This chapter provides direction on how to manage the conduct of the evaluation, including key tips for managing the evaluation team. Careful management of the conduct stage and close communication with the evaluation team will facilitate a high-quality evaluation report.
A. MANAGING THE EVALUATION CONSULTANT OR TEAM

Once recruited, the evaluation consultant or team needs to have an open and clear line of communication with the evaluation manager. The evaluation manager ensures evaluation ethics and standards are met by the evaluator(s) and monitors progress. Supporting the evaluation team should not interfere with the evaluation process in ways that could jeopardize the evaluation’s impartiality.

Supporting the evaluation process during this stage will include:

• Providing comments and quality assurance on the deliverables.
• Organizing relevant background documentation\(^\text{28}\) required by the evaluation team.
• Briefing the evaluator(s) on the programme, purpose and scope of the evaluation and any relevant contextual information.
• Facilitating connections with stakeholders for information and data collection and establishing a schedule of interviews, surveys, etc. for the evaluation team (with assistance from the management and reference groups). However, the UN Women programme staff should not accompany evaluators or participate in individual interviews with stakeholders or other data collection (unless it is a self-evaluation or participatory data collection method), as it may result in biased results and affect the credibility of the evaluation.
• Providing support in addressing emerging issues as they arise in the collection and analysis of information and data.
• Providing support on integrating gender equality and human rights principles

\(^{28}\text{Relevant background documentation includes UN Women programme document, UN Women strategic plan, relevant international conventions and agreements, monitoring reports, evaluability assessment, mid-term evaluation, relevant UN country team documents, relevant national documents, etc.}\)
into all approaches.

- Communicating on a regular basis with the evaluator(s) to provide support.
- Sharing evaluation products with management and reference groups for comment and compiling feedback (using Tool 7. Evaluation product comment template).
- Providing logistical support to the evaluator(s), including organizing the schedule of interviews/meetings for site visits.
- Ensuring the evaluator(s) have a plan for safety and security when visiting project sites.
- Ensuring the evaluator(s) have a plan for applying ethical standards in the conduct of the evaluation.

Interim deliverables are provided to the evaluation manager by the evaluator(s) for review, comment and suggestion. The evaluation manager and regional evaluation specialist should screen deliverables for quality prior to sharing with the management and reference groups. This step is very important due to the time constraints of the management and reference group members. If the deliverable is of satisfactory quality, it can be shared with the management and reference groups for comment, typically with a one to two week time frame (see Chapter 6 for more information on the quality assurance process).

Being responsive to the evaluation team helps minimize surprises and lays a foundation of mutual trust and respect. Evaluation managers may not have an answer for every question, but they can take a lead on finding answers. It is important that evaluation managers are aware of the potential risks to the conduct of an evaluation and plan in advance to mitigate or minimize them (see Table 3 for suggestions).
Table 3. Common risks to evaluation conduct and mitigation strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common risks</th>
<th>Necessary actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluator(s) prove incompetent, lack gender equality and human rights expertise, or display inappropriate ethics or attitude</td>
<td>Discuss with regional evaluation specialist, human resources, and procurement the implications and determine the course of action. It may be necessary to end the contract if the team is unable to deliver or exhibiting inappropriate behavior. Corrective actions could also be taken such as adding expertise to the team. However, it would be inappropriate for UN Women to terminate a contract if, for example, stakeholders are not happy with the findings of the evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders are alienated by the evaluation team</td>
<td>Identify culturally appropriate ways for engaging stakeholders as part of the inception report. Make sure initial communications are set up well. Test the team’s sensitivity to cultural, social and local norms. Discuss with the team and identify how to meaningfully engage with stakeholders that may feel alienated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidentiality has not been respected</td>
<td>Confidentiality must be respected. Warn the team if this issue emerges and follow-up as needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation team does not meet the ToR, but claims they have</td>
<td>This is a contractual agreement, and any change from the ToR has to be agreed by all in advance. Consult human resources and/or procurement for more advice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time proves too short, budget proves too low</td>
<td>Invest time and energy in discussing the ToR during the initial phase so that the evaluation design matches the time frame and budget available. During the conduct of the evaluation, look for ways to modify design, methods or sampling to reduce time and costs. As a last resort, ask for more funds or an extension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme logic was missing</td>
<td>Go to the source, reconstruct or add alternative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no baseline</td>
<td>Invest time and energy in discussing the ToR during the initial phase and reconstruct the baseline where possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information is taboo or withheld by stakeholders</td>
<td>Provide reassurance about confidentiality. Ensure that data collection strategies are sensitive to cultural norms, language and accessibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information is withheld by the evaluator</td>
<td>Ensure the contract is clear about ownership. This is a UN Women evaluation and thus all information collected is property of UN Women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation team does not integrate comments provided</td>
<td>While the team is external and should act independently, the ToR must explicitly mention that comments provided by the reference and management groups, in particular the regional evaluation specialist, are aimed at methodological rigor, factual errors, errors of interpretation, or omission of information and must be considered by the evaluator(s) to ensure a high-quality product. The final evaluation report should reflect the evaluator’s consideration of the comments and acknowledge any substantive disagreements. Also provide the team with Tool 14. GERAAS evaluation report quality assessment checklist.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


B. INCEPTION PHASE

The inception phase is a key initial phase of the evaluation process. It helps to forge a common understanding between the UN Women evaluation manager and the evaluator or team on the full design of the evaluation and how it will be implemented.29

The inception phase is an opportunity to further clarify the ToR and any areas of uncertainty in relation to the scope. The inception phase also provides an opportunity to clarify the process, resource requirements and time frame for deliverables. It is also important to discuss the accessibility of the information and the data, and alternative methods if data is unavailable.

Inception meetings

The inception phase should benefit from meetings with the evaluation manager and management and reference groups, as appropriate. These can take place over the phone, via Skype or in person, resources allowing. Inception meetings are an opportunity for the evaluator(s) to introduce themselves and to gain clarity on the programme and context in which the evaluation will take place. They also allow stakeholders to have preliminary contact with the evaluator(s), introduce the purpose and approach of the evaluation, and facilitate further exchange during data collection.

For larger evaluations, a visit by the evaluation team to the programme or project site(s) may be undertaken in advance of the data collection. The information gathered during the visit will be used to make final decisions on the evaluation approach and to pilot test the data collection instruments and validate or modify stakeholder analysis. Hence, enough time should be allocated between any visits and the finalization of the inception report. Prior to conducting any site visits, the evaluator(s) should meet with the evaluation manager to discuss the process, methodology and questions or issues to be addressed in the visit.

Inception report

The inception phase culminates in an inception report produced by the evaluator(s), which is subject to rigorous reviews and approval. The inception report is a key document that serves as a road map for managing the overall evaluation process. The inception report is largely prepared on the grounds of the outcomes of the inception meetings between the evaluator(s) and the evaluation manager.

29 Note that the inception phase is a negotiation phase as well because moving forward it will serve as a road map for the evaluation process.
and evaluation management and reference group members. It also benefits from the preliminary review of relevant documentation and consultation with relevant staff and stakeholders.

The inception report seeks to enhance the understanding of the evaluator(s) by providing an answer to what is going to be evaluated and how. It includes the following:

- Proposed methods and analysis frameworks (including causal or contribution and gender and human rights analysis)
- Data collection procedures and sources
- Results of an evaluability assessment
- Review of documentation, scoping conducted, and programme theory or theory of change
- A work plan with associated activities, deliverables, timetable, roles and responsibilities, as well as travel and logistical arrangements for the evaluation

The inception report should be very clear on how the evaluation team will report to and engage with the evaluation manager and management and reference groups throughout the evaluation process. The inception report should comply with UNEG Norms and Standards and the UN Women Evaluation Policy and be guided by UNEG guidance document “Integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluation”. Box 14 proposes an outline for an inception report.

