Evaluation Policy
ADRA Denmark

Revised March 2023

Approved by the ADRA Board on 17.04.23

Introduction

All of ADRA's international work must be evaluated regularly at project, programme or thematic level. Evaluation basically serves two purposes: learning and accountability. To learn and to seek to improve constantly is a natural part of good practice in ADRA. Evaluation is an obvious tool for this and thus the decision to evaluate should depend on the potential for learning. Accountability – both to our donors and to our intended target groups – is an inherent part of our organisational emphasis on being a responsible and transparent humanitarian actor.

All evaluations in ADRA must live up to the following international standards: They must be independent, impartial, transparent, participatory, feasible, cost-efficient, accurate, and fair and must not single out individuals for judgement.

Our **approach** to evaluation

ADRA Denmark has a utilisation focused approach to evaluation. This basically means that evaluations should be judged by their utility and actual use. Therefore, evaluators should facilitate the evaluation process and design any evaluation with careful consideration of how everything that is done, from beginning to end, will affect use.

> *The focus in utilization-focused evaluation is on supporting intended use by intended users. The essence of this approach is a continual examination of and adaptation to how real people in the real world apply evaluation findings and how they experience the evaluation process* (Michael Quinn Patton, Utilization-Focused Evaluation).

As part of the utilisation-focused approach, our partners are involved in the decision-making on the type and scope of evaluations to undertake. Since our partners are most often the implementers of the interventions evaluated, they are also among the main users of the evaluation.

Utilisation-focused evaluation can be used for different types of evaluation (formative, summative, real-time, process, impact) and it can use different research designs and types of data.

Evaluations are a part of ADRA's framework for **Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning** (MEAL), which we understand in the following way:

Monitoring is a continuing function that primarily aims to provide managers and main stakeholders with regular feedback and early indications of progress or lack thereof in the achievement of intended results. Ongoing monitoring concerns all aspects of a project or programme including financial and compliance elements.

Evaluations take a step back from the day-to-day implementation. Evaluation is a time-bound exercise that attempts to assess systematically and objectively the relevance, performance and success of ongoing or completed interventions. Evaluation is undertaken selectively to answer specific questions to guide decision-makers and to provide information on whether underlying theories and assumptions used in programme development were valid, what worked and what did not work and why[1]. Finally, evaluation is different from financial audits in that it may include financial information but focuses on criteria such as relevance and effectiveness of interventions, while audits focus on compliance.

Accountability is about keeping our promises in terms of delivering on the outcomes and objectives we have envisaged for our interventions. Accountability should be understood both 'upwards' (vis-à-vis back donors) and 'downwards' – vis-à-vis the intended target group/rights-holders. Often, we have to learn and adapt in order to deliver on these objectives.

Learning is achieved when we as an organisation adapt our future interventions to past experience. Everyone involved in evaluations should have learning at the forefront of their mind, and interventions with a high potential for learning should be prioritised. Evaluators should make sure that the questions they focus on are formulated together with the evaluation users and other stakeholders and that these are involved in the

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[1] me-handbook.pdf (undp.org)

evaluation throughout. The goal is to explore the reasons for the successes and failures of activities funded by ADRA, and thus produce information that can help achieve future results more effectively and efficiently. Communication and discussion of findings should be prioritised, so that learning can take place. The evaluation document can include recommendations for future actions targeted at ADRA Denmark as well as relevant ADRA partners.

When to evaluate?

Evaluation can be conducted during the implementation of an intervention to assess if the implementation is on the right track and to learn from experience, so that the programming can be adapted in order to reach / contribute to the established objectives and generally improve performance. This type of evaluation is also known as **'formative evaluation'**, **'mid-term evaluation'** or **review**. Another term used is **'real-time evaluation'** (RTE), where the primary objective is *"to provide immediate (real time) feedback to those planning and/or implementing a project or programme. Feedback is usually provided during the evaluation field work, rather than afterwards. The ultimate intention is to improve the project or programme concerned through generating learning and recommendations. Real-time evaluations are normally associated with emergency response or humanitarian interventions. However, some people also use the term to refer to ongoing evaluations, carried out alongside development initiatives, which provide continuous and regular feedback, rather than feedback at a specific point in time"* (Intrac, Real-time evaluation).

