



# Programme Manager's Planning Monitoring & Evaluation Toolkit

Division for Oversight Services

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## Tool Number 5: Planning and Managing an Evaluation Part I: Planning Evaluations

### I. Introduction

The toolkit is a supplement to the UNFPA programming guidelines. It provides guidance and options for UNFPA Country Office staff to improve planning, monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) activities in the context of results based programme management. It is also useful for programme managers at headquarters and for national programme managers and counterparts.

Tool number 5 provides guidance on how to plan and manage evaluations during the country programme cycle. It is divided into six parts:

- **Part I** gives an overview of planning evaluations;
- **Part II** discusses the process of defining evaluation questions;
- **Part III** informs about options for data collection;
- **Part IV** discusses the management of the evaluation process including: the division of labour in managing and implementing the evaluation, the development of terms of reference, and the selection of evaluator(s);
- **Part V** proposes options for reporting and communicating evaluation results;
- **Part VI** describes standards that should be used to assess the quality of evaluation work.

The content of Part I is based on a review of evaluation literature of bilateral and international development agencies such as the Centres for Disease Control, Danida, and UNICEF as well as UNFPA project evaluation information.

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<sup>1</sup>This tool was first published in December 2000.

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## II. Planning for Evaluations over the Course of the Programme Cycle

Planning for evaluations should be an integral part of country programme design so that timely evaluation information is available to inform decision-making and ensure that UNFPA is able to demonstrate accountability to its stakeholders. Evaluation results are useful for making adjustments in the ongoing programme, or for purposes of designing a new country programme cycle. Careful planning of evaluations and periodic updating of evaluation plans also facilitates their management and contributes to the quality of evaluation results.

In planning evaluation activities, the country office together with key programme stakeholder should decide on:

- **WHY:** the purpose of the evaluations, including who will use the evaluation findings and how;
- **WHAT:** the main objectives of the evaluation and the questions it should address;
- **HOW:** the data sources and collection methods to be used in the evaluations;
- **WHO:** will undertake the evaluations: what expertise is required? Which evaluations should project stakeholder undertake (an internal evaluation)? Which should be conducted with the assistance of external consultants (national and/or international) and/or with involvement of CST experts? What should be the extent of stakeholder involvement?
- **WHEN:** the timing of each evaluation so that their results in each case or in combination can be used to take important programme related decisions;
- **RESOURCES:** the budget required to implement the evaluation plan.

Evaluations can cover entire country programmes; programme components; thematic areas such as IEC, gender, capacity building strategies and other management issues within the programme; and innovative or pilot projects. The following are a few important criteria to consider in determining the number and focus of evaluations to be undertaken in the course of the programme cycle:

- **the importance of the programme component/thematic area** in terms of resources allocated to it within the country programme;
- **the duration of UNFPA funding** of the particular thematic area. For instance, if population education has been funded for a period longer than five years, an evaluation of all of the activities within this thematic area is advisable in order to ascertain their impact and sustainability;

