Real-time evaluations of humanitarian action

An ALNAP Guide
Pilot Version

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Evaluators interviewing a group from the affected population during a real-time evaluation in Mozambique.

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Any errors in this guide are the responsibility of the authors and not of the peer reviewers. This pilot version builds on an earlier draft by Tony Beck and Ben Ramalingam, and on an initial paper by Emery Brusset (2007).

This is a pilot version of this guide, so feedback to the ALNAP secretariat would be most welcome, especially as reviewers were divided on some aspects of the guide, such as the format and length. ALNAP is especially keen to learn how the guide is used, and to gather practical examples for future versions of the guide, as well as concrete suggestions for improvements. ALNAP would be happy to receive examples of other tools that can be used in real-time evaluation. Please send any ideas and feedback to alnap@alnap.org.

Introduction
What is in this guide

This pilot guide is intended to help both evaluation managers and team leaders in commissioning, overseeing and conducting real-time evaluations (RTEs) of humanitarian operational responses. Drawing on a synthesis of existing good practices, it is intended as a flexible resource that can be adapted to a variety of contexts.

This guide concentrates on RTEs undertaken in first phase of an emergency response – where the RTE fieldwork takes place within a few months of the start of the response. This is because such RTEs pose particular problems for both the evaluation manager and the evaluation team. RTEs that take place later on in the response are closer to ex-post humanitarian evaluations, but this guide also addresses how such RTEs can feed into ongoing operations.

The focus of this guide is therefore on what is distinctive about humanitarian RTEs. It does not offer advice on evaluation methodologies in general, but on specific aspects of methodology which make RTEs unique and different. Nevertheless some of the advice will apply to all evaluations and not just to RTEs. This is motivated partly by the authors' observations of areas of weakness in existing evaluations.

Fig. 1 Chronological order of the tasks for manager and team

Section I:
Guidance for evaluation managers Steps 1–8

Section II:
Guidance for evaluation teams Steps 1–8

- Manager Step 1: Deciding to do an RTE
- Manager Step 2: Refining the standard terms of reference
- Manager Step 3: Planning and budget
- Manager Step 4: Selecting the team
- Team Step 1: Planning the fieldwork
- Team Step 2: Drafting an interview guide
- Team Step 3: Writing the inception report
- Manager Step 5: Reviewing the inception report
- Team Step 4: Conducting the fieldwork
- Team Step 5: The chain of evidence
- Team Step 6: Recommendations
- Team Step 7: Writing the report
- Team step 8: Feeding back in the field
- Manager Step 6: Reviewing the report
- Manager Step 7: The management response
- Manager Step 8: Dissemination and use

This guide contains three sections, which can be used separately or together. Section I offers guidance for evaluation managers running RTEs. Section II is guidance for evaluation teams undertaking RTEs. These two sections are each set out as a series of eight chronological steps. For a 'typical' RTE, the steps contained in Sections I and II would fit together in the sequence shown in Figure 1, which can serve as a checklist for an RTE.

Section III consists of 25 tools and techniques designed to help both evaluation managers and teams working through their respective steps. These tools are of three types: 'general resources', such as standard terms of reference and sample interview guides; 'data recording tools', including logs for interviews and for keeping track of issues, evidence, and findings; and 'checklists' for different aspects of RTE work. Throughout the guide, the steps are cross-referenced with the relevant tools. The tools and techniques provided in Section III are listed in Figure 2.

Fig. 2 Tools and techniques included in Section III of this guide

General resources
- Standard terms of reference
- Alternative humanitarian evaluation criteria
- Why do an RTE?
- Top ten reasons for doing an RTE
- Replies to ten reasons not to do an RTE
- Examples of previous evaluations
- Terms of reference for an advisory group
- A sample interview guide
- Facilitating an after-action review
- Focus group interviews for RTEs
- A focus group discussion guide
- Multi-agency response tool
- IASC guidelines on interagency RTE

Data recording tools
- Issues, evidence, findings, conclusions, recommendations tool
- Persons met tool: recording contacts and interviews
- Tool for listing group meetings
- Evaluation team itinerary tool
- Reference recording tool

Checklists
- Evaluator selection
- Feedback workshop
- Inception report
- Evaluation report
- Executive summary
- Report methodology chapter
- Interagency RTE

Together, these three sections are intended to offer solid, practically grounded advice and suggestions on how to hold effective RTEs in humanitarian contexts. Some experienced evaluators will find that they already use many of the ideas and methods included in this guide and may prefer to use the guide for dipping into. Other evaluators may prefer to work through the sections in detail. The many links and cross-references in this guide are intended to help different readers to use it in different ways.

Real-time evaluation is probably one of the most demanding types of evaluation practice, requiring not only a wide range of skills from evaluators but also a tightly focused professional approach in order to meet the time demands of an RTE. However, RTEs are not about doing regular evaluation work faster. Approaches in RTEs must be different from those in regular evaluations because of the limited time available to make an evaluative judgement.

Key to information boxes

Different types of boxes highlight different kinds of information in this guide.

Narrative boxes provide scenarios to help contextualise the information in the guide, for example: 'It is 7pm. You are just about to leave the office where you have been finishing a proposal that has to be in HQ by start of business tomorrow. You get a phone call from a colleague in the west of the country: there has been a major disaster involving tens of thousands of people, and they need assistance...'

Tip boxes provide suggestions, for example on how to organise particular activities or use particular techniques.

▶ Link boxes suggest other Steps or Tools that might be relevant to the activity being described.

Definition boxes provide definitions of terms used in the guide.

Section I
Guidance for Evaluation Managers

Manager Step 1 Deciding to do an RTE

What is an RTE?

As with all forms of research, RTEs are intended to construct knowledge. This constructed knowledge can improve ongoing operational decision making, either through learning broader lessons, or by a narrower observation of the performance of the current operation, or both.

RTEs are potentially most effective at the early stages of a response, as this is the phase when they can have the greatest influence on operations. Early-stage RTEs can also capture the experience of those dealing with the initial part of a response. They can also be effective at times of programme transition and of internally or externally driven change. RTEs are participatory in that they are interactive. The evaluation team discusses emerging findings with the country team and takes account of the country team's views in the evaluation report.[1]

A **real-time evaluation (RTE)** is an evaluation in which the primary objective is to provide feedback in a participatory way in real time (i.e. during the evaluation fieldwork) to those executing and managing the humanitarian response.

Note

[1] Where the evaluation team does not agree with the country team's view, this taking account may simply include recording this view and the reasons why the evaluation team does not agree with it.

RTEs are a useful tool for managing organisational risk in major operations or during periods of organisational change. They may also be used to provide head office or operational management with an overview of the whole operation that is not readily accessible from the ongoing flow of monitoring information and reports. They can also be used to check compliance with broader standards such as codes of conduct, agency policies on cross-cutting issues, or the real-time progress of reform initiatives.

RTEs are usually light exercises carried out by an evaluation team of one to four people. The evaluation team acts as the 'stranger who sees more' because of its distance from day-to-day activities. The team can be wholly internal, external or mixed. At the time of writing (early 2009), about ten international humanitarian agencies are using RTEs on a regular basis.

▶ Many leading humanitarian agencies use RTEs. See Tool 6: Examples of previous RTEs, in Section III, Tools and techniques.

For FAO the term RTE refers to a series of iterative evaluations. This is quite a useful format for agencies like FAO where the emergency response can last several years, as agricultural livelihoods are restored. Here, the key is that the evaluations are iterative rather than providing immediate feedback in the field.

What distinguishes an RTE from a regular evaluation?

The fundamental differences between an RTE and a regular evaluation of humanitarian action are two-fold: the timeframe and the audience.

1. Timeframe: the RTE team should deliver its report, or a substantive early draft of it, in the field before leaving the field.

2 Audience: the primary audience for an RTE is the agency staff implementing and managing the emergency response at different levels, including the field and national, regional, and global headquarters.

The intended use and focus of RTEs also distinguishes them from other evaluations.

- RTEs look at today to influence this week's programming
- mid-term evaluations look at the first phase to influence programming in the second phase
- ex-post evaluations are retrospective: they look at the past to learn from it.

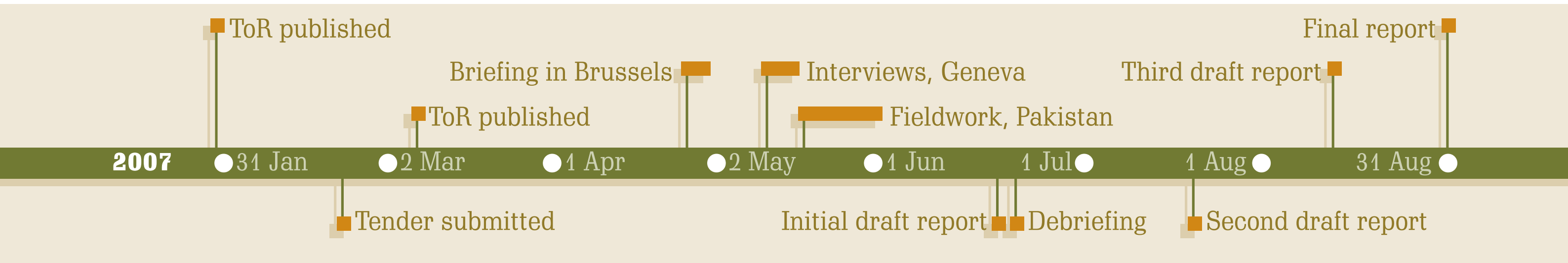
RTEs in the early stages of a response have to be mounted with very short lead-times. Unexpected programme changes that trigger RTEs can also lead to short lead-times for the RTE. Short-lead-time RTEs are the most challenging type of RTE to manage, and so this guide concentrates on them.

