FRAME TOOLKIT

FRamework for Assessing, Monitoring and Evaluating the environment in refugee-related operations

Module VII
Evaluation

UNHCR
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

care

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ACRONYMS

CEAP	Community environmental action plan
EA	Environmental assessment
FRAME	Framework for Assessing, Monitoring and Evaluating the Environment in Refugee-related Operations (Project)
GPS	Global positioning system
REA	Rapid environmental assessment
PRA	Participatory rural appraisal
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

GLOSSARY

Baseline Study: An analysis describing the situation prior to a development intervention, against which progress can be assessed or comparisons made.

Beneficiaries: The individuals, groups or organisations – whether targeted or not – that benefit, directly or indirectly, from the development intervention.

Case-study analysis: A learning tool used in training or group settings to stimulate the processes of dialogue, discussion and analysis. Typically based on real-life incidents, case studies illustrate the range of possible enabling and inhibiting factors in a given development activity. Case-study group discussions can increase understanding of broader issues involved in programme and project development.

Evaluation: The systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of both recipients and donors.

Ex-ante Evaluation: An evaluation that is performed before implementation of a specific intervention.

Ex-post Evaluation: Evaluation of an intervention after it has been completed.

External Evaluation: The evaluation of an intervention conducted by people outside the donor and implementation organisations.

Evaluator(s): The person or persons charged with undertaking an evaluation.

Facilitator: An outside expert in participatory evaluation methods, who has the capacity to listen; help the group to ask key questions; guide and facilitate discussions; encourage trust; delegate tasks and responsibilities; create an environment of sharing and reflection; and plan actions to help bring together the viewpoints of the various stakeholders.

Feedback: The transmission of findings generated through the evaluation process to parties for whom it is relevant and useful, so as to facilitate learning. This may involve the collection and dissemination of findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons, from experience.

Focus group: Small discussion group that concentrates on a specific topic. A group facilitator assists in focusing the discussion on strategies for defining solutions to particular problems. Used in evaluation as a means of starting a discussion, identifying needs and clarifying key points.

Impacts: Positive or negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by an intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.

Independent Evaluation: An evaluation carried out by people free of control of those responsible for the design and implementation of the intervention being evaluated.

Indicator: Quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a particular agency.

Internal Evaluation: Evaluation of an intervention conducted by a unit and/or individuals reporting to the management of the donor, partner or implementing organisation.

Lessons Learned: Generalisations based on evaluation experiences with projects, programmes or policies that abstract details from the specific circumstances to broader situations. Frequently, lessons highlight strengths or weaknesses in project/programme preparation, design and implementation that affect performance, outcome and impact.

Mid-term Evaluation: An evaluation performed around the middle of the period of implementation of an intervention.

Monitoring: A continuous process that uses the systematic collection of data on specific indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives, and progress on the use of allocated funds.

Participatory Evaluation: The collective examination and assessment of a programme or project by the stakeholders and beneficiaries. Participatory evaluations are reflective, action-oriented and seek to build capacity.

Qualitative Methods: Methods that minimise the use of numerical analysis, such as interviews, observation, testimonials and various PRA methods to elicit information from stakeholders. Information obtained in this way can help to illuminate data and numbers.

Random Sampling: A selection made without method or conscious choice.

Self-evaluation: An evaluation by those who are entrusted with the design and delivery of a specific intervention.

Secondary Sources: Sources such as periodic progress reports, annual reports, memos, sectoral studies and baseline data. They serve as background and foundation material and resources for an evaluation.

Stakeholder: An actor that has a vested interest in a given project, activity, or issue. Stakeholders may include groups affected by development actions, such as the poor, women, workers, farmers or the community at large, as well as other actors that can affect the outcome of a project, i.e., government officials, institutions, project personnel or the local government. In participatory evaluations, stakeholders assume an increased role in the evaluation process as question-makers, evaluation planners, data gatherers and problem solvers.

Stratified Sampling: A selection that ensures representation of a cross-section of a community according to such characteristics as age, gender, social class or race.

Triangulation: A process of cross-checking and cross-validating by talking with and referring to various sources.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 WHAT IS EVALUATION?

Evaluation is a time-bound exercise which attempts to assess systematically and objectively the relevance, performance and success of ongoing or completed projects or programmes. An evaluation is undertaken to answer specific questions, answers to which should help guide decision-makers, managers and individual actors in determining what worked and did not work, and why this was so.

Evaluation is also a means to extract – in this case – cross-cutting lessons from humanitarian relief operations, and determines the need for changes to specific activities, programmes or overarching strategies. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of these lessons learned into the decision-making process. In this manner, an evaluation also introduces a common language among all those agencies and individuals involved in a particular project or programme.

Evaluation is one component of UNHCR's broader performance review framework which also includes activities such as inspection, audit, programme monitoring and protection oversight.

The main purpose of UNHCR's evaluation function is to provide UNHCR managers, staff and partner organisations with useful information, analysis and recommendations thereby enabling the organisation to engage in effective policy making, planning, programming and implementation. In addition to being a means by which project or programme managers can fulfil their duty of accountability, evaluation is also a management tool used in decision-making, and is increasingly been appreciated as a potentially useful learning process for all parties concerned.

Useful and important as evaluations are, they can, however, also be easily misused or abused in a number of ways, including:

- using them to justify decisions already taken;
- using an evaluation to postpone decisions or delay actions;
- using them to defend or counteract particular policy decisions; and
- using an evaluation to alter implementation arrangements for a project or programme when this is not the main reason for a project or programme not reaching its intended outcome.

An evaluation with such an intention has little or nothing to offer stakeholders engaged in a particular project or programme.

1.2 WHY EVALUATE?

Formal evaluations have now become a routine part of project and programme management for most organisations. Evaluations were introduced to the United Nations in the 1970s, when member states felt the need for a more systematic planning and budgeting process and for more comprehensive information to assist General Assembly decisions.

Among the reasons for conducting an evaluation is to measure and be able to demonstrate progress and effectiveness of a given intervention, but an evaluation can also highlight where performance might not be as strong as was intended and can also show if a project or programme is partially or completely missing the point. Evaluations also commonly focus on cost-effectiveness, both of finances and resources. They are also, however, a useful means of learning more about how a particular approach worked or did not work and are thus a useful tool in developing more appropriate responses to particular situations or problems.

Project evaluation focuses on a specific project or development intervention to attain designated objectives. For this purpose, a project can be defined as a planned, non-routine intervention for achieving one of more objectives, encompassing a set of internal related activities which are undertaken during a specific period of time, using limited human, physical and financial resources.

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS OF AN EVALUATION
How do I draw up terms of reference for an evaluation? What should be evaluated and when? What indicators should be used? What is the best method for evaluating? Should the evaluation be quantitative or quantitative? Who should carry out the evaluation? How much will it cost?
Answers to these and other questions are found in this Handbook and elsewhere in this Toolkit.

A **programme evaluation**, in contrast, focuses on a less clearly bound entity than a project. Programmes are generally more comprehensive and long-term and will most often include diverse interventions from many agencies and interested parties.

Evaluations may also be conducted around an institutional policy.

SOME TYPES OF EVALUATION
Ex-Ante Evaluation – performed before implementation.
Ex-post Evaluation – an evaluation following the completion of a project/programme.
External Evaluation – the evaluation of a development intervention conducted by people at arm's length (i.e. at least not reporting to the same manager) from the implementing organisation and its partners.
Independent Evaluation – carried out by people free of control by those responsible for the design and implementation of the intervention.
Internal Evaluation – evaluation of a development intervention conducted by a unit and/or individual(s) reporting to the management of the donor, partner or implementing organisation.
Mid-term Evaluation – performed towards the middle period of the implementation schedule.
Participatory Evaluation – an evaluation in which representatives of agencies and stakeholders work together in designing, carrying out and interpreting an evaluation.
Self-evaluation – an evaluation by those entrusted with the design and delivery of a development intervention.

