*M*onitoring and *E*valuation Toolkit
for Programme Managers

Defining Evaluation

1. Introduction

The toolkit is a supplement to the UNFPA programming guidelines. It provides guidance and options for UNFPA Country Office staff to improve monitoring and evaluation activities in the context of results-based programme management. It is also useful for other programme managers at headquarters and national levels. Many of the approaches described in this toolkit can be used as well for programme[1] strategy development.

This tool defines the concept of evaluation, what it is and why we evaluate, the role of evaluation in relation to monitoring and audit, and its role in the context of results-based management approaches (RBM). The content is based on a review of a wide range of evaluation literature from academia and international development agencies such as UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, OECD and bilateral donor agencies such as USAID.

2. What is Programme Evaluation?

Programme evaluation is a **management tool.** It is a time-bound exercise that attempts to **assess** systematically and objectively the **relevance, performance and success of ongoing and completed programmes and projects**. Evaluation is undertaken selectively to answer specific questions to guide decision-makers and/or programme managers, and to provide information on whether underlying theories and assumptions used in programme development were valid, what worked and what did not work and why. Evaluation **commonly aims to determine the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of a programme or project**[2].

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[1] For the sake of brevity "programme" will be used throughout the tool kit to refer to a country programme as well as its sub-programme and project components.

[2] Definitions of these terms are provided in Tool Number 1: Glossary of Monitoring and Evaluation Terms and are further discussed in Tool Number 5, Part II: Defining Evaluation Questions and Measurement Standards.

3.   Why evaluate?

The **main objectives** of programme evaluation are:

- To *inform decisions on operations, policy, or strategy* related to ongoing or future programme interventions;
- To *demonstrate accountability*[3] to decision-makers (donors and programme countries).

It is expected that improved decision-making and accountability will lead to better results and more efficient use of resources.

Other objectives of programme evaluation include:

- ✔ To enable *corporate learning* and contribute to the body of knowledge on what works and what does not work and why;
- ✔ To *verify/improve* programme *quality* and *management;*
- ✔ To *identify successful strategies* for extension/expansion/replication;
- ✔ To *modify unsuccessful strategies;*
- ✔ To *measure effects/benefits* of programme and project interventions;
- ✔ To *give stakeholders the opportunity to have a say* in programme output and quality;
- ✔ To *justify/validate* programmes to donors, partners and other constituencies.

4.   What is the Relationship between Monitoring and Evaluation?

Monitoring and evaluation are intimately related. Both are necessary management tools to inform decision-making and demonstrate accountability. Evaluation is not a substitute for monitoring nor is monitoring a substitute for evaluation. Both use the same steps (see Box 1) , however, they produce different kinds of information. Systematically generated monitoring data is essential for successful evaluations.

Monitoring continuously tracks performance against what was planned by collecting and analysing data on the indicators established for monitoring and evaluation purposes. It provides continuous information on whether progress is being made toward achieving results (outputs, purposes, goals) through record keeping and regular reporting systems. Monitoring looks at both programme processes[4] and changes in conditions of target groups and institutions brought about by programme activities. It also identifies strengths and weaknesses in a programme. The

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[3] Accountability is the responsibility to justify expenditures, decisions or the results of the discharge of authority and official duties, including duties delegated to a subordinate unit or individual. Programme Managers are responsible for providing evidence to stakeholders and sponsors that a programme is effective and in conformity with its coverage, service, legal and fiscal requirements.

[4] Transformation of inputs into outputs through activities.

performance information generated from monitoring enhances learning from experience and improves decision-making. Management and programme implementers typically conduct monitoring.

Box 1. Evaluation Steps

The evaluation process normally includes the following steps:

- *Defining standards* against which programmes are to be evaluated. In the UNFPA logframe matrix, such standards are defined by the Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVIs) ;

- *Investigating the performance* of the selected activities/processes/products to be evaluated based on these standards. This is done by an analysis of selected qualitative or quantitative indicators and the programme context;

- *Synthesizing the results* of this analysis;

- *Formulating recommendations* based on the analysis of findings;

- *Feeding recommendations and lessons learned back* into programme and other decision-making processes.

Evaluation is a periodic, in-depth analysis of programme performance. It relies on data generated through monitoring activities as well as information obtained from other sources (e.g., studies, research, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, surveys etc.). Evaluations are often (but not always) conducted with the assistance of external evaluators.