An evaluation can also be undertaken by the end of an intervention (or a phase of that intervention) to determine the extent to which the anticipated outcomes were produced. This is normally termed a **'summative evaluation'**. A summative evaluation can also occur after an extended period of time has passed, for example to assess the long-term effects (impact) of the intervention.

An evaluation (whether formative or summative) can assess the achievement of objectives within a specific project or programme frame but can also be **thematic** – i.e. focusing on a specific theme across a number of projects or programmes, such as innovation or a particular programmatic approach.

In this document, the term 'evaluation' covers all evaluation types mentioned above. Evaluations are preferably planned and budgeted for during the design of a project or programme. In any case, evaluations must be approved during ADRA's annual planning process.

What to evaluate?

For evaluations of projects and programmes, the focus is usually on the results of the interventions with particular focus on the below criteria as defined by OECD/DAC. But also other evaluations, such as thematic or impact evaluations, usually focus on one or more of the below evaluation criteria:

RELEVANCE
is the intervention
doing the right things?

COHERENCE
how well does
the intervention fit?

EFFECTIVENESS
is the intervention
achieving its objectives?

EVALUATION CRITERIA

EFFICIENCY
how well are resources
being used?

IMPACT
what difference does
the intervention make?

SUSTAINABILITY
will the benefits last?

DAC criterion	DAC definition	Questions to ask
Relevance	The 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.	✓ Is/was the intervention relevant to ADRA and partners' development policies, goals and strategies? ✓ Is the intervention relevant in relation to the context and the needs and priorities of the intended target group? ✓ Were the right people targeted by the intervention (be aware of inclusion/exclusion bias)?
Coherence	The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution.	✓ To what extent was the intervention coordinated with authorities and with other hum/dev actors? ✓ How compatible was the intervention with other efforts addressing the same issues? ✓ Has the intervention taken nexus considerations into account?
Effectiveness	The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.	✓ Have the primary objectives identified been achieved? ✓ Have the planned or expected results been achieved? ✓ Was the intended population reached i.e. did all targeted population groups have appropriate access to the intervention, including men, women, boys, girls, elderly, people with disabilities, indigenous populations and other marginalized groups depending on the context?
Efficiency	The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely	✓ How economically have resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) been converted to results[2]?

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[2] Here Value for Money analyses could be relevant as per the VfM methodology piloted in 2022.

	to deliver, results in an economic and timely way	✓ Are the investment and recurrent costs justified? ✓ Could the same results have been achieved with fewer resources?
Impact	The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects	✓ What positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects have been produced by the intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended?
Sustainability	The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue.	✓ What is the probability of long-term benefits? ✓ Will the intended benefits continue when development cooperation is terminated? ✓ Is local ownership established? ✓ Has a sound exit strategy been applied?

For humanitarian assistance projects, due consideration must be given to the specific issues relevant in this context, for example difficult access to key informants due to the disruption caused by the crisis and rapid turnover in staff; an often polarised perspective on the same event due to ongoing conflict; and in general a rapid change in circumstances meaning that many assumptions about normal social and physical conditions may no longer be justified.

It is important to note that not all these criteria need to be considered in each evaluation. It is part of the preparation process to determine which criteria are most relevant for a given intervention and formulate the exact evaluation questions keeping the users of the evaluation in mind. The fewer criteria are chosen, the more focused the evaluation will be and the more in-depth the findings for each criterion. It is, however, recommended to always include the criteria *relevance* and *effectiveness*. Regardless of the criteria or specific methodology applied, it is recommended that project and programme evaluations include data collection among the final target group/rights-holders. The method used must be gender sensitive, i.e. pay specific attention to the role of gender and present disaggregated data wherever possible.

Who evaluates?

Evaluations in ADRA can be internal or external. As mentioned, evaluation is an exercise where we take a step back from the day-to-day implementation to assess progress / results, learn and adapt accordingly. The exercise can be done internally as part of the project cycle, but it is also important to involve external evaluators, i.e. contracted consultants, on a regular basis in order to get the benefit of the 'external eye' and also avoid conflict of interest in terms of ADRA staff evaluating their own performance.

