



Evaluation Technical Notes

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What goes into a Terms of Reference (TOR)

A Terms of Reference (TOR) — also known as a Scope of Work — is a plan or blueprint outlining the key elements of the purpose, scope, process and products of an activity, including management and technical aspects as necessary.

Developing a TOR is a critical early step in any assessment, survey, research or evaluation. In the narrowest sense, it is the basis for contractual arrangements with external consultants, though it should first be developed as a means of clarifying expectations, roles and responsibilities among different stakeholders, providing the plan for the overall activity, including follow-up. The time and effort spent in preparing a good TOR has big returns in terms of the quality, relevance and usefulness of the product.

Are you reviewing a TOR?
If so, you should ask yourself the questions shown in the boxes below.

The depth and details in the TOR will of course vary. The TOR for an externally facilitated programme evaluation involving numerous stakeholders will be quite detailed, while for an internal evaluation of an activity or an emergency assessment it could be a simple outline.

TORs are often developed in stages. In programme evaluation, stakeholders will focus on the details on purpose and evaluation questions. A further developed version used for recruiting external consultants requires more detail on existing information sources, team composition, procedures and products, but may describe methodology and a calendar of activities only in broad terms. The TOR may then be further refined once an evaluation team is on board, with a careful review of the purpose and key questions and corresponding elaboration of methodology.

NOTE: TORs ARE IMPORTANT:

For all stakeholders

- They explain the agreed expectations in terms of the parameters and process of the exercise, and are a guide to each stakeholder's specific role.

For the evaluation team

- They ensure that expectations are clear and the objectives are met.

For external and internal teams

- External teams may require more detail on background context and on intended audiences and uses; internal teams may simply need to clarify the parameters of the assignment.

What goes into a programme evaluation TOR?

Title

- Identify what is being evaluated. Use appropriate programme titles. Clarify the time period.



Background

- Briefly describe the history and current status of the programme, including objectives, duration, budget, activities.
- Situate with reference to the overarching country programme, parallel or linked national programmes.
- Situate the important stakeholders, including donors, partners, implementing agencies/ organisations.
- Describe other factors influencing timing and focus of the evaluation, for example in wider national context.

Purpose of the evaluation

- Why is the programme to be evaluated? Why at this time?
- How will the evaluation process and/or results be used? What is the value added?
- Who are the key users/target audiences? Is a particular decision-making event targeted (review meeting, consultation, planning activity, conference)?

Ask yourself:
Why evaluate?
For whom?

Scope and focus

- List the major questions the evaluation should answer — they should relate to the purpose and be precisely stated so that they guide the evaluator in terms of information needs and data to collect. Group and prioritise the questions.
- An “objectives” format can be used with or instead of evaluation questions. Where both are used, one objective is usually discussed through a number of questions.
- Specify evaluation criteria to be used. Consider traditional criteria (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact) as well as additional criteria relevant to evaluation of humanitarian response (coverage, co-ordination, coherence and protection.¹
- Specify key policy references to be used in assessment of relevance.

Existing information sources

- Identify relevant information sources that exist and are available, such as monitoring systems and/or previous evaluations. Provide an appraisal of quality and reliability.

¹ For more on these criteria, see UNICEF PPP ManualM at:

<http://www.intranet.unicef.org/Policies/DHR.nsf/NavProgramme?OpenNavigator>



Evaluation process and methods

- Describe overall flow of the evaluation process — sequence of key stages.
- Describe the overall evaluation approach and data collection methods proposed to answer the evaluation questions. An initial broad outline may often be developed further with the evaluation team. Ultimately it should define:
 - Information sources for new data collection
 - Sampling approaches for different methods, including area and population to be represented, procedures to be used and sampling size
 - The level of precision required
 - Data collection instruments
 - Types of data analysis
 - Reference indicators and benchmarks where relevant.
- Highlight any process results expected, e.g. networks strengthened, mechanisms for dialogue established, common analysis established among different groups of stakeholders.
- Specify any key intermediate tasks evaluator(s) are responsible for carrying out, and a preliminary schedule for completion. Consider for example:
 - Meetings, consultation, workshops with different groups of stakeholders
 - Key points of interaction with a steering committee
 - Process for verification of findings with key stakeholders
 - Presentation of preliminary findings and recommendations.

By whom?

**What is being evaluated?
For Whom?**

Stakeholder participation

- Specify involvement of key stakeholders as appropriate — consider internal stakeholders, programme partners, donor representatives, etc. Roles might include liaison, technical advisory roles, observer roles, etc., or more active participation in planning and design, data collection and analysis, reporting and dissemination, follow-up.
- Specify expectations in terms of involvement of, or consultation with, primary stakeholders. Be clear about where they would participate, i.e. in planning and design, data collection and analysis, reporting and dissemination, and/or follow-up.

Accountabilities



- Specify the roles and responsibilities of the evaluation team leader and team members, as well as other stakeholders and advisory structures involved, e.g. steering committees. This section should clarify who is responsible for:
 - Liaison with the evaluation team
 - Providing technical guidance
 - Co-ordinating the stakeholders involved
 - Approval of intermediate and final products
 - Capacity-building with stakeholders, national or other (a possible responsibility of the evaluation team).
- Specify any concerns or restrictions related to conflicts of interest.

In what form?

Evaluation team composition

- Identify the composition and competencies of the evaluation team. This should follow from the evaluation focus, methods, and analyses required. Distinguish between desired and mandatory competencies, as well as whether competencies are required by the whole team or by selected team members.
- Multidisciplinary teams are often appropriate. The qualifications and skill areas to be specified could include:
 - Areas of technical competence (sector, issue areas)
 - Language proficiency
 - In-country or regional work experience
 - Evaluation methods and data-collection skills
 - Analytical skills and frameworks, such as gender analysis
 - Process management skills, such as facilitation skills
 - Gender mix (not to be confused with gender analysis skills).

When?

Procedures and logistics

- Specify as necessary:
 - Special procedures, for example on relations with press or security
 - Work hours, holidays, and requirements (e.g. for working six-day weeks)
 - Weather, travel, and socio-cultural conditions that may influence data collection
 - Availability and provision of services (local translators, interviewers, data processors, drivers)
 - Availability and provision of office space, cars, laptops, tape recorders, and procedures for arranging meetings, requirements for debriefings
 - Reporting and dissemination requirements.
- List products to be delivered, to whom and when. Consider:
 - The evaluation report
 - Completed data sets (filled out questionnaires or surveys)



- Dissemination materials (newsletter articles, two-page summaries, presentation materials)
- For UNICEF, evaluation consultants should be required to provide all of the information for the UNICEF CO update to the UNICEF Evaluation Database in the required format
- Assessment of the evaluation methodology.
- Specify the format for deliverables, including software, number of hard copies, translations needed and structure of the evaluation report. (All evaluation final reports should document and clearly distinguish the important findings and conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned.)

Resource requirements

- Estimate the cost and prepare a detailed budget. Note the source of funds. Link the budget to the key activities or phases in the work plan. Cost estimates may cover items including:
 - Travel: international and in-country
 - Team member cost: salaries, per diem, and expenses
 - Payments for translators, interviewers, data processors, and secretarial services.
- Estimate separately any expectations in terms of time costs for:
 - Staff (before, during, after)
 - Other stakeholders, including primary stakeholders.

With what means?

Sources:

1. UNICEF, New York. *A UNICEF Guide for Monitoring and Evaluation: Making a Difference?* Evaluation Office, 1991.
2. CIDA, Canada. *How to Perform Evaluations Series*, No. 2, "[Model TOR](#)". April 2000.