

Guidelines for Initiating and Managing Evaluations

From The African Community of Practice On Managing for Development Results at The African Capacity Building Foundation



Guideline

N° 7

SYNOPSIS

Evaluation is increasingly becoming popular among development practitioners, especially in advancing the result agenda in Africa. Underpinned by two key objectives of learning and accountability for utilization of resources and results, evaluation plays a significant role at all stages of the project cycle. It is intended to equip decision makers, managers and other stakeholders with credible and timely information to make informed decisions. Therefore, African governments and their development partners are expected to facilitate the adoption of evaluation at all stages of development project implementation and demonstrate the impacts of evaluation on their strategic choices and policy interventions. However, the challenges faced by implementing entities are not only a result of inadequate financial resources or lack of 'space' for participation in the evaluation process, but more often than not, stakeholders are encouraged to fully participate and own the process but owing to the lack of the requisite knowledge, understanding and skills to initiate and manage the evaluation process, many of the stakeholders are unable or are reluctant to match-up to the task. Therefore, in line with the knowledge sharing objective of the African Community of Practice On Managing for Development Results (AfCoP-MfDR), these guidelines seek to articulate in a logical and sequential manner the steps involved in commissioning and managing evaluations. Based on information from secondary sources, this knowledge product presents four key steps and the tools required at each of them. The four steps are 1) initiating the evaluation, 2) preparation, 3) managing the evaluation and 4) using the evaluation findings. In conclusion, the guidelines emphasize the importance of improving the knowledge and skills of key stakeholders both from the demand and the supply side to ensure that they are able to generate and use quality, relevant and fit-for-purpose evaluation information for the day-to-day management and strategic decision making. This knowledge product points to the need for a joint effort among Pan African institutions and associations like the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) to support the development and implementation of harmonized and tailor-made evaluation training and technical support for African countries, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and other institutions. Further, it advocates for a sustained interest and investment in evaluation to ensure availability of adequate funding and an increased use of evaluation findings in decision making across the continent.

Introduction

African governments and organizations, and their counterparts around the world are

increasingly coming under pressure to meet the needs and expectations of their citizens and

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respond to the demands of their external partners. The governments are expected to be more effective, efficient, transparent and accountable towards the use of national resources. They are also being called upon to institute policies and programs that impact positively on the lives of the ordinary citizens.

The global financial crisis of 2008, increasing population and the concomitant demand for public goods and services has heightened the need to optimize the benefits from use of resources. This scenario, has now, more than ever, put a lot of pressure on governments and organization to improve the design, implementation and impact of their development interventions. Evaluation is a powerful management tool intended to help governments and organizations to make informed choices, optimize resource use and to demonstrate the impact of their policies, programs and projects.

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), evaluation provides objective and systematic assessment of policies, programs and projects, including its design, implementation and results. Thus, evaluation equips development actors with timely and relevant information regarding the extent of achievement of objectives, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of development interventions. It also empowers and arm decision makers and managers with evidence-based and credible information that enables them to make informed decisions.

The extant literature is replete with information on the increased recognition and popularity of evaluation across Africa. Millions of dollars are spent every year to conduct evaluations of different kinds and at different scales across the continent. However, most of these evaluations are commissioned and/or managed by external partners. The level of participation and ownership of these evaluation processes by

implementing entities and local partners is very low. This situation tends to compromise the value and effect of the evaluations on the delivery and impact of the interventions. Given the immense value and potential of fit-for-purpose and quality evaluation on the achievement of development results, there is the need to enhance the knowledge and skills of project implementing entities and development actors across Africa on how to initiate and manage evaluation to ensure that it generates, credible, reliable and fit-for-purpose information that is relevant and useful to the stakeholders. These guidelines therefore, seek to provide a step-by-step approach on how to commission and manage evaluation in an efficient and effective manner.

Objective of the Guidelines

The challenge faced by implementing entities and evaluation officers is not only related to inadequate financial resources or lack of 'space' for participation in the evaluation process, but more often than not, stakeholders are encouraged to fully participate and own the process but owing to the lack of the requisite knowledge, understanding and skills to initiate and manage the evaluation process, many of the stakeholders are unable or are reluctant to match-up to the task. Therefore, in line with the knowledge sharing and ideas sourcing objective of the AfCoP, these guidelines seeks to articulate in a logical and sequential manner the steps involved in commissioning and managing evaluations. The guidelines will highlight the key dimensions of the process from commissioning and oversight to the development and implementation of evaluation. The guidelines will also focus on management response and dissemination of findings in a participatory manner to ensure ownership, credibility and mutual accountability for results by the stakeholders. The guidelines are developed to be user friendly and easy for adaptation by AfCoP members and other users, throwing light

on the processes and tools required at each of the stages.

