New Consultancy and Relief Organization

NCRO

Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Manual

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Address: West Street of Maraston, House # 643, Nahya-e-3, Jalalabad City, Nangarhar Province Afgahnistan
Website: http://ncro-afg.org

NCRO
Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Manual

This manual on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for project results is an updated version of our few past year's experience. It seeks new directions in planning, monitoring and evaluation in the context of fast result oriented programs strategic plans.

Management and staff on key functions and mechanisms strive for results and principles in the overarching programmatic documents including the strategic plan to be achieved.

Objectives of this Manual include the following:

- A basic understanding of the purposes, processes, norms, standards and guiding principles for planning, monitoring and evaluation
- Knowledge of the essential elements of the planning and monitoring processes.
- Knowledge of the essential elements of the evaluation process.
- **Planning** and **monitoring** emergency programs, projects and activities
- Managing the commissioning process of **evaluations**

Planning, monitoring and evaluation for results

Monitoring and evaluation can help organization extract relevant information from past and ongoing activities that can be used as the basis for programmatic fine-tuning, reorientation and future planning. Without effective planning, monitoring and evaluation, it would be impossible to judge if work is going in the right direction, whether progress and success can be claimed, and how future efforts might be improved.

Planning is the process of setting goals, developing strategies, outlining the implementation arrangements and allocating resources to achieve those goals. It is important to note that planning involves different processes:

- Identifying the vision, goals or objectives to be achieved
- Formulating the strategies needed to achieve the vision and goals
- Determining and allocating the resources (financial and other) required to achieve the vision and goals
- Outlining implementation arrangements, which include the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating progress towards achieving the vision and goals

Monitoring is the ongoing process by which stakeholders obtain regular feedback on the progress being made towards achieving their goals and objectives.

Evaluation is a rigorous and independent assessment of either completed or ongoing activities to determine the extent to which they are achieving stated objectives and contributing to decision-making.

While monitoring provides real-time information required by management, evaluation provides more in-depth assessment. The monitoring process can generate questions to be answered by evaluation. Also, evaluation draws heavily on data generated through monitoring during the program and project cycle, including, for example, baseline data, information on the program or project implementation process, and measurements of results.

Principles of planning, monitoring and evaluating for results

These principles should be kept in mind throughout the entire process of planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Ownership

Ownership is fundamental in formulating and implementing programs and projects to achieve results. There are two major aspects of ownership to be considered:

- The depth, or level, of ownership of plans and processes
- The breadth of ownership

Engagement of stakeholders

Throughout all stages of planning, monitoring, evaluating, learning and improving, it is vital to engage stakeholders, promote buy-in and commitment, and motivate action.

A strong results management process aims to engage stakeholders in thinking as **openly and creatively** as possible about what they want to achieve and encourage them to organize them to achieve what they have agreed on, including putting in place a process to monitor and evaluate progress and use the information to improve performance.

Focus on results

Planning, monitoring and evaluation processes should be geared towards **ensuring that results are achieved** not towards ensuring that all activities and outputs get produced as planned.

Planning for results: Practical applications

The Benefits of planning

There are four main benefits that make planning worthwhile:

Planning enables us to know what should be done when—without proper planning, projects or programs may be implemented at the wrong time or in the wrong manner that results in poor outcomes. A classic example is that of an assistance agency that offered to help improve the conditions of rural roads. The planning process was controlled by the agency with little consultation. Road repair began during the rainy season and much of product used for construction was unsuitable for the region. The project suffered lengthy delays and cost overruns. One community member commented during the evaluation that the community wanted the project, but if there was proper planning and consultation with them, the donors would have known the best time to start the project and the type of material to use.

Planning helps mitigate and manage crises and ensure smoother implementation—there will always be unexpected situations in programs and projects. However, a proper planning exercise helps reduce the likelihood of these and prepares the team for dealing with them when they occur. The planning process should also involve assessing risks and assumptions, and thinking through possible unintended consequences of the activities being planned. The results of these exercises can be very helpful in anticipating and dealing with problems. (Some planning exercises also include scenario planning that looks at 'what ifs' for different situations that may arise.)

Planning improves focus on priorities and leads to more efficient use of time, money and other resources—Having a clear plan or roadmap helps focus limited resources on priority activities, that is, the ones most likely to bring about the desired change. Without a plan, people often get distracted by many competing demands. Similarly, projects and programs will often go off track and become ineffective and inefficient.

Planning helps determine what success will look like—a proper plan helps individuals and units to know whether the results achieved are those that were intended and to assess any discrepancies. Of course, this requires effective monitoring and evaluation of what was planned. For this reason, good planning includes a clear strategy for monitoring and evaluation and use of the information from these processes.

Putting it together: Planning for change

Planning for real results requires thinking critically about desired change and what is required to bring it about. The process involves asking a series of questions:

- What precisely do we want to see changed?
- How will this change occur? What will make change happen?
- Who needs to be involved?
- What resources are needed?
- What conditions need to be in place, and what will influence these conditions?
- How will we monitor and evaluate the changes?
- How will we use the information obtained from monitoring and evaluation?