1.3 BUT WHY DOES ENVIRONMENT NEED TO BE EVALUATED?

Should environmental projects and programmes supported by UNHCR and others in refugee and returnee situations be required to be evaluated? Notwithstanding being one of UNHCR's policy priorities, environmental initiatives are just as likely to miss their mark as any initiative, unless they are based on good planning and close and appropriate management and monitoring. While the latter (see Module IV, **Community Environmental Action Planning**) should highlight whether a project or programme is attaining its expected outcomes or is falling far short to reaching these, in the allocated time, there is no substitute for a periodic review or an evaluation of ongoing activities in order to reaffirm that things are progressing as anticipated. An evaluation is also often conducted upon completion of a multi-year project or programme, often with the intention of drawing best practices or lessons learned from the experience. This helps with future project replication elsewhere, but is also an additional guide to managers and decision-makers when it comes to planning future initiatives and budgets.

Not all projects or programmes, however, should be subject to an evaluation as this is a considerable undertaking in terms of peoples' time and resources. The size and budget of an environmental activity is a useful yardstick on which to base decisions on whether a project should be evaluated, but other considerations should also be borne in mind. A programme may, for example, need to be evaluated not for the activities *per se* but in terms of management effectiveness, or whether a project really conforms to UNHCR's **Environmental Policy**. Further guidance to help users decide why, when and how to conduct an evaluation is provided in the following sections of this Handbook but the following pointers should also be considered. An evaluation might be routine required if:

- the project or programme budget is in excess of, say, US$200,000;
- if Phase I of a project is reaching completion and, based on previous monitoring results, it is likely to reach its intended outcome and may therefore continue into a new phase;
- if the project or programme is large in terms of the size of the target group; and
- if it is a pilot or demonstration project, as the results may have implications for future work in the same area.

1.4 LINKS BETWEEN ASSESSMENT, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The need for sound and well planned and co-ordinated management of environment-related initiatives – not just environmental *per se* but those with some degree of dependency or inter-relationship with natural resources or ecosystems – has been discussed in the Introduction to this Toolkit (Module I). Key to this, is consistent, well planned and responsible assessments, monitoring and evaluations, the links between which are shown in Figure 1 and described briefly below.

An **assessment** of the physical environment – and the interrelationships between the state of the environment and the manner or degree to which people depend on this – is a basic requirement for many projects and programmes in relief and humanitarian operations.

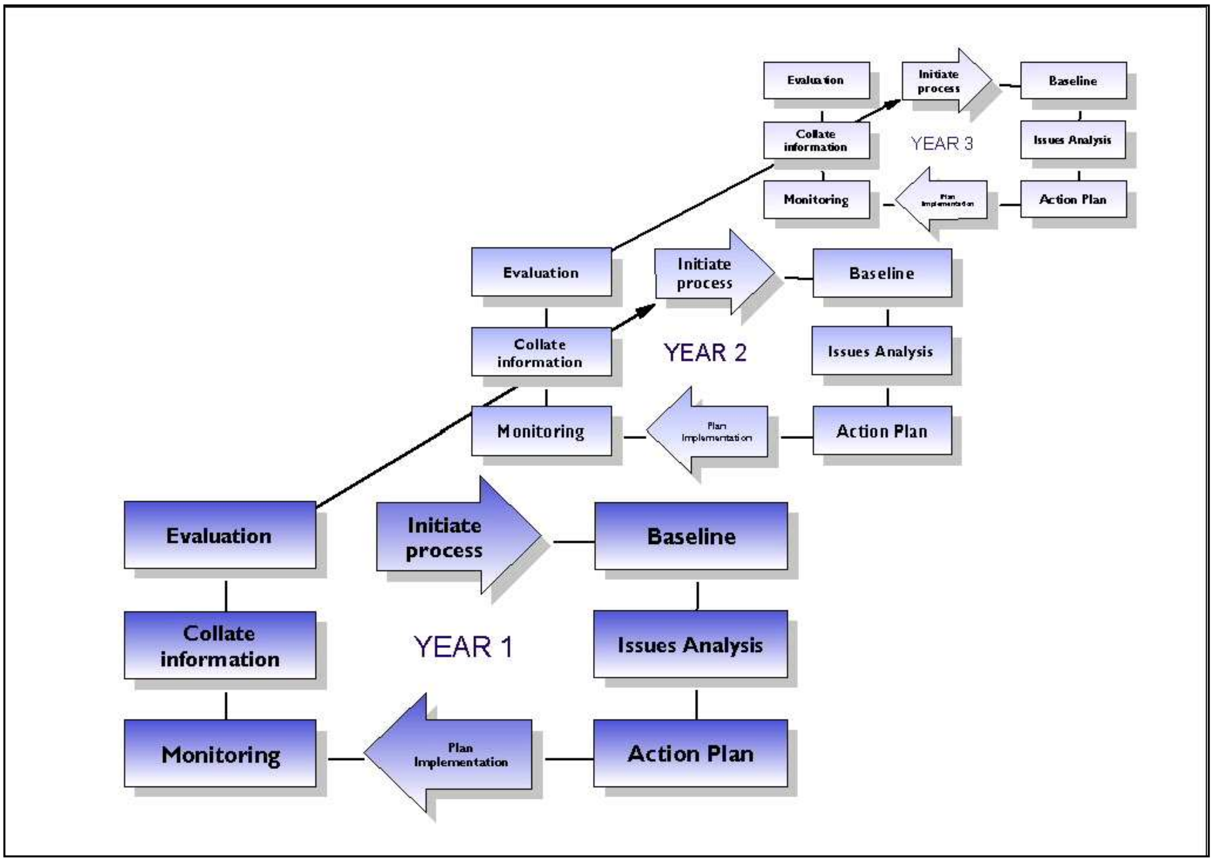
Environmental assessments – whether carried out using a rapid environmental assessment (REA) or a more formal and thorough environmental assessment (EA) – are also a useful means of gathering information and establishing baseline conditions for the state of the environment at and around a particular camp, settlement or community at a particular point in time. Environmental assessments also provide decision-makers, in particular, with quality information that should allow them to weigh a number of options when decisions about the potential location of a camp or settlement, for example, are being taken. Costly mistakes have been made in the past by failing to carry out such assessments, costly in terms of squandered resources, inevitable environmental rehabilitation, loss of peoples' livelihoods, and security for refugee families.

Monitoring is a continuous process of data collection and analysis throughout the duration of a project or programme. Ideally, information being gathered should enable a regular evaluation of progress to be undertaken by people at different levels, allowing adjustments to made where necessary. Different levels of information will be relevant to different groups. People at the field level will normally be more concerned with basics such as crop yield, the degree of pest infestation or the availability of water or pasture for livestock, whereas managers – who will also be keen to understand these basic conditions but – will be more concerned as to whether the project or programme response(s) they are managing or supporting are having the desired impacts or are failing to reach the intended levels..

The FRAME Toolkit advocates the active involvement of local communities in developing local monitoring tools and approaches through the establishment of a community environmental action plan (CEAP). This process is especially applicable towards the end of an Emergency and the transition to the Care and Maintenance phase. It also has widespread application throughout the Durable Solutions phase.

Evaluation, in contrast to some of the above, is a management and learning tool through which an occasional or periodic review – often entirely externally conducted – is undertaken of a particular project, programme or policy. Findings and recommendations from an evaluation are used to determine if a particular approach or set of project/programme activities are having the intended impact and, if not, to identify what needs to be done to rectify the situation. If a decision is taken that action is required, such information is then fed back into the project planning and management cycle to try and address and resolve the problems. Any such changes should thereafter be closely and routinely monitored until such time as a new evaluation might again be required (see also Project and Programme Management Cycle in the **Introduction** module of this Toolkit).

Figure 1. The Role of Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation in the Project/Programme Cycle



1.5 KEY PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS FOR EVALUATIONS

UNHCR’s evaluation function is guided by the following principles, outlined in the organisation’s Evaluation Policy (2002).