Initiating and Managing Evaluation

According to OECD working Party on Aid Effectiveness (OECD 1999 pg. 4), evaluation can be defined as “the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, program or policy, its design, implementation and results”. It is focused on understanding and learning from the alignment of the project design with the underlying expectations, effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation process as well as the results achieved whether intended or unintended anticipated or unanticipated. As defined by Rossi and Freeman (1993), evaluation is the “systematic application of social research procedures for assessing the conceptualization, design, implementation, and utility of programs”.

Evaluation helps project stakeholders to understand the reasons behind the trends and patterns recorded during projects implementation and to explain what they mean, why they occurred and implications going forward. It can be conducted in varying contexts

such as policy, strategy, program, project, theme, sector or and at the level of an organization.

Given the fact that development interventions in the forms of polices, programs and projects are a means to an end but not an end in themselves, evaluation becomes extremely important to ensure that the intended objectives always drive programmatic decisions, choices made during project implementation and accountability for achievement or otherwise of the intended results as well as learning from the process and the deliverables (AfDB 2013).

Evaluation can be conducted through, either, experimental or quasi experimental approaches in order to collect and assess qualitative and or quantitative evidence and information about the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of a development intervention (Gorgens and Kusek 2009). There are different types of evaluation. However, in the context of this AfCoP tool, the following types of evaluation are considered: formative, process, outcome, economic and impact evaluation. The taxonomy of evaluations is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Types of Evaluation

Type of Evaluation	When to use	What it shows	Why it is useful
1. Formative Evaluation “Evaluability” Assessment Needs assessment	During the development of a new program. When an existing program is being used in a new setting or with a new population.	❖ Whether the proposed program elements are likely to be needed, understood, and accepted by the target population ❖ The extent to which an evaluation is possible, given the goal and objectives of the evaluation and the program	❖ It allows modifications to be made to the design before full implementation begins ❖ Increase the likelihood that the program will succeed
2. Process Evaluation (Routine Monitoring)	❖ As soon as program implementation begins ❖ During implementation	❖ How well the program is working ❖ The extent to which the program is being	❖ Provides early warning of any problems that may occur

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Type of Evaluation	When to use	What it shows	Why it is useful
	of existing program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> implemented on time and within budget as designed ❖ Whether the program is accessible and acceptable to its target population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Facilitate effective tracking and measurement of how well activities are being implemented and results achieved
3. Outcome Evaluation (Objective Based Evaluation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ After the program has made contact with at least one person or groups in the target population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The extent to which the program is having an effect on the target population's behavior, organizational systems and processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ It tells whether the program is being effective in meeting its objectives
4. Economic Evaluation Cost Analysis- Cost Benefit Analysis, Cost Effectiveness, Cost Utility Analysis Value for money analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ At the planning stage using cost estimated/projections ❖ During operations of a program, using actual costs ❖ After end of project to assess value for money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The resources being used in a program and their cost (both direct and indirect) compared to the outcomes/benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Provides program managers and funders with a way to assess effects/benefits against cost
5. Impact Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ During the operation of an existing program at appropriate interval ❖ At the end of a program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The degree to which the program meets its ultimate goal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Provide evidence for use in policy, funding, and future programming decisions

Adapted from World Bank 2009 pg. 366-367

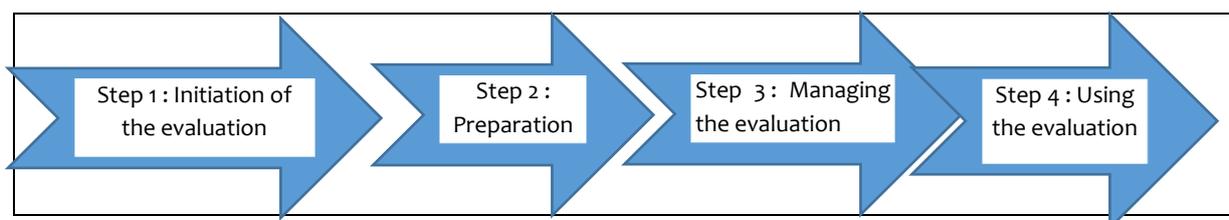
The Process: Key Steps for initiating and Managing Evaluations.

The value and benefit of an evaluation is the extent to which the findings are used to inform and guide decision making. Effective involvement of stakeholders including government, donors and beneficiaries as well as key informant who may not be directly impacted

by the project can enhance the level of ownership, buy-in and the likelihood of the findings being used by the evaluation stakeholders (UNDP 2009).

There are four (4) key stages in the process of initiating and managing evaluation. Figure 1 provides a diagrammatic presentation of the evaluation process in a sequential manner.