Although fieldwork is typically only two or three weeks for most humanitarian evaluations, the whole process from developing the terms of reference to finalising the evaluation report can take up to eight months, as Figure 3 shows.[2]

Note

[2] Note that this example does not show the time taken to agree the ToR with the desk or country programme.

Fig. 3 Timeline for an evaluation of humanitarian assistance



A lengthy period before the start of fieldwork is good practice, as it allows full consultation on the terms of reference and allows the evaluation manager to select from a wider range of teams.[3] A longer lead time also allows for more consultation with the field on how the evaluation can best fit in with the planned work of the operational programme or project. After the fieldwork, the final report may also take time because of the time taken to receive and process comments.

However, for a short-lead-time RTE the evaluation manager has to get a team in the field far quicker than for a typical evaluation.[4] Because RTEs have a clear focus on providing feedback to operational staff, the evaluation team cannot take months to refine and hone its report, but must deliver a substantial product before leaving the field.

Notes

[3] Conversely, evaluations with shorter lead times have to draw from a restricted pool of evaluators.

[4] The time it takes to go through the recruitment procedure is one reason why UNHCR often uses its own evaluation staff rather than consultants for real-time evaluations (Jamal and Crisp, 2002, p. 5).

This imposes time constraints at both ends of the fieldwork, and means that both the evaluation manager and the evaluation team need to work differently from how they would in a normal evaluation. RTEs need to be planned and managed in a far more disciplined and rigorous way than most humanitarian evaluations, with a greater focus on tight, well-timed processes.

If not well planned and executed, an RTE risks becoming a ‘wrong-time evaluation’ with low levels of acceptance by a busy staff. RTEs are well suited to the fast pace of decision making within the humanitarian sector, where they can bring a strong strategic focus at a critical stage of the response.

Triggers for starting an RTE

The time pressure on RTEs also means that normal processes for deciding to do an evaluation will be too slow for short-lead-time RTEs. Evaluation managers in agencies therefore need to get institutional agreement in advance to undertake an RTE whenever specific ‘triggers’ occur.
The following external changes are possible triggers for RTEs.

- A large new humanitarian response in a country in which the agency has had limited or no operational experience. An example here would be a new programme in response to a conflict or natural disaster.
- Sudden increase in the scale of a programme, in terms of either the population served or the resources committed. An example here would be an existing care and maintenance programme for refugees that suddenly has to cope with large influxes.
- Sudden changes in the nature of a programme. An example here would be the sudden shift from a development programme to a large relief operation following a natural disaster.
- Concern that cross-cutting issues such as gender or protection are being ignored in the heat of operations.
- Warning signs from project monitoring, such as unexplained sudden increases in indicators like malnutrition or child mortality.

A number of internal events can also be seen as possible triggers (although some of these might instead trigger a more conventional review or evaluation).

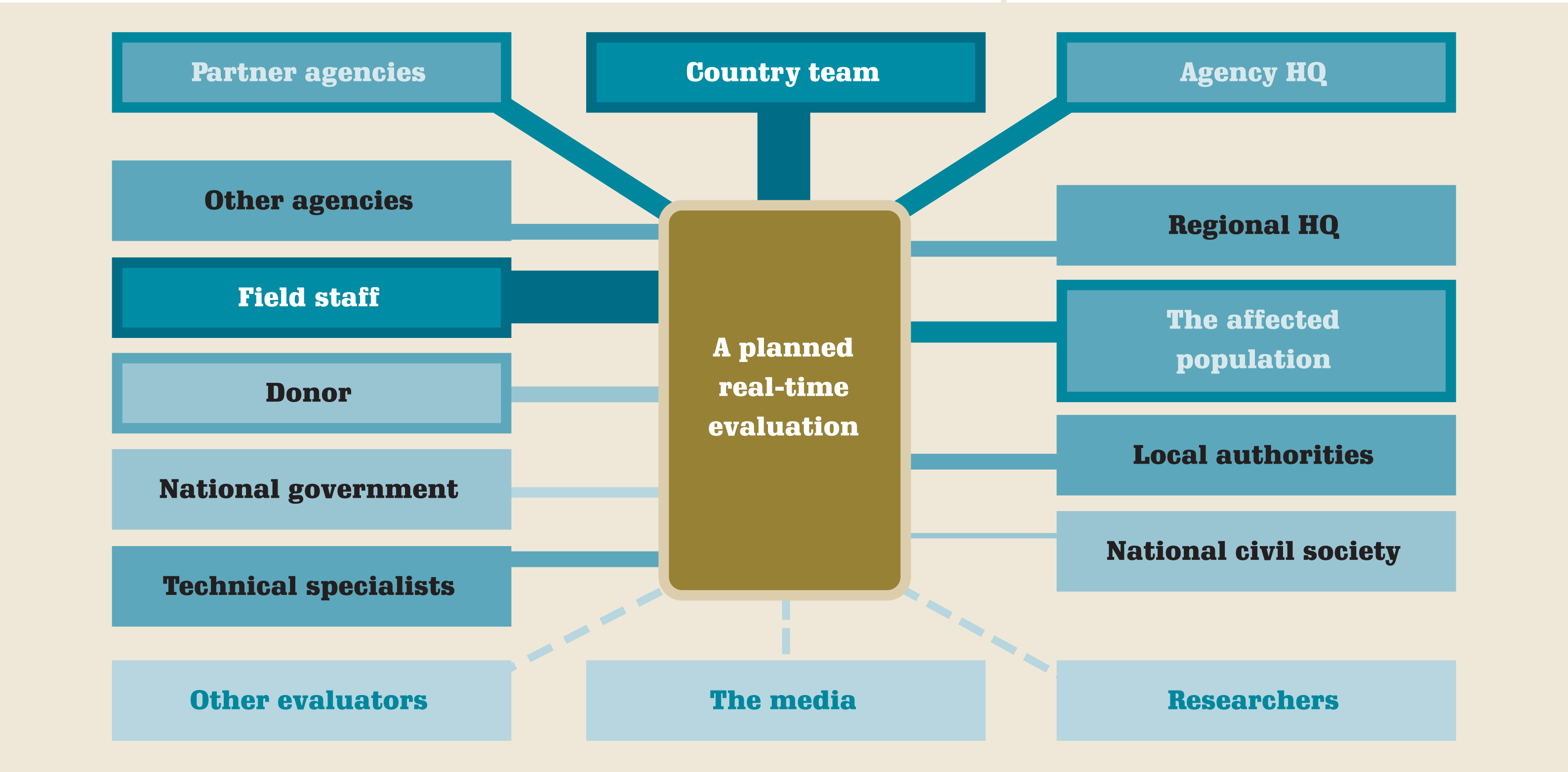
- Upcoming agency decisions on programme direction (e.g. geographical expansion, sectoral extension, curtailment or phasing out).
- Unresolved issues that provoke a lots of discussion within an agency and need research to resolve them (e.g. will refugees begin to return immediately, or will they wait for the official repatriation?).
- The introduction of new approaches by agencies (for example, if an agency is supporting host families taking in IDPs for the first time, it would be useful to have a quick RTE to flag up any serious issues).

Triggers can work only if an agency is prepared. Preparation means:

- the agreement of senior management that the agency should, in principle, conduct an RTE when specific conditions are met
- having the capacity in the evaluation office to manage an RTE
- an understanding by field managers that it is agency policy to conduct RTEs, and of the advantages that they can bring; this needs constant advocacy at annual programme meetings and other fora to present RTEs
- having a standard terms of reference that can be quickly adjusted
- maintaining a roster of consultants competent to carry out an RTE
- agreeing a standard follow-up process for RTEs.

Who are the stakeholders in an RTE?

Fig. 4 **A possible stakeholder map for an RTE**



Note Thicker lines indicate a greater stake in the evaluation.

When thinking about any evaluation, it is useful to think about who might have a stake or an interest in that evaluation (Figure 4). RTEs are distinctive because the country team and the field staff have a greater stake in the RTE than they have in other evaluations. This makes it essential that they support the evaluation, or it will become an external review rather than an RTE.

There are three reasons for thinking systematically about the evaluation stakeholders.

1. Some of these stakeholders may be natural supporters of the planned evaluation, and therefore need to be engaged as early as possible.

2 It is important to consider how to address any objections that key stakeholders might raise to the evaluation, and a stakeholder analysis can help to identify possible objecting parties.

3 Effective stakeholder analysis at the outset enables reflection on how different constituencies might use the evaluation findings. This will allow engagement of possible users from the outset – which is central for effective utilisation-focused evaluations.

Why do an RTE?

UNHCR is widely recognised as the innovator of the RTE process, having used some form of RTE as far back as 1991 in Iraq. UNHCR's guidance material sums up the key advantages of RTEs as follows.

Timeliness RTEs bring in an external perspective, analytical capacity and knowledge at a key point in a response. While personnel at headquarters or in the field may be able to carry out such an analysis, they are usually too burdened by the day-to-day management of the response to have time for reflection.

Perspective RTEs reduce the risks that early operational choices bring about critical problems in the longer term. The response to the 2004 tsunami is a case in point. If agencies had conducted RTEs before launching into post-tsunami shelter, some of the potential problems might have been flagged up earlier. 'A study for Sida after the 2004 tsunami noted that the succession of events in major disasters and other serious contingencies often forces decisions "in the field" that have pivotal and lasting effects for the strategic level of emergency response' (Bynander et al., 2005, p. 37).

Interactivity RTEs enable programming to be influenced as it happens, allowing agencies to make key changes at an intermediate point in programming. This implies that there is a virtual contract between the evaluation team and the programme to provide feedback to promote positive change in the programme. RTEs can also facilitate improved communication and understanding between HQ and the field.

What is the difference between RTEs and monitoring?

Evaluation asks not only if operations are in line with plans, but if the plans are appropriate and in line with broader agency policy. Where organisations have a policy of publishing evaluations, RTE can lead to greater accountability for the organisation than is offered by unpublished monitoring reports.