- Transparency: evaluation activities are conducted openly. Terms of reference, findings and recommendations are always placed in the public domain. Major evaluation contracts are awarded through a process of competitive bidding.
- Independence: the findings and recommendations of evaluation projects are not subject to the control or interference of senior UNHCR management. The independence of the evaluation function is ensured through the extensive use of external evaluators.
- Consultation: UNHCR’s stakeholders, including refugees whenever possible, participate in the identification, planning, implementation and utilisation of evaluation projects. Evaluation findings and recommendations are never placed in the public domain without such consultation.

- Relevance: evaluations focus on those operations, functions and operational policy issues that are of most direct concern to UNHCR, its partners and beneficiaries. Evaluations are used as a means of enhancing the organisation's capacity to fulfil its mandate on behalf of refugees and other people of concern to the organisation.
- Integrity: staff members and external evaluators engaged by UNHCR will maintain the highest possible professional and personal standards. In particular they will ensure the honesty and integrity of the evaluation process, and respect the security and dignity of the stakeholders with whom they interact.

Information and documentation gathered in the course of an evaluation project may not be used for any other purpose without the prior permission of UNHCR. Evaluators who collect significant evidence on issues which fall beyond their Terms of Reference (TORs) should provide the information immediately and, on a confidential basis, to the Head of the Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit or to the Inspector-General.

While these principles have been compiled to guide evaluation policy at the overall institutional level, they are equally relevant when it comes to thematic or technical evaluations, including those relating to environmental management.

2. HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

2.1 PURPOSE

Evaluation of the impacts of environment-related activities is nothing new to UNHCR but, as with assessment and monitoring initiatives, evaluations in previous years have been conducted on an *ad hoc* basis, often lacking the rigour and structure which the evaluation process demands.

This Handbook has been prepared for a number of reasons, but primarily to enable users to:
- better understand the underlying principles of evaluation;
- appreciate the importance of evaluations in the project/programme cycle;
- help users prepare for and actually conduct an evaluation of environment-related aspects of an operation; and
- demonstrate how information obtained through evaluations can and should be used to enhance planning and management.

These goals are entirely in keeping with UNHCR's Evaluation Policy (2002) which states the organisation's commitment to increasing and improving:
- the level of evaluation activity within the organisation;
- the effectiveness of its evaluation methods and management; and
- the use of evaluation findings and recommendations.

HOW TO EVALUATE

There are many ways in which an evaluation might be carried out and users are encouraged to select the most appropriate approach for each particular situation or project/programme. As a general guideline, however, evaluations may:
- be focused on a policy, a function, a programme, project practice or a set of procedures;
- be conducted at an early stage of an operation (in "real time", at a mid-point or upon completion of the operation. Spot checks can also be undertaken when there is evidence that things may not be going well;
- use a range of different evaluative, analytical and participatory techniques; and
- be fully external and independent, or involve UNHCR staff and partners.

As with other guidance provided in this Toolkit, this Handbook has been prepared in an attempt to ensure that evaluations are routinely and systematically carried out on all environmental-related activities.

In addition, however, this handbook is a deliberate attempt to promote what is known as a "utilisation-focused" approach to evaluation (Quinn Patton, 1997) which is intended to help ensure that the recommendations stemming from an evaluation are indeed translated into action. Some evaluation recommendations go unimplemented as they may not be realistic, because they lack support from senior management, because they are perceived as unrealistic or inappropriate by programme staff, or because the situation on the ground may have changed by the time the evaluation report is published.

With regards the evaluation of environment-related activities, what this means in practise is that:
- discussions and decisions concerning the need for an evaluation, followed perhaps by the development of terms of reference and the suggested methodology to be used, would be made in such a way as to maximise the potential for the findings and recommendations of the investigation to be effectively used;
- a stakeholder analysis would be undertaken at the outset of the evaluation to help identify who should be involved in the exercise – from stakeholders on the ground, through Implementing Partners and UNHCR management;

- regular consultations during the evaluation timeframe should help ensure that final recommendations are appropriate, practical and relevant; and
- evaluation findings and recommendations will be communicated in a timely and effective manner to UNHCR management and other key decision-makers.

By adopting this philosophy and approach it is hoped that the results of future evaluations will provide practical guidance, will find broader support from management and will be used more rigorously and systematically in programme management decisions.

2.2 INTENDED AUDIENCE

This Handbook, like others in the FRAME Toolkit, is intended for a number of different audiences and different parts of this volume will be of interest and relevance to certain people. The Handbook is written for a generalist audience as one of its main purposes is to help users appreciate how an evaluation might benefit their interests or situation, but also to show that an evaluation is not just a critical investigation of a project or programme. Many far-reaching benefits can stem from an evaluation, providing that it has been well prepared, well executed and that people are prepared and willing to learn from the experience by considering and acting upon the findings and recommendations in the final evaluation report.

In order to understand and help promote the use of the evaluation process, this Handbook describes the application of an evaluation in very general terms. Some situations may, however, require more specialist attention, coverage of which may not be included in this Handbook. Nonetheless, in such cases, the information contained in this volume should still assist managers or practitioners in determining what particular form of assistance might be required from relevant technical experts.

A Project Evaluation Manager will usually be appointed to oversee the evaluation process. S/he, in turn, may be required to report to an Evaluation Management Team or Steering Committee for further oversight. These individuals and groups are intended as the main users of this Handbook, together with management (UNHCR and its Implementing Partners, especially) and key decision-makers, if these are not already represented in the groups mentioned above.

Local stakeholders – refugees, returnees and members of local communities living in refugee-hosting areas – however, are also considered in this Handbook (as throughout the entire Toolkit) and their roles are no less important than those of management. In reality, however, experience shows that when dealing with evaluations of environment-related impacts in refugee-related situations, the call for an evaluation is almost invariably initiated by UNHCR, government or one of UNHCR's Implementing Partners. What is important for local stakeholders – who are the ones working on and hopefully benefiting from a range of environmental support interventions – is that they understand the basics behind the evaluation process and are empowered to participate in the evaluation, or even carry out periodic self-evaluations of their own work, and are able to help translate the outcomes from an evaluation into practices that will further enhance the outcome of the projects or programme with which they are engaging.

2.3 STRUCTURE OF THE HANDBOOK

Following the Introduction and this section, the handbook is essentially structured around three sections which:

- provide a broad overview of some of the most commonly used methods for conducting an evaluation (Section 3);
- outline seven key steps to follow when considering undertaking an evaluation (Section 4); and
- practical considerations to help users actually get started and to complete an evaluation (Section 5).

A selection of suggested reading materials on evaluation methodologies and other guidance follows Section 5.

3. EVALUATION METHODOLOGIES

A broad range of tried and tested methodologies and approaches are available for an evaluator: knowing which to use in a particular situation is key to the effectiveness of the evaluation itself. While experience undoubtedly plays a large part in an evaluator knowing which tool and approach – or which combination of these – might best suit a particular situation, information provided in the following chapters should help most users to at least know what they might expect from an evaluation but also how to prepare for and conduct an evaluation on their own account.

3.1 SOME KEY EVALUATION METHODS

3.1.1 Quantitative Methods

A quantitative approach to an evaluation means that things are either measured or counted, or more precise questions are asked according to a defined questionnaire so that answers can then be analysed numerically. If a probability sampling has been used, statistical analysis can then be applied to the data to give a precise description of the findings, e.g. in terms of averages, rations, ranges and trends.

Quantitative methods can:

- provide a broad overview of a particular situation based on data from a large number of people or cases about a limited set of questions;
- identify major differences in the characteristics of, or conditions affecting, a population; and
- determine whether there is a statistical relationship between a problem and an apparent cause.

Quantitative methods are therefore especially useful in:

- establishing a clearly measured baseline which can be used for subsequent monitoring and evaluations;
- confirming or backing up qualitative monitoring systems, or quantitative systems that are service based or otherwise limited in their level of representation;
- measuring programme impact;
- producing hard data to prove that certain problems exist; or
- to justify a particular strategy to donors, government and other decision-makers.

