JOINT EVALUATIONS

Guidelines from the ECB Project

Learning from NGO Experiences

Version 7: August 2012

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Over the years, this tool has been reviewed, revised, and overhauled. The most recent and seventh edition in August of 2012 was edited and reviewed by Angela Previdelli, Anne Castleton, Shagufta Jeelani, and Brian Atkinson from Mercy Corps, and Katy Love from the ECB Project. The April 2011 version was drafted by Katy Love from the ECB Project, Jock Baker from CARE, and Shagufta Jeelani from Mercy Corps based on feedback and reports from those who participated in ECB-supported joint evaluations in 2010 in Indonesia, Haiti, the Horn of Africa, and Niger. These people served as evaluation managers and coordinators, team leaders, team members, Steering Committee members, ECB field facilitators, and ECB accountability Advisers in joint evaluations, including: Paul O'Hagan, Greg Brady, Yves-Laurent Regis, Angela Rouse, and Jock Baker (Haiti); Yenni Suryani, Pauline Wilson, Loretta Ishida, and LeAnn Hager (Indonesia); Kevin Savage, Chele DeGruccio, Jim Ashman, and Wynn Flaten (Horn of Africa); and Kadida Mambo (Niger).

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ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

This documentwas written to share knowledge gained from the experiences of people that have been involved in joint evaluations conducted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It mainly profiles the work of NGOs involved in the Emergency Capacity Building Project (ECB), which has a goal to improve the speed, quality and effectiveness with which the humanitarian community saves lives, improves the welfare, and protects the rights of women, men and children affected by emergencies.

This book also draws on the lessons of multi-agency evaluations that already exist within the humanitarian sector. Major contributions have come, in particular, from the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP).

This book is intended for two main audiences. The first audience consists of evaluation managers and team leaders working on joint evaluations. The second audience consists of team members, steering committee members, and any other users interested in learning about joint evaluations. While both audiences will benefit from using this book, the first audience will likely be the primary users as they work more closely with conducting joint evaluations. We'd love to hear about your experiences and any feedback you have about these Guidelines. Please send comments or questions to info@ecbproject.org.

We hope that learning from previous experiences captured here will be useful for all those considering leading their agencies through a joint evaluation. Additionally, we hope that it will contribute to a growing body of knowledge on these processes and show that while there are many unanswered questions about joint evaluations, there is a lot we already know.

For further information please visit www.ecbproject or contact info@ecbproject.org.

The Guidelines

CHAPTER 1

WHY DO A JOINT EVALUATION?

Why should an agency consider taking part in a joint[1] evaluation of an emergency response program? After all, joint evaluations require collaboration, collaboration means more work and time, and time is a scarce commodity in emergency programs.

In recent years, several NGOs have sought to answer this question while taking part in the joint evaluations profiled in this book. While the results have been mixed and the learning curves have been steep, joint evaluations confer many benefits. The evaluations themselves have yielded instructive and useful findings, however agencies have also benefited significantly from the quality of the interactions that took place among peer agencies. Joint evaluations often serve as forums for ongoing learning, dialogue, and even begin collaboration.

Agencies also inevitably learn that there are some pitfalls in the process of conducting joint evaluations. Though a joint evaluation is not so different from a single-agency evaluation, there are some major differences. Some of the differences are highlighted below and addressed throughout this guide.

Above all, like a single-agency evaluation, a joint evaluation provides an opportunity to learn from past action so as to improve future decision making.

It should be noted that this guide sets out the ideal process and structure for a joint evaluation. In an emergency setting, of course, constraints emerge that make the ideal process a challenge to achieve. Evaluators, therefore, must be flexible and willing to adapt to the realities on the ground in order to achieve some—if not all—of the objectives they set out to achieve. [2]

The Benefits of a Joint Evaluation

1. Seeing the Big Picture

One evaluator said, "You [may] think you've covered the world but you've only covered one village in ten." Emergency responses typically involve several humanitarian actors. When the responses of more than one actor are put side-by-side and examined, the overall picture becomes clearer, revealing how factors such as geographic coverage, sector-specific interventions, and community involvement all fit together. Joint evaluations go further towards measuring impact by looking at the collective efforts of several actors to meet beneficiary needs and to identify what gaps exist.

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1. The model and definition of joint evaluations used in this booklet is any evaluation that looks at the work of more than one agency. This usually means that in addition to more actors being involved, there is a greater breadth of programming being examined.
2. Readers looking for further guidance should review "Shoestring Evaluation: Designing Impact Evaluations Under Budget, Time, and Data Constraints" by Bamberger, Rugh, Church, and Fort

2. Learning from and Relationship Building with Peers

Partners in a joint evaluation have a rare opportunity to learn about each other's programming and operations. They may share technical knowledge indirectly through the evaluation process, and also through the on-going relationships that are often established. The relationship building that occurs through a joint evaluation allows agency staff to identify other agencies' strengths and capacities. Relationships, founded on trust, built through a joint evaluation will result in agency cooperation in the future.

3. Building Coordination and Collaboration to Improve Response

Evaluation reports repeatedly show that better coordination would have led to a more effective response. Given the scale of disasters and the disproportionate amount of suffering they cause, agencies working alone are generally not able to have a large impact. In fact, agencies that coordinate responses and work together during emergencies are better able to meet the needs of disaster-affected populations. By comparing agencies' responses side by side, joint evaluations are better able to indicate where NGOs could have acted in a complementary fashion. They are also able to make recommendations for how they could do so in anticipation of the next emergency.

In some cases where agencies are already working together, a joint evaluation can be a 'logical conclusion' to a joint action or response. In Indonesia and in Niger in 2010, agencies agreed to conduct a joint evaluation to assess the impact of their joint activities.

The process of collaborating on the evaluation itself can be a powerful way of building relationships among partner agency staff that endure for the long term. In the ECB experience, some of these relationships have led to on-going activities and even the formation of an NGO coordination forum (see Niger). In Haiti, a joint evaluation helped build relationships among national staff and managers, serving as a starting point for long term interagency collaboration.

4. Wielding Weightier Conclusions

Joint evaluations can be more authoritative because of the combined importance of those backing them. As such evaluations are available to a wider audience, there is likely to be greater pressure to act upon the recommendations. Additionally, they provide a larger body of evidence for purposes of joint advocacy.

5. Improving Peer Accountability and Transparency

When agencies open up to one another by sharing weaknesses and strengths, they increase transparency and make it easier for them to hold one another accountable for acting upon the recommendations.

The Downsides of a Joint Evaluation

1. **More Complexity**

   It takes time, skill, and patience to get agencies to agree to do a joint evaluation. Participating agencies must agree on a short list of objectives, diffuse any tensions that may arise, and ensure that group decision-making processes are clear and respected. All the while, participating agencies deal with hiring and supervising an evaluation team, setting up interviews, ensuring logistics are in place, etc. This becomes even harder during an emergency.

   Without a lead agency to take on the primary responsibility for these tasks, and a committed steering committee that can jointly handle strategic discussion, a joint evaluation can be frustrating and unsuccessful.

2. **Less Depth**

   Under normal circumstances, joint evaluations cannot go into as much detail on any particular agency's programs as a single-agency evaluation. Therefore they may not be able to examine all aspects of a response that an agency is interested in.

Conclusion

Joint evaluations give NGOs more perspectives to learn from and a more complete understanding of what happened and what was done in response. They help us work together now and in the future and lead to relationships that can be very productive. For these reasons they can be enriching experiences and have a profound impact on the way we work as individual agencies and as collectives. It is important to have a realistic understanding of what can and cannot be accomplished by a joint evaluation before conducting one.

CHAPTER 2

JOINT EVALUATION – WHEN, WHO AND HOW?

There are good reasons to conduct a joint evaluation. But first, make sure there will be enough time for the evaluation, willing partners, and human, financial and other resources to get it done. The following questions are meant to help determine whether a joint evaluation is feasible.

When will it take place?

There is rarely a perfect time to conduct a joint evaluation. Ideally, evaluations should come at a time when memories of the response are still fresh in the minds of key informants. There needs to be time for their feedback to change the course of program activities, even if it falls between the emergency and the recovery or rehabilitation phase. Even evaluations that are conducted a year after an event can be useful; if not for that program, for future programs. They can also help uncover long-term impact.

One important factor when creating a time line for joint evaluations is to remember that working with multiple actors can slow down the process. If an evaluation is to be conducted in real-time (during the response or recovery phase), start discussions as early as possible during the emergency response.

Who will take part in it?

Approach other agencies that may already be considering an evaluation for the same humanitarian response. The agencies should have similar types of programs, in geographic areas that are close enough together, and with the same overall goal (e.g. ensuring affected populations are able to quickly recover from the disaster). Identify the appropriate person to contact, ideally someone who provides strategic direction for the country office. Explain what will be gained from doing this evaluation jointly (see Chapter 1). Listen to their views and note them down. Do not be discouraged if they are not interested. Keep talking to other agencies.

When talking to other agencies, find out how they approach evaluations. Do they conduct them because donors require them? How do they use the findings? What resources do they designate for evaluations? Document their answers to understand how each agency will approach the evaluation and use the findings. Their answers will also help prepare participants for potential areas of conflict, such as willingness to contribute staff time. Be sure the agencies are willing to commit staff time and resources to support the evaluation.

See The Tools:
Suggested Topics for Discussion with Prospective Partners.

Because evaluations can be sensitive issues, it is important to build trust among agencies. Clear communication, transparency, and consistency build trust. It is best to agree on the focus of the evaluation together, rather than approaching others with a single vision and asking if they are interested. Designing the evaluation together will build trust.

Is there enough time for a joint evaluation?

Be sure to allocate enough time for the evaluation team to get the job done. Unless the logistics of getting to and from field sites is unusually time-consuming, a thirty or forty day contract for the lead evaluator is reasonable. Ensure at least two days before officially starting the evaluation to do prep work such as reviewing documents and agreeing on the methodology, logistics, etc., with the agencies. Not ensuring enough time for the additional work will compromise the quality of the evaluation. Ensure that time is built in to account for missed deadlines, as this will inevitably occur when many actors are involved.

How will it be paid for?

Joint evaluations usually take more time to conduct, and may require a bigger team. Costs, therefore, may be higher than for single agency evaluations. The costs can be spread out among agencies. This should be discussed as part of the earlier negotiation.

Have a rough idea of what the evaluation may cost. The main costs are for hiring consultants and support staff. Compare this with what funds may be available and what other agencies may be willing to contribute. Include staff time, lodging, and vehicles. If insufficient funds are available for the evaluation, consider a joint peer review of one another's programs and come together to discuss findings.

Donors are likely to be receptive to joint evaluations if they result in a better understanding of the context and the overall humanitarian response. Some donors commission joint evaluations themselves.

What makes joint evaluations useful to stakeholders?

Joint evaluations describe a global shared experience and therefore typically are of interest to more people across various layers of each organization. The more people at different levels of the organization interested in the evaluation, the greater the chance that the findings will be used beyond one program or project. In a large emergency, agency staff at regional and global levels will likely be interested in the findings. Talk to people at the head office level in the country where the emergency happened, at the regional level, and at headquarters level. Even if the findings cannot be used in the programs being evaluated, they may be used to inform other programs, systems and policies within the organization.

If the proposal for the evaluation came from headquarters, it may be useful to ask: do those in the field, particularly country office leadership, believe that this will be a useful exercise for them? If not, they may not want to engage, and the evaluation will prove hard to carry out. How will they use the findings? How committed will they be to the evaluation? Their interest and engagement need to be high to make this a successful experience.

There should be a reasonable level of confidence that the findings will be used before proceeding with the evaluation. If not, the evaluation team will struggle to achieve the objectives.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT TO DO BEFORE THE EVALUATION

Joint Evaluations take some forethought. When deciding to conduct a joint evaluation, there are considerations to take into account and steps to take before beginning. Here are some things to consider.

Choose a lead agency and agree on roles

In our experience, best practice is for one agency to lead the joint evaluation process. Any of the participating agencies could serve as the lead; what matters is that the agency is capable of carrying out the responsibilities.