The evaluation team is selected based on their documented experience within fields relevant to the project or programme in question and with conducting evaluations. Preferably, the team should include at least one person with extensive knowledge of the local context as well as both male and female consultants. Detailed Terms of Reference (ToR) for the assignment are always developed before the start of the assignment (see below).

The evaluation process

In line with ADRA's utilisation focused approach, an evaluation must always be designed to maximize learning in its specific context. As such, methodology, scope and budgets may vary. However, the following elements should normally be part of an ADRA evaluation:

- **Preparation phase**: The first step is to establish an Evaluation Committee, which will steer the evaluation process and review and approve deliverables. The Evaluation Committee should comprise the most relevant stakeholders including the primary users of the evaluation, e.g. Project Manager and MEAL Adviser from the implementing partner's side and the MEAL Adviser, programme coordinator and

thematic focal point (e.g. cash, gender or livelihoods specialist) from ADRA Denmark.

Two main questions should be clarified at the beginning of an evaluation: 1) *Who is going to use the evaluation*? This means identifying the primary intended users of the evaluation and 2) *What needs to be done to make it as useful for them as possible?* This information should drive all other decisions made whilst planning and implementing the evaluation. When the evaluation subject, scope and questions are determined, the Terms of Reference can be drafted (using ADRA's format). This is one of the most critical processes of an evaluation and should be allocated sufficient time and resources. The most well conducted evaluation by the most experienced team of experts will not provide useful findings if the questions or aspects evaluated are not well thought through. It can be avoided by making the evaluation a participatory process, making it utilisation-focused and seeking feedback from relevant project stakeholders. The next step is to form the evaluation team. In case of an external evaluation, a consultant/team for the assignment should be recruited.

- **Inception phase**: The evaluation team will study the project/programme documentation provided by ADRA and work on an evaluation matrix or analytical framework, which will determine what types of data need to be collected and which methodologies/methods will be used to respond to each evaluation question. The team will develop data collection tools such as survey / interview questionnaires or Outcome Harvesting database, as well as a timeline for the evaluation, including dates for field travel, submission of deliverables and deadlines for feedback by the Evaluation Committee. This information will be documented in an inception report, which will be submitted to and approved by the Evaluation Committee.

- **Data collection phase**: Once the inception report is approved, the evaluation team will travel to the project locations to collect data according to the plan agreed in the inception report. The trip will need significant administrative and logistical support from the implementing partner hosting the team. ADRA Denmark's Programme Coordinator will also support this process. By the end of the data collection phase, the evaluation team will do a debriefing session to present preliminary findings to the implementing partner (and possibly to the Evaluation Committee).

- **Data analysis phase**: Analysing the collected data is a crucial part of the evaluation process, and the team should be given sufficient time to conduct a proper analysis and draft the evaluation report. The findings and recommendations should be presented to the Evaluation Committee and possibly other relevant stakeholders before the draft evaluation report is finalized. This can be done through a 'validation workshop', which gives project stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback to the evaluation team to ensure that the findings and recommendations are accurate, relevant and applicable.

- **Evaluation report**: The Evaluation Committee should provide feedback on the draft evaluation report to ensure that misunderstandings etc. are corrected before the report is finalised. The evaluation report must follow a 1-2-30 format: The first page must contain recommendations for future interventions, the following two pages should contain an executive summary and the evaluation itself should be no more than 30 pages. Supporting annexes (including the TOR) do not need to be within the 30-page limit. If agreed in the ToR, the end product of the evaluation exercise could be different than the traditional evaluation report depending on what is most relevant for evaluation users.

- **Follow-up phase:** Once the final report is submitted, ADRA Denmark/the implementing partner (the primary intended users) will develop an action plan. It is the responsibility of the respective ADRA Denmark programme coordinator to follow up on the implementation of the action plan. In cases of thematic or cross-country evaluations, ADRA Denmark's MEAL Adviser will support the sharing and cross-country / programmatic learning. To ensure accountability and transparency, all evaluation reports are public, unless specific precautions need to be taken regarding the safety of partners and ADRA staff, or the effectiveness of a strategy or advocacy campaign. ADRA Denmark is responsible for publishing the final evaluation report on ADRA DK's website.