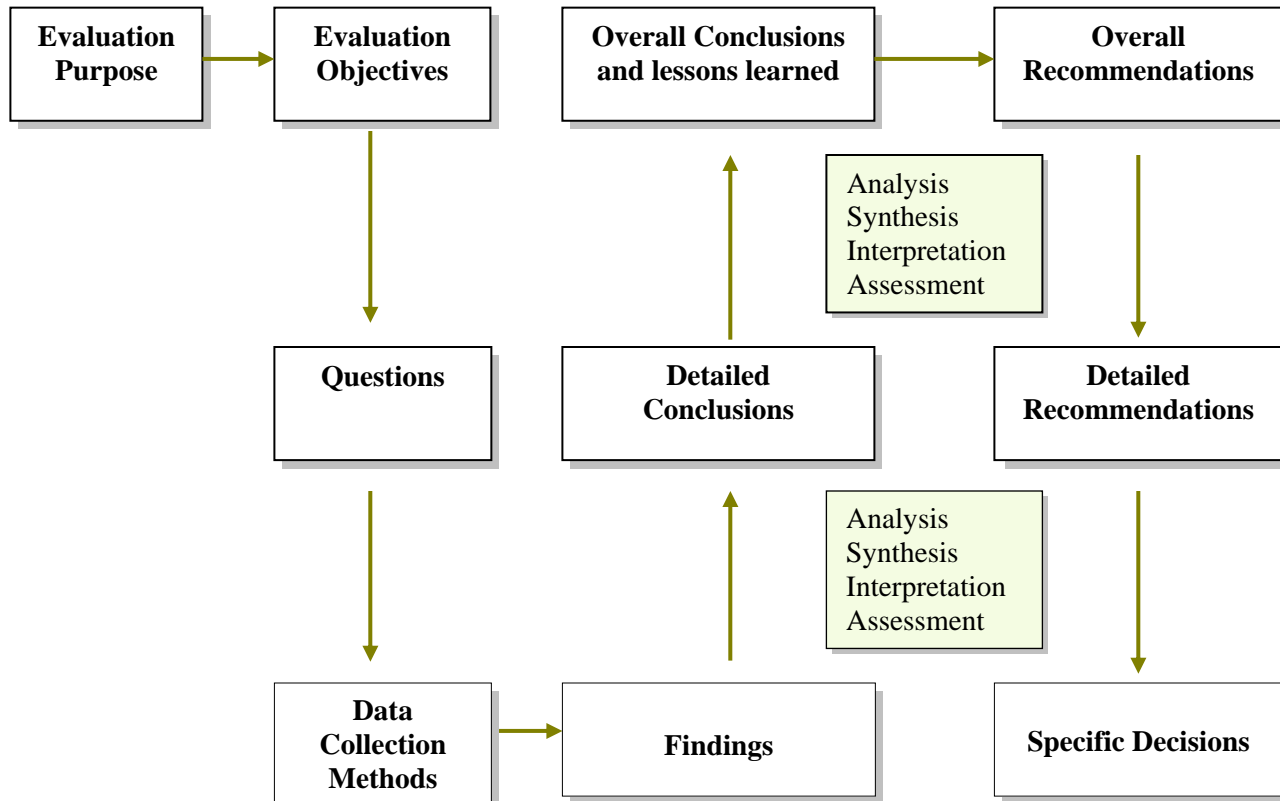
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- **the strategic importance of the activities**, for instance in the case of a pilot or innovative project being tested for possible replication or for policy formulation;
  - **the quality and relevance of information collected** through monitoring activities during programme implementation. Availability of high quality process information and data on programme indicators collected during implementation will greatly facilitate evaluation activities. A data-base of good quality programme process information may eventually eliminate the need for very lengthy and costly evaluation exercises and reduce the number of evaluations required for adequate decision-making;
  - **the cost of undertaking evaluations** which should be commensurate with their influence on programme decisions;
  - **timing of evaluation exercises** to ensure that evaluation results are available in time for important decisions to be taken;
  - **the capacity of UNFPA country offices** and programme managers to manage evaluations in light of their workload.

The answer to the question “why undertake an evaluation” is discussed in Tool Number 3 which outlines different purposes for which evaluations could be considered in the course of a programme cycle. The following section gives an overview of the analytical processes through which evaluation objectives and questions («what») are transformed by using various data collection methodologies («how») into conclusions and recommendations. Such conclusions and recommendations will allow programme stakeholders, including UNFPA, to take informed country programme management decisions, including those related to funding.

### III. The Evaluation Analytical Process

An evaluation analytical process consists of a number of stages as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The Evaluation Analytical Process



Source: Adapted from Danida, 1999.

#### 1. Preparation: Defining Evaluation Concerns, Questions and Standards; Selecting Data Collection Methods and Designing Data Collection Instruments.

During the preparatory stage, the evaluation manager and key stakeholders select and define the **evaluation objectives and the questions** to be answered by the evaluation. They also **define standards** to be used to assess the particular programme/thematic area/innovative project being evaluated.

Involving the main users of evaluation results in defining evaluation standards at the beginning of the process is very important as evaluation results will only be used by the intended users if they are confident that the conclusions therein are based on standards that are acceptable to them. Some of these

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standards, such as the programme results, may have been clarified earlier at the time of programme design or in the course of implementation. However, various stakeholders may interpret details of programme results differently, and results may be redefined over time.

Depending on the nature of the evaluation questions selected, evaluator(s) choose **data collection methods and design instruments** to gather valid and reliable evidence, that enable them to answer the evaluation questions. Data collection instruments include, for example, a list of questions and description of a method for reviewing monitoring information contained in project and programme documents; interview guides for in-depth interviews; focus group guides; and health facility checklists.

Evaluation questions and standards are explained in greater detail in Tool Number 5, part II: Defining Evaluation Questions and Measurement Standards. Data collection methods and instruments are discussed in Tool Number 5, part III: Types of Data and Data Collection Instruments.

## **2. Implementation: Collecting Information**

Information and evidence to answer the evaluation questions are collected using the data collection instruments. The data collected are the evaluation findings.

## **3. Analysing Evaluation Information; Drawing up Conclusions and Lessons Learned**

The evaluation findings are analysed and synthesised into a number of statements, the detailed evaluation conclusions, which provide answers to the evaluation questions. The strength of the conclusions depends on the amount, quality and credibility of the information collected. It also depends on the quality of interpretation and assessment of the evaluation evidence gathered by the evaluator(s).