> **USING INDICATORS FOR EVALUATIONS**
>
> While serving an important, almost pivotal role, for monitoring purposes, environmental indicators are also a key tool for evaluations. The choice of indicators is normally made during the project/programme planning phase, but these can be subject to revision during the course of time. Knowing what indicatory have been set and selected, as well as obtaining information on their current status will be of immense importance to the Evaluation Team. For further guidance on the selection and measurement of indicators, users should refer to the **Environmental Indicator Framework** (Module 5) and **Community Environmental Action Planning** Handbook (Module 4) of this Toolkit.

Quantitative information – including financial records – is normally available through existing written reports and surveys which might be conducted expressly for the evaluation (see below).

3.1.2 Qualitative Methods

Qualitative methods help build an in-depth picture of a particular situation or issue among a relatively small sample of people. These methods also reveal in more detail how people perceive their own situation and problems, and allow them to determine their priorities.

Qualitative methods are flexible, questions being asked in an open-ended manner. When used systematically within a given context or situation, qualitative methods produce results which are as reliable and objective as those produced by quantitative methods.

Qualitative methods are useful when:

- planning a programme concerned with social change;
- selecting appropriate indicators for qualitative change, i.e. is the situation better or worse;
- a thorough understanding or a particular context or underlying cause of an issue or problem is needed;
- time or funds are limited – this is often faster and cheaper than a quantitative survey; and
- probability sampling is not possible, e.g. if access is difficult for one reason or another.

3.1.3 Participatory Evaluation

Participatory approaches to evaluations have proven to be essential in the refugee-related context, when dealing with environment-related issues as well as other social concerns, in particular. This method requires that the evaluator(s) talks directly with refugees, returnees and members of local communities (if appropriate and relevant to the evaluation), with the evaluator(s) probing and asking questions as well as controlling to some degree the dialogue and discussions, mainly to try and keep these focused to environmental issues and related concerns. It is an especially good means of gathering qualitative information. Meetings can be held on a one to one basis or in a larger forum.

Participatory evaluations require quite a different approach from the more traditional form of an evaluation, and requires especially good group and interpersonal skills, active listening and a willingness on the part of the evaluator(s) to be led by refugee perspectives in making their assessments rather than controlling the dialogue. Knowledge of participatory techniques such as participatory rural appraisal (PRA) is helpful in this approach (see also Annex I of the **Community Environmental Action Planning Handbook** in this Toolkit)

Participatory approaches to evaluations, as with similar experiences in environmental assessment and monitoring, have proven to be especially appropriate and appreciated by certain members of the refugee or returnee community, in particular, for example if women are not allowed to openly voice their opinions or concerns in public meetings. The method can ensure that the right people are involved and can identify weaknesses in the decision-making process, allowing managers to then take corrective action. Participatory evaluations can also provide useful early warning signs of progress or obstacles. It does, however, also lend itself to much broader application with others, including the elderly and youth.

The following checklist of key questions and some issues which need to be discussed is intended to help users to plan, implement and report on a participatory evaluation if this is the chosen approach for a given situation.

PLANNING	
Why?	Why are we thinking of doing an evaluation? Is it to judge the past or to improve the future, or both? Is it for our learning or for others' learning, or for both? Is the impetus for evaluation coming from the community, from a donor agency or from our own team? Why are we thinking of doing this evaluation in a participatory way? What are the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach?
Who?	Who might want to participate? Who definitely needs to participate? Are there any groups or individuals that will need special encouragement to participate? Will some people need to be approached separately if their voices and opinions are not heard? Will some people try to dominate the process?
What?	What are we trying to find out – facts, quantities, opinions, experiences, intended effects, unintended effects, the nature of the quality of changes that have taken place, the extent of the benefits, the costs for different groups of people? Are we concerned with specific outputs or with wider outcomes, with more general impact or with all of these? Are these summarised in the agree terms of reference for the evaluation?
When?	Depending on provisional answers to the above questions, when should this evaluation be done? Will it have to start soon so that findings can be discovered early and changes made to improve the project or programme at a still early stage? Or will we have to wait until the results become clearer before any useful evaluation work can be achieved? Or will the evaluation have to be done at more than one point in time? If so, when?
How?	In light of the answers to the above, how should this evaluation be carried out? What methods are possible, cost-effective and appropriate? How will the necessary facts be discovered and interpreted? How will different opinions be heard and discussed? How will different viewpoints be recognised, and either reconciled or at least recorded?
IMPLEMENTING	
What?	What exactly needs to be done? What documents have to be obtained, or meetings arranged, or practical resources such as transport or funds secured? What explanations need to be prepared and circulated?
Who?	Who needs to agree or approve certain things? Who might help and who might oppose the process? Whose participation is already agreed and whose still needs to be negotiated? Who will take responsibility for which necessary actions?
When?	Has the sequence of preparations, activities and reporting been worked out in detail? Is the timetable adequate and realistic in terms of recognising that participatory approaches tend to take more time than non-participatory ones?
How?	Is there agreement on the evaluation methods that will be used? Are these realistic in terms of the resources, opportunities and constraints within the situation? How will the findings be recognised and, hopefully, resolved?

REPORTING	
Who?	Who needs to receive a report? Have we remembered all the interested parties, including people or organisations who are not directly involved, as well as those who have actively participated in the programme and its evaluation? Who is going to produce the different types of reports which may be required? Who may need to agree to the content of each report?
What?	What will be included in a particular report? What should be left out? What will be the format of the report – a spoken summary, a brief paper, a letter or a detailed document together with statistical tables and graphs, if required?
When?	Does any interim reporting have to be made before the evaluation work is complete, such as preparing a draft of the conclusions and recommendations? Do these have to be ready in time for a particular meeting or event, locally or elsewhere?
How?	What methods will be used to draft the final report or reports? Will the task be divided between different people or will it be designated to one individual? How will different contributions be edited and compiled to avoid overlap or gaps? How will any differences of opinion be dealt with?
Why?	As a final check, does the planned reporting meet all of the original purposes of undertaking the evaluation? What are the values that have guided the choices made and the decisions reached in coming to certain conclusions and making certain recommendations? Does the report adequately address all of the agreed terms of reference for this assignment?

Source: Modified from Taylor, 2001

3.1.4 Surveys

If available data is inadequate in its coverage, or perhaps as a means of data verification of at least some issues, the evaluator(s) might opt to undertake specific surveys with representative agencies or stakeholders. This is usually based around a standard and, ideally, relatively simple, questionnaire which is completed either individually with selected stakeholders, or during a focus group discussion (see below) or workshop. Attention needs to be given to ensuring that a representative sample of individuals and age and gender groups are allowed to participate openly and freely in such surveys.

One advantage of this method is that a large amount of data can be gathered. This, however, is a time consuming process – especially if the questionnaire is detailed – not only at the time of the survey but also during later analysis.

3.1.5 Focus Group Discussions

Focus groups are group discussions in which about ideally eight to ten people are gathered together to discuss a topic of interest. The discussion is guided by the evaluator who asks questions and tries to help the group have a natural and free conversation with each other. Focus groups are aimed at encouraging participants to talk with each other, rather than answer questions directly to the evaluator. Specific groups can be established, for example a farmers' group, a pastoralist group, a women's co-operative and so on, the important point being to ensure that somehow focus group discussions are made available to all members of society, regardless of their status, age or gender.

Ideally, some degree of agreement and consensus of at least some of the major environment-related concerns and status of activities being implemented will emerge from these discussions, but these need not necessarily be the same for different groups, i.e. a refugee community may well identify different problems and concerns to the local village community. Broad consultation is therefore required which is why this can be a time consuming process. (More practical information and guidance on focus group discussions can be found in Annex II of the **Community Environmental Action Planning** Handbook.)

3.1.6 Triangulation

Triangulation – the systematic use and comparison of independent data collection methods – is an important method, especially if the evaluator or Evaluation Team is relying extensively on surveys, interviews of group discussions as a means of data gathering.

Triangulation is a means of ensuring that data gathered from a range of sources – possibly even discussions held separately with a group of men and women – are cross-checked and verified, making the data – and thus the findings of the evaluation – more robust.