Table 2. Steps to Designing an M&E System



Step 1: Pre-evaluation: Initiating Evaluation

Checking the “evaluability” or readiness of the project/program for evaluation

Step 2: Preparation

- Agreeing on the management of the evaluation - defining the roles and responsibilities
- Drafting the TOR
- Selection and engagement of consultants/evaluators
- Organizing the relevant documentation

Step 3: Managing evaluation data collection and reporting

- Briefing and supporting the evaluator/evaluation team
- Reviewing the inception report prepared by evaluator/evaluation team
- Reviewing draft and final evaluation reports

Step 4: Using the evaluation: management response. Knowledge sharing and dissemination

- Preparing the management response and implementing follow-up action

Preparing and disseminating evaluation products and organizing knowledge sharing events

Adapted from UNDP 2009- Handbook on Planning Monitoring and Evaluation for Development Results. Pg. 146

Step 1: Initiating the evaluation- Assessing the Evaluability of the intervention.

The evaluation process begins with an assessment of the evaluability of the program by reviewing the justification and validity of the evaluation (see Table 3). It is an important process but usually overlooked in most cases. The evaluability assessment helps to ascertain whether an evaluation is worthwhile in terms of its likely benefits, consequences and costs (Gorgens and Kusek 2009). It involves appraising whether it is still relevant, feasible and cost effective to conduct the evaluation given the

changes over time and volume of project performance information available to the team. Before evaluations are initiated, it is essential to review and where relevant, update the project results framework and the indicator values to ensure that emerging information on the changes that have occurred since the start of the project are incorporated given the fact that the evaluation plan is usually developed at the design stage of the program. Below is a sample checklist that can be used to assess the evaluability of an evaluation.

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Table 3: Checklist for Evaluability Assessment

	Yes	No
a. Does the program have a clearly defined theory of change? Is it commonly understood by all the stakeholders and does the quality of the design allow for the evaluation?		
b. Does the program have a well-defined results framework/matrix with clearly delineated goal, outcomes, outputs activities and inputs? Are there SMART ¹ performance indicators?		
c. Does the program have adequate capacity in terms of baseline data, performance monitoring information and relevant reports and background information that will support the evaluation?		
d. Is the justification of the project still valid?		
e. Is the planned evaluation still relevant considering the context?		
f. Is there adequate human and financial resources allocated to the evaluation?		

Adapted from UNDP 2009 and https://www.unodc.org/documents/evaluation/Guidelines/Evaluability_Assessment_Template.pdf, [Accessed on 2 march 2016]

¹ Specific – Measurable – Attainable – Relevant – Time bound

Once the evaluability assessment is completed and a decision has been made to go ahead with the evaluation, all key stakeholders should be notified and involved in the rest of the processes to ensure early buy-in, ownership and transparency of the evaluation.

Step 2: Preparation

The next step of the evaluation process is the delineation of the institutional arrangement including defining the structure and team composition as well as the roles and responsibilities of the key stakeholders. An evaluation management team ‘**core management team or reference group**’ should be established to lead, coordinate and provide oversight and quality assurance throughout the entire process. They are also responsible for ensuring effective, quality and timely data collection, analysis and reporting in line with the needs and expectations of the evaluation stakeholders. The team should have a leader or

manager (usually the M&E Specialist) who will act as the focal person or point of contact for all engagements with the evaluators and the commissioning institution. He/she should also be responsible for the day to day management and assurance of independence and objectivity of the evaluation (UNDP 1999).

The roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders including the core management team should be clearly defined and agreed upon right at the beginning of the exercise to ensure that there is no role conflict. The structure and process of an evaluation may vary depending on the type, scope and the level - national or organizational. Table 2 delineates some of the generic roles and responsibilities of an evaluation.

Table 4. Key roles and responsibilities of evaluation stakeholders

Commissioner of the evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Determine which project will be evaluated and when ▪ Provide guidance to the core management team at the beginning on the purpose and use of the evaluation ▪ Respond to the evaluation findings, and recommendations by preparing management response, dissemination strategy and use of the findings ▪ Safeguard the independence and transparency of the evaluation ▪ Ensure that adequate resources are allocated for the exercise
Team Leader/Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lead the drafting of the evaluation TOR ▪ Manage and coordinate the consultant selection and contractual arrangements and budget ▪ Lead and coordinate compilation of background documents and field data collection ▪ Coordinate the review of the inception, draft evaluation (s) and final report and ensure that they meet the expected quality standards.
Core Management Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Participate in the drafting and review of the draft TOR

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support the compilation of background documentation and reports ▪ Oversee the conduct of the evaluation including field data collection ▪ Reviews the inception and draft evaluation reports to ensure that they meet the quality standards
Evaluators/consultants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Draft and submit inception report with clear methodology and evaluation work plan ▪ Collect and analyse data from the field based on agreed methodology and approach ▪ Submit draft report for review by the clients ▪ Refine draft report based on comments and feedback on the draft ▪ Lead the validation of the draft report ▪ Submit final report after incorporate comments and suggestions from clients.