The lead agency hires and supervises the evaluation team, coordinates travel logistics, provides team members with workspaces, organizes meetings, and gives leadership regarding the definition of the objectives. Ultimately, it is this agency that is accountable for the evaluation.

Though some sharing of responsibility is desirable, agencies should designate the majority of the day-to-day management responsibilities to the lead agency. When responsibilities are dispersed too broadly among participating agencies, evaluations do not appear to work well.

The steering group should agree on the roles of the lead agency, the roles assigned to other participating agencies, and share them with all involved persons, staff and evaluators.

Estimate costs and duration

Based on the draft itinerary, the steering committee should agree on a draft budget and cost-sharing arrangements. Typically agencies share consultant costs equally and provide funding for the staff member they appoint to join the evaluation team. Think through funding implications for all aspects of the process and how long each activity will take. For example, ensure funds for good quality editing, formatting, and presentation, as these can make a significant difference in how widely the report is read. Be realistic about the time it will take the evaluation team to get the job done. Between thirty to forty days are recommended for the team leader. The consultant will likely be the largest cost.

It is essential to budget for the consultant as his/her tasks will include:

- Review documents, prepare methodology, and correspond with the steering committee prior to the evaluation.
- Conduct field visits to at least three sites for each of the agencies.
- Interview agency staff.
- Interview other stakeholders.
- Present the findings.
- Prepare a draft of the report
- Incorporate edits and comments on the report from multiple actors.

Communicate what the evaluation is about

A joint evaluation is a newsworthy event. Not everyone, however, will understand their purpose. Make sure people inside and outside the participating agencies, including beneficiaries, are aware of the evaluation so they will be more likely to review and make use of the findings. Draft a one-page informational sheet about the evaluation for widespread sharing. Inform country office staff of the evaluation. Ideally, the country office would be engaged throughout the evaluation process.

It is particularly important to have preparatory discussions with beneficiary communities to ensure they understand the purpose of the evaluation and they agree to participate in the evaluation. Ensure that beneficiary communities understand that evaluators do not have any assistance to give.[3] In Haiti, for example, the evaluation team trained 30 national staff from the participating agencies to conduct the focus group discussions. These teams asked open-ended, non-agency focused questions.

Set up a management structure

When setting up a management structure for the evaluation it is important to recognize that it is not just an evaluation but also a collaboration. Do not yield to pressure to make 'politically-correct'[4] choices for the lead agency, steering committee members or high-level sponsors of the evaluation. Seek out individuals for the management group and evaluation team that are committed to a successful outcome, even if they are not conventional choices. Where there is a need for politically correct representation, create space for these individuals in some high profile, but less critical function.

A joint evaluation management structure could look something like this:

* **A chairperson.** This person is based at the lead agency for the evaluation and is a member and chair of the steering committee. He/she conducts most of the strategic decision making, operational and collaboration responsibilities of the evaluation. This individual usually assumes the role of evaluation manager and is the direct reporting line for the team leader. The chairperson manages the budget and tracks expenses.

* **A steering committee.** This group is responsible for initial strategic decision making regarding objectives, timing, and resource allocation, including staff and funding. The steering committee also reviews and debates the findings and acts upon their implications within their agencies and beyond. The steering committee is normally chaired by the lead agency and has representation from each of the participating agencies. Ideally, the committee has a maximum of five members, making oversight and decision making more focused and achievable in reasonable amounts of time. This supposes that participating agencies are willing to delegate staff to a committee.

  The ideal steering committee member is senior enough to speak on behalf of his or her agency and has the authority to make decisions. This individual must have good knowledge of his or her organization's emergency programs and on-going development work. In addition, he/she should be able to think strategically, and know enough about

3. See Tool 9 in the Good Enough Guide to Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies
4. A choice made to serve a single agency's agenda, which may not benefit other agencies or the evaluation as a whole.

evaluations to advise on the evaluation methods to be used and the field locations to be covered. The ideal steering committee member will also be likely to follow-up on relevant recommendations.

* **A manager or administrator.** This person is ideally based in the lead agency with a certain percentage of his or her time dedicated to the evaluation. He/she can also sit on the steering committee but without voting rights.

* **The evaluation team.** The team is typically composed of a team leader who is often an international consultant, a national consultant, and a representative from each of the partner agencies. This team is accountable to the steering committee, particularly the committee chair

There are variations on this structure of course. Most evaluations have higher-level sponsors that may also form a superstructure. Sector experts may also be needed on the evaluation team.

Steering committee members should agree on and document clear processes and standards of efficiency, transparency and accountability regarding roles and responsibilities. They should agree on how decision making will work, how to resolve disagreements within the steering committee, and how to share information. Steering committee members should be the same throughout the entirety of the evaluation. When members rotate on and off the committee, decisions and guidance may change, which will complicate matters for the evaluation team.

Steering committee members will also agree on the report format, the use of agency logos, the ownership of the evaluation products (i.e. intellectual copyright), how agencies will use the findings and if they will hold one another accountable, etc.

See The Tools for a Sample Agreements Document.

Find a competent administrator/manager

Consider hiring someone who can spend a significant amount of time (50-100%) focused on the evaluation, especially in the month or two leading up to the evaluation. This person may be an administrator, but should also be supervised by a senior person who can advise on strategic issues.

A superb administrator can make a major difference in the success of any evaluation, particularly a joint evaluation. Ideally, a national staff person is hired or seconded from one of the agencies. He/she is responsible for collecting all relevant documents that the evaluation team will need, taking minutes at meetings, and coordinating the various roles of the agencies involved (e.g. reminding them of meetings). This person also ensures that the administrative needs of the evaluation team are met.

A sample task list for this person could look like this:

- ❑ Organize the recruitment for the independent consultant.
- ❑ Arrange schedules and manage the calendar.
- ❑ Arrange logistical arrangements for traveling in the field.
- ❑ Work with the team leader to determine what briefing documentation is needed and ask agencies to submit; compile and send it to team members and/or upload to a shared web-page. Ideally, documentation should include material on the projects of each of the agencies.
- ❑ Arrange meetings in the capital both with the participating agencies and with outside actors.
- ❑ Help document who is responsible for what and share this with all parties.
- ❑ Prepare a schedule for the team.
- ❑ Make a list of resources needed, e.g. vehicles.
- ❑ Agree norms for per diem and other policies (Typically, each agency follows their own and the coordinating one hires the externals and uses their per diems).
- ❑ Discuss with the national consultant the briefing he or she will need to give the evaluation team about key actors involved in the crisis and the unfolding of the emergency.
- ❑ Meet with the evaluation team

The steering committee or chairperson can appoint the evaluation administrator or manager. Ideally, the steering group defines the authority level of the administrator, who he/she will report to, and what level of authority he/she will have to make decisions. The steering group should clearly indicate the amount of time an administrator will provide to support the evaluation team.

Choosing evaluation team members

Select the right team. In addition to the technical skills they need to conduct the evaluation, team members have to be good at balancing the needs of multiple clients with sensitivity. Although team members should clearly understand their roles before the evaluation, experience has shown that they will need to be flexible once the evaluation begins. The team shouldn't be too large to manage – three to four members are usually sufficient.

A typical team could be composed of:

- **An independent consultant/team leader.** The independent leader knows a lot about conducting evaluations and has strong management and leadership skills. He/she is able to stay calm under pressure and be adaptive in the face of the unexpected. Team leaders of joint evaluations need to be able to deal with multiple layers of management and balance various expectations. He/she must have strong diplomacy and communication skills – both written and verbal. They have previous experience as a team leader. People with these skill sets are sometimes hard to find. It is critical that there is a budget line to pay for them.

Though it's not always possible to find a team leader who has previously led joint evaluations, it is important to confirm that he/she have experience in impact analysis in emergencies, as they will need to understand how the various sets of data come together to form a bigger picture. Note that consultants often come with their own ideas and methodologies, and they will need guidance and parameters from the steering committee.

* **A national consultant.** The national consultant provides critical guidance on the political, social, and cultural context of the emergency to the team, especially to the team leader. The team leader is often an expatriate. Having a national consultant on hand for a joint evaluation can help with networking with national stakeholders. It can also ensure that knowledge about key actors and events is quickly transferred to the evaluation team. This knowledge transfer minimizes the complexity of the data and the factors to be analyzed.

* **A sector specialist.** A joint evaluation challenges the team of evaluators to address the wide range of program areas being covered while also focusing on selected key and priority aspects. This is especially true as each agency may have unique interests. If agencies need more in-depth examination of a particular type of program, they should consider bringing a sector specialist to the team. The sector specialist frees other members to focus on the overall picture.

* **Agency team members.** Each agency typically appoints one representative to the evaluation team. The representatives are not acting on behalf of their agency but rather must act as impartial evaluators. The skill sets of these people (i.e. their expertise in certain sectoral areas, language and facilitation skills, and evaluation experience) are very important to the overall success of the team. Ensuring that agency—and even country office—staff are represented on the evaluation team increases ownership over the evaluation findings.

It may be hard for agency team members to be available for the full length of the evaluation, but experience has shown that continuity is important to evaluation quality. Continuity also greatly enhances the learning experience. Agency managers should therefore make every effort to ensure full participation of agency staff on the evaluation team.

Given the importance of getting competent team members, it's important to start the recruitment process early. Good evaluators are often booked for weeks or even months in advance.

Once the steering committee finalizes the Terms of Reference for team members, they should decide on the skills they want, agencies should consider requesting help from their head or regional offices in recruiting the team, such as doing the initial advertising and screening and then sending a shortlist of candidates to the lead agency.

The objectives for the evaluation should be well defined by the time hiring beings so the steering committee is clear on what profiles they need on the team and who to hire.

See The Tools for Sample Terms of Reference for Evaluation Team Members.

Choose a few objectives to cover

The participating agencies may have different interest areas they would like to cover in a joint evaluation. But it is not practical to address too many objectives in a joint evaluation as there is already more content to cover. Ideally, there are no more than three or four objectives within the terms of reference. The scope should be as narrow as possible. For example:

- How appropriate was the intervention?
- How timely was the intervention?
- How well did it assist people in recovery?

Objectives that concern the overall impact of the response are usually best for a joint evaluation. Objectives of unique concern to one or two participating agencies, such as issues of operational efficiency, are not generally appropriate for joint evaluations. In areas where more depth is needed, hire an additional team member to focus on a specific type of program or issue.

It is wise to not consult too widely on the scope of the evaluation. There exists the risk of weakening the objectives of the evaluation and making it difficult to cover it all.

Objectives should be agreed upon before the evaluation team is hired. In fact, consider bringing in an external facilitator to negotiate the scope of the evaluation ahead of time. Once the lead evaluator joins, he/she should tell the participating agencies what is feasible and realistic. It is critical to find a balance between what agencies want and what the lead evaluator believes is possible.

See The Tools for a Terms of Reference Template.

Agree on evaluation standards and methods

Joint evaluations should include a document review, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions with staff and beneficiary groups.

The team leader should build an approach to examine each agency's work with enough rigor to inspire confidence in the findings while not detracting from a focus on the overall impact of the agencies' response. The steering committee is expected to advise this process and communicate the criteria they will use for village and beneficiary selection for the interviews.

In addition to more locations for field visits, joint evaluations may require more interviews with other actors, such as UN agencies, representatives from civil society, national and local partners, and government officials.

Certain indicators will be "non-negotiable" to be in line with accepted international standards, such as the OECD/DAC standards for evaluation.[5] Sphere standards are another key point of reference that should be assessed during an evaluation, both for sectors and common standards of participation. A single set of standards should be used for consistency in measuring performance. Be clear on the minimum organizational standards. Reference the Key Elements of Accountability on the ECB Project website.

Manage communications within the collaboration

Joint evaluations need clear agreements on communication focal points, particularly on where to store key documents. One solution is to set up a simple web page to upload documents, contact lists, schedules and other essential information. Agencies should hold face-to-face meetings to build cohesion.

It is also important to have regular opportunities along the way for the evaluation team to discuss any concerns with steering committee members. For example, early in the process, the team can give feedback as to how well the evaluation methods are working and check with the steering committee whether these methods should be modified. If the steering committee is actively engaged, the evaluation will be much more likely to succeed.

It is also important to agree in advance on principles of transparency regarding evaluation results. This includes communicating results in a transparent way to beneficiary communities (which could be in the form of a discussion or roundtable). Trying to cover up or hide evaluation results is not only against principles of accountability, but undermines organizational learning, and can often backfire.

Prepare, prepare, prepare!

Experience has shown that a good amount of work can be undertaken even before the evaluation team arrives. Once Terms of Reference for the evaluation have been established, a list of key informant interviews can be determined, meetings can be established, focal points can be finalized, and preparatory documents can be emailed to the evaluator.

5. http://www.alnap.org/resources/guides/evaluation/ehadac.aspx

CHAPTER 4

WHAT TO DO DURING THE EVALUATION

If realistic objectives are established, a strong management structure, and competent team, the evaluation should be easier to manage. The team will still need good logistical support and guidance. Here is some additional guidance on conducting the evaluation.

Brief the team upon arrival

Ensure that the team has a chance to discuss the Terms of Reference with each of the steering committee members. The lead evaluator should also go over the Terms of Reference with the steering committee as a group.

The administrator/manager or steering committee chair should brief team members on roles and responsibilities within the evaluation structure. The team needs to be briefed not only on the logistics and the process of the evaluation, but also on the response programs that are to be evaluated. The team will need to be clear on how the evaluation is run, what the role of the lead agency and the other agencies is, who the team reports to, where they will get logistical support, and how they will maintain independence. When these points are not clear, confusion abounds, and the team struggles to achieve objectives. Anticipate extra consultation time when estimating how much time the team will need for the evaluation.

The evaluation team should conduct a daily debriefing. Team leaders should ensure that the steering committee receives regular updates throughout the process.

Ensure findings are reported with sensitivity

Receiving and reviewing the findings of a joint evaluation can be an exciting time for the agencies but also a time of apprehension. The lead evaluator should present findings in a way that will not make any agency feel inferior or unfairly compared with others. Agencies will inevitably look for mentions of themselves and judge whether they think the findings are fair. Findings that are critical in nature should be phrased in a constructive way, supported by reasonable evidence and balanced with positive feedback. In addition to the main report, the evaluator could also create short individual reports for each of the agencies. In practice, however, this may not be worth the additional effort. Joint evaluations tend to be better at analyzing overall response and coordination between agencies (i.e. from a beneficiary perspective) rather than individual agency operations.

Another approach is for the evaluation team to analyze and interpret the data in advance then let the agency analyze it (in a tabulated format) and form their own conclusions and recommendations. With this type of participation, agencies are more likely to accept the conclusions and feel responsible for acting on the recommendations.

Ultimately, in well-conducted evaluations, agencies are less likely to take issue with the results. A focus on learning makes even the least flattering findings more acceptable to agencies because the findings can be instructive.

Once the agencies have discussed and debated the findings, they should discuss them with a broader group of stakeholders. The stakeholders should especially include those that were consulted during the evaluation process, such as UN agencies, beneficiaries, local NGOs, and local government. An interagency validation workshop is one option. In the workshop agencies are given an opportunity to confirm or dispute the major findings and recommendations.

Finalizing the Evaluation Report

Assuming stakeholders are briefed throughout the evaluation, the findings and recommendations in the evaluation should not surprise stakeholders. Do anticipate, however, that stakeholders will not agree with all findings. The steering committee should be prepared to address these disagreements.

The evaluation report should be easy to read and relatively short--no more than 30 pages. It is important to focus on the successful aspects and highlight good practice in the report.

It is critical to allow time to receive feedback on the draft of the report. Be realistic about the time line for this period. If a short time frame is offered, feedback will likely not be received in time. In ECB's experience, failure to receive feedback on drafts presents major obstacles in the report finalization. Stakeholders eventually share feedback, but at that time, the team leader will likely have moved on from the evaluation and may no longer be able to address the feedback. Therefore, it is critical to have a time line that outlines all major deadlines, including feedback. Further, as we have learned, the longer the period between the evaluation and the report, the less useful the findings may become.

CHAPTER 5

WHAT TO DO AFTER THE EVALUATION

With the evaluation done and the findings revealed, one part of the process comes to a close. In other ways, the real work is just beginning. Here is guidance for making the most of the completed evaluation.

Develop both collective and individual rollout plans

Joint evaluations have relevance to a wide range of actors. Agencies should share the report with humanitarian bodies and networks, such as ALNAP, in addition to headquarters. Sharing a joint evaluation report widely demonstrates transparency and a commitment to contribute to learning within the broader humanitarian sector.

Agencies may want to develop simple collective and individual communications plans. The plans include distribution lists for the report and small action planning meetings to discuss and present the implications of the findings.

Emphasize peer accountability

Joint evaluations allow agencies to hold one another accountable for progress on recommendations. They may choose to work on some recommendations together. They may agree beforehand to hold a follow-up workshop in six months or a year's time. During the workshop, agencies can discuss how they shared findings, what progress was made, and the outcome of any actions taken.

CHAPTER 6

JOINT EVALUATIONS IN REAL TIME

Conducted while emergency response is on-going, real-time evaluations (RTEs) are valuable tools for fixing problems and making program improvements. However, a joint real time evaluation can be especially challenging. Here are aspects to consider when deciding to conduct a real time joint evaluation.

Prepare for the evaluation before the emergency starts

In cases of slow onset emergencies, there may be time to plan months in advance. Even with rapid onset emergencies, preparedness is possible. It is possible to jointly outline generic plans for the evaluation that can be turned into actual plans when required. These plans should include many of the aspects outlined in this booklet on how to organise a joint evaluation. One crucial aspect is the designation of focal point(s). Focal point(s) are people on standby who have the responsibility of starting a RTE process and convening the various actors, etc. Ideally, they remain available as point person(s) during the evaluation.

Take a "good enough" approach to the evaluation

If shortcuts must be taken, use a "good enough" approach. "Good enough" does not mean second best: it means adopting quick and simple solutions in an emergency response, which may be the only practical possibility. When the situation changes, review the chosen solution and amend the approach accordingly.

For example, it is possible to simplify managerial structures. Within days of the parties agreeing to do a joint evaluation, they may agree to establish a small, rapidly organized managerial structure. This managerial committee can transition to a more robust structure at a later stage. During the first week, for instance, the management committee could look at what is minimally necessary, and create a short list of terms of reference. The management committee could delegate much of the day-to-day management to one or two key actors, and spend less time on group decision making and consensus building.

Each participating agency is trusted to carry out the tasks assigned to them in accordance with pre-determined plans and standards. Once the process has started and the evaluation is in motion, agencies can gradually build in tighter quality control mechanisms, more focused terms of reference, and a more inclusive process (e.g. a larger management group).

Note that a 'good enough' approach is not an ideal evaluative process. Certain aspects of the joint evaluation should not be subjected to shortcuts. Such aspects particularly include ethical standards, such as the confidentiality and independence of the evaluative process.

Call on additional resources

Participating agencies can call for additional internal support. A staff member could be seconded to country offices for some weeks to help with the joint RTE. Unlike country office staff who may be preoccupied with emergency response, this person would have time to focus on the evaluation. He/she would do an initial scoping and stakeholder analysis, and meet collectively or individually with partners to get their views. He/she could also assist with practical preparations for the team, including setting up field visits.

Consider some other joint reflection process

If a joint RTE is not realistic, consider other learning processes like a joint after action or peer review. Agencies can do quick assessments of their work (see Impact Measurement and Accountability in Emergencies: The Good Enough Guide) and convene for a short meeting/workshop. They can also invite an experienced expert to provide advice on how to adapt the operation.

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, many of these steps can be prepared in advance. The more preparation there is, the more useful and less intrusive the joint RTE process.

Sample Terms of Reference for a Joint Evaluation

1. **Background and context for the evaluation**

2. **Purpose of the evaluation**

   One evaluator said, "You [may] think you've covered the world but you've only covered one village in ten." Emergency responses typically involve several humanitarian actors. When the responses of more than one actor are put side-by-side and examined, the overall picture becomes clearer, revealing how factors such as geographic coverage, sector-specific interventions, and community involvement all fit together. Joint evaluations go further towards measuring impact by looking at the collective efforts of several actors to meet beneficiary needs and to identify what gaps exist.

3. **Specific scope of the evaluation** (boundaries including what will not be part of the evaluation)**:**
   - Geographic coverage
   - Time frame
   - Evaluation framework and standards (OECD/DAC, Sphere)
   - Evaluation deliverables/outputs
   - Technical support to be provided by each participating organization
   - Administrative support to be provided by each participating organization
   - Logistic support to be provided by each participating organization

4. **Administration/ Finance:**
   - Determine resources required: i.e. budget and staffing – how many people will be required, for how long, and at what cost.
   - Determine 'ownership' of the products of the joint evaluation: i.e. intellectual copyright, etc.
   - Identify process/procedure for dealing with interagency disagreements concerning any aspect of the joint evaluation.
   - Agree on report format, use of agency logos, etc.

5. **Methodology:**
   - Identify standards to use when assessing performance.
   - Identify the methodology and, generally, what questions will be posed. Questions of a potentially sensitive nature (some questions may be more sensitive to some organizations than others) should be discussed as early in the process as possible so that problems do not surface later.
   - Decide how to assess adherence to international standards.
   - Identify stakeholders and level of involvement in the process.
   - Identify data sources.
   - Consider gender issues and vulnerable groups.

6. **Team Composition:**
   - Assign a Team Leader. Include a description of role and responsibilities.
   - Identify additional team members. Include description of roles and responsibilities.
   - Configure team coordination.

7. **Management of the Evaluation Process:**
   - Determine the intended use of evaluation results and parties responsible for follow up.
   - Build reporting structure within the joint evaluation configuration.
   - Ensure periodic reporting schedule throughout the process.
   - Define reporting requirements.
   - Agree on how to deal with fraud, misconduct or wrong-doing uncovered as part of the evaluation process.

Source: CRS Guidelines for Participation in Joint Evaluations: Final Draft

Sample Terms of Reference for Evaluation Team Members

Team Composition

The team will consist of:

- A Team Leader, who will be an external consultant
- A staff member from each of the participating agencies who is based in a country other than the host country and has not been directly involved in the emergency response
- A national consultant

1 a.) External International Consultant (Team Leader) - Responsibilities

The external consultant will act as Team Leader (TL) and will retain overall responsibility for meeting the objectives as detailed in the attached evaluation ToR (including editing authority for the final report). This ensures an effective process, team management, and that outputs are of good quality.

Description of Tasks

- Reporting
  a) Development of an inception report of up to three pages in length, with a chapter plan and key areas of enquiry, and submission within four days of start of the consultancy.
  b) Submission of combined draft report within one week of field work completion
  c) Submission of final report as specified in the schedule, consisting of key findings, conclusion and recommendations.
  d) Annexes with country specific details and context
  e) Stand-alone executive summary (no more than 5 pages)

- Lead an orientation briefing for stakeholders to ensure a common understanding and expectations regarding the scope and objectives of the evaluation.

- Organize and, as necessary, facilitate relevant meetings, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. Undertake associated data collection activities (e.g. document review/research) as foreseen within the scope of this evaluation. Some of these activities may take place outside of the field mission, e.g. telephone or face-to-face interviews with HQ-based staff.

- Collate, analyze and synthesize data and other information collected during the course of the evaluation.

- Prepare a daily written summary of interviews and "Main Points" in conjunction with the Team Members to assist with ongoing analysis and synthesis of information relevant to objectives.

- Delegate specific areas of responsibility to the other team members to maximize use of relevant skills and facilitate triangulation during analysis.

- Design, organize, and lead (if appropriate) the debriefing for participating agencies and key partners on the preliminary findings, conclusions, and recommendations within each region and at the end of the field mission.

- Ensure compliance of the team with international humanitarian assistance standards and take reasonable steps for ensuring that the security and dignity of the affected population is not compromised and that disruption to on-gong programs is minimized.