Four basic types of triangulation exist:
- data triangulation uses a variety of data sources in a study, for example, interviewing different status levels in society, or those from all political parties or ethnic groups represented;
- investigator triangulation, which uses different evaluators or social scientists;
- method triangulation, in which multiple methods such as interviews, observations, questionnaires or written secondary sources are used to study a single problem or programme; and
- theory triangulation which uses multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data.

3.1.7 Mixed Methods

A combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods is often the most effective approach as each can complement the other and thus serve as an additional cross-checking service. Some basic consideration, however, should be borne in mind when selecting the approach, such as:

- the **purpose of the evaluation**: the situation/issue needs to be well understood, and the expectation for the evaluation clearly determined;
- **information required**: the problem/issue to be evaluated needs to be clearly defined. Once the type of information needed has been determined, specific questions will then need to be drawn up;
- **confidence in resulting data**: how accurate and reliable must the information be?
- **timeframe**: when do decisions need to be taken?
- **availability of resources**: human and financial; and
- **presentation of findings**: what type(s) and form(s) of data will the main stakeholders find the most appropriate and convincing?

As with other tools in this Toolkit, use of participatory approaches to evaluation is strongly advised in environment-related projects and programmes. This, however, may require more time – not necessarily resources of funds – than the more conventional approach to an evaluation, which often engages a core team of 2-3 people to conduct the analysis.

4. EVALUATION IN PRACTISE

4.1 BACKGROUND

The nature of an evaluation is often shrouded in mystique or gives an impression of power control by those responsible for calling for the evaluation in the first place. Unlike a formal environmental assessment, there is no golden rule to conducting an evaluation, but experience from a number of years and countless evaluations of humanitarian and development interventions have resulted in some useful guidance as to how an evaluation of an environmental situation or issue might be approached.

4.2 SOME KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Good preparation is essential for all evaluations. This can be guided by focusing on the following considerations, each of which is described in more detail below:

1. Why is the evaluation being undertaken at this point in time and who is requesting it to be done?
2. When should the evaluation be carried out – what season, for example, or at what stage of a project/programme cycle?
3. What is the precise scope (geographical and thematic) and focus of the evaluation?
4. Who is responsible for the evaluation – management and implementation?
5. How will the evaluation be conducted – what methods are to be applied, what information sources are likely to need consulting?
6. What resources are needed – financial, human and logistics primarily?
7. Next steps: what will become of the findings from the evaluation, how will these be shared to broader audiences and who will be responsible for ensuring that recommendations from the evaluation will be duly considered and translated into action?

4.2.1 STEP 1. WHY?

There are a number of positive reasons for conducting an evaluation, but primarily this hinges on the desire or need to improve performance and ensure that actions being taken or supported are having the desired effect. By asking the right questions, the evaluation also serves as a means of determining whether those ongoing activities are still on track, and correspond to perceived or determined needs.

Experience and lessons learned from the evaluation will allow the evaluator(s) to form well-founded recommendations for future action – action which might merely re-inforce the way an activity or programme is currently being implemented or highlight the need for an alternative action so that the desired impact might be attained. An evaluation is therefore not a decision-taking process, but an indispensable aid to improved decision-making. All of these actions help improve transparency among the various stakeholders, but also increases accountability with donors or between an Implementing Partner and UNHCR, for example.

It is important that the reason for undertaking an evaluation is made clear from the outset. The agency requesting and co-ordinating the evaluation should have a well-founded reason for undertaking the evaluation – a periodic check on progress against objectives, for example, or a desire to learn specific lessons if a particular project is to be piloted in other situations – which should be made evident to all those involved. Likewise, even from the outset, the co-ordinating agency should have some notion of how it intends to use the recommendations of the evaluation.

STANDARD EVALUATION CRITERIA

Effectiveness
- To what extent were the objectives achieved?
- What were the main issues influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?
- Did the intervention reach its target population?
- Was the project or programme implemented as envisioned?

Impact
- What has happened as result of the project or programme?
- What real difference has the activity made to the intended beneficiaries?
- What impact has the intervention had on the context and underlying causes of the situation?
- What would have happened if the project or programme had not been implemented?

Relevance/Appropriateness
- To what extent were the objectives of the project/programme relevant to the situation and peoples' needs?
- Were the activities appropriate?
- Should the project/programme be continued?

Efficiency
- Were the activities cost-effective?
- Were the objectives achieved at least cost?
- Was the project or programme implemented in the most efficient way? Were objectives achieved in a timely manner? What proportion of inputs was locally sourced?

Ownership of the results of an evaluation is as important as determining, for example, ownership of certain natural resources such as wild grasses for thatching or wild fruit or trees used for medicinal purposes. If stakeholders are given a chance to be part of the evaluation process and to witness how the work they might be responsible for is doing in terms of meeting prescribed targets, the more encouraged they will be to ensure that recommendations from the evaluation are taken seriously.

4.2.2 STEP 2. WHEN?

Ideally, evaluations should be routine and regular undertakings throughout the life cycle of all projects and programmes. This provides an opportunity for using different forms of evaluations, for example, periodic external evaluations using expertise from outside the daily and routine conduct of a project/programme, supplemented with more regular self- or internal evaluations by designated members of the project team, perhaps someone from the Implementing Partner, UNHCR's Environmental Co-ordinator of Environmental Focal Point and a representative from the refugee and/or local community. Multi-year programmes will invariable require an evaluation upon completion, this often being a standard requirement of donors. While an end-of-programme evaluation on its own will provide little benefit for the project itself it should provide a number of useful lessons learned. Ideally, however, an end-of- programme evaluation would be able to call upon the results of previous mid-term or *ad hoc* evaluations carried out during the actual time span of the project or programme.

Evaluating environment-related projects or programmes is not always as routine as some of the more classical forms of evaluation. An evaluation should not, for example, be planned during times of peak activity such as planting or harvesting when many stakeholders will have other priorities and may be unable or unwilling to answer questions. In some countries, accessing many camps and settlements may also prove difficult during the wet season. Consideration should also be given when planning meetings of stakeholders – not only in terms of their availability and readiness to participate in discussions, but also in terms of representation, ensuring that a balance is stuck between genders, age, religious beliefs and welfare/status.

Improved project/programme planning will ensure that evaluations feature in the project/programme cycle: inclusion of an evaluation in project documents such as UNHCR's Sub-agreements will help ensure that resources are assigned for this activity, that those responsible for the project/programme are expecting an evaluation to take place, and that time has been allocated to enable consideration to be given to the recommendations of the intended evaluation in future plans.

4.2.3 STEP 3. SCOPE AND FOCUS

The scope of the evaluation needs to be accurately and clearly captured in the evaluation TORs. Essentially, an evaluation should restrict its investigation to the following topics:

- what, if any, change has taken place in a prescribed period of time, and how do these changes relate to the intentions or expectations outlined in the project/programme document?
- what were, or are, the reasons for the apparent success or failure?
- what, if any, obstacles have prevented the project/programme from achieving its stated goal(s)?
- on the basis of the evaluation's observations, what actions are needed to either redirect certain activities which are not and are unlikely to reach their expectations, or may be required to continue supporting those which have reached their targets?
- what, if any, lessons can be learned from this experience?

Alternatively, an evaluation may also need to focus primarily on a single issue – such as management – which will require a different approach to that adopted for a project or programme.

The evaluation TORs should also identify the concerned audience or stakeholders but some flexibility should be allowed to enable the evaluator(s) to extend the breadth of the investigation should this prove necessary, e.g. in order to be able to obtain more information on a given subject.

Defining the precise physical area of the evaluation is also important, not only as it lends added focus to the evaluation *per se*, but because it in itself will serve as an important point of reference for any future monitoring and evaluation. On some occasions an evaluation might be required to cover an entire camp or settlement area – perhaps as well as adjoining or nearby communities, or distant sites where trees might be being harvested, for example – but distinct components of a camp or settlement might also be selected for the evaluation if the overall scale is judged too large. Plotting the area(s) being evaluated using a geographical positioning system (GPS) tool is a simple and effective means of recording these date, which also makes it more readily applicable for further, later studies. (For more information on the use of a GPS, please refer to Module V of this Toolkit.)

