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for every child



EVALUATION OFFICE  
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# Guidance Note for Conducting Evaluability Assessments in UNICEF



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# INTRODUCTION

The objective of this guidance note is to introduce the concept of evaluability by providing a set of concise, practical and user-friendly tools to support UNICEF, HQ, Regional and Country Offices in the conduct of Evaluability Assessments.

This guidance note and accompanying tools<sup>1</sup> were developed by the UNICEF Evaluation Office and should be viewed as an evolving area of work.

The note explains what evaluability is and establishes when, how and who should conduct the evaluability assessment. The guidance includes a comprehensive list of internal and external resources as well as links to some good practice examples of evaluability assessments conducted by UNICEF. Finally, the guidance includes a checklist for ensuring sound programme design (Annex I).

This note draws from and adapts existing good practices to programme planning, monitoring and evaluation.

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<sup>1</sup> Annex I: Checklist for determining the evaluability.

# PURPOSE OF EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENTS

## WHAT IS EVALUABILITY?

Evaluability is critical to strengthening results-based management and demonstrating the contribution of UNICEF-assisted programmes to results for children and promoting rights. The assumption being that: better designed programmes are key to better results.

An Evaluability Assessment is a quality assurance tool for good programme design. It is a tool to help managers bring early adjustments and corrections to programme design and implementation as needed. Evaluative thinking can and should be applied as early as possible at the design stage of an intervention. Ideally, evaluative principles should be institutionalised within existing programme quality assurance systems and processes in addition to commissioning out standalone evaluability assessments.

The DFID Working Paper (Davies 2013) on Evaluability Assessment identified these dimensions of evaluability:

- **Evaluability “in principle”**, will look at the clarity of the conceptual underpinnings and design of the intervention including the underlying theory of change and how it has been translated into the intervention results framework.
- **Evaluability “in practice”**, will assess how the intervention theory has been operationally translated in practice given the availability of relevant data and the capacity of management systems able to provide it.

- **The utility and practicality of an evaluability assessment**, will examine the likely usefulness of a future evaluation in relation to areas of inquiry and potential evaluation questions. The assessment will define the design, scope, approach and methodology of the evaluation of the programme.

## KEY BENEFITS

- Enable early adjustment and corrections to the design, as needed;
- Strengthen the application of tools to track programme performance and demonstrate results;
- Stronger mechanisms to track institutional performance and demonstrate results.
- Provide an indication of the readiness to be evaluated.

The purpose of an evaluability assessment for UNICEF is to provide programme staff and partners with evidence on the extent to which results can be demonstrated in the near, medium and long term based on programme documentation and the monitoring systems being established. An evaluability assessment will provide assurance to stakeholders that the programme is robust, that objectives are adequately defined, that causal linkages are clarified, that its indicators are validated and measurable, and that systems are in place to measure and verify results.



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The Evaluability Assessment will:

- Clarify logic and coherence of the programme.
- Assess the adequacy and validity of the indicators, tools and systems for monitoring, measuring and verifying results.
- Assess availability of human resources and financial resources to monitor and evaluate the expected results.
- Provide guidance on approaches to the evaluation of the programme.

Specifically, the assessment will look at the following elements<sup>2</sup>:

- Is there a well-articulated theory of change for the programme?
- Is the theory of change flexible and responsive to external factors? Were there modifications to the intervention logic

and why? Are the causal linkages between the different levels of the intervention logic clear?

- Is there a logical flow from outputs to the achievement of outcomes; are results chains coherent?
- Are there mechanisms and adequate human and financial resources in place to collect relevant data in a consistent fashion?
- Are there SMART<sup>3</sup> performance indicators with clearly identified means of verification?
- Are systems in place to enable frequent monitoring of performance indicators?
- Are baselines and targets clearly defined? What is the strategy to obtain these where they have not been formulated?
- Will monitoring systems generate the data to enable measurement and the demonstration of planned results?

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from [https://www.unodc.org/documents/evaluation/Guidelines/Evaluability\\_Assessment\\_Template.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/evaluation/Guidelines/Evaluability_Assessment_Template.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> SMART indicators are: Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic, Time-related.

# WHEN TO CONDUCT AN EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT

Evaluability Assessments should be considered early in the programme cycle, to guide design and to check that implementation is going forward as planned. Three stages in the programme cycle present options for undertaking evaluability assessments:

Intervention stage	Evaluability focus	Analysis	Evaluability results	Evaluative tool	Conduct
<b>1. Design</b>	Theory of change (ToC)	Evaluability in Principle	Improved project design	Applying standard evaluation principles to intervention design	Internal Evaluation or M&E Specialists and/or External RBM or evaluation expert
<b>2. Early programme implementation</b>	ToC & Data availability	Evaluability in Principle & in Practice	Improved M&E framework	Evaluability Assessment	Preferably external RBM/evaluation expert
<b>3. Mid to end point implementation</b>	ToC & Data availability & Stakeholders	Evaluability in Principle & in Practice & Evaluation Use	Improved evaluation terms of reference (ToRs)	Evaluation Scoping Exercise	Internal and/or External Evaluation/M&E expert

Adapted from: [http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/themes/evaluability\\_assessment](http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/themes/evaluability_assessment)

**At the design**<sup>4</sup> and approval stages of an intervention, the associated quality assurance processes should involve evaluability assessments. The process of Evaluability Assessment should be institutionalised within existing quality assurance systems and processes.

**At the early programme implementation stage,** Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks should integrate evaluability questions. Given the complexity of some interventions, a fully-fledged evaluability assessment looking at evaluability in principle and in practice may be commissioned to (i) assess that the conceptual underpinnings,

design and intervention results framework as well as to (ii) assess how the intervention theory has been operationally translated in practice. Such an exercise will also look at the likely utility and practicality of a future evaluation.

**At the mid to end point of programme implementation,** preparatory work such as an approach or scoping paper may be commissioned to cover issues listed in the annexed Evaluability Assessment checklist. This work should be closely linked to planned Country Programme Evaluations (CPE's), country programme evaluation plans, and/or any planned evaluations.

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/themes/evaluability\\_assessment](http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/themes/evaluability_assessment)

## WHO SHOULD CONDUCT AN EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT?

Evaluability assessments like evaluations are best conducted by experts with strong Results Based Management (RBM) and evaluation skills. The complexity of what the evaluability assessment reviews and the resources available determines whether it is externally or internally conducted.

In the context of the table above, if the evaluability assessment is conducted by an external expert, the UNICEF evaluation or M&E staff should assume the role of managing the assessment. The role of the UNICEF manager includes organizing and leading the evaluability assessment process, including preparing its design, hiring of

the consultant and ensuring quality. The external expert will then conduct the evaluability assessment. Conducting the evaluability assessment includes responsibility to collect and analyze the data and prepare the evaluability assessment report of the findings and recommendations.





# USE OF THE EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT

The evaluability assessment will be used to adjust programme design and identify actions to be undertaken to strengthen the programmes' logic and measurability. Specifically, the assessment will provide recommendations to adjust the theory of change to make it more realistic or adjusted to the changes in the context, strengthen the M&E system to monitor and evaluate the programme.

Evaluability assessment reports for "early programme implementation" (option 2 of section 3 above) should be accompanied by a comprehensive Management Response addressing the findings and recommendations of the assessment. This should be uploaded to the Evidence Information Systems Integration (EISI) and tracked. The management response should be uploaded within 60 days of the EA being submitted in EISI. More detailed guidance on developing a management response and ensuring it is uploaded in the EISI database can be found at the following page:

<https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/EO/SitePages/ManagementResponse.aspx>

## COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT

The 2018 Evaluation Policy for UNICEF sets out requirements for undertaking Country Programme Evaluations (CPEs) for all country programmes. This guidance is aligned with and should be used together with the 'Guidance on planning, managing and conducting Country Programme Evaluations in UNICEF'.

In order to maximise the utility, the Evaluability Assessment of a Country Programme should be timed so as to feed into key decision-making moments in the Country Programme cycle.

### NOTE

- The role of the evaluability is to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- Programme adjustments should be undertaken after completion of the evaluability assessment.

Evaluability Assessments (refer section 3 above) of Country Programmes should be considered either during (i) *the design phase* of the country programme and/or (ii) in early implementation of the programme cycle. The two options are as follows:

- i. Undertaking an Evaluability Assessment during the 'Design Stage' of a Country Programme

#### **Timing:**

To be undertaken in year 4 of the previous Country Programme as the Programme Strategy Notes underpinning the new Country Programme are being finalized.

#### **Objective:**

Focus on 'Evaluability in Principle' to improve Country Programme design by applying standard evaluation principles.

## Scope:

- Assess the clarity of objectives, alignment, logic and coherence of the *country programme* and its alignment to the country context and UNICEF Strategic Plan.
- Determine whether the results chain and objectives are clearly articulated and whether relevant, reliable and valid indicators, measures, tools and mechanisms are in place. In practice, this will require a review of the theory of change (TOC), including related outputs, implementation strategies and cross-cutting issues, to determine whether a clear, comprehensive and coherent results framework is in place.
- Review performance indicators and targets to determine whether they adequately measure progress at different levels of the results chain; and identify any significant gaps in coverage.

## Questions:


- How relevant is the *country programme* in relation to development plans of the country, UN system planning frameworks such as UNDAF and the direction and focus of UNICEF Strategic Plan?
- Is there a well-articulated theory of change for the country programme?
- Are the causal linkages between the different levels of the intervention logic clear?
- Is there a logical flow from outputs to the achievement of outcomes; are results chains coherent?
- Are there mechanisms and adequate human and financial resources in place to collect relevant data in a consistent fashion?
- Are the components of the *sector programme/ country programme* clearly relevant to the needs of the target group, as identified by any form of situation analysis, baseline

study, or other evidence and argument?  
Is the intended beneficiary group with an equity focus clearly identified?

- To what extent are results, indicators and activities measurable?
- To what extent are cross-cutting priorities, gender and equity measurable against clear targets?
- How well have key assumptions, risks and mitigation strategies been specified? Have assumptions about the role of partners, government and UNICEF been made explicit? Are there plausible plans to monitor these in any practicable way?

## Deliverables:

- Draft report
- Final report (maximum 10 pages)

 It is important to note that the evaluability assessment report can point to strengths and weaknesses in the Country Programme design. The report will identify findings and recommendations. However, it is not the role of the evaluability assessment expert to implement these recommendations or undertake a revision on the TOC.

## ii. Undertaking an Evaluability Assessment during 'early programme implementation' of a Country Programme

### Timing:

To be commissioned in the first year of implementation of the Country Programme. This will allow for course correction at the mid-term review point of the country programme cycle.

### Objective:

Focus on 'evaluability in practice' to assess the operationalization and implementation of the Country Programme with a light focus on 'evaluability in principle'.

## Scope:

- Assess the clarity of objectives, alignment, logic and coherence of the country programme and its alignment to the country context and UNICEF Strategic Plan.
- Assess the adequacy and validity of the indicators, tools and systems for monitoring, measuring and verifying results.
- Assess the availability and quality of the data needed to measure and monitor results (including the availability and sufficiency of baselines and targets).
- Assess the adequacy and quality of information available from current monitoring systems to conduct useful Country Programme Evaluation.
- Assess adequacy of financial resources to meet the expected results.
- The evaluability assessment will pay particular attention to assessing the way equity, innovation, gender and humanitarian action have been integrated.


## Questions:

- Is there a well-articulated theory of change for the country programme?
- Is the theory of change flexible and responsive to external factors? Were there modifications to the intervention logic and why? Are the causal linkages between the different levels of the intervention logic clear?
- Are there mechanisms and adequate human and financial resources in place to collect relevant data in a consistent fashion?
- Are indicators in place? Have the indicators been defined (e.g. numerators and denominators) with clearly understood standards? Has a target value for the indicator been provided, including for any necessary stratification?

- Are baselines in place for indicators?
- Are the indicators reliable for decision making for the programme improvements?
- Is there a means of verification system in and reliable to generate information at reasonable intervals to help monitor change?
- Are measures, tools, and mechanisms in place to measure crosscutting priorities and normative principles?
- Are resources aligned with the results?
- Are the data and systems in place to allow UNICEF to assess the adequacy of resources to achieve intended results?

## Deliverables:

- Draft report
- Final report (maximum 20 pages)

 It is important to note that evaluability report can point to strengths and weaknesses in the operationalization of the country programme. The report will identify findings and recommendations. However, it is not the role of the evaluability assessment expert to improve the M&E framework or implement recommendations as part of the evaluability assessment.

## Management and conduct of Country Programme Evaluability Assessments

(refer to section 4 above)

## Duration:

The data collection, analysis and reporting should not exceed 15 working days for the evaluability assessment during the design stage of a country programme and 20 days for evaluability assessments conducted during early implementation.

## EVALUABILITY TOOLS

### **ANNEX I:** CHECKLIST FOR DETERMINING THE EVALUABILITY OF A PROGRAMME/INTERVENTION

The use of the annexed checklist can be used by UNICEF staff and provides an indication of whether the intervention is fit for purpose and whether substantive improvements are needed to ensure successful implementation. Completion of the checklist will also determine if a more robust external evaluability assessment should be conducted. If the majority of elements in this checklist are not in place it is crucial that corrective actions be taken (e.g. re-design etc.).

## ESTIMATE COST AND LEVEL OF EFFORT

The cost and level of effort (number of days of the exercise) will depend on how the exercise is structured and framed.

The exercise will also depend on the complexity and size of the programme/intervention under examination. Taking these two parameters into account, the exercise may range between 15 and 20 working days from the moment the contract is signed with the consultant (this excludes the preparatory phase of developing/finalizing the ToR).



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# EVALUABILITY RESOURCES

For more information please see below some useful resources.

## PRIMARY RESOURCES:

- DFID: *Planning Evaluability Assessments: A Synthesis of the Literature with Recommendations* (October 2013). This [synthesis paper](#) summarises the literature on Evaluability Assessments, and highlights the main issues for consideration in planning an Evaluability Assessment. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/248656/wp40-planning-eval-assessments.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/248656/wp40-planning-eval-assessments.pdf)
- The working paper produced by Dr. Rick Davies, *Planning Evaluability Assessments: A Synthesis of the Literature with Recommendations*, provides links to around 131 items of literature related to evaluability assessment. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08a0d40f0b652dd000534/61141-DFIDWorkingPaper40-finalOct13.pdf>
- *Evaluability Assessment: Improving Evaluation Quality and Use* Michael S. Trevisan and Tamara M. Walser, Sage Publications, 2015: <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/evaluability-assessment/book240728>  
This book provides an up-to-date treatment of Evaluability Assessment (EA), clarifies what it actually is and how it can be used, demonstrates EA as an approach to evaluative inquiry with multidisciplinary and global appeal, and identifies and describes the purposes and benefits to using EA.
- Peersman; Guijt and Pasanen (2015) *Evaluability Assessment for Impact Evaluation: Guidance, Checklists and Decision Support*. ODI <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9802.pdf>
- Better Evaluation: *Evaluability Assessment* [http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/themes/evaluability\\_assessment](http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/themes/evaluability_assessment)

# ANNEX I: CHECKLIST FOR DETERMINING THE EVALUABILITY OF A PROGRAMME/INTERVENTION

Evaluability Parameter	Key questions	Short assessment and recommendations
<b>Assess the, relevance logic and coherence of results structures, alignment to country context and coherence of the sector programme/ country programme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the sector programme/country programme have a clear theory of change/logic model? Does it address the problems identified?</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the results framework of the sector programme/ country programme coherently articulated and aligned to country context and national priorities? Is it aligned to the UNICEF Strategic Plan? Is it aligned to regional priorities? Do the outputs, outcomes and overall goal follow the result chain logic?</li> <li>The results chains are coherent, logical, with clearly articulated statements</li> <li>Are results statements and the results framework taking into account equity considerations to programming and gender-responsive?</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the results clear and realistic? Are they measurable (quantitatively or qualitatively)?</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are intended beneficiary groups clearly identified?</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent are results and indicators measurable?</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How well have key assumptions, risks and mitigation strategies been specified?</li> <li>Have assumptions about the role of partners, government and UNICEF been made explicit?</li> <li>Are there plausible plans to monitor these in any practicable way?</li> </ul>	

Annex 1 (cont'd)

Evaluability Parameter	Key questions	Short assessment and recommendations
<b>Assess the adequacy and validity of the indicators, tools and systems for monitoring, measuring and verifying results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the sector programme/country programme have capacity to provide data for monitoring and evaluation?</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are baselines in place for indicators?</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the sector programme/country programme have a monitoring system to gather and systematize the information with defined responsibilities, sources and periodicity?</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do indicators and targets take into consideration equity considerations to programming?</li> <li>Are indicators and targets gender-responsive?</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the likely costs of such data collection and analysis (dollar costs in terms of the time of evaluation staff, programme managers and staff and partners)?</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a complete set of documents available? Are these documents accessible and well organized?</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a viable plan to fill data gaps?</li> </ul>	
<b>Assess adequacy of financial resources to meet the expected results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the resources aligned with the results?</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are data and systems in place to allow UNICEF to assess the adequacy of resources to achieve intended results?</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there resources set aside for evaluation?</li> </ul>	
<b>Planning Evaluations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there demand for evaluation? If not, why? And are demands realistic given programme design, budget and data availability?</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there adequate, monitoring, evaluation and learning in place for the sector programme/country programme to be evaluated?</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the sector programme/country programme include a clear plan and budget for evaluation? Is it clear who will manage the evaluation?</li> </ul>	



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