- **Dissemination phase:** This phase can overlap with the follow-up phase. It is the responsibility of the

Evaluation Committee to ensure that the findings and recommendations as well as the action plan are communicated to all relevant project stakeholders. In addition to the rights-holders (or representatives of right-holders), this could include ministries, local authorities, local organisations, etc., but also ADRA Denmark and implementing partner staff who were not part of the Evaluation Committee. It might require several workshops or presentations to reach the different stakeholder groups. It is a good practice to draft a 1- or 2-pager – ideally in form of a visual infographic – summarizing the findings and recommendations, which can be disseminated among stakeholders.

Guidelines for evaluations in ADRA

When deciding on which evaluations to undertake, partners will be involved along with considerations on available budget and the specific requirements of the donor. As mentioned, utilisation and learning should be a key factor when deciding which interventions to evaluate and how. As a general guideline, some form of evaluation of the engagements funded by ADRA DK must be conducted periodically in all partner countries e.g. over a 4-year period (as with the Strategic Partnership Agreement with Danida). The subject of the evaluation is described in the **Evaluation Plan** (see below). In some cases, back donors have stricter requirements, which should be adhered to. Not all donors will allow for budget allocations to evaluations, but when designing interventions and submitting proposals, budgets for evaluations should be included wherever possible.

For smaller projects, stand-alone evaluations may not be needed but the interventions could be included as part of programmatic / thematic evaluations. Moreover, small pilot projects may be prioritised for evaluation, since the objective of piloting a new idea is to learn how it works in practice, thus the learning potential is high.

This Evaluation Policy is supplemented by an **Evaluation Plan** that sketches out planned evaluations at portfolio level and describes a combination of project / country level evaluations and thematic evaluations that spans across countries and projects. The rationale of the evaluation plan is to highlight the results and learning from the ADRA DK engagements by purposely selecting elements of the strategic portfolio, which will be evaluated during a given time-span. The Evaluation Plan is a living document and will be adjusted as per need. The Evaluation Plan is decided by the Programme Director and MEAL Adviser in consultation with the Programme Coordinators and partners.

About this policy and related tools

This policy is written by the Programme Department and approved by the Board of ADRA Denmark. It should always be shared with external consultants assigned to carry out evaluations on behalf of ADRA Denmark. The policy will be revised at least every five years, i.e. in 2028.

Focus on learning and utilisation

The evaluation process is seen as an opportunity for ADRA staff and partners to look back and reflect on a particular intervention, a policy or an approach and form conclusions about what can be learned from it and put to use in future. The process should be participatory from beginning to end and include all relevant stakeholders including rights-holders and partners as well as other CSOs when relevant. However, the long-term responsibility of generating learning lies with ADRA. The main opportunities for learning in the evaluation process are:

- ✓ Involving relevant users in designing the Terms of Reference. This includes partner staff as well as other ADRA supporting offices when relevant.

- ✓ Ensuring meaningful contact with rights-holders, ADRA staff and other stakeholders during field visits.

- ✓ A dissemination workshop or event where findings, learnings and recommendations are shared with all relevant stakeholders.

- ✓ A follow-up/action plan detailing how ADRA is going to address the findings and turn the recommendations into action.

- ✓ Using lessons learned when designing new projects, programmes, policies or advocacy.

- ✓ Including lessons learned in annual reports and other reporting opportunities.

Annex 1 – Terms of Reference for the Evaluation Committee

The Evaluation Committee (EC) is a temporary group responsible for overseeing the evaluation process, making key decisions and reviewing evaluation products. It helps ensuring due process in evaluation management and maintaining distance from programme implementers (preventing potential risks of undue influence). Key decisions expected to be made by the EC relate to the evaluation purpose, scope, timeline, budget and team selection as well as approving the final TORs, inception report and evaluation report.

The EC is established and chaired by ADRA Denmark's MEAL Adviser.

The EC should be initiated during the Planning Phase. Members should be informed of their expected contributions to the evaluation as well as of the tentative timelines within which they will be required to accomplish each task.

Most of the EC responsibilities can be accomplished through e-mail communication, although occasional group meetings may be necessary at key points in the process.