4.2.4 STEP 4. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

Management of the evaluation process usually lies with the agency – or in the case of a community, selected representatives – who has commissioned the investigation or who was responsible for the design of the project or programme, at which stage the inclusion of an evaluation would most likely have happened. On occasion, however, a management committee may be established with representatives from the main agencies and communities actively being involved.

Implementation, likewise, can either be carried out by internally, externally or through a combination of both. A balance, however, should be attained with respect to the scale of the evaluation: too large a group will make it more cumbersome in terms of arrangements and may give a poor impression to stakeholders. An external evaluator could, for example, perform the task adequately if given the required information and allowed to meet with a broad range of stakeholders. This also in many cases instils a feeling of greater accountability. On the other hand, involving some of the people who are actively engaged in project or programme activities can also be beneficial: the programme manager, and representatives from the refugee and local community, as well as UNHCR's counterpart agency, could also work with a consultant as part of the team, as long as respective roles and responsibilities have been clearly defined and agreed upon at the outset.

BASIC SKILLS REQUIRED FOR AN EVALUATION

As a minimum, the evaluation team should have the following skills represented:

- evaluation experience, including proven knowledge of a range of evaluation tools, including participatory approaches;
- respected leadership and good management;
- good facilitation skills;
- ability to analyse information from many different sources;
- knowledge of the project or programme, including the management and financial requirements and arrangements of the activity;
- knowledge of the subject being evaluated; and
- good communication skills, including report writing.

4.2.5 STEP 5. HOW WILL IT BE CONDUCTED?

The choice of methods, as well as the approach taken will depend largely on the nature and scale of the evaluation. An evaluation of the management of a project, for example, will use quite different approaches and methods to one focussing on the community's appreciation for fuel-efficient stoves. As mentioned earlier (see Section 3.1.7), a combination of methods – quantitative, qualitative and participatory – is generally advisable although this will require more time in preparation and execution than a simple straightforward evaluation conducted using a questionnaire, for example.

Accessing reliable and relevant information is crucial to any evaluation. Project or programme documents (past and current) should be provided as well as occasional reports and any previous evaluations which might have taken place. Earlier environmental assessments should provide essential baseline information, while periodic monitoring reports and current workplans should provide insight as to whether there have been any changes in direction for the project/programme over the years. A suggested list of possible contacts for the evaluator(s) is always useful and can save time, although the evaluator(s) should not feel obliged to only consult people who have been nominated.

Few evaluations will follow the same pattern and each will require consideration of its duration. Time required, again, will depend on the type of evaluation being conducted. Ongoing internal or self-evaluations, for example, should not require more than one or two days every other month, provided that the overall project/programme manager has a good grasp of the situation and receives regular and reliable updates and feedback from his/her field staff.

More formal evaluations, however, will require more time, both for administrative arrangements (contracting evaluators, inter-agency discussions), preparations (briefings, logistics, security clearances), undertaking the evaluation and the analysis of findings. A two-month timeframe is probably around the average time required to evaluate an environmental intervention (e.g. fuel consumption and needs or environmental education) at a single camp or settlement, so consideration of timing is important in terms of having results from the evaluation in time for the anticipated next year's programme.

4.2.6 STEP 6. RESOURCES NEEDED

The resources needed for an evaluation – like its design – will vary according to the situation and scope of the exercise. Major costs are usually those of the evaluator(s), transportation, daily working expenses and logistics, conference or meeting facilities and costs associated with the production and dissemination of the evaluation report. Ideally such costs should be factored into the project or programme budget.

As with other meetings where individual participants or groups of people such as the Environmental Management Group from a camp or settlement may be required to spend time with the evaluation team, a decision should be made at the outset regarding remuneration. This should be clearly articulated either prior to or at the start of meetings by the evaluation leader (see the **Community Environmental Action Planning Handbook** for additional guidance).

4.2.7 STEP 7. NEXT STEPS

To get the maximum benefit from any evaluation, consideration of how to use whatever the outcome of the exercise should begin at the earliest possible moment of the project or programme planning cycle. This is especially important when dealing with community-based activities, such as much of the environment-based work with refugees, returnees and local communities, as it will ultimately determine how the evaluation should be conducted, who might participate in the exercise, how the findings will be shared with participants and how the next steps of project or programme formulation might be carried out.

5. SOME PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 GETTING STARTED

The evaluation process generally involves the following steps:
- clarification of the purpose of the evaluation;
- preparation for the evaluation through the development of TORs which will define the purpose of the evaluation and guide the entire exercise;
- selection of the evaluator or evaluation team who will be responsible for carrying out the study;
- preparation of the work plan and methodologies to be used;
- identification of information sources and collection methods;
- data collection; and
- analysis of the information and preparation of the final report.

5.1.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

An evaluation should never be carried out just for the sake of being seen to do an evaluation. Some evaluations are automatically required by donors, but most will probably come about on account of an evaluation having been identified during the project/programme planning phase. Certain events, however, might also trigger the need for a spontaneous evaluation, including:
- the need to learn more about the success of a particular project or programme or a specific component of one of these, perhaps with a view to replicating it elsewhere;
- the need to understand the reasons for problems or failures;
- changed circumstances, for example, following a change of management, hand-over of activities to new partners, or altered operational priorities;
- project or programme renewal; and
- external pressure, e.g. following an audit report.

Not all projects or programmes, however, may require a formal evaluation and judgement must be exercised by either UNHCR, the government, Implementing Partners or participating communities. Relatively small projects may not require or merit a formal evaluation. If regular monitoring shows that a particular project or programme is doing well and sufficient quality documentation on project/programme outcomes is being generated on a regular basis, an evaluation may not be needed.

Once a decision has been taken to evaluate a project, programme or policy, if it has not already been done during the initial planning phase, agreement should be reached about the precise purpose and expected outcome of the evaluation. Transparency is essential at this stage if for nothing else but to put people at ease concerning the expectations and possible implications of the evaluation. If the evaluation is intended to be participatory, input from all implicated stakeholders should be obtained at this stage. This is likely to result in considerable debate so negotiation skills and leadership may well be needed to arrive at some commonly agreed consensus over the nature and purpose of the evaluation. This, however, should help clarify peoples' expectations from the evaluation and should also help define the scope and focus of the exercise as well as the broad manner in which it would be carried out.

5.1.2 Preparation

Preparing for an evaluation requires an investment of time and thought.

Once a decision has been taken to undertake an evaluation it is important that all stakeholders involved – from the refugee or local community members to implementing partners and local government at least – be informed of the proposed evaluation. Input should ideally be sought to draft TORs at this stage: some individuals from the identified stakeholders may become involved or at least consulted during the evaluation.

The TORs sets out the plan for the evaluation in detail. This is a key step in the whole evaluation process and it is important that sufficient time is given to getting this right. Time invested now to develop a clear focus for the evaluation will help create a relevant and useable product at the end.

KEY ELEMENTS OF AN EVALUATION TERMS OF REFERENCE

Project/Programme background
Reasons for the evaluation
Scope and focus
Evaluation team
Timetable
Deliverables
Confidentiality and use of information

An overall Evaluation Project Manager – with or without the support of a specially formulated Management Committee – should be appointed to oversee the whole preparation and implementation process. To help prepare the initial TORs, the Project Manager, at least, must have a clear and agreed understanding of the following:

- why the evaluation is being conducted;
- key issues to address during the evaluation and the intended scale of the enquiry;
- broad approach to be followed, e.g. participatory or using a single evaluator;
- resources available from the different parties;
- resources (funding, logistical demands) likely to be required;
- required expertise to undertake the evaluation;
- duration of the evaluation; and
- how the findings will be disseminated and used.