The process should define all the building blocks required to bring about the desired long-term goal, and monitor and evaluate the extent to which progress is being made. Done in this manner, planning can become a powerful process that helps to:

- Achieve stakeholder consensus and commitment
- Communicate clearly with all stakeholders about the desired changes
- Motivate actions and mobilize resources
- Better define all the internal and external resources and partnerships needed to achieve results
- Better understand the interests, needs and concerns of different groups of stakeholders, including men, women and traditionally marginalized groups
- Set clearer performance indicators for monitoring and evaluation
- Allocate responsibilities

Recap of key considerations in planning for results

- Planning should be focused on results—real development changes that help to improve people's lives. It should not be done merely to meet the requirements of supervisors or Headquarters.
- Planning should always be seen as a process, of which the actual plan is only one product.
- The planning process should extend beyond only looking at results and performance measures. It should include a plan and mechanisms for **managing, monitoring and evaluating** and well developed ideas for partnering and collaborating to achieve the desired results.
- The planning process should be highly participatory and very open, and should encourage frankness, creativity, and innovation.
- Planning must be guided by core principles of development effectiveness. It should not lead to a neutral or generic plan but one that is based on lessons of what works or does not work in development programming.
- The most important outcomes of the planning process are: clarity on goals, objectives and a vision of the future; commitment and motivation of

stakeholders; and clarity on the process to implement and manage the plan. The planning document can serve as a useful record of what has been agreed and a tool for communicating to new stakeholder.

Planning for monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation serve several purposes. In the absence of effective monitoring and evaluation, it would be difficult to know whether the intended results are being achieved as planned, what corrective action may be needed to ensure delivery of the intended results, and whether project s are making positive contributions towards human development. Monitoring and evaluation always relate to pre-identified results in the development plan. They are driven by the need to account for the achievement of intended results and provide a fact base to inform corrective decision-making. Monitoring, as well as evaluation, provides opportunities at regular pre-determined points to validate the logic of a program, its activities and their implementation and to make adjustments as needed. Good planning and designs alone do not ensure results. Progress towards achieving results needs to be monitored. Equally, no amount of good monitoring alone will correct poor program designs, plans and results. Information from monitoring needs to be used to encourage improvements or reinforce plans. Information from systematic monitoring also provides critical input to evaluation. It is very difficult to evaluate a program that is not well designed and that does not systematically monitor its progress.

Monitoring for results

The previous section provided guidance on how to plan for monitoring and evaluation including developing an M&E framework and effectively addressing other planning needs, such as securing resources and capacities for implementing monitoring and evaluation activities. This section provides step-by-step guidance on how to implement planned monitoring activities. It also presents useful tools and tips for effective monitoring and use of monitoring evidence in decision-making.

1. Have a clear common understanding of the following:
    a. The **monitoring policies** applicable to the respective monitoring entity
    b. Relevant **roles and responsibilities** and how they are applied in monitoring for both outcomes and outputs, and management entities in projects and programs
    c. Commonly used monitoring tools and approaches
2. Reinforce and elaborate the initial monitoring framework with detailed information needed to implement monitoring actions. This includes finalizing reference points for periodic monitoring such as indicators, baselines, risks, and annual targets, and locking them in monitoring information systems.
3. Implement monitoring actions: organize, plan and implement monitoring actions, using selected tools for collection and analysis of data and reporting.
4. Use monitoring data objectively for management action and decision-making.

Preparing to monitor by reinforcing the initial M&E plan

Once there is clear understanding on the monitoring policy, operational context, roles and responsibilities, one can prepare to implement monitoring actions. The first activity in implementing monitoring activities is to ensure that the M&E framework is up to date. The M&E framework prepared at the end of the planning stage of a program or project forms the basis for this purpose. It should be carefully reviewed and elaborated as necessary.

There is no artificially fixed time for elaborating the M&E framework, except that it should be done prior to implementing program project s and as close as possible to when actual implementation starts. For country programs, the detailed program-level M&E framework should be prepared after the submission of the respective program documents for Executive Board approval. The period of six to nine months prior to the beginning of the program implementation cycle is often opportune to do this.

The M&E framework comprises three components: a narrative component, a results framework, and a planning matrix for monitoring and evaluation. Any changes that might be needed to the narrative component are unlikely to be substantial, and updating of that component would be relatively straightforward. However, there might be a need to refine the results map and the planning matrix for monitoring and evaluation on the basis of new (and more accurate) information that emerges during the development of specific projects. Data that emerges during detailed project development stages could significantly improve the initial descriptions of outputs, indicators, baselines, risks and assumptions, and thereby enhance the effectiveness and quality of monitoring. Moreover, the M&E framework is first prepared at the end of the planning process, which is focused on planning for results. Detailed information pertaining to implementation or monitoring (for example, type or scheduling of monitoring events, methods to be used, and so forth) could not have been easily accessible or accurately predicted at that time. Therefore, it should be carefully reviewed and incorporated at this stage.

Elaborating the M&E framework provides the opportunity for the M&E framework to be a more realistic and effective tool for monitoring.

Monitor: Collection of data, analysis and reporting

Scope of monitoring

Monitoring aims to identify progress towards results, precipitate decisions that would increase the likelihood of achieving results, enhance accountability and learning. All monitoring efforts should, at a minimum, address the following:

- **Progress towards outcomes**—this entails periodically analyzing the extent to which intended outcomes have actually been achieved or are being achieved.
- **Factors contributing to or impeding achievement of the outcomes**—this necessitates monitoring the country context and the economic, sociological, political and

other developments simultaneously taking place and is closely linked to risk management.

- **Individual partner contributions to the outcomes through outputs**—these outputs may be generated by programs, projects, policy advice, advocacy and other activities. Their monitoring and evaluation entails analyzing whether or not outputs are in the process of being delivered as planned and whether or not the outputs are contributing to the outcome.
- **Partnership strategy**—this requires the review of current partnership strategies and their functioning as well as formation of new partnerships as needed. This helps to ensure that partners who are concerned with an outcome have a common appreciation of problems and needs, and that they share a synchronized strategy.
- **Lessons being learned and creation of knowledge products for wider sharing.**
- Partners may add additional elements where needed for management or analysis, while keeping a realistic scope in view of available capacities. Monitoring usually provides raw data that requires further analysis and synthesis prior to reporting for decision-making. Using information gained through monitoring, program managers must analyze and take action on the program and project activities to ensure that the intended results—results that are in the agreed results and resources frameworks—are being achieved. Managers of programs also monitor and document the contributions of soft development project s and strategic partnerships.

Monitoring data for management action and decision-making

Data and information on progress towards results are gathered, reviewed and used at the project, outcome, sectoral and program levels. These entities are interconnected and reinforce each other. There is a two-way flow of information among them with the following common objectives:

- Clarifying and analyzing progress, issues, challenges and lessons
- Precipitating actions and decisions including effecting changes in plans and resources as required

Project level

Monitoring data normally aggregates from project level to higher level results. At the project level, the use of monitoring information can be summarized as follows.

The first monitoring action at the project level is to be clear of what is expected in terms of project-specific results and what is to be done with respect to monitoring actions. At the beginning, projects should: have a clear scope (that continues to be clear throughout the project); expected deliverables and how these contribute to the higher level results; ensure that cumulative annual targets are adequate to produce the envisaged outputs; and ensure that they lead to the delivery of planned outputs in the agreed time-frame. This information is initially captured in the project results framework and its M&E framework. This process should be repeated at each annual project review to continuously validate that delivery of outputs is on schedule and remains relevant. If this is not the case, higher level boards or committees should be notified so that any implications on the overall planned results can be reviewed for modifications, new time-frames and costs.

The project should review the data to:

- Revalidate if the project and program results logic remain valid in light of the operational experience and evidence.
- Discern what issues have emerged during implementation: Have the foreseen risks and assumptions materialized?
- Have other unforeseen challenges, opportunities and risks materialized? Are these being managed?

Progress towards generating outputs and their continued relevance to the outcome and issues should be synthesized and forwarded to the agency to which the project reports and to the respective outcome or sectoral monitoring mechanism. On the basis of that monitoring data, the project management and board or steering committee should re-confirm that the delivery of outputs is on schedule and that the project is contributing towards the desired outcomes. If not, they should determine what changes are needed. If revisions to plans are needed, then the project management should draft the revisions, including the results framework with new cost estimates, annual targets and so forth, to facilitate decision-making at higher levels. Such information could be provided at agreed intervals such as quarterly, semi-annually, annual or on an as needed basis.

Outcome level

Sectoral and outcome-level coordinating mechanisms play a critical role in results monitoring and developing capacities for monitoring. They forge partnerships around project s supported by partners to achieve common results, provide oversight in a collective spirit, make linkages to national systems and national development goals, and promote the development of monitoring capacities.

At the beginning of the program or project implementation, the existence of such outcome-level monitoring and oversight mechanisms should be verified. If such mechanisms do not exist, then arrangements should be made to set up such groups through engagement with national partners. The outcome and sectoral monitoring mechanisms should take the following actions:

- Ensure that all those who are contributing to the outcome are included in the group.
- Agree on regular interactions and a plan of action to ensure that coordination and monitoring mechanisms remain efficient and effective.
- Review the components of the outcome (outputs and other activities) and ensure that outputs to be produced are sufficient to bring about the outcome and sustain the benefits.
- Ensure that the results plan for outcome indicators, targets, risks and assumptions are valid, adequate and managed.
- Promote development of national capacities in monitoring.

- Agree on a practical arrangement to coordinate the functioning of the outcome group. The outcome group should ideally be led by a national entity.
- The sectoral or outcome coordinating mechanism should continually assess the status of outputs and related projects by partners—all of which contribute to an intended outcome. It does so by examining information from all relevant projects, national reports, donor reports and other sources. It should review the findings of quarterly and annual reviews pertaining to the outcomes and identify lessons that are to be fed back into programming, and serve as a vehicle for ensuring documenting and disseminating lessons learned. It also serves as the focal team for outcome evaluations. Specifically it should:

- Review and assess connected projects and provide feedback to all relevant partners upon receipt of relevant reports, notably the APRs from each contributing project.
- Consider any changes needed in each constituent project and in overall approach in order to achieve the outcomes, the consequences of the necessary changes, and take appropriate action to ensure achievement of the outcomes.

It is important to keep in mind that the outcome and sector-level coordinating mechanisms are larger, as they focus on the achievement of the national outcomes.

Why evaluate? Uses of evaluation

Evaluation is critical for NCRO to progress towards advancing human development and relieve human suffering. Through the generation of evidence and objective information, evaluations enable managers to make informed decisions and plan strategically. The effective conduct and use of evaluation requires adequate human and financial resources, sound understanding of evaluation and most importantly, a culture of results-orientation, learning, inquiry and evidence-based decision-making**.**

When evaluations are used effectively, they support program improvements, knowledge generation and accountability.

- **Supporting program improvements**— did it work or not, and why? How could it be done differently for better results?

The interest is on what works, why and in what context. Decision makers, such as managers, use evaluations to make necessary improvements, adjustments to the implementation approach or strategies, and to decide on alternatives. Evaluations addressing these questions need to provide concrete information on how improvements could be made or what alternatives exist to address the necessary improvements.

- **Building knowledge for generality and wider-application**—what can we learn from the evaluation? How can we apply this knowledge to other contexts?

The main interest is in the development of knowledge for a common use and for generalization to other contexts and situations. When the interest is on knowledge generation, evaluations generally apply more rigorous methodology to ensure a higher level of accuracy in the evaluation and the information being produced to allow for generality and wider-application beyond a particular context.

Evaluations should not be seen as an event but as part of an exercise whereby different stakeholders are able to participate in the continuous process of generating and applying evaluative knowledge. Organizations managers, together with government and other stakeholders, decide who participates in what part of this process (analyzing findings and lessons, developing a management response to an evaluation, disseminating knowledge) and to what extent they will be involved (informed, consulted, actively involved, equal partners or key decision makers). These are strategic decisions for assistance organizations managers that have a direct bearing on the learning and ownership of evaluation findings. An evaluation framework that generates knowledge, promotes learning and guides action is an important means of capacity development and sustainability of results.

- **Supporting accountability**—Is NCRO doing the right things? Is NCRO doing things right? Did NCRO do what it said it would do?

The interest here is on determining the merit or worth and value of an project and its quality. An effective accountability framework requires credible and objective information, and evaluations can deliver such information. Evaluations help ensure that NCRO goals and projects are aligned with and support of the ground realities, and national priorities. NCRO is accountable for providing evaluative evidence that links its contributions to the achievement of development results in our country and for delivering services that are based on the principles of human development. By providing such objective and independent assessments, evaluations in NCRO support the organization's accountability towards its Executive Board, donors, governments, national partners and beneficiaries.

The intended use determines the timing of an evaluation, its methodological framework, and level and nature of stakeholder participation. Therefore, the use has to be determined at the planning stage provides a set of questions to guide NCRO and its stakeholders in assessing the potential use of evaluations.

Evaluation policy: Principles, norms and standards for evaluation

The evaluation policy was adopted to strengthen the evaluation function in NCRO. The guiding principles, norms and standards as expressed in the policy and Norms and Standards for Evaluation guide the practice and use of evaluation in NCRO. Norms for evaluation are how evaluation should be conducted in order to meet the required quality standards and its intended role.

Roles and responsibilities in evaluation

The NCRO evaluation policy outlines the roles and responsibilities of key constituents of the organization in evaluation. Program units and the NCRO Evaluation Department carry out different types of evaluations in order to objectively assess NCRO contributions to program and project results.

Roles and responsibilities in decentralized evaluations		
Who: Actors and Accountability	What: Roles and Responsibilities	When
Senior Management of Program Units • NCRO contribution towards national goals • Progress, problems and trends in the achievement of NCRO level and program results • Patterns and efficiency of resource use • Use of evaluative knowledge for learning and accountability	• Ensure the development of an evaluation • Promote joint evaluation work with the UN system and other partners. • Ensure clear and comprehensive results frameworks are in place, and effective monitoring is implemented • Safeguard the independence of the evaluation exercise and ensure quality of evaluations • Prepare a management response to all evaluations and ensure the implementation of committed actions in the management response	• Planning • Planning and monitoring • Commissioning of evaluation Post-evaluation and follow-up
Heads of Thematic Units and Program Officers/Project Staff Heads of Thematic Units: • NCRO portfolio of programs and projects in a thematic area—NCRO contribution to particular outcomes within a program Program Officers or Project Staff: • Progress towards and achievement of outputs and outcomes • Problems and issues related to implementation • Practical project-level	• Participate and involve relevant stakeholders in developing an evaluation plan • Ensure initiatives in a given thematic or results area • Facilitate and ensure the preparation and implementation of relevant management responses • Facilitate and ensure knowledge sharing and • use of sectoral or thematic evaluative information in programming	• Planning • Planning and monitoring • Post-evaluation and follow-up

collaboration with and monitoring of partners' contribution, as well as resource mobilization		
M&E Specialists/Advisers and Regional Evaluation Advisers • Coherent M&E framework and systems in place and implemented at the program and project levels • Enhanced quality of planning, monitoring and evaluation	• Support program evaluability by facilitating the development of a coherent results framework and a monitoring system, and providing program and project staff with tools, guidance and training • Support evaluation planning and upload and maintain the evaluation plan • Provide guidance in drafting evaluation selecting evaluators, mapping stakeholders, reviewing draft evaluation reports, and identifying evaluation questions and methodologies • Facilitate the preparation of timely management responses to all evaluations • Ensure management response tracking and support M&E capacity development and knowledge sharing	• Planning • Planning and ongoing implementation • Post-evaluation and follow-up
Stakeholders and Partners	• Actively participate in the development of the evaluation plan for NCRO Participate, as relevant, in evaluations as a member of the reference group	Planning implementation and follow-up
Oversight Units: Regional Bureaux and the Executive Office	• Regional bureaux: provide oversight to ensure that the relevant country offices fulfill the requirements as outlined above • The Executive Office provides oversight for evaluations carried out by the regional bureaux and other corporate units	Planning, monitoring, implementation and follow-up
Evaluation Office	• Provide norms, standards, guidelines and tools to support the quality enhancement of evaluations • Maintain and improve management systems for evaluation.	

MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR PROGRAM UNITS

Manual on Monitoring and Evaluation for Results, requirements for evaluation practices have been adjusted in many ways. This table lists the policy requirements before and after the introduction of the Evaluation Policy. Each evaluation plan should indicate, at a minimum, mandatory evaluations. The implementation status of the evaluation plan and committed actions in management responses will be monitored by responsible oversight units

Mandatory evaluation-related requirements		
Tool	Before the Evaluation Policy	After the Evaluation Policy
Project Evaluation	Optional	Only mandatory when required by a partner- ship protocol and included in the project document. Strongly recommended to evaluate pilot projects before replication or upscaling, projects that are going into a next phase.
Outcome Evaluation	A certain number of them are required during the program period, depending on the size of the total program.	Outcome evaluations or outcome-oriented evaluation planned in the evaluation plan.
Evaluation Plan	Country-level evaluation plan is prepared by country offices electronically, and submitted to the Evaluation Office for approval.	All program units are required to prepare a plan for the program period. It is made available to the Executive Board along with the program document before its approval. It is to monitor and report on evaluation compliance.
Management Response	Optional	All evaluations require a management response. It is to monitor and report on the status of committed follow-up actions.
Information Disclosure	It contains evaluation plans and reports. It is optional for program units to upload information.	Program units are required to upload evaluation plans, reports, and management responses. It contains summary reports, information on evaluation focal points in each program unit, and various reporting tools for all program units.

Mandatory requirements for program units

Since the last two years version of the Manual on Monitoring and Evaluation for Results, requirements for evaluation practices have been adjusted in many ways. Each evaluation plan indicates, at a minimum, mandatory evaluations. The implementation status of the evaluation plan and committed actions in management responses will be monitored by responsible oversight units.

Avoiding and mitigating conflict of interest in evaluation
Conflict of interest due to past engagement

As a general rule, NCRO commissioning units will not assign consultants to the evaluation of projects, sectors and themes, strategies, corporate processes or policies for which they have had prior involvement in design, implementation, decision-making or financing. Following this principle, NCRO staff members or employees that may be or have been directly or indirectly related to the program or project should not take part in the evaluation team.

Assuring the quality of evaluation design and methodology

This section describes key components of quality evaluation design and elements of quality evaluation reports to help NCRO managers, evaluation managers and partners carry out effective quality assurance of the evaluation process and products**.** It is intended to enhance knowledge about available methods and tools to ensure that key evaluation products—such as the ToR, evaluation design and reports—meet the quality criteria as defined by the governing norms, standards and policies. This section also aims to help external evaluators understand the quality standards that are expected of evaluations in NCRO.

While external evaluators are responsible for refining the methodology and carrying out the evaluation, overall design and methodology is largely determined by the information provided in the evaluation department. Therefore, those responsible for drafting the ToR can refer to this section for information on key elements of the design and the role of stakeholders, defining the context, the evaluation purpose, and focusing the evaluation before drafting and finalizing the ToR.

Overview

Developing a quality evaluation design involves a thorough understanding of what is being evaluated and making decisions about the following key elements and how each will contribute to valid and useful evaluation results:

- The **purpose** of the evaluation
- The **focus** of the evaluation, that is, the **key questions** that the evaluation seeks to answer
- The **sources and methods** for obtaining information that is credible and defensible
- The procedures that will be used to **analyze and interpret data and report results**
- The **standards** that must be reached for the project to be considered successful
- The **evidence** that will be used to indicate how the project has performed and demonstrate its results (outputs and outcomes)

Role of stakeholders

Stakeholders play an important role in designing and carrying out a quality evaluation. Stakeholders include individuals and groups that have a vested interest in the results of the evaluation. Their involvement at all stages of the evaluation—including focusing the evaluation, shaping the questions to be addressed, identifying credible sources of evidence, reviewing findings and assisting in their interpretation—increases the credibility, potential usefulness and sustainability of evaluation results. Typically, stakeholders can be divided into three major categories, which are not mutually exclusive:

- **Those involved in the program implementation**—donors, collaborators, strategic partners, administrators, managers and staff
- **Those served or affected by the program**—intended beneficiaries, relevant organizations and agencies, government officials, advocacy groups, skeptics, opponents and staff of the implementing or competing agencies
- **Primary users of the evaluation**—specific persons in a position to do or decide something regarding the program, such as donors, IP programmatic counterparts and partners in joint evaluation

The level of involvement of stakeholders will vary among evaluations. When designing an evaluation, it is important for the program unit to identify stakeholders early and draw upon their knowledge as the evaluation design is shaped, starting with their meaningful involvement in developing the ToR. This is particularly critical for joint evaluations, in which case partners involved in the evaluation should be involved in all phases of developing the evaluation design.

The evaluation purpose

All evaluations start with a purpose, which sets the direction. Without a clear and complete statement of purpose, an evaluation can risk being aimless and lacking credibility and usefulness. Evaluations may fill a number of different needs. The statements of purpose should make clear the following:

Why the evaluation is being conducted and at that particular point in time

Who will use the information

What information is needed

How the information will be used

The purpose and timing of an evaluation should be determined at the time of developing an evaluation plan. The purpose statement can be further elaborated at the time a ToR for the evaluation is drafted to inform the evaluation design.

Focusing the evaluation

Evaluation scope

The evaluation scope narrows the focus of the evaluation by setting the boundaries for what the evaluation will and will not cover in meeting the evaluation purpose. The scope specifies those aspects of the program and its context that are within the boundaries of the evaluation. The scope defines, for example:

- The unit of analysis to be covered by the evaluation, such as a system of related programs, polices or strategies, a single program involving a cluster of projects, a single project, or a subcomponent or process within a project
- The time period or phase(s) of the implementation that will be covered
- The funds actually expended at the time of the evaluation versus the total amount allocated
- The geographical coverage
- The target groups or beneficiaries to be included

The scope helps focus the selection of evaluation questions to those that fall within the defined boundaries.

Evaluation objectives and criteria

Evaluation objectives are statements about what the evaluation will do to fulfill the purpose of the evaluation. Evaluation objectives are based on careful consideration of: the types of decisions evaluation users will make; the issues they will need to consider in making those decisions; and what the evaluation will need to achieve in order to contribute to those decisions. A given evaluation may pursue one or a number of objectives. The important point is that the objectives derive directly from the purpose and serve to focus the evaluation on the decisions that need to be made.

Possible project evaluation objectives: To assess the status of outputs; to assess how project outputs are being achieved; and to assess the efficiency with which outputs are being achieved.

Evaluation criteria help focus evaluation objectives by defining the standards against which the project will be assessed. NCRO evaluations generally apply the following evaluation criteria to help focus evaluation objectives: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of project efforts.

Relevance concerns the extent to which a project and its intended outputs or outcomes are consistent with national policies and local traditions and priorities and the needs of intended beneficiaries. Relevance also considers the extent to which the project is responsive to NCRO human priority needs of empowerment and gender equality issues. Relevance concerns the congruency between the perception of what is needed as envisioned by the project planners and the reality of what is needed from the perspective of intended beneficiaries. It also incorporates the concept of responsiveness—that is, the extent to which NCRO was able to respond to changing and emerging priorities and needs in a responsive manner.

An essential sub-category of relevance is the criteria of **appropriateness**, which concerns the cultural acceptance as well as feasibility of the activities or method of delivery of a project. While relevance examines importance of the project relative to the needs and priorities of intended beneficiaries, appropriateness examines whether the project as it is operation is acceptable and is feasible within the local context. For example, a project may be relevant in that it addresses a need that intended beneficiaries perceive to be important, but inappropriate because the method of delivery is incongruent with the culture or not feasible given geographic or other contextual realities. In applying the criterion of relevance, evaluations should explore the extent to which the planning, design and implementation of project takes into account the local context.

Effectiveness is a measure of the extent to which the project intended results (outputs or outcomes) have been achieved or the extent to which progress toward outputs or outcomes has been achieved.

Evaluating effectiveness in project evaluations involves an assessment of cause and effect—that is, attributing observed changes to project activities and outputs, the extent to which changes in the number of voters can be **attributed** to a voter education project. Assessing effectiveness in outcome evaluations will more likely examine NCRO contributions toward intended outcomes. An outcome evaluation might explore the extent to which the observed outputs from a voter education project, along with other NCRO-supported outputs such as professionalizing the electoral administration, contributed towards achieving stated outcomes relating to inclusive participation measured by other observers and reputable experts.

Assessing effectiveness involves three basic steps:
1. Measuring change in the observed output or outcome
2. Attributing observed changes or progress toward changes to the project and determining NCRO contributions toward observed changes
3. Judging the value of the change (positive or negative)

Efficiency measures how economically resources or inputs (funds, expertise and time) are converted to results. A project is efficient when it uses resources appropriately and economically to produce the desired outputs. Efficiency is important in ensuring that resources have been used appropriately and in highlighting more effective uses of resources.

As the nature and primary purposes of project and outcome evaluations differ, the application of criterion will also differ. In assessing efficiency, a project evaluation might explore the extent to which resources are being used to produce the intended outputs and how resources could be used more efficiently to achieve the intended results. An outcome evaluation may involve estimates of the total NCRO investment toward a given outcome. The application of this criterion, particularly in NCRO outcome evaluations, poses a challenge as the nature of NCRO project do not always lend themselves to conventional efficiency indicators. In such cases, some analysis of delivery rates, the reasons some projects are implemented more quickly than others, and overall management ratios at the program level might be considered. It is also important to assess how the partnership strategy has influenced the efficiency of NCRO project through cost-sharing measures and complementary activities.

Sustainability measures the extent to which benefits of a project continue after external assistance has come to an end. Assessing sustainability involves evaluating the extent to which relevant social, economic, political, institutional and other conditions are present and, based on that assessment, making projections about the national capacity to maintain, manage and ensure the intended results in the future.

An assessment of sustainability might explore the extent to which:

- A sustainability strategy, including capacity development of key stakeholders, has been developed and implemented.
- There are financial and economic mechanisms in place to ensure the ongoing flow of benefits once the assistance ends.
- Suitable organizational arrangements have been made.
- Policy and regulatory frameworks are in place that will support continuation of benefits.
- The requisite institutional capacity i.e. systems, structures, staff, expertise, etc. exists.

Impact measures changes in human development and people's well-being that are brought about by development projects directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. Many development organizations evaluate impact because it generates useful information for decision making and supports accountability for delivering results. At times, evaluating impact faces challenges: confirming whether benefits to beneficiaries can be directly attributed to NCRO support can be difficult. However, the impact of NCRO project should be assessed whenever their direct benefits on people are discernible.

Evaluation questions

Evaluation questions, when answered, can give users of the evaluation the information they seek in order to make decisions, take action or add to the knowledge base. The evaluation questions refine the focus of the evaluation by making explicit the aspects of the project that will be considered when judging its performance.

Evaluation questions reflect the underlying chain of assumptions about how the project is expected to operate within its contexts pursuant to the intended outputs and outcomes. The questions chosen for an evaluation should follow from a thorough understanding of the project operations, intentions and context and should be selected for their role in meeting the evaluation purpose, objectives and relevant evaluation criteria.

