MFA website on Evaluation Manual.

11.2 Additional Reading

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland:

Ministry for Foreign Affairs' internal norm 1/2015 on Development Evaluation (PDF)

Evaluation function in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (website)

Development Evaluation Unit (EVA-11) (website)

MFA Manual for Bilateral Programmes (PDF)

Instructions on Implementing the Decree on Information Security in Central Government (PDF)

OECD Development Assistance Committee:

OECD DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance (website)

Revised Evaluation Criteria - Definitions and Principles for Use (2019) (PDF)

Revised and Updated Evaluation Criteria (2020) (PDF)

OECD/DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation (2010) (PDF)

OECD/DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance (1991/2008) (PDF)

European Union:

EU International Cooperation and Development (website)

United Nations Evaluation Group:

UNEG Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in evaluation (PDF)

UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation (PDF)

UNEG Ethical Guidelines (PDF)

UNEG Checklist for a human rights and gender equality evaluation process (PDF; pp. 44)

United Nations Development Programme:

UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (website)

Word Bank:

World Bank Independent Evaluation Group IEG (website)

Other sources:

Better evaluation (website)

- Collect and retrieve data (website)
- Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation (website)
- Evaluability assessment (website)
- Evaluability assessment checklist (Word)

ALNAP Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide (PDF)

Creative Commons Licence (website)

International Aid Transparency Initiative IATI (website)

Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland