Office of Evaluation

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Terms of Reference template for the evaluation of projects and programmes funded through voluntary contributions by resource partners

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[OED tools](http://typo3.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/oed/docs/GTFSREM070ITA_2011_ER.pdf)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Office of Evaluation (OED)

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Table of contents

[Purpose of the template 4](#_Toc348611283)

[1 Background of the Project 3](#_Toc348611284)

[2 Purpose of the Evaluation 3](#_Toc348611285)

[3 Evaluation framework 3](#_Toc348611286)

[3.1 Scope 3](#_Toc348611287)

[3.2 Evaluation criteria 4](#_Toc348611288)

[3.3 Evaluation issues 4](#_Toc348611289)

[4 Evaluation methodology 7](#_Toc348611290)

[4.1 Approach and tools 7](#_Toc348611291)

[4.2 Stakeholders and consultation process 7](#_Toc348611292)

[5 Roles and responsibilities 8](#_Toc348611293)

[6 Evaluation team 9](#_Toc348611294)

[7 Evaluation deliverables 10](#_Toc348611295)

[8 Evaluation timetable 10](#_Toc348611296)

[Annexes 10](#_Toc348611297)

[**Annex 1.** Project evaluation report outline 10](#_Toc348611298)

[**Annex 2.** FAO Strategic Objectives, Results and core functions, 2010-2019; 10](#_Toc348611299)

[**Annex 3.** OED project performance questionnaire 10](#_Toc348611300)

Purpose of the template

This document provides the basic structure and contents of the terms of reference for the evaluation of projects and programmes (henceforth called projects) funded by voluntary contributions from FAO resource partners, for which budget resources are made available from the project’s budget. It is primarily for use by FAO managers/ budget holders and evaluation managers when they have to initiate an evaluation; it also aims at being a reference for resource partners and participants in FAO project evaluations.

The template is primarily designed for project evaluations. It can also be used as reference for the preparation of terms of reference for the evaluation of more complex programmes and/or clusters of projects, adapted as appropriate.

The document ‘Step-by-step procedures for the evaluation of voluntary-funded projects’, available in OED Web site[[1]](#footnote-2) at illustrates in detail the process to be followed for the evaluation of Voluntary-funded projects and programmes.

For ease of reference, the three boxes below provide some explanations on the possible timing of such evaluations and on the UN programming principles.

1. Mid-term evaluation

A mid-term evaluation is typically held around the half-way point in the project life. Such evaluations generally focus on implementation issues and are designed to facilitate mid-course corrective action. In such evaluations, it may be difficult to arrive at conclusions about sustainability and impact

1. Final evaluations

A final evaluation is held at or near the end of a project. Final evaluations are undertaken for both accountability and learning purposes and are often linked to decisions about extending the project to a further phase. In the latter case, the evaluation should be held at least six to nine months before the scheduled conclusion date, to permit timely consideration of the evaluation results and future funding decisions.

1. UN country programming principles[[2]](#footnote-3)

As of mid-2012, FAO formally introduced the five UN Country Programming Principles in its Project Cycle Guidelines. The following are defined as *normative principles*: Human Rights Based Approaches (HRBA)/ Right to Food/ Decent Work; Gender equality, and Environmental sustainability. Two were defined as *enabling principles*: Capacity Development (CD) and Results-Based Management (RBM). This revised version of the template ToR integrates the five principles in OED standard project evaluation framework.

Model Terms of Reference[[3]](#footnote-4)

# Background of the Project

This section should contain a brief description of the project to be evaluated. It should include objectives and main activities, key events and main achievements and issues to date, the project’s institutional set-up and budget, total and residual. A more detailed description may be included in the form of annex.

# Purpose of the Evaluation

This section will explain the reasons for conducting the evaluation and its objectives. All evaluations should have the double purpose of accountability to all stakeholders, including project participants, and contributing to organizational learning.

This section should mention whether it is a mid-term or final evaluation, state the intended stakeholders and refer to any specific management decision for which the evaluation serves as an input, e.g. extension of the current phase, formulation of a new phase, up-scaling. Typically the whole project will be evaluated; in the case of long-lasting projects/programmes, this section will also define what is the period to be evaluated (e.g. only the second or last phase).

# Evaluation framework

This section illustrates the scope, and the standard issues that all project evaluations should address and the criteria that will typically be used during the assessment.

Questions, issues and criteria will be tailored to the project being evaluated and to the timing of the evaluation in the life of the project. It is recognized, for instance, that impacts may be difficult to capture at an early stage of implementation.

In the case of complex programmes, an additional section may be required on the conceptual design underpinning the evaluation framework. This could be part of this chapter or separate.

## Scope

Scope determines the boundaries of the evaluation, tailoring the objectives and evaluation criteria to the given situation. This section will make the coverage of the evaluation explicit: time period of analysis, phase in implementation, geographical area and the dimensions of stakeholder involvement. The limits of the evaluation should also be acknowledged within the scope. Typically, all evaluations will assess the project from its conceptual phase[[4]](#footnote-5) to current and potential results. If only the last phase of the project will be assessed, some reference should still be made to the initial concept and design and any subsequent modification.

## Evaluation criteria

1. The project will be critically assessed through the internationally accepted evaluation criteria, i.e. relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. In line with the new FAO project cycle, the evaluation will assess compliance with the following UN Common Country Programming Principles: Human Rights Based Approaches (HRBA)/ Right to Food/ Decent Work; Gender equality, Environmental sustainability, Capacity Development and Results Based Management. *Additional characteristics to guide the analysis are: robustness, clarity, coherence, realism and technical quality. In the case of emergency projects, special attention should be given to Humanitarian Principles and Minimum Standards. If any of the mandatory features listed above cannot be reasonably assessed during the evaluation, this should be stated under ‘Constraints and limitations’ within the evaluation methodology section.*

## Evaluation issues

*This section identifies the issues that the evaluation will have to assess structured upon the mandatory evaluation criteria. A number of these issues are standard, as their analysis is mandatory for reasons of both accountability to the Organization and lessons learning through a systematic and harmonized approach to project evaluations. Should some issue not apply to a specific project, this can be dropped providing appropriate explanation for this. Any additional specific issue and evaluation question that ‘tailor’ the ToR to the project to be assessed can be further developed under any of the headings below.*

1. Relevance of concept and design
2. Project relevance to (*select as applicable from the following list*): national/regional development priorities, programmes, needs of the population; UNDAF; Consolidated Appeal or other UN programming framework; FAO Country Programming Framework; FAO Global Goals and Strategic Objectives/Core Functions; other aid programmes in the sector;
3. Robustness and realism of the theory of change underpinning the project;
4. Clarity, coherence and realism of the Logical Framework[[5]](#footnote-6) of the project and of its design, including:
* The causal relationship between inputs, activities, outputs, expected outcomes (immediate objectives) and impact (development objectives);
* Validity of indicators, assumptions and risks;
* Approach and methodology;
* Resources (human and financial) and duration;
* Stakeholder and beneficiary identification and analysis;
* Institutional set-up and management arrangements.
1. Effectiveness of outputs and outcomes
2. Overall effectiveness of the project, actual or potential, in attaining its intermediate/specific objectives:
* Description and analysis of the outputs produced, in terms of quantity, quality and timeliness; (Key outputs for the evaluation team to assess should be included here. The evaluation team may add to the list as appropriate)
* Description and analysis of the outcomes achieved, expected and unexpected, their robustness and expectations for further uptake and diffusion.[[6]](#footnote-7) (*Key outcomes against which the evaluation should assess achievements should be included here. The evaluation team may add to the list as appropriate*)
1. Use made by the project of FAO’s normative and knowledge products and actual and potential contribution of the project to the normative and knowledge function of the Organization.
2. Efficiency and effectiveness of project implementation process

This section will assess how the project was implemented, including overall efficiency of delivery and management of available resources. Any major issue that affected implementation should be mentioned here.

1. Assessment of project management:
* Quality, realism and focus of work plans;
* Assessment of delivery, causes and consequences of delays and of any remedial measure taken, if any;
* Monitoring and feed-back loop into improved management and operations;
* Staff management;
* Development and implementation of an exit strategy;
1. Institutional Setup:
* Administrative and technical support by FAO HQ, regional, sub-regional and country office, as appropriate;
* Institutional set-up, internal review processes, coordination and steering bodies;
* Inputs and support by the Government/s and resource partner/s.
1. Assessment of financial resources management, including:
* Adequacy and realism of budget allocations to achieve intended results;
* Adequacy and realism of Budget Revisions in matching implementation needs and project objectives;
* Rate of delivery and budget balance at the time of the evaluation and in relation to work-plans.
1. Analysis of the application of the UN common country programming principles, cross-cutting themes, and of the Humanitarian Principles and Minimum Standards in the case of emergency projects
2. Analysis of gender mainstreaming for gender equality. This will include:
* extent to which gender equality considerations were reflected in project objectives and design to address the needs, priorities and constraints of both women and men, and in the identification of beneficiaries;
* extent to which gender equality considerations were taken into account in project implementation and management;
* extent to which gender relations and equality have been or will be affected by the project. Particular attention will be devoted to the four FAO’s Gender Equality Objectives attainable at the level of initiative or thematic area: i) Equal decision-making; ii) Equal access to productive resources; iii) Equal access to goods, services and markets; iv) Reduction of women’s work burden;[[7]](#footnote-8)
1. Analysis of gender equity in the management and staffing of the project
2. Analysis of the Capacity Development dimension in the design, implementation and results of the project, at individual, organizational and enabling environment levels.[[8]](#footnote-9) This will include CD on both technical and soft-skills, i.e. planning, budgeting, partnering and negotiating.
3. Analysis of the adoption of the Human-Rights Based Approach, namely:
* the integration of the Right to Food dimension and principles, in the design, implementation and results of the project;
* the integration of decent rural employment concerns in the design, implementation and results of the project.
1. Analysis of Partnerships and Alliances, namely:
* how they were planned in the project design and developed through implementation;
* their focus and strength; and
* their effect on project results and sustainability.[[9]](#footnote-10)
1. Analysis of how environmental impacts were taken into consideration and addressed, following the steps and criteria contained in the FAO Environmental Impact Assessment guidelines[[10]](#footnote-11).
2. In the case of emergency projects, analysis of the extent to which the programme has effectively adhered to the principles promoted in the Humanitarian Charter and to the Minimum Standards as defined in the Sphere handbook.[[11]](#footnote-12)
3. Impact
4. Overall impact of the project, actual or potential, positive and negative, produced directly or indirectly, intended or unintended; and
5. Overall contribution of the project to FAO Country Programming Frameworks, Organizational Result/s and Strategic Objectives, as well as to the implementation of the corporate Core Functions.
6. Sustainability

In case of emergency projects, when sustainability may not apply, connectedness should be sought: i.e. the need to assure that activities of a short term emergency nature are carried out in a context which takes longer term and interconnected problems into account.

1. The prospects for sustaining and up-scaling the project's results by the beneficiaries and the host institutions after the termination of the project. The assessment of sustainability will include, as appropriate:
* Institutional, technical, social and economic sustainability of proposed technologies, innovations and/or processes;
* Expectation of institutional uptake and mainstreaming of the newly acquired capacities, or diffusion beyond the beneficiaries or the project;
* Environmental sustainability: the project’s contribution to sustainable natural resource management, in terms of maintenance and/or regeneration of the natural resource base.
1. Based on the above analysis, the evaluation will draw specific conclusions and formulate recommendations for any necessary further action by Government, FAO and/or other parties to ensure sustainable development, including any need for follow-up or up-scaling action. The evaluation will draw attention to specific good practices and lessons to be learned as they are of interest to other similar activities. Any proposal for further assistance should include specification of major objectives and outputs and indicative inputs required.

# Evaluation methodology

*The following standard text will appear and be adjusted and complemented as required.*

*Any constraints faced by the evaluation will need to be explored and mitigating measures should be identified as appropriate.*

## Approach and tools

1. The evaluation will adhere to the UNEG Norms & Standards[[12]](#footnote-13).
2. The evaluation will adopt a consultative and transparent approach with internal and external stakeholders throughout the evaluation process. Triangulation of evidence and information gathered will underpin its validation and analysis and will support conclusions and recommendations.
3. The evaluation will make use of the following methods and tools (*list as appropriate*): review of existing reports, semi-structured interviews with key informants, stakeholders and participants, supported by check lists and/or interview protocols; direct observation during field visits; surveys and questionnaires.
4. Particular attention will be devoted to ensure that women and other under-privileged groups will be consulted in adequate manner. Insofar as possible and appropriate, interaction will also take place with non-participants to canvass their opinions. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework;[[13]](#footnote-14) the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) framework can be used for assessment of project results.[[14]](#footnote-15)

## Stakeholders and consultation process

For national projects, the briefings and debriefing will include the Government, the resource partners, the FAO Representation and other relevant actors. For regional, inter-regional and global projects/programmes, debriefing arrangements will be specified. The list of stakeholders proposed below will need to be tailored to the specific project evaluation.

1. The evaluation team will discuss in detail with the key stakeholders of the project and will take into account their perspectives and opinions. Key stakeholders will include: (*list as appropriate)*
* Project Task Force members;
* Government representatives from the partner organizations;
* the resource partner;
* FAO Representatives in the participating countries; and
* Participants in communities, including farmers, processors, exporters, organizations and cooperatives, service providers, etc.
1. The evaluation team will maintain close liaison with: the FAO Office of Evaluation, the Project Task Force members and Project staff at headquarters, regional, sub-regional or country level. Although the mission is free to discuss with the authorities concerned anything relevant to its assignment, it is not authorized to make any commitment on behalf of the Government, the donor or FAO.
2. The team will present its preliminary findings, conclusions and recommendations to the project stakeholders in the visited country/ies and insofar as possible, in the relevant FAO Decentralized Office and in HQ, to obtain their feedback at the end of the data-gathering phase.
3. The draft ToR will be circulated among key stakeholders for comments before finalisation; suggestions will be incorporated as deemed appropriate by OED. The draft evaluation report will also be circulated among key stakeholders for comments before finalisation; suggestions will be incorporated as deemed appropriate by the evaluation team.

# Roles and responsibilities

*Should other stakeholders engage in the evaluation process beyond participating in meetings, discussions and information gathering, their roles and responsibilities should be added here. Additional tasks can also be added to those proposed below.*

1. FAO Budget Holder (BH), the Lead Technical Officer (LTO) and the Project Task Force (PTF) of the project to be evaluated are responsible for initiating the evaluation process, drafting the first version of the Terms of Reference, and supporting the evaluation team during its work. They are required to participate in meetings with the team, make available information and documentation as necessary, and comment on the draft final terms of reference and report. Involvement of different members of the project Task Force will depend on respective roles and participation in the project.
2. The BH is also responsible for leading and coordinating the preparation of the FAO Management Response and the Follow-up Report to the evaluation, fully supported in this task by the LTO and PTF. OED guidelines for the Management Response and the Follow-up Report provide necessary details on this process.
3. FAO Office of Evaluation assists the BH and LTO in drafting the ToR, in the identification of the consultants and in the organization of the team’s work; it is responsible for the finalization of the ToR and of the team composition;[[15]](#footnote-16) it shall brief the evaluation team on the evaluation methodology and process and will review the final draft report for Quality Assurance purposes in terms of presentation, compliance with the ToR and timely delivery, quality, clarity and soundness of evidence provided and of the analysis supporting conclusions and recommendations.
4. The Office of Evaluation has also a responsibility in following up with the BH for the timely preparation of the Management Response and the Follow-up to the MR.
5. The Evaluation Team is responsible for conducting the evaluation, applying the methodology as appropriate and for producing the evaluation report. All team members, including the Team Leader, will participate in briefing and debriefing meetings, discussions, field visits, and will contribute to the evaluation with written inputs for the final draft and final report.
6. The Team Leader guides and coordinates the team members in their specific work, discusses their findings, conclusions and recommendations and prepares the final draft and the final report, consolidating the inputs from the team members with his/her own.
7. The Evaluation team will be free to expand the scope, criteria, questions and issues listed above, as well as develop its own evaluation tools and framework, within time and resources available.
8. The team is fully responsible for its report which may not reflect the views of the Government or of FAO. An evaluation report is not subject to technical clearance by FAO although OED is responsible for Quality Assurance of all evaluation reports.
9. As a contribution to the OED Knowledge Management System:
* the Team Leader will be responsible for completing the OED quantitative project performance questionnaire, to be delivered at the same time with the final evaluation report;
* OED will ask all team members to complete an anonymous and confidential questionnaire to get their feedback on the evaluation process.

*For further details related to the tasks of the Team leader and team members, please refer to template TORs provided in annex.*

# Evaluation team

The composition of the evaluation team will be indicated as well as the profile of the team members. Ideally, the Team Leader will have sound evaluation experience.

1. Mission members will have had no previous direct involvement in the formulation, implementation or backstopping of the project. All will sign the Declaration of Interest form of the FAO Office of Evaluation.
2. The evaluation team will comprise the best available mix of skills that are required to assess the project, and as a whole, will have expertise in all the following subject matters:
* *Technical sector A*
* *Technical sector B*
* Gender equality and HRBA;
* Conduct of evaluations.
1. Furthermore, to the extent possible, the team will be balanced in terms of geographical and gender representation to ensure diversity and complementarity of perspectives.

# Evaluation deliverables

The following text should be used, with appropriate time frames indicated for report preparation deadlines. Any other expected deliverable will be listed and described in this section.

1. The evaluation report will illustrate the evidence found that responds to the evaluation issues, questions and criteria listed in the ToR. It will include an executive summary. Supporting data and analysis should be annexed to the report when considered important to complement the main report.
2. The recommendations will be addressed to the different stakeholders and prioritized: they will be evidence-based, relevant, focused, clearly formulated and actionable.
3. The evaluation team will agree on the outline of the report early in the evaluation process, based on the template provided in Annex I of this ToR. The report will be prepared in English/French/Spanish[[16]](#footnote-17), with numbered paragraphs, following OED template for report writing. Translations in other languages of the Organization, if required, will be FAO’s responsibility.
4. The team leader bears responsibility for submitting the final draft report to FAO within (*time-span to be decided on a case by case basis*) weeks from the conclusion of the mission. Within (*time-span to be decided on a case by case basis*) additional weeks, FAO will submit to the team its comments and suggestions that the team will include as appropriate in the final report within maximum two weeks.
5. Annexes to the evaluation report will include, though not limited to, the following as relevant:
* Terms of reference for the evaluation;
* Profile of team members;
* List of documents reviewed;
* List of institutions and stakeholders interviewed by the evaluation team;
* List of project outputs;
* Evaluation tools.

# Evaluation timetable

This section should provide a tentative work-plan and time-table for the whole evaluation including timing for clearance of both ToR and draft evaluation report.

1. The evaluation is expected to take place during (*period to be indicated*). The country visit phase is expected to last approximately (*indicate how long*) weeks. The timetable in the box below shows a tentative programme of travel and work for the evaluation team. It will be finalised upon the recruitment of the evaluation team.
2. Tentative timetable of the evaluation

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Task** | **Dates** | **Duration** | **Responsibility** |
| ToR finalization |  |  |  |
| Team identification and recruitment  |  |  |  |
| Mission organization |  |  |  |
| Reading background documentation |  |  |  |
| Briefing  |  |  |  |
| Travel |  |  |  |
| Mission to  |  |  |  |

Annexes

1. Project evaluation report outline
2. FAO Strategic Objectives, Results and core functions, 2010-2019;
3. OED project performance questionnaire
1. http://www.fao.org/evaluation/oed-about/guidelines/en/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. The UN Country Programming Principles will be applied, in so far as possible, also to projects approved before June 2012. In FAO, the Human Rights Based Approach is mainly embedded in the Right to Food and Decent Work principles. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. This title will be deleted in real ToR, as well as the text in italic that follows [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. As of June 2012, in the new FAO Project Cycle this should be embodied by the Concept Note [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. The Logical Framework embodies the Results-Based Management approach in a project [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. ‘FAO projects should have (only) one outcome. Programmes may have more.’ From FAO Project Cycle Guidelines, 2012 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. See FAO Policy on Gender Equality: http://www.fao.org/docrep/017/i3205e/i3205e.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. See: http://www.fao.org/capacitydevelopment/en/ [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. See: http://www.fao.org/partnerships/partners-home/en/ [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. See: http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i2802e/i2802e.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. In the Humanitarian charter, humanitarian agencies jointed expressed their conviction that all people affected by disaster or conflict have a right to receive protection and assistance to ensure the basic conditions for life with dignity. See: http://www.spherehandbook.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. United Nations Evaluation Group, http://www.uneval.org/normsandstandards [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework identifies five different capitals (human, social, natural, financial, and physical), each including different assets. It helps in improving understanding of livelihoods, in particular of the poor. For more information, among others: http://www.livelihoods.org/info/guidance\_sheets\_pdfs/section2.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. SWOT is a widely used strategic planning tool, useful also in the assessment of development interventions, to canvass their strengths and weaknesses, as well as future perspectives. It is particularly used in focus groups, but it can be adapted to individual interviews as well. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. The responsibility for the administrative procedures for recruitment of the team, will be decided on a case-by-case basis. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Select as appropriate [↑](#footnote-ref-17)