▶ See: Manager Step 8: Dissemination and use, for more about potential users of the evaluation.

▶ Section III provides additional material which can help strengthen the case for doing an RTE – see Tool 3: Why do a real-time evaluation?, Tool 4: Top ten reasons for doing an RTE, Tool 5: Replies to the top ten reasons for not doing an RTE, and Tool 6: Examples of previous RTEs.

Monitoring is a continuing function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing… intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds (OECD/DAC, 2002, pp. 27–28).

References

Bynander, F., Newlove, L.M. & Ramberg, B. (2005) *Sida and the Tsunami of 2004: a Study of Organizational Crisis Response* (Sida Studies in Evaluation 05/02). Stockholm: Sida. Last viewed on 7 September 2008. URL: http://www.crismart.org/upload/Publikationer/Externa/Sida.pdf

OECD/DAC (2002) *Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management.* Paris: OECD/DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation. Last viewed on 21 January 2009. URL: http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/29/21/2754804.pdf

Manager Step 2 Refining the standard terms of reference

This guide devotes a lot of space to the terms of reference because they are one of the evaluation manager's main tools for controlling the focus of the evaluation. Every evaluation has a set of terms of reference (ToR), but a short-lead-time RTE needs to have a draft ToR agreed in advance. This step looks in turn at each essential section of a ToR, offering guidelines and examples.

> A vital part of this step is getting agreement from the field on the terms of reference. Without this, it is doubtful whether there is any value in attempting to conduct an RTE. In some cases it may be necessary for the evaluation manager to visit the field. Such visits not only help to gain support for the RTE but can also help to focus the terms of reference, as emails asking for comments on the ToR often go unanswered.

Agreeing a ToR is far more difficult in multi-agency RTEs. One of the big problems is the tendency for ToRs to balloon as each agency adds in questions of specific interest to them. Given the typical time limits of most evaluations, the greater the number of questions, the smaller the attention that each one can receive.

Intervention background

This section of the ToR should include details about the intervention logic, as well as the structure and substance of the activities carried out and outputs and delivered. It should contain summary details about:

1. the basic facts of the disaster itself
2. the nature of the response to be evaluated.

A paragraph on each aspect will normally be sufficient for an RTE ToR.

> A magnitude 7.6 earthquake struck near Balakot on 8 October 2005. The earthquake caused 75,000 deaths and serious injuries to another 76,000 people. Of those killed, 98% lived in either Pakistan's North West Frontier Province (NWFP) or in Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). The total damage from the earthquake was estimated at US$6.9 billion and strong damage stretched over an area of 28,000 square kilometres.
>
> The disaster was met by a large-scale response. ECHO announced the first funding on the day of the earthquake, and in all made available 49.6 million euros in six separate decisions. ECHO was the fifth-largest funder for the earthquake response, and provided 5.2% of the overall funding for it.

▶ This step is framed around a draft terms of reference using standard evaluation criteria – see Tool 1: Standard terms of reference, in Section III: Tools and techniques.

Evaluation purpose

This section of the ToR should contain details about the intended use of the evaluation, including any operative decisions the evaluation is expected to feed into.

- What is the evaluation intended to do? Is the main focus learning or accountability? (Because of the nature of RTEs the main focus is normally learning, including learning about how well the programme is doing.)
- What is the audience hierarchy? Who is to use the evaluation results and for what?
- What decisions rest on this evaluation?

> This evaluation is intended to review the current operations and especially the compliance of our organisation with the Red Cross/NGO Code of Conduct to learn lessons from our current operations. Field staff and headquarters will use the learning from this evaluation to modify the programme, if appropriate, to increase compliance with the Code. The next phase of our response plan will incorporate lessons from this evaluation.

Stakeholder involvement

This section of the ToR should explain how stakeholders, including field personnel, are expected to participate in the research, reporting and dissemination activities of the evaluation. In particular it should address how the evaluation team is to relate to any steering committee or advisory group.

Given that RTEs take place when personnel are already fully occupied with the emergency response, it is important that the planned engagement of the evaluation team with staff members is clear. It is also vital that the role of the advisory group is clear, for the benefit of both the evaluation team and the advisory group.

▶ See Tool 7: Terms of reference for an advisory group, for an example of how the evaluation team might relate to an advisory group. Tool 1: Standard terms of reference, provides suggested wording on the relationships between the evaluation team, field staff and advisory group.

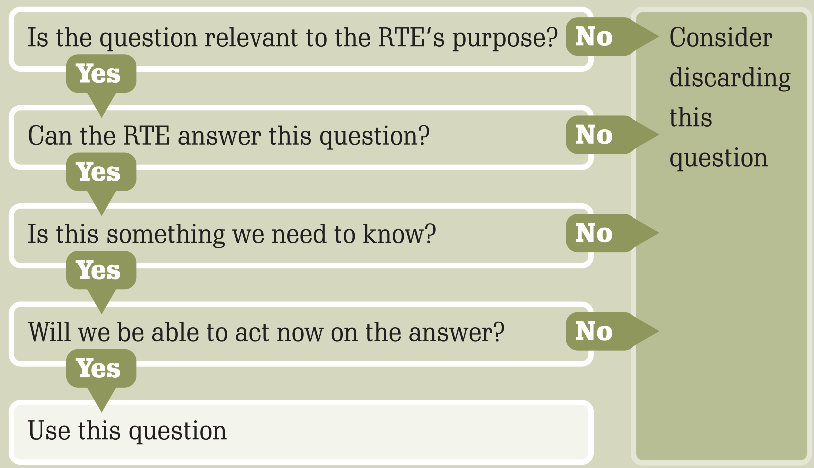
Evaluation questions

The evaluation questions should be listed in the ToR, and based on a set of criteria, policy issues and performance standards that suit the evaluation purpose. Evaluation ToRs often include far too many questions. The number of questions is a particular concern for RTEs, because these may not have the lengthy pre-fieldwork research phase and don't have a lengthy post-fieldwork analysis phase to allow subsidiary questions to be answered.

> A good rule of thumb for the number of evaluation questions is that this should be no more than the number of topics that can be covered in a typical evaluation interview – usually 20 to 25 questions plus a few warm-up questions and closers. Although an evaluation team may use different topic guides for different types of interviewees, the guides generally reflect different ways of asking about the same theme.

As with all research, there is a distinction between knowledge that is interesting and knowledge that has utility in terms of the evaluation purpose.

Use a flowchart to select and refine your questions.



Questions should normally be organised in terms of the evaluation criteria or some other framework. The criteria may vary between evaluations, but a full range of humanitarian evaluation criteria is outlined in the following two sections. Only the criteria of interest should be included – this may be only one or two criteria in some cases. The definitions below are largely derived from ALNAP's guide on evaluating humanitarian action (Beck, 2006).

Evaluation criteria

The traditional (OECD/DAC) evaluation criteria are discussed here, and potential additional criteria are discussed in the next section.

Appropriateness and relevance

Relevance is concerned with assessing whether the project is in line with local needs and priorities (as well as donor policy).

Appropriateness is the tailoring of humanitarian activities to local needs, increasing ownership, accountability and cost-effectiveness accordingly (Beck, 2006, p. 20).

RTEs can ask beneficiaries about appropriateness in a way that programme staff cannot because of their involvement in the delivery of goods and services. RTEs can also highlight where initial approaches have become less relevant over time.

The cross-cutting theme of protection, which can be very important in complex emergencies, can be addressed under appropriateness, as assistance that does not address protection concerns can be regarded as inappropriate.

▶ It can be useful to consider alternative criteria – see Tool 2: Alternative evaluation criteria, I Section III below. However, it is important to remember that using alternative criteria will make it harder to compare evaluations or to include them in syntheses or meta-evaluations.

Reference

Beck, T. (2006) *Evaluating Humanitarian Action Using the OECD-DAC Criteria.* London: ALNAP. Last viewed on 8 June 2008. URL: www.odi.org.uk/alnap/publications/eha_dac/pdfs/eha_2006.pdf

Longer-term projects such as recovery projects will often have formal project-design documents including logical frameworks. These and the underlying logic model should be examined as part of the evaluation of relevance

Effectiveness

Effectiveness measures the extent to which an activity achieves its purpose, or whether this can be expected to happen on the basis of the outputs (Beck, 2006, p. 21).

A different definition is provided by the OECD/DAC: the extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance (OECD/DAC, 2002, p. 20).

Effectiveness is another key issue in humanitarian RTEs, as it is often one of the principal purposes of the RTE. Timeliness can be a key facet of effectiveness in humanitarian evaluations. The RTE can provide an informed 'outsider's view' of the effectiveness of an intervention, not least because field personnel can be too close to the activities to judge their effectiveness.

Connectedness and sustainability

Connectedness refers to the need to ensure that activities of a short-term emergency nature are carried out in a context that takes longer-term and interconnected problems into account (Beck, 2006, p. 20).

Connectedness has been adapted from the concept of **sustainability** – the idea that interventions should support longer-term goals, and eventually be managed without donor input (Beck, 2006, p. 27). Here, 'input' refers not just to money but also to management, political or other support.

Connectedness is crucial in humanitarian RTEs, as it addresses the key question of the strategic impact of the short-term decisions taken during the early stages of the response.

Connectedness and sustainability should also address the cross-cutting concerns of environment and of disaster-risk reduction. Disaster-risk reduction is a particularly important theme in natural disasters, but can also be an issue in complex emergencies.

Coverage

Coverage is the need to reach major population groups facing life-threatening suffering, wherever they are (Beck, 2006, p. 21).