1 b.) External International Consultant – Team Leader Profile

Required:

- Excellent [language(s)] and good working knowledge of the other language; good oral communication skills
- Track record of substantive Team Leader and evaluation management experience
- Extensive humanitarian programming management experience
- Knowledge of mandates and modus operandi of principal humanitarian actors (host government, NGOs, UN agencies, Red Cross Agencies, etc.)
- Proven writing skills

Preferred:

- Experience/expertise in the area of rapid onset emergencies.
- Skills and experience in one or more of the following areas: food economy/livelihood security, water and sanitation, public health, programming, management, finance/admin, logistics, human resources, post-crisis rehabilitation, disaster risk reduction, and /or participatory approaches in emergencies.

2 a.) Internal Agency Team Members – Responsibilities

Given this is an external evaluation, the agency team member does not represent his/her agency. Using an objective approach under the TL's leadership, he/she provides guidance to the team on relevant aspects of the agency's mandate, policies, strategies, and "realities". The agency team member's inputs should ensure that findings and recommendations targeted at that agency are well-informed and practical. Specific tasks are as follows:

- Together with the other members of the evaluation team, provide an orientation briefing to stakeholders to ensure a common understanding and expectations regarding the scope and objectives of the evaluation.
- Participate in and, as necessary, facilitate relevant meetings, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. Undertake associated data collection activities (e.g. document review/research) as foreseen within the scope of this evaluation. Some of these activities may take place outside of the field mission (e.g. telephone or face-to-face interviews with HQ-based staff).
- Provide agency specific information and contextual background to assist the TL in his/her analysis to ensure findings take account of agency context and recommendations are realistic.
- Collate, analyze, and synthesize data and other information collected during the course of the evaluation.
- Prepare a daily written summary of interviews and "Main Points" to share with the Team Members to assist with ongoing analysis and synthesis of information relevant to objectives.

- Draft inputs on specific areas of responsibility (as designated by the TL) for integration into the draft and final reports.
- Participate in the debriefing of the agencies and (if appropriate) key partners on the preliminary findings, conclusions, and recommendations at the end of the field mission.
- Assist the TL with drafting and completing the final version of the report.

2 b.) Internal Agency consultants – Team Member Profile

Required:

- Excellent written [language], good working knowledge of [other language], and good oral communication skills
- Extensive humanitarian programming/project management experience
- Knowledge of mandates and modus operandi of principal humanitarian actors (host government, NGOs, UN agencies, Red Cross Agencies, etc.)

Preferred:

- Experience/expertise in the area of rapid onset emergencies or natural disasters.
- Skills and experience in one or more of the following areas: risk reduction, food economy/livelihood security, programming, management, finance/administration, logistics, human resources, post-crisis rehabilitation, disaster risk reduction, participatory approaches in emergencies, monitoring and evaluation methodologies, and analysis.

3 a.) External National Consultant - Responsibility

Agencies will select a national consultant to provide the evaluation team necessary analysis and background of the country, to allow findings and recommendations to be placed in an appropriate context.

- Together with the other member(s) of the evaluation team, provide an orientation briefing to stakeholders to ensure common understanding and expectations regarding the scope and objectives of the evaluation.
- Participate in and, as necessary, facilitate relevant meetings, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and undertake associated data collection activities (e.g. document review/research) as foreseen within the scope of this evaluation. Some of these activities may take place outside of the field mission, (e.g. telephone or face-to-face interviews with HQ-based staff).
- Collate, analyze, and synthesize data and other information collected during the course of the evaluation.
- Prepare a daily written summary of interviews and “Main Points” to share with the Team Members to assist with ongoing analysis and synthesis of information relevant to objectives.
- Draft inputs on specific areas of responsibility (as designated by the TL) for integration into the draft and final reports.

- Participate in the debriefing of the agencies (and key partners, if appropriate) on the preliminary findings, conclusions and recommendations at the end of the field mission.

- Assist the TL tasked with drafting the country report and completing the final version of the report.

3 b.) External National Consultant – Team Member Profile

Required:

- Excellent written [language] and good oral communication skills

- Expertise in the context and cultural issues of the country, including all of its diverse ethnic groups and past experiences with international aid activities

- Humanitarian programming/project management experience

- Knowledge of mandates and modus operandi of principal humanitarian actors (host government, NGOs, UN agencies, Red Cross Agencies, etc.)

Preferred:

- Skills and experience in one or more of the following areas: risk reduction, food economy/livelihood security, programming, management, finance/admin, logistics, human resources, post-crisis rehabilitation, disaster risk reduction, and participatory approaches in emergencies,

- Experience in monitoring and evaluation methodologies and analysis.

Duration

For the Team Leader, dedicate an estimated total of 28 days of fieldwork from [start date]. Include an additional 7 days for report writing at the end of the assignment. For the national consultants and internal agency staff, dedicate an estimated total of 28 days fieldwork and 3 days report writing.

Sample Agreements Document

Ownership of the Products

An explicit agreement or 'protocol' should include designation of 'ownership' of the process and its products (e.g. the report, but also any other evaluation products such as articles, brochures, etc.). Ownership entails a series of aspects, from legal rights and obligations to decision-making authority, especially in the event of disputes. Such a protocol would also include agreement and guidance on decision-making processes. These processes include quorums, voting versus observer rights, etc., and how these relate or are invoked for different stages or aspects of the process (e.g. day-to-day management decisions will be delegated to the evaluation administrator/ manager, and maybe the team, while more sensitive or important decisions will be made at higher levels).

Establishment of the Management Structure

Agreement and formalization needs to cover procedures for establishment of the management structure; dismantling of the structure (including consideration of future ownership of the products of the MAE); a disputes-management mechanism (as in labour law, where potential disagreements will be addressed in an agreed manner); broad expectations for financial, material, and human resource provision and management (including contracting the evaluation team and other resource provision, especially for day-to-day secretariat functions), etc.

Incorporation of Feedback

Of particular importance is explicit agreement on the incorporation of comments on the report, especially if they are from within the overall management structure. Decide if certain types of comments are always to be acted upon (e.g. errors of fact or inadequate verification) or are of an advisory nature only (e.g. interpretations or analysis).