Table 1. Characteristics of Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring	Evaluation
Continuous	Periodic: at important milestones such as the mid-term of programme implementation; at the end or a substantial period after programme conclusion
Keeps track; oversight; analyses and documents progress	In-depth analysis; Compares planned with actual achievements
Focuses on inputs, activities, outputs, implementation processes, continued relevance, likely results at purpose level	Focuses on outputs in relation to inputs; results in relation to cost; processes used to achieve results; overall relevance; impact; and sustainability
Answers what activities were implemented and results achieved	Answers why and how results were achieved. Contributes to building theories and models for change
Alerts managers to problems and provides options for corrective actions	Provides managers with strategy and policy options
Self-assessment by programme managers, supervisors, community stakeholders, and donors	Internal and/or external analysis by programme managers, supervisors, community stakeholders, donors, and/or external evaluators

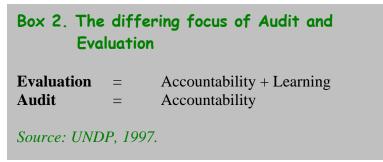*Sources:* UNICEF, 1991; WFP, May 2000.

5.   When do we need Monitoring and Evaluation results during the Programme Cycle?

- **During situation analysis** and identification of overall programme focus, lessons learned from past programme implementation are studied and taken into account in the programme strategies;

- **During programme design,** data on indicators produced during the previous programme cycle serve as baseline data for the new programme cycle. Indicators data also enable programme designers to establish clear programme targets which can be monitored and evaluated;

- **During programme implementation,** monitoring and evaluation ensures continuous tracking of programme progress and adjustment of programme strategies to achieve better results;

- **At programme completion,** in-depth evaluation of programme effectiveness, impact and sustainability ensures that lessons on good strategies and practices are available for designing the next programme cycle.

6. What is the relationship between evaluation and audit?

Like evaluation, audit assesses the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of both programme and financial management and recommends improvement. However, the objective and focus of audit differ from that of evaluation.

Box 2. The differing focus of Audit and Evaluation

Evaluation	=	Accountability + Learning
Audit	=	Accountability

Source: UNDP, 1997.

Unlike evaluation, audit does not establish the relevance or determine the likely impact or sustainability of programme results. Audit verifies compliance with established rules, regulations, procedures or mandates of the organization and assesses the adequacy of internal controls. It also assesses the accuracy and fairness of financial transactions and reports. Management audits assess the managerial aspects of a unit's operations.

Notwithstanding this difference in focus, audit and evaluation are both instruments through which management can obtain a critical assessment of the operations of the organization as a basis for instituting improvements.

7. What is the role of evaluation in RBM?

International development organizations such as UNFPA currently place strong emphasis on national capacity building, good governance and public sector transparency. In this context, evaluation, together with continuous monitoring of programme and project progress, is an important tool for result-based management. In assessing what works, what does not work and why, evaluation provides information that strengthens organizational decision-making and promotes a culture of accountability among programme implementers. The lessons highlighted through evaluation enable UNFPA to improve programme and organizational performance. Demonstration of more and higher quality results through improved performance can lead to increased funding of UNFPA assisted projects and programmes.

Box 3 outlines, in no particular order of priority, some characteristics and expected benefits of introducing results-based monitoring and evaluation in the Fund.

Box 3. The Expected Benefits of Strengthening Results-based Monitoring and Evaluation in UNFPA

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- Senior management is strongly committed to the use of M&E results in decision-making – commitment influences the management style;
- Staff undertake M&E activities and use M&E data at all stages of the programme cycle;
- Staff apply M&E approaches to all areas of UNFPA operations for example in programme, finance, and human resources management;
- Staff engaged in monitoring and evaluation activities strive to pursue objectivity. They make clear the criteria and values on which their judgments are based;
- Staff are held accountable for results and take risks to achieve them;
- Staff apply lessons learned to programme management;
- Staff is recognized by the organization for achieving good results and for their efforts to counteract risks.

THEN

- UNFPA becomes more efficient and better equipped to adapt to a rapidly changing external environment;
- The quality and effectiveness of UNFPA's assistance increases;
- UNFPA and its partners achieve results;
- UNFPA's credibility improves;
- Funding for UNFPA assistance is likely to increase;
- Staff has a heightened sense of achievement and professional satisfaction; productivity improves.

Source: Adapted from UNICEF, 1998.

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