References

Beck, T. (2006) *Evaluating Humanitarian Action Using the OECD-DAC Criteria.* London: ALNAP. Last viewed on 8 June 2008. URL: www.odi.org.uk/alnap/publications/eha_dac/pdfs/eha_2006.pdf

OECD/DAC (2002) *Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management.* Paris: OECD/DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation. Last viewed on 21 January 2009. URL: http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/29/21/2754804.pdf

Coverage is another key topic for RTEs, as the early rush to respond sometimes leads to particular groups being left out, due to the weakness of early needs assessments. RTEs can be particularly good at flagging up such oversights.

Coverage should also include the cross-cutting themes of gender, social exclusion and access. Social exclusion may be an issue for the elderly in some contexts.

Coordination

Coordination: the systematic use of policy instruments to deliver humanitarian assistance in a cohesive and effective manner. Such instruments include strategic planning, gathering data and managing information, mobilising resources and ensuring accountability, orchestrating a functional division of labour, negotiating and maintaining a serviceable framework with host political authorities and providing leadership (Minear et al., 1992, pp. 6–7).

Coordination is a well-known problem area in humanitarian response, and most RTEs will pay some attention to this. The issues of an agency's own internal management and coordination process can be addressed under this criterion. Coordination also includes the relationship between the coordination mechanisms used by the aid community and those of the national government.

Other potential criteria for RTEs

The following criteria may be relevant for humanitarian RTEs in some circumstances.

Efficiency

Efficiency measures the outputs – qualitative and quantitative – achieved as a result of inputs. This generally requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving an output, to see whether the most efficient approach has been used (Beck, 2006, p. 21).

Efficiency is often very difficult to assess in humanitarian response. It is particular difficult to assess in short-lead-time RTEs simply because the team does not have the time to make detailed analysis of financial reports to develop unit costs. Even so, a team may be able to identify issues that should receive deeper analysis.

Impact

Impact looks at the wider effects of the project – social, economic, technical and environmental – on individuals, gender- and age-groups, communities and institutions. Impacts can be intended and unintended, positive and negative, macro (sector) and micro (household) (Beck, 2006, p. 21).

References

Beck, T. (2006) *Evaluating Humanitarian Action Using the OECD-DAC Criteria.* London: ALNAP. Last viewed on 8 June 2008. URL: www.odi.org.uk/alnap/publications/eha_dac/pdfs/eha_2006.pdf

Minear, L., Chelliah, U., Crisp, J., Mackinlay, J. & Weiss., T. G. (1992) *United Nations Coordination of the International Humanitarian Response to the Gulf Crisis 1990–1992* (Occasional Paper 13). Providence: Thomas J. Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University. Last viewed on 13 October 2007. URL: http://hwproject.tufts.edu/publications/electronic/e_op13.html

Impact is another area which is difficult for humanitarian RTEs to address because it can be very difficult to estimate the impact of a particular intervention from the early stages. Impact may be better assessed by a conventional evaluation.

Coherence

Coherence is the need to assess security, developmental, trade and military policies as well as humanitarian policies, to ensure that there is consistency and, in particular, that all policies take into account humanitarian and human-rights considerations (Beck, 2006, p. 21).

This is quite a demanding criterion for humanitarian RTEs to cover, because of the limited time available for analysis and background research.

Proportionality

Proportionality is the extent to which a particular humanitarian response is in proportion to the needs of affected people, and to other similar emergency responses.

Proportionality is not yet a formal evaluation criterion, but it is appropriate to ask to what extent humanitarian responses have been in proportion to the scale of needs, and to similar humanitarian responses in other contexts.

Cross-cutting themes

The main cross-cutting themes of gender, social exclusion, access, protection, environment and disaster-risk reduction have been included within other criteria listed above. There may be other themes, depending on the specific context. Within the ToR, cross-cutting themes can be covered either in the general text, or in a separate section or sub-section.

Recommendations and lessons

The terms of reference should specify the sort of recommendations expected from the evaluation team, in terms of focus and audience. Good recommendations will answer the following questions.

- What needs to be done?
- Where does it need to be done?
- Who is to do it, and by when?

The introduction to each recommendation should explain why the recommendation is made, and the subsequent text may suggest how the recommendation could be implemented.

In general, a smaller number of recommendations is easier to follow up and implement. There are a several possible approaches here for the ToR, which can ask evaluators to:

▶ Section II of this guide also includes suggestions for evaluation teams on developing recommendations – see Team Step 6: Recommendations.

Reference

Beck, T. (2006) *Evaluating Humanitarian Action Using the OECD-DAC Criteria*. London: ALNAP. Last viewed on 8 June 2008. URL: www.odi.org.uk/alnap/publications/eha_dac/pdfs/eha_2006.pdf

- limit themselves to the five or ten recommendations that they think would bring the greatest benefit for the least cost of implementation
- rank their recommendations by priority
- separate recommendations by the target (so that the result is a limited number of recommendations for each audience, such as senior management, logistics, country management).

As with all evaluations, the findings and conclusions in an RTE should be clearly and explicitly based on the evidence collected by the evaluation. Lessons and recommendations should be based on the conclusions, but may also draw on learning from elsewhere, including the evaluators' wider knowledge and experience, as long as these other sources are clearly stated. Like all qualitative research, evaluations are constructed and they are arguments for a particular case rather than proof positive.

▶ Section II has specific recommendations to help evaluation teams ensure that their findings and conclusions are based on the evidence though the use of a specific tool – see Team Step 5: The chain of evidence. See also Tool 12: Issues, evidence, findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Methodology

The timing and timeframe for RTEs brings some methodological differences from normal evaluations. The truncated timeframe prevents conducting quantitative beneficiary surveys, because of the lead time involved in setting up a survey. However, observation can play a larger role in RTEs than in other humanitarian evaluations, and the team should allow for sufficient field time to make full use of observation.

The primary humanitarian evaluation research tool is the semi-structured key informant interview. It is sometimes useful to repeat interviews in an RTE to generate greater interactivity. Humanitarian evaluations rely mostly on qualitative methods, but quantitative methods are also useful for specific issues, such as malnutrition or mortality rates. Quantitative methods are also applicable to calculations of unit costs (for efficiency) or for coverage or expenditure rates for different populations.

▶ Methods are also discussed in Section II – see Team Step 4: Conducting the fieldwork.

A number of specific methods are addressed in Section III on Tools (see Tool 8: A sample interview guide, Tool 9: Facilitating an after-action review, Tool 10: Focus group interviews for RTEs, and Tool 11: A sample focus group discussion guide).

Section III also provides a checklist for the methodology chapter of the eventual report – see Tool 22: Methodology chapter checklist.

In the terms of reference, being too prescriptive in the methodology section may limit the usefulness of the evaluation, as this denies experienced evaluators the freedom to change the methods to suit conditions on the ground. RTEs may involve significant changes in plans due to the dynamic nature of emergency responses, so it is essential that the evaluation is not constrained by the demand for specific methods that may not remain appropriate in changed circumstances. However, it is appropriate to insist on the use of multiple methods and the need for triangulation.

Work plan and schedule

The work plan and schedule needs careful thought in an RTE, due to the time constraint. The schedule should set out both the planned time budget for the work, and any critical milestones such as the dates by which fieldwork is to start and the dates for significant outputs.

The time plan for an RTE must allow for sufficient time for:

- feeding back to the country team, not only at the end of the work but also midway through it so that the country team can identify issues overlooked by the evaluators, or errors in their analysis
- developing a draft report that the evaluators can present before leaving or shortly afterwards
- the team leader to present the evaluation at different headquarters.

Task	Team leader (weeks)	Team member (weeks)
Initial reading	1	1
International travel to country	1	
Initial briefing at capital	1	1
Preparing inception report	2	1
Interviews in capital	2	2
Fieldwork at site 1	5	5
First feedback at capital	2	2
Fieldwork at site 2	6	6
Second feedback at capital	1	1
Writing report	3	3
Presentation and discussion of findings	1	1
International travel	1	
Revising report	4	1
Travel and presentations at various headquarters	6	
Total	**36**	**24**

Example milestones for a real-time evaluation

- The fieldwork is to begin with a briefing of the team in-country on Monday 9 March. The team is to provide an inception report with the work plan agreed with the country office by Wednesday 11 March.
- The team is to provide a briefing of its findings to the country team on Monday 30 March. The presentation used for this briefing is to be copied to the evaluation office on 30 March.
- The team should submit an initial draft of the report by Thursday 2 April. The team leader should brief staff in headquarters on Tuesday 7 April, and at the regional headquarters on Thursday 9 April.
- The final version of the report, reflecting written comments, as well as verbal comments made during discussions at headquarters, should be presented by Monday 13 April.

Outputs

The section on outputs in the terms of reference should state what outputs the team is to provide and what those outputs should consist of. Outputs will typically include an inception report, oral briefings, briefing presentations, reports and other communications. Outputs may also include participation in follow-up seminars and workshops.

If there are any specific formatting requirements for outputs, they should be stated in the ToR.

Issue	Description
Short name for the output	Description of the output, including any instructions as to structure and length

▶ Tool 1: Standard terms of reference, contains examples of specifications for particular outputs.

Standard evaluation reports may not be appropriate for many RTEs. Because the RTE is primarily focused on providing information for ongoing operations, outputs such as presentations or issue papers may be more useful than a traditional report. However, full evaluation reports may be an administrative requirement for some agencies, and current evaluation quality standards do require them.

Evaluation team

The terms of reference should describe the composition of the evaluation team. It should detail the responsibilities of the team leader and provide the person specifications of the team leader and any other team members.

Because an RTE is expected to add value by contributing the experience of the evaluators, it is probably essential that at least the evaluation team leader is an experienced humanitarian manager with appropriate field experience who can understand the pressures under which the field personnel are working. An appropriately experienced team leader can also command respect in the field.

The broad person specifications should indicate only the level of experience required. Specific lists of skills required should be presented for the team overall, rather than for individual members. The idea is to find a team with the requisite skills shared between the members. It can also be useful to include an explicit requirement for the team to have balance, for example in terms of gender, organisation, being internal or external.

Example of a team skills specification
One international and two national consultants are required with the following skills set:
Experience in emergency response, particularly in natural disaster settings • Familiarity with humanitarian reform • Excellent knowledge of the UN and NGOs in Pakistan • Good facilitation skills • Experience using participatory techniques in information collection • Knowledge of or experience working with local NGOs or local government structures • Experience working on gender issue.

▶ Team selection is discussed below in Manager Step 4: Selecting the team. Section III includes an alternative checklist for selecting evaluators (Tool 17: Evaluator selection checklist).

Manager Step 3 Planning and budget

Before the evaluation can be put to tender or awarded, the evaluation manager will need to do some planning and budgeting.

Planning

Initial planning

The outline of the timetable will already have been established in negotiations with the field when preparing the terms of reference. The initial planning may also include setting up an outline in-country programme for the evaluation team, and reserving time for headquarters interviews.

The document set

Many evaluation managers now assemble a basic document set. This is especially useful for short-notice RTEs, as the evaluation team will have little time to carry out a literature study before the evaluation. Document sets should include:

- project design documents where these exist
- key operational documents of relevance to the evaluation, such as situation updates and reports
- general agency policy documents that the evaluation team should be aware of
- documents setting out any senior management decisions of relevance to the operation.

▶ Documentary research is also discussed in Team Step 4: Conducting the fieldwork.

Previous evaluations are also very useful, although some evaluation managers are reluctant to share these because of concerns about biasing the focus of the team. Current best practice is to distribute the document set electronically, either on a CD-ROM or through a password-protected website.

The budget

There are three budget-related issues in which RTEs are slightly different from regular humanitarian evaluations. These are mission length, dissemination and contingencies. As discussed below, RTEs may require more funding for these aspects.

Mission length

Even though an RTE should be lighter than a full evaluation, the mission length may need to be longer by 5 to 7 days to allow the team time to discuss findings and conclusions between field missions and to prepare a draft report before leaving the country. The extra time should also allow the evaluators to present their findings and conclusions to the staff in the field before leaving the country.

Dissemination

If a real-time evaluation is to have any effect on programming, everybody involved has to know what the conclusions and recommendations are. While written reports are good for some, most people managing the emergency will need the conclusions delivered in a more condensed and interactive way. Briefings offer managers the chance to ask questions about the evaluation and to understand why certain recommendations are made.

The evaluators should visit headquarters at different levels and hold briefing meetings there to present their results and to discuss any comments that the staff may have. Such meetings are often more effective forms of communication than are evaluation reports themselves. Given that the aim with RTEs is to achieve instrumental use, the briefing meeting should take place as soon as possible after the fieldwork, while the issues are still current. The budget should allow for the time and travel costs necessary for such presentations.

▶ Dissemination is discussed further below, in Manager Step 8: Dissemination.

Contingencies

RTEs that take place in the early stages of a response happen in a changeable environment, and there may be a greater need than in other evaluations to allow for contingencies. Contingent events that can arise may include the need to change the planned site for the fieldwork.

Manager Step 4 Selecting the team

In terms of team selection, there are a few special considerations for real-time evaluations that do not apply to standard humanitarian evaluations: team size and skills, recruitment timeline and recruitment process.

Team size and skills

The larger the evaluation team, the greater the resource footprint it places on the staff managing the response. This means that the evaluation team should be as small as possible for any RTE in the early stages of a response, because otherwise the team consumes a lot of resources that could be supporting the response.

For field managers, the question is to what extent the evaluators are likely to add value in proportion to the resources cost of hosting them. Proposing a small team of one or two people is much more likely (than a large team of four or five people) to meet with agreement from the field.

However, there may be a number of drivers for large teams that have to be considered. Additional team members may be proposed to provide an understanding of the cultures of different organisations, to provide a gender balance, North–South balance, or to bring particular skills to the evaluation team.

It is possible in a normal humanitarian evaluation to add team members for each specialist sector that is to be covered.[1] This is simply not possible in an RTE in the early stages, so it is important to engage evaluators who are competent to deal with a range of sectors.

Of course, having a smaller team eases recruitment and reduces the load on the evaluation manager as well as on the field. It is possible to use just one evaluator – this may be appropriate where the field team is very concerned about the load that even a two-person team might put on them. However, it is vital to be sure of the competence of the evaluator in question.

The ideal team is one that has worked together successfully before, but this is rarely an option even when a team is contracted through a consultancy company. Such an arrangement is possible only when a single team is given a continuing contract for a series of evaluations, although this may raise questions of independence.

If the team is selected carefully, having a two-person team can allow gender balance, internal-external balance, and professional balance. It also allows for interaction and feedback – a vital capacity in RTE.

Note

[1] For example, the Sida follow-up to the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition's 'Linkages between Relief, Recovery, and Development' study had a total team size of 17 people.

Recruitment timeline

The recruitment timeline poses another problem for short-lead-time RTEs. The normal recruitment timetable for a humanitarian evaluation team can last from one to three months, which is too long for RTE recruitment. Good evaluators tend to be booked up in advance, but as they work on a contract basis, they may have gaps in their calendars due to losing bids they expected to win, or the cancellation of contracted work for other reasons.

> Good evaluators may be booked up for six or more months ahead, but projects may fall through at the last minute because of access, security or other reasons. It is worth developing a roster of evaluators committed to the concept of RTEs, so that as soon as a significant emergency response begins, evaluators can be contacted to check their availability to lead an RTE in 4–6 weeks time.

Recruitment process

If the agency in question has a very formal recruiting procedure, one approach is to recruit a pool of pre-qualified evaluators for RTEs on a stand-by basis, then select from that pool when an RTE is launched, based on formal criteria established in advance. The evaluators in the pool can be ranked for any evaluation using a scoring sheet.

Sample RTE evaluator scoring box

Apect	Mark	Candidate scores					
		A	B	C	D	E	F
Knowledge of the local context	5						
Knowledge of the technical sectors	10						
Experience in the region	5						
Experience in the disaster type	10						
Knowledge of the organisation	5						
Knowledge of the evaluation focus	15						
Immediate availability	35						
Availability for dissemination	15						
Total marks out of 100	**100**						

See Tool 17: Evaluator selection checklist, in Section III below, for an alternative checklist that can be used to aid evaluator selection. This could also be scored as in the above example.

Manager Step 5 Reviewing the inception report

Although inception reports take time and may therefore seem to be inappropriate for RTEs, they are very useful because they:

- provide an opportunity for the evaluation manager to assess how the team understands and plans to approach the evaluation
- oblige the evaluation team to plan its work coherently – good planning is essential to meet the tight time deadlines of an RTE
- supply a clear statement of intent from the RTE team, so that members of the country programme can quickly identify any concerns about the proposed approach
- help to clarify whether the evaluation terms of reference are realistic.

RTE inception reports are different from standard evaluation inception reports, which typically contain a great deal of material recycled from the tender document. However, RTEs may not be based on a formal tender, because of the speed of this route. This means that RTE inception reports may have to be written from scratch.

An RTE inception report does not have to be a comprehensive presentation, but should include two key elements: a demonstration that the team clearly understands the context of the emergency, the response and the evaluation, and a clear plan for conducting the evaluation.

Inception reports provide the evaluation manager with an opportunity to address any problems with the team's understanding and approach before they become major issues. In order for the manager to have a voice in the inception report, it is usually appropriate for a very rough draft to be shared with the manager, and then for the report to be completed collaboratively. At the very least, the team leader should discuss the inception report with the evaluation manager, as deeply as needed, before embarking on the fieldwork.

▶ There is a checklist in Section III to assist the process of reviewing an inception report – see Tool 19: Inception report checklist. Section II for the evaluation team contains advice on writing the inception report – see Team Step 3: Writing the inception report.

Manager Step 6 Reviewing the report

The evaluation report is still the main output from evaluations in real time, as from any evaluation. However it is to be hoped that an RTE will also already have had an impact through feedback from the evaluation team before the report is completed.

The evaluation manager needs to review to report to check that it:

- broadly meets the terms of reference, and, if not, whether the reasons why it does not are clearly explained and acceptable to the evaluation manager
- answers the evaluation questions
- is coherent and free from internal contradictions
- has conclusions and recommendations supported by the evidence described in the report
- has recommendations that are clear, and is clear about who is being asked to implement them
- provides sufficient information for readers to judge how much reliance they can put on it
- meets any specific agency layout or formatting requirements.

Readers of the evaluation report will make their own assessment of the quality of the evaluation and of the authority of the recommendations. A good report reflects well on the evaluation manager and the evaluation team, a bad report does otherwise.

▶ Section II discusses the evaluation report in depth – see Team Step 7: Writing the report. Section III includes checklists for the report contents – see Tool 20: Evaluation report checklist, Tool 21: Executive summary checklist, and Tool 22: Methodology chapter checklist.

Manager Step 7 The management response

Management responses are important for all evaluations, as they can help to ensure that the evaluation is considered by senior management. A management response is particularly critical for RTEs, as they strive for what Sandison (2007) described as direct utilisation: RTEs aim to have a direct influence on current programme activities, and not just to contribute to broader learning.

The management responses, by operational as well as senior managers, should address the conclusions and recommendations in the report, stating whether each conclusion is broadly accepted. If a conclusion is not accepted, the evidence against the conclusion should be stated. This may be phrased as a general commentary on the evaluation, specifically identifying any conclusions which are not accepted.

For each recommendation, the management response should state:

- whether the recommendation is accepted – if recommendations are not accepted, the reason should be clearly stated
- what action has already been taken and by whom, to address the recommendation, or the underlying problem
- what action is planned to address the recommendation, or the underlying problem, who is going to take this action, and what the timetable is.