Source: Author

Once the core team has been formed, the next activity is to develop the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the evaluation and selection of the evaluation team or consultants. The ToR must be developed in a participatory process involving all the key stakeholders to ensure that it reflects and captures all the needs and interest. However, it must be stated that the responsibility lies with the commissioning institution to ensure that it is well done. The ToR should be clear and detailed enough by covering all the relevant elements - purpose, scope, requirements and expectations - of the evaluation. Given the importance of the ToR to the quality, relevance and use of the evaluation, adequate time and attention should be dedicated to ensure that it captures all the relevant issues. It must detail the why, when and who will be invoked in the evaluation, how and the expected deliverables. The terms of reference should be clear in terms of the evaluation objectives and the key questions to ensure that the assignment is properly focused. Since not all issues related to the intervention can be covered during the evaluation, the ToR should be carefully focused and properly targeted to avoid confusion. Additional clarity in

terms of procedures is provided in the next paragraphs.

Selection of evaluation team or consultants:

The type of consultant(s) and duration of the assignment depends on the scope and nature of the evaluation. Depending on the procurement requirements of the commissioning institutions or as agreed by the parties involved, individual consultants or a firm may be hired through a competitive bidding process or single sourcing method. However, in both cases, the process is expected to be transparent. The evaluators are a key determinant of the quality, relevance and usability of the evaluation. Therefore care should be taken to ensure the most qualifies, capable and experienced candidate(s) are selected. To enhance the robustness and transparency of the selection process, clear selection criteria detailing the required qualification, technical competencies, knowledge and experience required to conduct the assignment should be clearly delineated and used for the selection of consultants.

Organization of background documents: Once the consultants are engaged, the team leader together with the core management team

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should ensure that all relevant background documents (project documents, performance reports, field record, update indicator tracking table etc.) are collected, organized and made available to the evaluators. The documentation is intended to help the evaluators have a clearly understanding of the project (context and performance) and to gauge the additional information that will be required from the field to be able to respond adequately to the evaluation objectives and answer the specific questions. The background information will also inform the drafting of the inception report including development of a methodology and approach for the assignment as well as a work plan for the evaluation.

Step 3: Managing the conduct of the evaluation

This stage involves the management of the field data collection analysis and reporting which will be conducted by the evaluators. The stage begins with the drafting and review of the inception report which details the consultants understanding of the assignment, detailed methodology and the work plan. To ensure that the field assessment proceeds without hurdles, the core management is expected to ensure that respondents are well informed and fully aware of the process and the protocols. The core team will also be responsible for facilitating the review of the draft and final reports including organization of a validation workshop to ensure that all comments and feedback are properly integrate into the final report.

Step 4: Using the evaluation: Management response, knowledge sharing and dissemination

The last stage of the process is the development of a management response to the findings and recommendations of the evaluation. The management response should address all the pertinent issues and assign clear roles and responsibilities to the relevant stakeholders

based on their mandate. It should also spell out the implementation schedule including specific timelines for the implementation of the proposed actions. After this process and the approval of the report by the appropriate organs- management or the Board- where relevant, the report can then be shared with all the relevant stakeholders. Summaries of the report should be developed and shared with other stakeholders based on their interest and needs.

Conclusion

The importance of evaluation in advancing result agenda in Africa is undebatable. These guidelines provide necessary steps in conducting credible evaluation of national programs and projects for informed decisions on country outcome and evidenced based policy formulation. This knowledge product clearly shows that evaluation is a means to an end. As such, it should not just be conducted because it was anticipated or planned for at the design stage of the project. Rather, evaluation should be aimed at providing additional information and insights that will be essential for effective implementation and achievement of intended project, programme or country results. As much as possible the process must be cost-effective and involve all relevant stakeholders. It must be conducted in a transparent and professional manner and effort should be made to ensure that the findings and recommendations are adequately used.

Based on the above, the following recommendations are advanced to help enhance the initiation and management of evaluations:

- Efforts should be made to increase knowledge and awareness of evaluation concepts, methodology and use as well as the allocation of adequate resources for evaluation across the continent;
- Pan-African institutions such as ACBF and AfDB should facilitate the design

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and implementation of harmonised and tailor-made evaluation training and technical support for African countries, RECs and other institutions;

- The growing interest and investment in evaluation should be sustained to ensure adequate funding and increased use of evaluation findings in decision making ;
- Last but not the least, the capacity of regional and national evaluation associations should be enhanced to ensure that they are able to advocate for and stimulate the use of evaluation results for decision making across the continent.

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This guideline is part of AfCoP/AfriK4R knowledge series is intended to summarize good practices and key policy findings on managing for development results. The views expressed in the notes are those of the authors. Notes are widely disseminated and are available on the website of the Africa for Results initiative (AfriK4R), at: www.afrik4r.org/page/resources

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