It may be useful to refer to the following checklist when reviewing the draft report:

- Consistency with the ToR: Is the report consistent with the objectives described in the original ToR?
- Style and clarity: Is the report of an acceptable professional standard? Is the language and format reader-friendly for targeted stakeholders? Are the findings clearly stated with adequate supporting evidence? Is it appropriately balanced between being concise and being informative?
- Potential usefulness of the report to stakeholders the recommendation clear? Is the recipient of the recommendation clear? Do the recommendations provide adequate guidance for follow-up or are they too general? Are they realistic? Does the Executive Summary fulfill its purpose (i.e. provide a concise summary of the report, particularly for senior level decision-makers who may not read the entire report)?
- How successful is the evaluation in prioritizing key issues? Are there too many recommendations? Are there any critical omissions?
- Are there any important corrections and/or omissions to the text?

Management Response & Action Planning

Once the report has been finalized, the next important step is for the evaluation steering committee to discuss the recommendations and agree on whether to "accept", "partially accept", or "reject" a particular recommendation. If a recommendation is rejected, then it will be important to explain why. If a recommendation is "accepted" then a clear action plan with individual responsibilities for follow up should be entered in the management matrix. A partially accepted recommendation contains both elements, an action plan for follow up and an explanation of why the recommendation was not fully accepted.

Joint Evaluation Readiness Checklist

Assessment and scoping of the value of conducting a joint evaluation

- What is the added-value of a joint exercise as opposed to individual exercises, considering its ultimate use?
- What are those uses, and what target groups/ audiences do they aim?
- Is there sufficient buy-in for a joint evaluation, including understanding the complexities, costs, and benefits?
- What agencies and other possible stakeholders might be interested and involved?
- Can they be mapped, prioritized, and consulted?
- Who will conduct the consultation? Consider how, when, and where (e.g. in an agency headquarters, the field, or a neutral venue) the consultation be conducted.
- How much time is available for the joint evaluation?
- How large and broad can the evaluation be, considering the time and resources available?

Establishing a multi-agency management structure

- Can the main actors be identified and committed to the process (e.g. through their unambiguous commitment to provide time and resources)?
- Can a lead or host agency be identified?
- Among those actors, what is the most effective and efficient management structure?
- Can agencies sign an explicit agreement/protocol on roles, responsibilities, rights, and obligations of all concerned? See possible example below under sample tools.

Designing the Joint Evaluation and Terms of Reference

- What are the possible uses and recipients of the proposed evaluation? This includes prioritization of the possible target users and audiences for the products coming from the evaluation.
- What are the priority uses and the main evaluation questions to be addressed, within the time and resource limits available?
- What might be the expected methods, in light of the evaluation use and coverage?
- What other aspects are needed for the ToR (e.g. possible stakeholders to be involved, locations to be visited, duration, report style and length, etc.)?

Team selection, preparation and planning

- What evaluator profiles are needed? What will the size of the team be? These decisions should be made by the group or sub-committee.
- How and by whom will evaluators be selected and contracted(e.g. delegation of selection to the management sub-committee, based on accepted standards of professionalism, independence, and transparency)?
- How will on-going coordination and information flows be managed among the main actors (management sub-committee, lead agency, joint evaluation manager, and the evaluation team)?

Conducting the Joint Evaluation, including analysis and reporting

- What methods and expertise are required to cover the range of issues, locations, and aspects in the evaluation? This would be mainly the responsibility of the team and manager.
- What joint activities workshops and meetings are required to facilitate quality understanding and analysis?
- When, how, and by whom will draft reports will be reviewed? See sample protocol below.

Dissemination and use

- How many and what type of products will result from the evaluation? This decision should be based on the diverse sets of target groups/audiences, including individual and joint-agency initiatives.
- How, when, and by whom will the products be disseminated and communicated (in line with expected use)? Agreement is required during the initial planning stages, which implies the development of a communications plan.
- What resources are available, and from whom, for the implementation of the plan and unforeseen costs?
- As a complement to the communication plan, can a joint-follow-up action-plan to address issues in the evaluation be developed?
- Does follow-up require a new structure and, if so, which, managed by whom, and how? This would be to implement and monitor relevant activities, as decided by the overall joint evaluation group. Consider the initial scoping, ToR, and results of the joint evaluation. It could imply a new structure and process involving the agencies wishing to take the results forward into a new 'review-and-action' process.
- Will there be a review of the joint evaluation itself, to identify lessons from the exercise? This would probably require at least one workshop or meeting of all main actors and stakeholders.

Suggested Topics for Discussion with Prospective Partner Agencies

	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 3
1. Is your organization planning to carry out an evaluation?			
2. If so, what will it be used for?			
3. What resources have been set aside for it (funds, staff time, etc.)?			
4. What is the current evaluation capacity within your organization (e.g. previous experience with evaluation, staff with monitoring and evaluation skills)?			
5. When is it planned for and how much time has been set aside for it?			
6. If an evaluation has not been planned, what types of information could you usefully gain from an evaluation?			
7. How are evaluations viewed within your organizational culture?			
8. What is your understanding of joint evaluations?			
9. What do you believe you could gain from a joint evaluation?			

References and Further Reading

Joint Evaluations

Guidance for Managing Joint Evaluations. DAC Evaluation Series, OECD 2006.
http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/29/28/37512030.pdf

Joint Evaluations: Recent Experiences, Lessons Learned, and Options for the Future. DAC Evaluation Network Working Paper, OECD, 2005.

Lessons About Multi-Agency Evaluations: Asian Tsunami Evaluation Coalition.
http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/F48164952D0AE1F0492571B700230406-tec-tsunami-14jul.pdf

General Evaluations

USAID Center for Development Information and Evaluation, Performance Monitoring and Evaluation TIPS series. http://www.usaid.gov/results-and-data/information-resources/program-evaluations

Western Michigan University, Evaluation Center. Evaluation Checklists
http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/checklists/checklist_topics/

Shoestring Evaluation: Designing Impact Evaluations Under Budget, Time, and Data Constraints. M. Bamberger, J. Rugh, M. Church, and L. Fort, The American Journal of Evaluation, 2004.

Patton, Michael Quinn. *Utilization-focused Evaluation*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1978. Print.