The management response should also state what mechanism the agency is going to use to follow up on implementation of the planned actions. Management responses are often presented in a table.

Reference

FAO (2008) *Management Response to the Evaluation of FAO Cooperation in Sierra Leone 2001–2006.* Rome: Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations. Last viewed on 21 September 2008. URL: http://www.fao.org/pbe/pbee/common/ecg/351/en/ManagementResponseSierraLeone.doc

Sandison, P. (2007) 'The utilisation of evaluations'. In *ALNAP Review of Humanitarian Action: Evaluation Utilisation* (pp. 89–144). London: ALNAP. Last viewed on 21 September 2008. URL: http://www.alnap.org/publications/RHA2005/rha05_Ch3.pdf

Extract from a management response to an FAO evaluation (FAO, 2008)

Recommendation	**Further donor funding required**	**Acceptance by management**			**Comment on the Recommendation**	**Actions to be taken**		
		Accept	Partially accept	Reject		Action	Timing	Unit Resp.
Recommendation 8 Specific consideration should be given in the national priority framework to cross-cutting issues such as environment, gender equity and HIV/AIDS. Together with MAFS, the National Farmers Association, and civil society agriculture-led HIV/AIDS-mitigation strategies at community level should be developed in the context of expansion of FFS in Sierra Leone.	Yes	X			The recommendation will be incorporated in the NMTPF and NADP planning which should consider activities to improve rural living conditions such as better nutrition, HIV/AIDS, malaria, schistosomiasis prevention, literacy and other essential livelihood areas.	Liaise with UN agencies, line ministries of the GoSL and NGOs working in these areas.	Immediate	FAOR, SFW (with other Units), ESW

Eliciting a management response can be more difficult in agencies which do not already have a system for this. However, the evaluation manager can make the case that RTEs are special, and request a management response. If there is no automatic system for generating a management response, it is worth considering which stakeholders might be co-opted to support the need for one.

▶ Consideration of evaluation stakeholders is also mentioned in Manager Step 1: Deciding to do an RTE.

As well as the management response to the evaluation report, there should be an operational response from the field team to the real-time advice from the RTE team. It may be useful for this to be formally described and annexed to the evaluation report.

In the case of interagency evaluations, where several agencies are involved, each individual agency may prepare its own management response. If agencies taking part in an interagency evaluation do not have a formal system for this, or if the system is inappropriate for joint evaluations, it may be useful to gather feedback with a simple tool. This could also be used for single-agency evaluations.

▶ A simple tool for gathering feedback to a joint RTE is presented as Tool 23: Multi-agency response tool. More on interagency evaluations can be found in Tool 24: IASC guidelines on interagency RTE, and Tool 25: Interagency RTE checklist.

Manager Step 8
Dissemination and use

Dissemination is essential for all evaluations. However, the use of RTEs to try to achieve change very quickly makes planning for dissemination very important. The dissemination plan needs to be built in from the start, as there is a shorter window for improving current practice than there is for improving subsequent practice.

Dissemination is much wider than just the evaluation report, and also includes briefings for operational personnel, management at different levels, other NGOs and government. One key target for dissemination should be the field personnel who are moving on to the next emergency response, or who have already left the field. Agencies can use emails to send this group a short summary of the evaluation.

The key management issue is to ensure that dissemination is thought about in advance, and that any necessary days for briefings at headquarters and any other dissemination costs including translation are included in the budget.

Reference

World Bank Group, Carleton University & IOB/ Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2002) *International Program for Development Evaluation Training (IPDET): Building Skills to Evaluate Development Interventions: Module 9. Presenting Results*. Washington: Operations Evaluation Department of the World Bank and Operations Evaluation Group of the International Finance Corporation. Last viewed on 28 June 2008. URL: http://www.insp.mx/ bidimasp/documentos/1/IPDET%20modulo% 209.pdf

Dissemination plan, based loosely on World Bank Group et al., (2002, pp. 9–2)

Audience	Product	Who to do	By when
Country management team	Mid-evaluation briefing	Whole team	Midpoint of fieldwork
Country staff	Final briefing	Whole team	End of fieldwork
Whole agency	First draft report	Team leader	End of fieldwork
UN HC	Briefing on findings and conclusions	Team leader	End of fieldwork
Ministry officials	Briefing on findings, conclusions and recommendations	Team member C	On completion of final report
NGO Forum	Briefing on findings, conclusions and recommendations	Team member C	On completion of final report
Regional HQ	Briefing on findings, conclusions and recommendations	Team member B	On exit from field
Global HQ	Briefing on findings, conclusions and recommendations	Team leader	Within three days of departure from field
Agency	Final report	Team leader	With seven days of receipt of comments
Development education community	Journal article on the RTE	Whole team	Two months after fieldwork
Humanitarian evaluation community	Presentation at ALNAP Biannual	Team Leader	Next Biannual

Dissemination of evaluation findings does not guarantee utilisation, but utilisation is impossible without dissemination. It is good to agree a dissemination plan in advance, as there are those who will be opposed to the broader dissemination of any evaluation that contains even a single word that might be interpreted as a criticism of the agency.

▶ Dissemination has budget implications (see Manager Step 3: Planning and budget) and should reach all major stakeholders (see Manager Step 1: Deciding to do an RTE). Availability for dissemination activities may be one of the selection criteria for the evaluation team (see Manager Step 4: Selecting the team).

Section II
Guidance for Evaluation Teams

Team Step 1 Planning the fieldwork

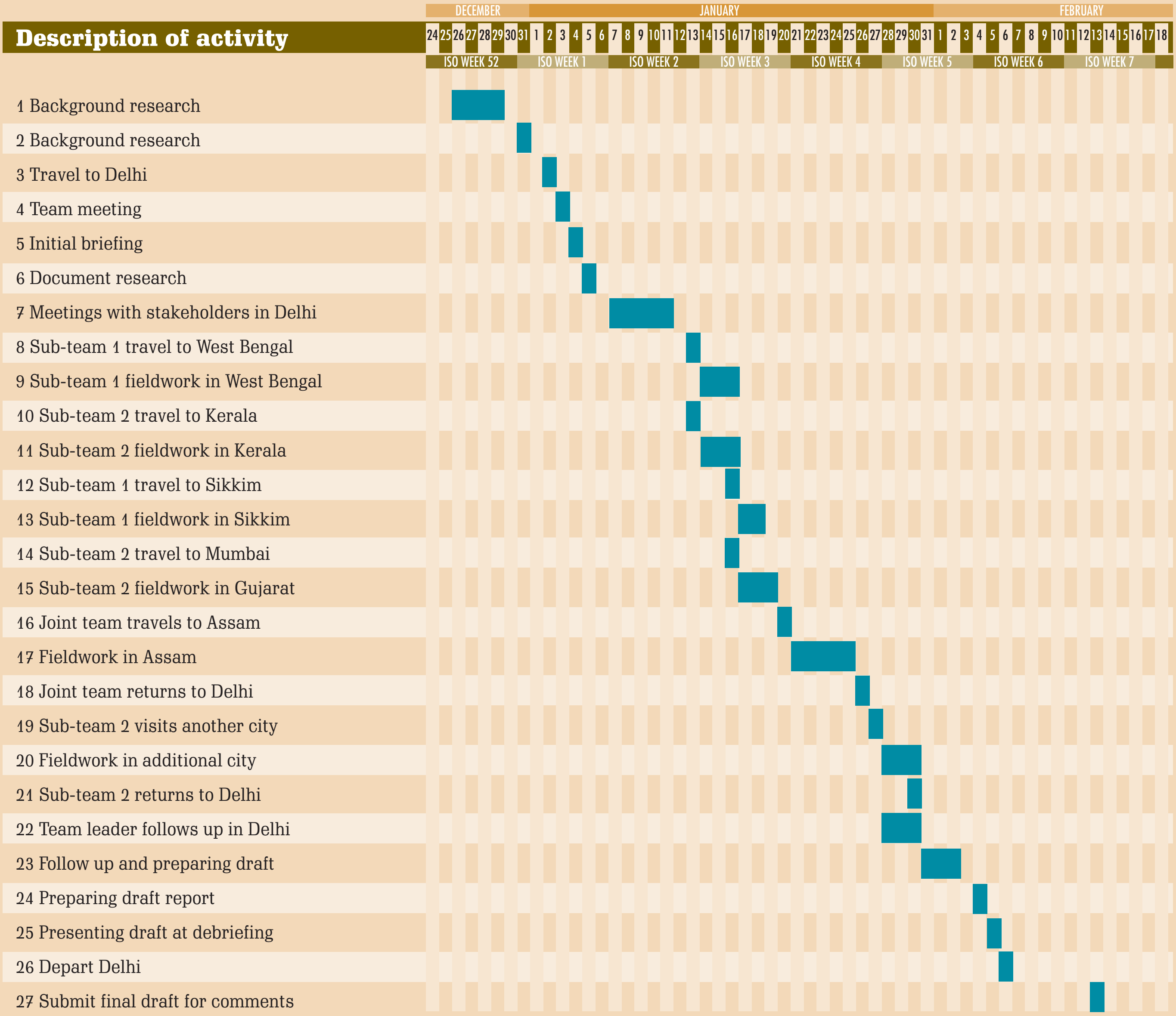
The first element of planning an RTE is to make contact with the field, through the evaluation manager initially, to establish the basic logistics and timings for the evaluation visit. It is vital that the fieldwork plan be agreed with the country team, and that it respects concerns about over-burdening field staff.

While all evaluations need to be planned, this can be particularly important for RTEs, especially when they take place in the early response period. Planning for RTEs needs to be done in a careful but flexible manner. It needs to be flexible because in the early stages of an emergency response, the context of the response will be changing, and a rigid fieldwork plan would soon come apart. However, the fieldwork also needs to be well planned, so that it allows the team to develop its findings and conclusions in a considered way.

