Tool 5.
How to conduct an evaluability assessment

1. Introduction

The purpose of this tool is to support programme managers in conducting an evaluability assessment to determine the feasibility of an evaluation and improve the effectiveness of programmes and future evaluations. The tool will explain what an evaluability assessment is, the purpose, when and how to conduct one, what the focus should be, and what to do after the evaluability assessment.

2. What is an evaluability assessment?

An evaluability assessment is a systematic process that helps identify whether or not an intervention is in a condition to be evaluated, and whether or not the evaluation is justified, feasible and likely to provide useful information. It not only shows whether or not a programme can be meaningfully evaluated, but also whether or not conducting the evaluation is likely to contribute to improved programme performance and management. Its purpose is to determine whether or not the evaluation is to be undertaken and to prepare the programme to generate all the conditions necessary for an evaluation. An evaluability assessment is not considered to be an evaluation but rather a review. It can be conducted internally, or a consultant with a background in evaluation and gender analysis can be hired to conduct it.

3. Purposes and value of an evaluability assessment

The purpose of an evaluability assessment for programme managers includes:

- Assessing the readiness for an evaluation to take place at a later stage and whether or not a programme is evaluable.
- Analyzing whether or not an evaluation is worthwhile in terms of benefits, utility and costs.
- Identifying the needed changes to be made.
- Formulating recommendations on the purpose, scope, timing and design of an evaluation to take place at later stage (e.g., what types of evaluation).
The value of an evaluability assessment for programme managers includes:

• Clarifying programme goals and objectives.
• Clarifying roles and responsibilities among stakeholders.
• Assessing the feasibility of the programme goals and objectives.
• Identifying programme priorities.
• Improving programme performance.
• Saving programme resources by making improvements in a timely manner and forestalling expensive evaluations of a programme that is not ready to be evaluated.
• Facilitating the development of a learning organization.

4. Common issues that render a programme “unevaluable”

An evaluability assessment can save time and money for UN Women by determining whether or not an evaluation is feasible and appropriate and assist in the planning and preparation of an evaluation. Evaluability assessments can identify areas where evaluability is weak and provide recommendations on how it can be improved prior to the evaluation process. An evaluability assessment can not only conclude if an evaluation can be undertaken or not, but also identify steps a programme or evaluation can take to address issues raised by the assessment.

After an evaluability assessment is conducted, the following conclusions can be drawn:

• **The programme is ready for an evaluation.** The evaluability assessment will inform the evaluation design and may recommend corrective actions to enable an evaluation. It may also suggest some of the parameters for the evaluation.

• **The assessment identifies issues with the evaluability of the programme.** Shortcomings in the programme’s design or implementation will often affect the programme evaluability. The evaluability assessment should identify what can be done to ensure evaluability and recommend how an evaluation can deal with these issues. For example, if there is no theory of change, the evaluation can reconstruct one for the purpose of the evaluation.
5. How to conduct an evaluability assessment

Duration
An evaluability assessment can take several days, weeks or months to complete depending on the time available and efforts. Ideally, programme managers should aim to have it completed quickly and it should not require a lot of resources.

External or internal evaluator?
While an evaluability assessment can be conducted by a programme staff member who is knowledgeable about evaluation, it is usually most successfully conducted by a professional evaluator. It is important to keep in mind that the person performing the evaluability assessment should have a strong background in evaluation and gender equality.

Key principles of evaluability assessment
The key principles of the evaluability assessment are: formative (i.e., the evaluability assessment should be conducted at early stage in the programme); learning; and engaging stakeholders.
Gender equality and human rights considerations

All evaluability assessments should examine if human rights and gender equality are integrated into an intervention, regardless of whether or not the intervention is targeting these issues. For example:

- If gender equality and/or human rights analyses and disaggregated data (e.g., sex, class, or ethnicity) are available and attention was given to these in the programme theory and design, it will facilitate including gender equality and human rights in an evaluation in a cost-effective manner.