An indefinite number of questions could be asked for each evaluation criterion. Real world evaluations are limited in terms of time, budget and resources. Therefore, it is important to be strategic in determining what information is needed most and to prioritize evaluation questions. It is better to answer fewer questions robustly than to answer more superficially. A clear and concise set of the most relevant questions ensures that evaluations are focused, manageable, cost-efficient and useful.

To ensure that the key questions selected for the evaluation are the most relevant and most likely to yield meaningful information for users, NCRO program units must solicit input from and negotiate agreement among partners and other stakeholders, including the evaluation team.

Gender, exclusion sensitivity and rights-based approach

Consistent with NCRO policy efforts, NCRO evaluations are guided by the principles of gender equality, the rights-based approach and human development. Thus, as appropriate, NCRO evaluations assess the extent to which NCRO projects have addressed the issues of social and gender inclusion, equality and empowerment; contributed to strengthening the application of these principles to various development efforts in a given country; and incorporated the NCRO commitment to rights-based approaches and gender mainstreaming in the project design.

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making gender-related concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. NCRO evaluations should assess the extent to which NCRO projects have considered mainstreaming a gender perspective in the design, implementation and outcome of the project and if both women and men can equally access the project 's benefits to the degree they were intended. Similarly, evaluations should also address the extent to which NCRO has advocated for the principle of equality and inclusive development, and has contributed to empowering and addressing the needs of the disadvantaged and vulnerable populations in a given society.

The rights-based approach in assistance efforts entails the need to ensure that development strategies facilitate the claims of rights-holders and the corresponding obligations of duty-bearers. This approach also emphasizes the important need to address the immediate, underlying and structural causes for not realizing such rights. The concept of civic engagement, as a mechanism to claim rights, is an important aspect in the overall framework. When appropriate, evaluations should assess the extent to which the project has facilitated the capacity of rights-holders to claim their rights and duty-bearers to fulfill their obligations.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation design must detail a step-by-step plan of work that specifies the methods the evaluation will use to collect the information needed to address the evaluation criteria and answer the evaluation questions, analyze the data, interpret the findings and report the results.

Evaluation methods should be selected for their rigor in producing empirically based evidence to address the evaluation criteria and respond to the evaluation questions. The **evaluation report** should contain an **evaluation matrix** that displays for each of the evaluation criteria, the questions and sub-questions that the evaluation will answer, and for each question, the data that will be collected to inform that question and the methods that will be used to collect that data. In addition, the inception report should make explicit the underlying theory or assumptions about how each data element will contribute to understanding the development results—attribution, contribution, process, implementation and so forth—and the rationale for data collection, analysis and reporting methodologies selected.

Data collection methods

The data to be collected and the methods for collecting the data will be determined by the evidence needed to address the evaluation questions; the analyses that will be used to translate the data into meaningful findings in response to the evaluation questions; and judgments about what data are feasible to collect given constraints of time and resources. NCRO evaluations draw heavily on data generated through monitoring during the program or project implementation cycle. Performance indicators are a simple and reliable means to document changes in development conditions (outcomes), production, or delivery of products and services (outputs) connected to a development project.

Performance indicators are useful but have limitations. Indicators only indicate; they do not explain. Indicators will not likely address the full range of questions the evaluation seeks to address. Indicators provide a measure of what progress has been made. They do not explain why that progress was made or what factors contributed to the progress.

Primary data consists of information evaluators observe or collect directly from stakeholders about their first-hand experience with the project. These data generally consist of the reported or observed values, beliefs, attitudes, opinions, behaviors, motivations and knowledge of stakeholders, generally obtained through questionnaires, surveys, interviews, focus groups, key informants, direct observation and case studies. These methods allow for more in-depth exploration and yield information that can facilitate deeper understanding of observed changes in outcomes and outputs and the factors that contributed by filling out the operational context for outputs and outcomes.

Secondary data is primary data that was collected, compiled and published by someone else. Secondary data can take many forms but usually consists of documentary evidence that has direct relevance for the purposes of the evaluation. Sources of documentary evidence include: local, regional or national demographic data; nationally and internationally published reports; social, health and economic indicators; project or program plans; monitoring reports; previous reviews, evaluations and other records; country strategic plans; and research reports that may have relevance for the evaluation. Documentary evidence is particularly useful when the project or program lacks baseline indicators and targets for assessing progress toward outputs and outcome measures. Although not a preferred method, secondary data can be used to help recreate baseline data and targets. Secondary information complements and supplements data collected by primary methods but does not replace collecting data from primary sources.

The table below presents brief descriptions of data collection methods that are most commonly applied in evaluations in NCRO for both project and outcome evaluations.

Good for gathering descriptive data on a wide range of topics quickly at relatively low cost.

Field visit report format

The content of the field visit report varies depending on the purpose of the visit. At a minimum, any field visit report must contain an analysis of the progress towards results, the production of outputs, partnerships, key challenges and proposed actions. **This format shall be changed to fit local needs.**

Date of visit:___________________

Subject and venue of visit: ________________________ **(**Project number and title, venue visited)

Purpose of the field visit:

Outcomes	Update on outcomes	Outputs	Update on outputs	Reasons if progress below target	Update on partnership strategies	Recommendations and proposed action
	A brief analysis on any relevant changes pertaining to the outcome as stated in results matrix.	State output from project document or work plan.	Achievements of the project in outputs (marking if strategic) and soft assistance (if any).	If applicable.		Actions on any matter related to outcome, progress of outputs, and/or partnerships. Corrective measures. Responsibilities/time.