In particular the following should be planned for:
- time at the start of the evaluation for all the team members to agree the approach that the team is going to take
- some reflection time at the midway stage so that the team can develop its initial analysis
- opportunities for reflection at the end of the fieldwork so that the team can discuss and agree its findings, conclusions, and recommendations
- time for the team leader in particular, towards the end of the evaluation, to prepare the initial draft of the report.

Continued ▶

The following is an example of a work plan from an inception report. This was a lengthy evaluation ranging over a wide area, but with a requirement to submit a draft report before leaving the country.



Team Step 2 Drafting an interview guide

▶ See Tool 8: A sample interview guide, and Tool 13: Persons met – recording contacts and interviews, in Section III: Tools and techniques.

While real-time evaluations should make extensive use of observation, key informant interviews are likely to be one of the main sources of information. Most key informant interviews in RTEs take the form of semi-structured interviews with a pre-prepared topic guide.

Using a topic guide is particularly important in early-response-stage RTEs because interviews may be subject to greater time constraints than in regular humanitarian evaluations. The topic guide can be expected to have three sections: introduction and introductory or 'warm-up' questions, questions based on the terms of reference, and closing or 'wrap-up' questions and final information. For the early-response-stage RTE, it may be necessary to place the most critical questions at the start of the topic guide.

Introduction and introductory questions

Before asking any questions it is important to state the evaluators' names, the purpose of the evaluation, the interview rules, and possibly how long the participant can expect the interview to take. An interview protocol card (which can be business-card size) can usefully set out the interview rules for interviewees who can read in the language of the card.

An interview protocol card

Your rights as an interviewee

- You have the right not to be interviewed or to terminate the interview at any time
- You have the right not to answer any question
- Nothing you say will be attributed to you directly or indirectly without your explicit permission
- The notes on this interview will not be shared outside the evaluation team
- If you provide an email address, we will send you draft of the report for your comments.

Introductory questions are useful to reduce tension at the start of the interview. One effective way of doing this is to ask about the role of the interviewee in the emergency response.

Questions based on the terms of reference

The bulk of any interview will be around the questions raised in the terms of reference. Not all questions will be equally applicable to all interviewees, and it may be useful to prepare different topic guides for different types of respondents.

The topic guide is a guideline rather than a questionnaire. The order of questions or the text of a question can be changed to suit the particular interview. More contentious issues should normally be left until the end of the interview. However, interviews for an RTE may be curtailed prematurely if the interviewee is called away on an urgent matter. If this seems likely, it can be best to start with the most important questions.

Closing questions and final information

Questions in the final stage of an interview should cover general learning, and can be direct or indirect, as follows.

- When you look back on the response, what it the biggest lesson that you have learned, or had reinforced, by this experience?
- What have you personally learned from this experience?
- What was the thing that most surprised you in this operation?
- If you were back at the start of the operation with the knowledge you have now, what would you do differently?
- Is there any question that you were expecting which I have not asked?

Lastly, this section of the interview should deal with any administrative matters, such as noting contact details for the interviewee, and the email address for a copy of the draft report.

Team Step 3 Writing the inception report

The inception report is a key document in the evaluation. Although it takes time to prepare, an inception report is useful for the RTE team especially because it lets the operational teams and the evaluation manager know exactly what the RTE team proposes to do and why. This is important in the RTE context where the evaluation places an administrative load on an already busy programme.

The inception report should include the following key elements:

- an introduction or context section demonstrating the evaluation team's understanding of the context of the humanitarian crisis, the context of the response and of the actions to be evaluated, the purpose and intent of the evaluation, and the concerns of stakeholders
- a clear work plan including the allocation of roles and responsibilities within the team, any deadlines for intra-team reporting, and detailed travel plans – this should also take the constraints into account, and be realistic and specific about what will happen when
- an outline of proposed methodologies, with an initial priority interview plan
- acknowledgement of and, if possible, specific information on the role of the advisory group
- annexes containing the interview guide, and a focus group topic list (if focus groups are planned).

> If the context section of the inception report is well written, it can be adapted to be used as the introduction to the context section in the main report. The same may apply to other parts of the inception report. If members of the evaluation team have the opportunity, they can prepare the outline of the inception report before going to the field, and perhaps also draft some of the sections.

▶ Section I for evaluation managers also contains advice on the inception report – see Manager Step 5: Reviewing the inception report.

▶ See Section III, Tool 8: A sample interview guide, on key informant interviews, and Tool 11: A sample focus group discussion guide.

Team Step 4 Conducting the fieldwork

Fieldwork for an RTE is largely similar to that for a standard humanitarian evaluation. There are two main exceptions to this.

1. Staff members in an early-stage response may be extremely busy and will have less time for evaluators than they would later on in the response. They may also change their views over time.
2. Evaluators need to be especially well organised to be able to gather the data, analyse it and present a cogent debriefing and report without the weeks of post-fieldwork analysis and writing that standard evaluations usually offer.

Record-keeping during fieldwork

The time demands of real-time evaluation mean that records must be kept up to date through the evaluation, rather than being produced at the end by a forensic examination of notes and tickets. This applies to lists of persons met or interviewed, itinerary items, issues and findings, and references.

> The team leader should prepare pro formas for records of interviews, meetings, itinerary, issues and findings, and references, and share these with the other team members. Each team member should keep the lists keep up to date and return them to the team leader every few days. Or different team members can collate different items. The aim is to avoid reformatting information, so that time at the end of the mission can be devoted to analysis rather than administration. The golden rule for all evaluation but especially for RTEs is that no item of data should be typed in more than once.

▶ Section III contains several examples of tools and pro formas that could be used or adapted. See Tool 13: Persons met – recording contacts and interviews, Tool 14: Listing group meetings, Tool 12: Issues, evidence, findings, conclusions and recommendations, Tool 15: Team itinerary, and Tool 16: Listing references.

Interviews

Key informant interviews are the core of data collection for humanitarian evaluation. Evaluation interviews typically last from 45 to 60 minutes (and longer in some cases). However, in the conditions of an RTE, access to interviewees may be limited by time, or may be subject to interruptions. Strategies to deal with this include asking key questions first, getting briefed about the role of the interviewee beforehand, and being ready to remind interviewees about the position of an interview before an interruption.

It may also be worth interviewing people more than once, to capture any learning that they have had during the evaluation fieldwork. All interviews and similar interactions should be listed in the evaluation report, so that readers can easily see what the key findings are based on.

Surveys

Surveys are generally not practicable as part of real-time evaluations as they take too long to prepare, conduct and process. Before a survey, the questionnaire has to be agreed and tested, and enumerators have to be trained, and then the survey results have to be collated and analysed.

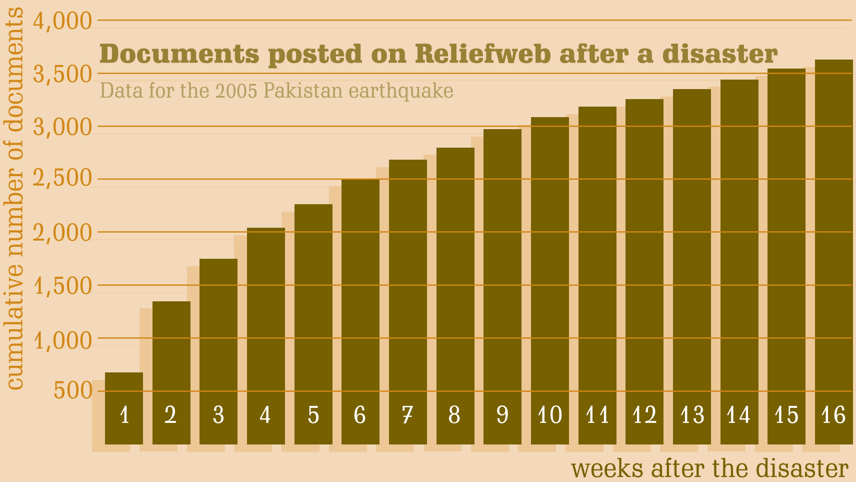
However, it may be possible to take advantage of monitoring surveys (such as food-basket monitoring) or even to undertake simple monitoring surveys on the evaluators' own datasets. While it is not ideal to try and generalise from such small surveys, these can still provide useful indications of areas which need further investigation.

> The terms of reference specified that the team should conduct a questionnaire survey. The team began developing a questionnaire, but it soon became clear that this would not be an appropriate method of data collection for beneficiary views. The time available did not allow the proper testing of a questionnaire, or the recruitment and training of assistants, to produce a dataset large enough for statistically valid results.
>
> Instead, the team opted to use focus group meetings with beneficiaries to ask them about their experience of the floods and cyclone ,and their views on the response. The team met with over 400 beneficiaries at 16 different sites (with multiple meetings on some sites) to ask them about their views. The team visited both flood-affected and cyclone-affected areas.

Documentary research

Because of the timescale, documentary research for an RTE is different from that for other evaluations. Later evaluations will be able to draw upon the RTE and other summative accounts of the response, but the RTE is probably going to be restricted to agency situation reports and other primary accounts. However, the sheer volume of these can make them a difficult research resource.

An example of the post-disaster volume of reports



> One way through the document maze is to concentrate on series of updates from donors, such as those often provided by USAID or DFID. These can provide a good summary overview of how the situation has developed from the donor viewpoint. They can be very useful for developing a chronology of external events, and can be more useful than detailed reports in gaining a quick understanding of the general progress of a response. However, the evaluator must then flesh out this framework by considering more detailed reports from multiple sources.

After-action review

▶ See Tool 9: Facilitating an after-action review, in Section III below.

After-action reviews are not common in evaluations, and are sometimes seen as an alternative to evaluation for organisational lesson-learning. However, they are a good tool in RTEs to gather data and to promote learning within the country team. After-action reviews fit well with the RTE mandate to contribute to improved performance.