- If gender equality and/or human rights were not considered in the design and implementation of the intervention and no disaggregated information is available, evaluators will need to identify and gather additional data in order to assess the gender equality and human rights dimensions of the intervention.

Methodology

An evaluability assessment is a qualitative analysis. Typical evaluability assessment methodologies include: desk review and qualitative data collection through individual interviews, focus group discussions and stakeholder workshops.

The programme documents should be ready for review, and staff should be ready to be interviewed. It is necessary for an evaluator to look at all of the programme pieces to fully understand what a programme does on day-to-day basis.

Evaluability assessment steps

Like other evaluations, an evaluability assessment comprises the following key steps: 1) preparation; 2) conduct; and 3) use.

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5 Rosse et al define an evaluability assessment as “a qualitative analysis of a project, programme or plan to determine whether it meets the preconditions for its evaluation and, if so, how the evaluation should be designed to ensure maximum utility.”
6. Focus of an evaluability assessment

Decide the scope of the evaluability assessment

If staffing is available, the programme should form an evaluability assessment working group or team composed of implementation staff responsible for programme management, as well as stakeholders and the person conducting the evaluability assessment. The first activity of the team should be to identify the scope of the evaluability assessment, the parameters of the programme, and the individuals to be interviewed.

In order to identify the scope of the evaluability assessment, the following focus for evaluability assessments are helpful:

- Theory of change/logic model
- Existence and availability of relevant information
The evaluability assessment should examine:

Theory of change/logic model (examine programme relevance, appropriateness and coherence)

- Does the programme clearly identify the problem and target population (context analysis)?
- Are gender inequality factors and women’s needs clearly and explicitly identified?
- Does the programme have a clear strategic intent and a theory of change?
- Does the programme have clear goals, objectives and results?
- Does the programme articulate levels of activities, financial resources, results and strategies?

Existence and availability of relevant information (examine programme accessibility and adequacy)

- Does the programme have enough information on the intervention and the context?
- Does the programme have SMART indicators?
- Does the programme have baseline information?
- Does the programme have a monitoring system to gather and systematize information with defined responsibilities, resources and periodicity?
- What kind of information on women’s rights is accessible and how is it or will it be collected?

Conduciveness of the context (examine stakeholder involvement, resource and capacity, and socio-political conduciveness)

- What is the level of stakeholders’ involvement and their perspectives towards the programme?
- Does the programme have resources and capacities to undertake the evaluation (i.e., budget, time, technical knowledge)?
- How is the adequacy of the institutional and socio-political context (e.g., evaluation culture, groups of interest that could influence the independence of the evaluation, etc.)?
Accountability (management structure, monitoring and reporting, ownership and leadership)

- Does the programme have a clear management structure?
- Do partners have their responsibilities, accountabilities and ownership of the programme?
- Does the programme have a transparent performance monitoring and reporting system?

Table T3. Evaluability assessment focus areas and criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of focus</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ToC/Logic model</td>
<td>Relevance, Appropriateness, Coherence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Existence and availability of relevant information</td>
<td>Accessibility, Adequacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conduciveness of context</td>
<td>Stakeholder involvement, Availability,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Socio-political conduciveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Clear management structure and responsibilities,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Transparent monitoring and reporting of performance,</td>
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<td>Existence of ownership and leadership in national and civil society partners</td>
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7. What to do after evaluability assessment

By conducting an evaluability assessment, an office can save a great deal of time and money by determining whether or not an evaluation is feasible and appropriate. On rare occasions, an evaluability assessment will identify major issues with the programme that render the programme not ready for evaluation or “unevaluable”.

An evaluability assessment begins the evaluation process by carrying out a preliminary assessment of the programme design and implementation. At its conclusion, the assessment will identify steps necessary in order to prepare for an evaluation. It is in UN Women’s best interest to either invest the time and funds necessary to hire external consultants to conduct an evaluability assessment or to have one conducted internally by the respective office.