**Evaluation matrix**

The evaluation matrix is an integral part of the inception report (Tool 8. Evaluation matrix template). The evaluation matrix summarizes the key aspects of the evaluation exercise by specifying what will be evaluated and how. The matrix includes the evaluation criteria, main evaluation questions with all the corresponding sub-evaluation questions, indicators for measuring progress, required data, data sources, and data collection methods. It has to be noted that the evaluation matrix is a living document and will be subject to modification and amendment as the evaluation progresses. However, any modification to the evaluation matrix should be made in consultation with the UN Women evaluation manager.

---

30 The evaluability assessment can be done as a separate process or as part of the inception or preparatory phase of an evaluation. The evaluability assessment will help to identify shortcomings and their implications for the evaluation. Please refer to Chapter 4 and Tool 14. GERAAS evaluation report quality assessment checklist.
Quality assurance of the inception report

The inception report should undergo various quality assurance, review and approval processes (Tool 1. Evaluation process standards for decentralized evaluation). Quality assurance must address the appropriateness of the proposed evaluation design, methodology and data collection instruments. It also examines the structure and clarity of reporting, proposed mechanisms to assure confidentiality of data.

Box 14. Outline of inception report

I. Introduction
   • Background and context
   • Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation
   • Theory of change or programme theory

II. Methodology
   • Evaluation criteria and elaboration of key questions
   • Indicators for measuring results (should be based on programme indicators)
   • Evaluation design (method of data collection and analysis)
   • Sample and sampling design
   • Limitations to the evaluation

III. Evaluation matrix
   • Summarizes the key aspects of the evaluation exercise by specifying what will be evaluated and how

IV. Work plan

V. Responsibilities, logistics and support

VI. Annexes
   • Documents reviewed
   • Draft data collection instruments (questionnaires and interview guides, lists of evaluation team members and contact details).
   • Terms of reference
   • Evaluation management and reference group members
and information, engagement of stakeholders, adherence to evaluation quality standards, and integration of gender equality and human rights principles in the design of the evaluation \(^{31}\) (see Chapter 6 for details on the UN Women quality assurance process). Stakeholders should be given one to two weeks to provide feedback.

The UN Women evaluation manager in coordination with the evaluation management group (see Chapter 4 for description of roles and responsibilities) should approve the final inception report before the evaluation team undertakes any primary data collection. Once approved, the inception report replaces the ToR as a key reference document and will form the basis for guiding the entire evaluation process through its finalization. Roles and responsibilities for quality assurance of the inception report are outlined in Table 4 and Figure 8.

### Table 4. Roles and responsibilities for inception report

| Evaluation team | • Prepares the inception report, which should reflect an agreed-upon approach and design for the evaluation from the perspective of both the evaluation team and the evaluation manager. |
| Evaluation manager | • Conducts a preliminary assessment of the quality of the report. If it is not of good quality, it should be sent back to the evaluation team.  
• Provides substantive comments on the conceptual and methodological approach and other aspects of the evaluation design.  
• Establishes mechanisms for communication, consultation and presentation of the report (Skype, phone, video-conference, e-mail, and where possible, workshops or meetings).  
• Coordinates feedback on the draft and final report, using Tool 7. Evaluation product comment template, from the regional evaluation specialist, management and reference groups. |
| Evaluation management and reference groups (including the regional evaluation specialist) | • Provides substantive comments and other operational assistance throughout the preparation of the draft and final inception reports.  
• Where appropriate, participates in meetings and workshops with other key partners and stakeholders before finalization of the inception report. |

\(^{31}\) Participation and inclusion are key building-blocks of any evaluation in UN Women, therein, where appropriate, consultation with key stakeholders starting from the inception phase is highly encouraged to potentially increase the utility of the evaluation results.

C. DATA COLLECTION

Upon approval of the inception report, the evaluation team can begin collecting data. The evaluation manager should provide logistical support to the evaluator(s) to facilitate data collection. However, with the exception of self-evaluation or participatory data collection activities, the UN Women evaluation manager and programme staff should not participate in data collection activities (i.e., accompany the evaluator on individual interviews), as this would interfere with the impartiality of the process. The evaluator(s) are responsible for addressing translation needs, if necessary.

