

Standard format for evaluation reports

By following a uniform format, evaluation reports tend to be easier to read and use. The format also facilitates syntheses of different reports for broader learning purposes, such as suggested in DCAs evaluation policy. The format could be included as an annex to the contract with the consultant's thus providing early instructions on how the report should be prepared and what is expected to be delivered.

The report should not be longer than 60 pages exclusive of annexes. Following is a format for the report structure with explanation of the content in each section.

1. Executive summary

The executive summary of maximum two pages provides information about the evaluation and its purpose, emphasising main findings, evaluative conclusions, recommendations and lessons to be learned. The summary should be self-contained and self-explanatory. Special care should be taken to prepare the executive summary, as it is may be the only part of the report that some people have time to read.

2. Introduction

The introduction presents the background and overall purpose and scope of the evaluation, including how and by whom it is intended to be used, (focus on accountability and learning, whether it is terminal or in preparation of a new phase, etc.) as well as the evaluation criteria employed and the key questions addressed. A brief summary of the methods applied with specific reference to how rights-holders and other stakeholders have been involved should also be included here. It also outlines the structure of the report and provides guidance to readers.

3. Background

This chapter describes the main characteristics of the evaluated intervention and its given context including location, history, organisation and stakeholders. It should cover the focal problem addressed by the intervention, the objectives and the logic of cause and effect of the intervention. A description of activities carried out, key outputs delivered and overall costs should be included. The chapter should also cover the policy and development context of the evaluated intervention, including the assumptions about external factors that were part of intervention planning. When preparing the chapter, the evaluators should summarize the findings and conclusions of any earlier evaluations of the same intervention.

4. Findings and conclusions

Findings are empirical data that the evaluators present as evidence relevant to the evaluation questions. The findings are systematically presented in objective terms so that readers can form their own opinion about the strengths and weakness of the conclusions of the evaluation. They can be presented in various ways that can be decided upon by the RR and the teamleader. It is of course important the author of the report is comfortable with the presentation. A couple of suggestions are:

- *According to the standard ToR (i.e. according to evaluation criteria)*
- *According to an operation logic e.g. Design & planning, Implementation, Results, Cross cutting issues*
- *According to the logframe of the operation (by objective, activity or other)*

The evaluative conclusions are the evaluators' concluding assessments of the intervention based on the findings. They provide answers to the questions in the ToR and if possible, based on the data available, they pass an evaluative judgment as to whether the operation was relevant, effective, efficient, and sustainable. The evaluative conclusions are often best presented together with the underlying findings on which they are based, and not in a separate section as sometimes seen.

5. Lessons to be learned

Lessons to be learned are findings and conclusions that can be generalised beyond the evaluated intervention. In formulating lessons, the evaluators are expected to examine the intervention in a wider perspective and put it in relation to current ideas about good practice in the given context.

6. Recommendations

Recommendations indicate what actions the evaluators believe should be taken on the basis of the evaluation. Recommendations to DCA may cover the whole spectrum of aid management, including resource allocation, financing, design and planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Recommendations should always identify their respective addressees and be tailored to the specific needs and interests of each addressee. They should be clearly stated and geared to facilitate implementation.

7. Annexes

The report should include as a minimum following annexes: ToR, bibliography, list of people and institutions interviewed, description of methodology applied, (including research design, sampling, data collection instruments (surveys, checklists, interview guides, etc.), and analytical procedures. It should discuss the limitations of the selected methods as well as their strengths.