Other activities for which the Project Manager will be primarily responsible for are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Likely Broad Actions Needed and Responsibilities

ACTION	WHAT IT COVERS	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?	OUTPUTS
Drafting and planning original evaluation concept	The need for an evaluation; provisional budget and workplan; expectations	Project Manager who will likely assume the role of Evaluation Project Manager; field operations	Concept paper
Identify and contact possible Management Committee members	Establishes a small, formal oversight committee which can give added value and credibility to an evaluation	Evaluation Project Manager	
Draft TORs	Specific purpose, objectives, proposed methodologies, expected outputs, timeframe and cost of evaluation	Evaluation Project Manager	
Review TORs	Sharing draft TORs with all relevant agencies and stakeholders – including evaluator(s) if possible	Evaluation Project Manager; Management Committee; field operations	Evaluation TORs

Table 1 Contd

ACTION	WHAT IT COVERS	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?	OUTPUTS
Set timeframe		Management Committee; field operations	
Identify and contract evaluator(s)	Identify and arrange for contractual matters	Evaluation Project Manager; Management Committee	Tender documents prepared; evaluator(s) contracted
Assemble documentation for evaluation team	Project/programme documents (original if still relevant and most recent); previous evaluations; monitoring reports; budgets; maps; other relevant reports	Evaluation Project Manager; Management Committee	
Preparation and research	Project/programme research; visas; logistical arrangements; initial interviews	Evaluator(s); field operations	
Field investigation	Data gathering, analysis, draft report writing, workshops, meetings	Evaluator(s); field operations	Site visits and main period of consultation completed
Oversee evaluation		Evaluation Project Manager	
Review evaluation findings and recommendations	Circulate to all stakeholders participating in the evaluation with deadline for receipt of comments; compile comments for evaluator(s) review	Evaluation Project Manager; Management Committee	Draft evaluation report
Revision of draft report an recommendations		Evaluator(s); Evaluation Project Manager	
Final verification of TORs and report		Evaluation Project Manager; Management Committee	
Dissemination	Public release of the evaluation report	Evaluation Programme Manager	Evaluation report
Lessons learned; possible workshop(s)	Synthesis of best practices as revealed through the evaluation	Evaluation Project Manager	Experience shared; workshop; recommendations implemented

5.1.3 Scope

Determining the scope of the evaluation not only refers to the physical or geographical coverage of the enquiry, but also to the agencies and individuals who would/should be consulted and the precise nature of activities to be investigated. While it may be useful and desirable to broaden the scale of the evaluation as much as possible, it is always advisable to focus the evaluation on a few key topics if possible and then identify the main actors responsible for these.

Comments received on the draft TORs will possible help guide the Evaluation Management Committee on the scale and scope of the evaluation.

5.1.4 Schedule

While the TOR will normally contain a suggested workplan, the evaluator(s) together with the Evaluation Project Manager should as part of their early discussions devise a more detailed work plan, highlighting in detail what precisely the evaluation team proposes to do, as well as where, how and why. A thorough security briefing should be provided by the Project Evaluation Manager (or Security Officer) to the entire evaluation team, and necessary logistical support, for example, radios, provided for the duration of the exercise. Other issues to consider might include:

- discussion on broad approach of the team members (if applicable);
- overview of the situation, project, programme or policy to be evaluated;
- agreement of specific individual and collective responsibilities;
- discussion of appropriate methodologies and agreement of those to be used;
- identification of information needed and possible sources;
- possible contacts;
- logistical arrangements, including office working facilities;
- report drafting process; and
- reporting to the Project Evaluation Manager.

If the evaluation is being conducted by a group or people, some of whom might at least be responsible for a specific sector or activity, then the Team Leader must ensure from the outset that each member of his/her team is fully aware of what is expected from them in terms of outputs, including written outputs to be included in the final report. In such circumstances it is the responsibility to ensure that any written contributions from other members are up to standard, that these are correctly edited as part of a single report, and that the draft report does not comprise merely a collection of different reports by different people.

5.1.5 Evaluative Method(s)

Evaluations are commonly carried out under difficult conditions: people in the field may be too busy to spend time discussing issues, some people are naturally wary of an evaluation and may not be co-operative, and working conditions in the field are often quite strenuous. Some evaluations are also placed under very strict time constraints as a manager may need to have the evaluation team's recommendations in order to be able to submit new project proposals or budgets. All of this makes the selection of appropriate evaluation methods all the more important.

Some of the most common generic approaches to conducting an evaluation have been described in Section 3. Table 2 outlines a broader range of possible methods as well as some of their key characteristics, potential sources of information for these methods and some of the main advantages and disadvantages of using these. Many experienced evaluators will have their own preferences: this table, however, should help some of the less experienced field users to at least identify some possible ways of carrying out an evaluation in a manner which suits their own needs.

5.1.6 Team Composition

Although many evaluations can be carried out by one person it is often useful and sometimes more credible if a team of people perform this exercise. Added accountability may also result from engaging an external consultant to, at least, lead the evaluation process if not conduct it.

As with all such experiences, however, getting the balance of skills, experience and the approach correct is often the challenge. Local knowledge can also play an important role in the workings and outcome of an evaluation: its importance should not be underestimated.

The Evaluator or Evaluation Team should be solely responsible for all data collection, data analysis and the formulation of preliminary conclusions. The same people should also be solely responsible for drafting the evaluation report, although some discussions may take place on this between the evaluator(s) and the Project Manager, for example.

Table 2. Some Evaluation Methods

Method	Characteristics	Possible Sources of Information	Some Advantages and Disadvantages
Literature search and file/document review	Literature searches – reports, and published books and papers. File reviews of project and programme proposals; reports. Related evaluation reports from other similar situations.	Feasibility studies Planning documents Progress reports Correspondence Published papers Books	✓ Good for developing historical perspective and familiarisation with project or programme ✓ Useful source of stakeholder information
Key informant interviews	Individual face to face interviews Focus group consultations on predetermined issues or topics Interview protocol established for formal interviews Interview guide available for more open-ended interviews	Sectoral experts Project or programme staff Implementing partners Local government authorities Refugees or returnees Local community representatives HQ and Branch, Field Office staff	✓ Useful for dealing with small groups, or specific groups like women on their own ✓ A flexible yet in-depth approach ✓ Easy to implement ✓ Can yield considerable information in a short time period ✗ Risk of one-sided presentation and interpretation from informants

Table 2. Contd

Method	Characteristics	Possible Sources of Information	Some Advantages and Disadvantages
Focus group interviews or group interviews	Focus group consultations on predetermined issues or topics Used for analysis of specific problems and to identify attitudes and priorities in smaller groups	Key stakeholders Implementing Partners	✓ Responsible and efficient method ✓ Generation of new ideas × Can be very demanding and needs good facilitation skills × Risk of one-sidedness from participants and leaders of focus groups
Informal surveys	Quantitative surveys of small samples of the population Non-probability sampling procedures used	Stakeholders Implementing Partners Local government authorities	✓ Low cost ✓ Participants verify the information × Discussions can be manipulated by strong positioned individuals × Controversial themes can be ruled out
Site observations	Involves inspections, on-site visits and observations to understand process, infrastructure, services and their use	Project sites and activities. Field installations. Domestic situation, e.g. for fuel efficient surveys Markets	✓ Helps understand the context and physical environment ✓ Simple method, little advance preparation needed × Dependent on the observer's understandings and own perceptions
Surveys	Provides quantitative and qualitative responses from a selected list of respondents. Suitable where large numbers of people may need to be involved: may need to hire and train local enumerators	Includes the use of written oral interviews and questionnaires	✓ Useful for large audiences × Response rate can be difficult to project × Data collection and analysis is a demanding process