In order to maximize stakeholder participation and ensure a gender-responsive evaluation, the evaluation manager should support the evaluator(s) during data collection in the following ways:

- Consult partners regarding the evaluation and the proposed schedule for data collection
- Arrange for a debriefing by the evaluator(s) prior to completion of data collection to present preliminary and emerging findings or gaps in information to the evaluation manager, evaluation management and reference groups
- Ensure the stakeholders identified through the stakeholder analysis are being included, in particular the most vulnerable or difficult to reach, and provide logistical support as necessary contacting stakeholders and arranging for transportation.
• Ensure that a gender equality and human rights perspective is streamlined throughout the approach, and that the evaluator(s) is abiding by the ethical principles outlined in Chapter 4 and Box 15.

Data collection should follow the approach outlined in the inception report. If it is necessary to change the evaluation activities during the course of the evaluation, changes should be discussed with the evaluation manager and management group. Any changes made to the approach or data collection tools could introduce systematic error or bias and thus compromise findings. Thus it is necessary to weigh the benefits of these changes with the disadvantages.

### Box 15.

**Ethical considerations for data collection**

Specific safeguards must be put in place to protect the safety (both physical and psychological) of both respondents and those collecting the data.

Some steps that UN Women should take including ensuring:

- A plan is in place to protect the rights of the respondent, including privacy and confidentiality
- The interviewer or data collector is trained in collecting sensitive information, and if the topic of the evaluation is focused on violence against women, they should have previous experience in this area
- Data collection tools are designed in a way that are culturally appropriate and do not create distress for respondents
- Data collection visits are organized at the appropriate time and place so as to minimize risk to respondents
- The interviewer or data collector is able to provide information on how individuals in situations of risk can seek support

### Ensuring high-quality evaluation data

The UN Women evaluation manager should keep in mind the quality of programme data available for an evaluation and how it will impact the collection of evaluation data. Often, there is no programme theory of change or limited baseline information, there is a high turnover of staff during the lifetime of a programme, monitoring systems are not in place or are weak, and resources and capacities are
not adequate to maintain strong quality of data. In these situations, the evaluator needs to take steps to ensure that they have an accurate understanding of the programme and are developing evaluation data collection tools that accurately measure the programme’s progress.

Gender-responsive evaluations also require cultural sensitivity to ensure high quality of data and validity. A clear understanding of cultures and values will ensure that appropriate data collection methods and tools are developed (see Box 16). In particular, the evaluator should: identify the complexity of cultural identities, identify power dynamics between and within different groups, and be cognizant of the use of language. Engaging with the reference group and groups who are the focus of data to consider multiple perspectives when interpreting findings will contribute to a culturally appropriate evaluation. However, it is the evaluation manager’s responsibility to ensure that a safe place for reflection and free and meaningful participation is created.

**Box 16. Validity and reliability**

The evaluator may refer to the “validity and reliability of data”, which applies to both qualitative and quantitative data. High validity and reliability of data will strengthen the confidence in the evaluation findings.

**Validity** refers to the accuracy of the data, i.e., whether or not data collection tools are measuring what they are intended to measure.

**Reliability** refers to the extent to which the same findings would result after utilizing the same method of data collection multiple times.

There are multiple methods for ensuring that data collection tools exhibit high validity and reliability. For example, to ensure reliability, the tool can be tested multiple times on the same individual; the tool can be administered by multiple administrators; or the tool could contain multiple questions that are aimed at answering the same question. The evaluator should test data collection tools to ensure high validity and reliability.

The evaluation manager should ensure the evaluator(s) takes the following into account:

- If a theory of change or baseline does not exist, the evaluator can reconstruct these through stakeholder workshops
- Cultural aspects that could impact the collection of data should be analysed and integrated into data collection methods and tools
- There should be adequate time for testing data collection tools
- The limitations of the data should be understood and generalizing findings should be avoided unless a strong random sample was taken
- Use multiple methods of data collection and analysis (triangulation), which allows for validation across the multiple methods and sources
- Validate findings through engagement with stakeholders at stakeholder workshops, debriefings or other form of engagement

**D. ANALYSIS AND INTERIM REPORTING**

Analysis of information and data occurs throughout the conduct stage. However, once all information and data has been collected, a different analytical process is undertaken. This involves the systematic organization, comparison and synthesis of information and data derived across and through all methods. The analysis includes an assessment of what the information is saying about each of the evaluation questions. Evaluations triangulate information using various methods of data collection and sources of information in order to ensure robust findings. Ultimately, evaluators must make judgments based on the evidence. The evaluation report should describe the analytical process undertaken and the underlying rationale for judgments made.