PROJECT PERFORMANCE—IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

(If the person conducting the field visit observes problems that are generic and not related to any specific output, or that apply to all of them, he or she should address the 'top three' such challenges.)

List the main challenges experienced during implementation and propose a way forward.

1. ____
2. ____
3. ____

PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS

LESSONS LEARNED

Describe briefly key lessons learned during the project:

1. ______________________________
2. ______________________________
3. ______________________________

Participants in the field visit:
Prepared by: ____________________ (Name, title)

- List of persons met
- Other annexes

Results framework with means of verification

IMPACT:			
Indicator	**Baseline**	**Target**	**Means of Verification**
OUTCOME:			
OUTPUT 1:			
OUTPUT 2:			

Check Lists

1

	QUICK CHECKLIST FOR VALIDATING ASSUMPTIONS AND RISKS	YES	NO
√	The assumed condition is outside the control of the program or project		
√	The assumed condition is necessary for program success		
√	The assumed condition is not a result that could be included in the results framework		
√	There is a high probability that the assumption will hold true		
√	The assumption is specific and verifiable-its status can be checked by calling partners or donors		
√	The assumption is stated as if it is actually the case		
√	The risk is clearly beyond the control of the program		
√	The risk is not simply the negative restating of an assumption		
√	The consequences of the risk are sufficiently grave as to pose a serious threat to overall program success		
√	There is a moderate to high probability that the risk may occur		

2

	QUICK CHECKLIST FOR REVIEWING OUTPUTS AND OUTPUT INDICATORS	YES	NO
√	The outputs and their indicators are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART)		
√	The outputs are defined as products or services made possible by the resources provided in a project.		
√	The language used to describe the outputs includes the noun or thing to be produced, as well as the verb describing what happens on completion of the output.		
√	The outputs are defined as things over which one or more agencies have control and can be hild accountable for delivering.		
√	The outputs defined are necessary ingredients for achieving the outcomes.		
√	There are indicators that measure both the process of producing the outputs (e.g. how many of something was done), as well as the quality and/or effect of what was produced (e.g. level of usage or user satisfaction with what was produced).		

3

QUICK CHECKLIST FOR REVIEWING OUTCOMES AND OUTCOME INDICATORS	YES	NO
√ The outcomes and their indicators are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART)		
√ The outcomes clearly outline an area of work where the agency and its partners can have significant influence.		
√ The outcomes are worded in such a way that they communicate what has changed, for whom (if relevant) and by when, (Outcomes should generally be achievable within five years.)		
√ The outcomes clearly address the interests and concerns of men, women and marginalized groups (if relevant).		
√ The outcomes address changes in institutional capacities and behavior that should lead to sustainable development of the country or region.		
√ The outcomes speak to changes in conditions and capacities and not delivery of products and services.		
√ The outcomes have indicators that signal how the desired change will be measured.		
√ The outcome indicators are measures of change that go beyond what one agency will produce or deliver. They are measures of change in the country or region and not measures of what project will produce.		
√ The outcome and its indicators provide a very clear and precise image or picture of what the future should look like, and is not so general that it could cover almost anything.		

4

	QUICK CHECKLIST FOR REVIEWING A RESULTS MAP	YES	NO
√	We have identified results that relate to addressing policy and legislative constraints		
√	We have identified results that relate to addressing gaps in institutional capacities		
√	We have identified results that relate to addressing relevant cultural and social norms		
√	We have identified results to improve the condition of men, women and marginalized groups		
√	We have identified results that address the rights of different groups in society		
√	We can see many layers of results		
√	We have defined the results in broad terms, looking beyond the specific contribution of individual agencies or stakeholders		
√	The results map provides us with a picture of the broad range of actions that will be needed (including advocacy and soft support) and does not only focus on projects or tangible outputs		
√	The results map shows us where action will be needed by both partners and non-partners in our effort		

5

	QUICK CHECKLIST FOR REVIEWING A PROBLEM TREE	YES	NO
√	We have identified problems and causes that relate to the policy and legislative environment		
√	We have identified problems and causes that relate to gaps in institutional capacities		
√	We have identified problems and causes that relate to cultural and social norms		
√	We have identified problems that affect men, women and marginalized populations, and the rights of different groups		
√	We can see many layers of causes of the problems we have identified		
√	We have defined problems in the broadest terms, looking beyond the issues that individual agencies or stakeholders are concerned with		
√	We have defined the problems and their causes without initially focusing only on the dimensions that one or more agencies have capacity to address thorough projects		

6

	QUICK CHECKLIST FOR ASSESSING THE READINESS FOR EVALUATION	YES	NO
√	Does the subject of evaluation have a clearly defined results map? Is there common understanding as to what projects will be subject to evaluation?		
√	Is there a well-defined results framework for projects that are subject to evaluation? Are goals, outcome statements, outputs, inputs and activities clearly defined? Are indicators SMART?		
√	Is there sufficient capacity for the projects to provide required data for evaluation? For example, is there baseline data? Is there sufficient data collected from monitoring against a set of targets? Are there well-documented progress reports, field visit reports, reviews and previous evaluations?		
√	Is the planned evaluation still relevant, given the evolving context? In other words, is there still a demand for evaluation? Is the purpose of the evaluation clearly defined and commonly shared amongst stakeholders?		
√	Will political, social and economic factors allow for an effective conduct and use of evaluation as envisaged?		
√	Are there sufficient resources (human and financial) allocated to evaluation?		