Table 2. Contd

Method	Characteristics	Possible Sources of Information	Some Advantages and Disadvantages
Expert opinion	Uses the perspectives and knowledge of experts as indicators of results and to assess evaluation issues Judgements form the basis of the expert opinion information collection method	Recognised experts in the field, with especial knowledge of the particular situation being evaluated	✓ Can be quite valid in assessing interventions with a high level of scientific or technical content ✗ Important to obtain a fairly wide range of feedback to avoid biases or rigid schools of thought
Case studies	Used when an intervention is comprised of a series of projects or cases A sample of case studies is selected to assess results	Project information Stakeholder interviews or consultations	✓ Can provide descriptive information on impacts ✓ Useful for programme level evaluations to draw conclusions ✗ May be biased towards successful interventions only
Participant observation	In-depth observation of one or a few selected cases Observation may or may not be participatory	Participants (refugees, returnees or local community members, as appropriate) actively engaged in specific projects or programmes Implementing Partners Local government authorities	✓ Helps to gain deeper insight into socio-cultural conditions, processes and patterns of behaviour ✓ Provides background knowledge needed to interpret other results ✓ Can help identify unforeseen effects and processes ✗ Time consuming process ✗ Can lead to misinterpretation unless several independent informants and observers are used

Source: Adapted from UN-HABITAT, 2003

5.1.7 Reporting Requirements

The evaluation team should be fully aware of the reporting requirements during and upon conclusion of the evaluation. Regular communication is advisable during the course of the evaluation, especially as this will allow the Project Manager to better monitor progress and allow the team as a whole to present and discuss progress and any obstacles to work which might have arisen.

As a norm, the evaluator(s) should give a preliminary presentation of their findings to UNHCR and partner staff in the field before departing to write up the first draft report. This is important as it allows the evaluator(s) to present initial findings, allows the team to have a response from at least some of those who participated or were consulted in the process, and it also shows that the evaluation team has taken their informant’s input seriously.

A draft report (see Table 3 for suggested outline) of the evaluation should then also be circulated to all those who participated in the evaluation. Broader circulation to other agencies or perhaps local government – if not already consulted – may also be appropriate at this stage, as this is the time when major errors or misunderstandings need to be sorted out. The Project Manager and Management Committee in particular should pay especial attention to the recommendations being put forward as a result of the evaluation as they will most likely be ultimately responsible for trying to put these into practise. The need for clear, simple, achievable and appropriate recommendations should be stressed.

Table 3. Suggested Content for an Evaluation Report

Section	Sub-section	Requirements
Title page		Shows the status of the report, e.g. draft or final, and identifies the author(s) and agencies responsible. Should also show the date of the report
Table of contents		Includes references to workplan, people met, tables, figures, annexes. Could be followed by a note to acronyms used
Executive summary		Clear stand alone concise summary of key findings and recommendations (4-6 pages)
Main report		Should not generally exceed 30 pages and should be clearly written and presented. Photographs should be avoided or limited if possible to allow ease of transmission by e-mail
	Internal context	Why this evaluation was undertaken at this time, including a summary of the purpose of the evaluation as per the TOR of the evaluation, and a note of any changes to the TOR
	External context	The external circumstances and key events against which this evaluation is taking place
	Methodology	Describes how the evaluation was conducted
	Analysis	Comparison of information from various data sources. Identifies the main issues arising from the data gathered. Notes any shortcomings in the methodology
	Findings	Describes the main conclusions based on the above analysis. Particular focus should be given to the project or programme's impact and the effectiveness (or lack) of the approach
	Recommendations	Clear statements of actions recommended, with possible actors or other means of implementation possibly identified
Annexes		To include: TOR; Evaluation Team members; Evaluation schedule; List of people met (optional and with consideration to confidentiality which might have been requested from certain individuals/agencies); List of materials and other data sources. Should also include evaluation materials used, such as questionnaires

Adequate time needs to be allowed for the evaluation team to review comments received on the draft and to perhaps allow them to re-engage in dialogue with some individuals or agencies.

Upon revision of the first draft, the Project Manager and/or Management Committee should once again review the document along with earlier feedback to satisfy themselves that the current text is to their satisfaction. The evaluation's TORs should also be revisited at this stage to ensure that the evaluator(s) have fully complied with what was asked of them. If both of these matters have been addressed to satisfaction, then the report should be copied and distributed to all who contributed to or participated in the evaluation, as well as other agencies who might be interested in the outcome. Alternatively, a copy of the Executive Summary and list of recommendations might be circulated broadly, allowing interested parties to then contact the Project Manager should they wish to receive a full copy of the evaluation.

A copy of the final report should also be sent to donor organisations supporting environment-related activities in refugee-related operations. The final report should also be posted on the internet, possibly coinciding with a short press article which could help raise awareness of the undertaking. As UNHCR's policy is to be fully transparent concerning the results of any evaluation, external access to the report should be made as easy as possible.

5.1.8 Follow-up

While some indications of expected follow-up to the evaluation will already have been discussed when planning the evaluation and to some extent during the evaluation itself, only when the final report is completed will the Project Manager and Management Committee be in a position to clearly determine how to deal with the findings of the investigation. In doing so, an approach similar to that shown in Table 4 might provide a useful internal tracking means.

Table 4. Simplified Management Response Matrix for Tracking Implementation of an Evaluation's Recommendations

Recommendation	Task Unit	Management Response	Action Planned	Timeframe
1.				
2.				
3.				
Etc				

If the evaluation has unveiled a number of serious issues, which for example might risk the closure of a project or programme, then a meeting should be organised without delay of all stakeholders involved in the activity. Findings of the evaluation should be presented and discussed and a decision formulated on how to respond to the recommendations.

In addition to an evaluation serving as an indispensable check on progress at the field level, the results of an evaluation also offer a useful learning opportunity for the organisations also involved, including UNHCR if it is the organisation co-ordinating the exercise. Ideally the Evaluation Project Manager should organise one or more learning meetings or workshops to present the main findings, conclusions and actions following the evaluation, to groups of internal and external stakeholders. Separate meetings may be necessary with the main decision-makers to try and ensure that the recommendations are taken on board and implemented. Depending on resources available and the scale of needs identified through the evaluation, implementation may require some prioritisation to ensure that the most urgent issues are addressed first.

Once the evaluation report has been completed and agreed a useful next step – best taken at this stage while the situation and information is still fresh in the mind – would be to identify a number of best practices or lessons learned as a result of the evaluation. These should be structured as best fits the situation, for example being centred on a number of technical issues or specific themes or management strategies. While this may not be required of the evaluator or Evaluation Team *per se*, it is usually helpful if at least one person from the team participates in this exercise: otherwise, the task will most likely fall to the Project Manager.

A useful way to also conclude a lessons learning exercise is to use the occasion of meeting the various stakeholders at the end of the evaluation to brief them on the outcome of the evaluation and to discuss next steps such as implementation of the recommendations. Including the stakeholders again at this stage of the exercise should also help cement their involvement in future work on the project or programme. While the level of ownership of the evaluation's results will thus be at least shared with some of the stakeholders, the lessons learned from the exercise should also serve an important institutional learning function, further directing managers and decision-makers in the decisions taken regarding project, programme and policy planning and management. Particular attention, for example, might be shown to topics such as the following:

- preparations made for and required by the evaluation;
- logistics, from consultant recruitment perhaps to field support and needs;
- methods and approaches used; and
- value of the evaluation – did the experience meet expectations and was it worth the effort?

Discussion and answers to questions on these and other issues should help provide useful feedback to UNHCR and other agencies and thus serve as a useful learning experience which will enrich future similar investigations.

6. SELECTED REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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Selected Web Sites

African Evaluation Association (www.afrea.org/index.htm)
ALNAP (www.alnap.org)
American Evaluation Association (www.eval.org/)
Australasian Evaluation Society (www.aes.asn.au/)
OECD-DAC (www.oecd.org)

FRAME Toolkit

This toolkit comprises the following modules:

1. **Introduction to the FRAME Toolkit**
2. **Environmental Assessment**
3. **Rapid Environmental Assessment**
4. **Community Environmental Action Planning**
5. **Environmental Indicator Framework**
6. **Geographical Information System**
7. **Evaluation**

For more information on this Toolkit, please contact:
UNHCR OSTS, Geneva, Switzerland

or

CARE International, Geneva, Switzerland