Gender-responsive evaluations use a gender analysis framework, a systematic approach to examining factors related to gender that assesses and promotes gender equality issues and provides an analysis of the structures of political and social control that create gender equality. This technique ensures that the data collected is analysed in the following ways:

- Determining the claims of rights holders and obligations of duty bearers
- Assessing the extent to which the intervention was guided by the relevant international (national and regional) normative frameworks for gender
equality and women’s rights, UN system-wide mandates and organizational objectives

- Comparing with existing information on the situation of human rights and gender equality in the community, country, etc. (see Box 17 for resources)

- Identifying trends, common responses and differences between groups of stakeholders (disaggregation of data), for example, through the use of graphs or illustrative quotes (that do not allow for identification of the individual)

- Integrating into the analysis the context, relationships, power dynamics, etc.

- Analysing the structures that contribute to inequalities experienced by women, men, girls and boys, especially those experiencing multiple forms of exclusion

- Assessing the extent to which participation and inclusiveness (with respect to rights holders and duty bearers) was maximized in the interventions planning, design, implementation and decision-making processes

- Triangulating information to identify similarities and/or discrepancies in data obtained in different ways (i.e., interviews, focus groups, observations, etc.) and from different stakeholders (e.g., duty bearers, rights holders, etc.)

- Identifying the context behind the numbers and people (using case studies to illustrate broader findings or to go into more depth on an issue)

- Comparing the results obtained with the original plan (e.g., through the application of the evaluation matrix)

- Assessing the extent to which sustainability was built into the intervention through the empowerment and capacity building of women and groups of rights holders and duty bearers

The preliminary findings obtained through this process should be validated through a stakeholder workshop with evaluation management and reference groups towards the end of the primary data collection stage. This could also happen as part of the end of visit debriefing. This interim reporting of findings by the evaluation team will build understanding as the evaluation process is underway and lead to greater buy-in and use of evaluation results, but needs to have been built into the ToR, the inception report and the evaluation team’s work plan. This is an opportunity for the team to field the emerging trends from primary data collection against the reactions of the reference group, as the reference group may be able to provide further information, point out
key gaps in data, errors of interpretation and validate the findings. The draft evaluation report will address any issues identified through the stakeholder validation workshop.

Box 17. Resources for data on gender equality and human rights

- UN Statistics – Gender Statistics: http://genderstats.org/
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Social Institutions and Gender Index: http://genderindex.org/
- A listing of UN reports, databases and archives relating to gender equality and women’s human rights can be found at: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/directory/statistics_and_indicators_60.htm
CONDUCT STAGE

INCEPTION REPORT:

Did the M&E officer/evaluation manager quality assure the inception report? Yes ☐ No ☐

Was the draft and final inception report shared with the regional evaluation specialist for quality review? Yes ☐ No ☐

Was the draft and final inception report shared with the evaluation reference and management groups for quality review? Yes ☐ No ☐

Was the final inception report approved by the country representative/deputy representative? Yes ☐ No ☐


UN Women Virtual Knowledge Centre: [http://www.endvawnow.org/](http://www.endvawnow.org/)


Tool 1. Evaluation process standards for decentralized evaluation

Tool 7. Evaluation product comment template

Tool 8. Evaluation matrix template


UNEG: [http://unevaluation.org/](http://unevaluation.org/)
  - Integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluations
  - Norms for Evaluation in the UN System
  - Standards for Evaluation in the UN System
  - Quality checklist for evaluation ToR and inception report

  - Evaluation Policy
  - POM, Chapter 5 Evaluation