Interpretation is the effort to determine what the findings mean and is part of the overall effort to make sense of the evidence gathered in an evaluation. Uncovering facts regarding a programme's performance is not sufficient to draw evaluative conclusions. Evaluation evidence must be interpreted to derive the practical significance of what has been learned.

Assessments are statements concerning the merit, worth, or significance of the programme element being evaluated. They are formed by comparing the findings and interpretations against the selected evaluation standards.

Interpretations and assessments draw on information and perspectives that stakeholders bring to the evaluation inquiry and on the evaluator(s)' expert knowledge on the subject matter.

The detailed evaluation conclusions are then further synthesized into **overall evaluation conclusions and lessons learned**. Lessons are learning from experience. They are generalizations about a specific circumstance. They are formulated drawing both from evidence of the particular programme elements being evaluated and from the overall accumulated experience of the evaluator(s) in their fields of expertise.

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#### 4. Formulating Recommendations

Recommendations are actions for consideration by intended users of the evaluation results. Formulating recommendations is a distinct stage of programme evaluation that requires information beyond what is necessary to assess programme performance. For instance, knowing that a programme is able to reduce the risk of disease does not necessarily translate into a recommendation to continue the effort, particularly when competing priorities or other effective alternatives exist. Thus, recommendations for continuing, expanding, redesigning, or terminating a programme or project are separate from assessments regarding a programme's effectiveness. Making recommendations requires information on the context, particularly the organizational context in which programmatic decisions will be made, of which the evaluator(s) may not always be sufficiently informed.

The various elements of evaluation explained above are illustrated with information from a UNFPA project evaluation in **Box 1** below.

### **Box 1. An illustration of Evaluation Purpose, Objectives, Findings, Conclusions, Lessons and Recommendations: the Jenin Community-based RH Project, Palestine.**

**Evaluation purpose:** to enable decision on continued funding of the project and provide information on changes required in the project approach.

**Evaluation objectives:** to assess the strengths and limitations of the project in terms of: design; management; quality of care; and cost effectiveness.

#### **Data Collection Methods**

1. Review of available documentation to obtain a general overview of objectives, design and logistics.
2. Interview with key contacts from organizations associated with the project.
3. Focus group discussions with Family Planning Educators and clients at service delivery points (SDPs)
4. Client satisfaction survey.
5. Visit to selected SDPs and application of checklists to assess the physical conditions of the facilities, inventory of contraceptive supplies, and observe the quality of service delivery.
6. Performance of patient record audit in order to determine if they were adequately completed and if essential indicators for diagnosis and treatment were provided.

**Sample finding, conclusions, lesson, and recommendations regarding one aspect of quality of care (i.e. presence of female service providers).**

**Finding:** interviews with CARE and PFS staff as well as focus group discussions with clients revealed that female physicians are acceptable to the women whereas male physicians are not. The point is illustrated by the fact that utilization of clinic services increased only after the employment of a female physician. At the same time, the scarcity of female physicians in general, and in the Jenin District in particular, makes it hard to lure female physicians from the lucrative private practice. Investment in staff, both financial and in terms of training is vital for ensuring that experienced and skilled female physicians are involved in the project.

**Detailed conclusion:** increasing the availability of experienced female health professionals in the clinics based on the client load would improve the quality of care and eventually increase the number of clients.

**Overall conclusions on quality of care:** project activities have improved access to a range of culturally and technically appropriate and reasonably priced RH/FP services and information. However, there are gaps in quality of care including lack of basic sanitary facilities; poor clinic and staff management practices such as lack of supervision and support systems for the physicians [poor working environment].

**Lesson learned:** in Palestine, as in many other Muslim Arab countries, female physicians, as opposed to male physicians, contribute to both the acceptability of services and continuing use of the clinics by female clients.

**Overall recommendation:** continue to support family planning services that are integrated with RH services using existing PHC services as a foundation. Within this context, continue support for the Jenin Community-based RH project.

**Detailed recommendation:** invest in high quality, culturally adequate service providers and clinic facilities: employ female physicians; ensure close and ongoing supervision of providers' performance by a project manager, preferably a female with a health background; upgrade the physical infrastructure of the clinics.

**NOTE:** UNFPA support to the project was not continued in the new CP cycle because USAID support was going to include the project area.

*Source: Halabi 2000.*

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## Sources

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*This tool is subject to constant improvement. We welcome any comments and suggestions you may have on its content. We also encourage you to send us information on experiences from UNFPA funded and other population programmes which can illustrate the issues addressed by this tool. Please send your inputs to:*

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