After-action reviews are particularly suitable for the real-time evaluation context, as they may identify learning that would not emerge in key informant interviews because staff members would not yet have had time to reflect on their experiences and gain explicit rather than implicit learning from them. After-action reviews also help to emphasise that field personnel are sources of learning, and not just statistics for the evaluators.

An after-action review will typically take half a day or more. It may be difficult to convince management to hold one at such an early stage of the response. However, conduction an after-action review at the start of an evaluation helps to focus the evaluation on the issues of concern to the field staff. It can also help to highlight key issues at the start, allowing interviews to focus on these.

Beneficiary consultation

Beneficiary consultation is often a weak area of humanitarian action. Field managers are typically overloaded with tasks and may have very limited contact with disaster-affected populations. The RTE team has far more opportunity to meet with disaster-affected people and to get their views. It is essential that RTE teams engage in beneficiary consultation, as this is one area in which they can demonstrate that they are bringing real value to the field programme.

Beneficiary consultation is important in early-response-phase RTEs, as this is the stage of the response when there is the greatest opportunity to save lives and reduce suffering. Such opportunities may sometimes be identified only through consulting beneficiaries.

Consultation can take various forms: key informant interviews, general meetings or focus group interviews. Preparation is essential to make the most of the meetings, and the team should prepare a topic guide for each meeting. Details of all meetings should be presented in the evaluation report, to demonstrate the extent of the beneficiary consultations underpinning the team's conclusions.

▶ Section III includes a sample pro forma for recording group meetings – see Tool 14: Listing group meetings.

Observation

Observation can play a particularly important role in RTEs. In the early stages of a response, both the affected population and staff are still learning about the context, and the evaluators may gather information directly from observation that would not be available indirectly through key informants. Observation is also a good means of triangulating agency statements about what they are doing with practice in the field.

Photography is a very useful adjunct to observation for the real-time evaluator, as it allows the evaluator to show others what has been observed. Even if photographs are not used in the final report, they are still very useful in briefing presentations. Well-chosen, relevant photographs can help to make the RTE report more accessible.

This photograph (by Daryl Martyris) of a family's entire belongings in Mozambique was used to illustrate the point during feedback presentations that poverty rather than flooding was the critical issue for many families. Almost all the goods were post-flood donations.

Focus group interviews

Many different types of group meetings are often called 'focus group interviews', but this term correctly describes only interviews with a particular structure and format.

Focus groups can provide evaluators with qualitative information on a range of issues. A moderator or facilitator guides five to twelve people in a discussion of their experiences and opinions about a topic. The facilitator works from a pre-prepared discussion guide and uses probing questions to elicit information. Focus group meetings typically last between one and two hours and cover two to four topics.

Focus group interviews are facilitated in-depth discussions on no more than three or four topics for five to twelve people, where a moderator guides the discussion according to a prepared discussion guide. The intent of focus group interviews is to promote self-disclosure among participants about what they really think and feel.

In RTEs, focus groups are particularly important because RTEs can rarely include beneficiary surveys. However, RTE focus group interviews differ from the traditional model in that evaluators in RTEs do not have the normal ratio of one day or more of analysis per hour of focus group discussion.

▶ In Section III, see Tool 10: Focus group interviews for RTEs, and Tool 11: A sample focus group discussion guide.

Triangulation

Given that RTEs are intended for direct use, it is important that research results are triangulated so that they can be clearly seen to be based on more than one type of data source. Triangulation – checking the same information from a different source – gives the evaluation authority.

The need for triangulation means that the team members need to ask questions even when they think that they already know the answer. Sometimes, they will find that the answer is different from what they expect.

There are two bases for triangulation.

1. Method – for example, beneficiary statements in a focus group about ration levels can be checked against direct observation. Method triangulation is one of the most powerful forms of triangulation.
2. Cross-categories – the categories can be anything which could be expected to influence perspective or experience of the aid programme, including gender, employment, agency, role, beneficiary/provider, status or age. Thus, it is possible to triangulate the accounts of disaster-affected people with those of government or agencies, and so on.

Ethics

Evaluations are a form of social research, which is normally conducted on the basis of informed consent. Interviewees should be informed of the ground rules of the interview. For key informant interviews, this may be done with a simple card (as shown on page 37). Humanitarian evaluation is normally conducted on the basis of a variant of the Chatham House Rules, where the comments made by interviewees are not attributed to them, either directly or indirectly.

RTEs may occur in complex emergencies or other contexts where interviewees could be at risk if they are identified. In some extreme cases, interviewees' names should not be reported but simply replaced with 'Interviewee One', 'Interviewee Two', etc. in a list. If one interviewee at a particular location is made anonymous in this way, it may be appropriate for all interviewees at that location to be made anonymous.

Team Step 5 The chain of evidence

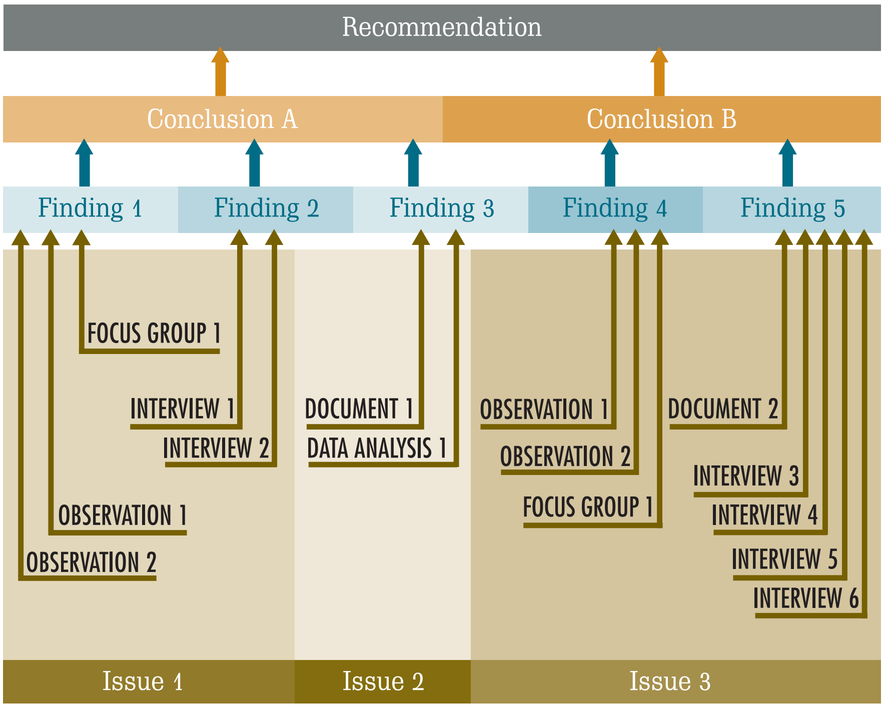
The time constraint

One of the constraints of RTE is that the team does not have weeks to process and consider the evaluation findings. The team must conduct the analysis, and draw out findings, conclusions and recommendations as the evaluation is in progress, so that these can be delivered to the country team before the evaluation team leaves.

This constraint means that the team has to take particular care to ensure that nothing is overlooked (exclusion errors), or that recommendations are made which are not supported by evidence (inclusion errors). Recommendations from an RTE will not be accepted by field staff unless they are grounded in reality.

Figure 5 is an idealised diagram showing how recommendations should be based on conclusions, and that conclusions should themselves be based on findings. Findings should be based on different pieces of evidence, ideally even on pieces of evidence from different evaluation methods.

Fig. 5 The chain of evidence: research to recommendations



▶ Section III, Tools and techniques, includes a tool for ensuring a chain of evidence – see Tool 12: Issues, evidence, findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Using a tool to link evidence to recommendations

One approach with RTEs is to use a simple tool to tabulate issues, findings and evidence, as the work proceeds, and then to discuss this as a team to develop conclusions and recommendations. The example below is part of such a tool that was used in an evaluation of a disaster-risk reduction programme in India.

Part of an issues/recommendations sheet for an evaluation of a DRR programme in India

Issue	Finding	Evidence	Conclusion	Recommendation
Volunteer skill level	Volunteer and trainer skills need polishing	1. Trainer at mock drill 5 did not push head back far enough to clear tongue for airway in mouth to mouth demonstration. 2. One third of reef knots shown in mock drills were granny knots (and therefore dangerous). 3. Most common resuscitation method demonstrated is no longer regarded as very effective.	Training needs a quality-control mechanism.	The agency should within six months set up a quality-control mechanism to ensure that training is of good quality and that skills are kept up to date.

This emerging finding led to the evaluation team paying close attention to the skills demonstrated by volunteers at the mock drills after the issue was first raised, and examining video and photographs of earlier mock drills.

This kind of table is usually completed on a spreadsheet, with each piece of evidence on a different row. Each finding may be supported by several different pieces of evidence, each conclusion by several different findings, and each recommendation by a number of conclusions.

A linking tool is best used throughout the evaluation, with team members contributing issues, findings and evidence as they come across them. Conclusions should ideally be established through analysis of the findings. This approach spreads the analysis of the data throughout the course of the evaluation. Emerging issues may even lead to a change in the evaluation approach, or to more attention being given to particular aspects.

- **Issues** are the ‘foreshadowed problems’ that occur to the team following reading of the background documents, briefings or fieldwork. The list of issues will grow during the course of the evaluation.
- **Findings** are what is discovered about the issue.
- **Evidence** is what findings are based on. Evidence can take the form of interviews, direct observation, documents or other data. As the evidence may take the form of individual interviews made under the Chatham House Rules, this tool is not included in the outputs but is only shared within the team.
- **Conclusions** are the result of the analysis of findings.
- **Recommendations** are the actions recommended in response to the conclusions.

Team Step 6
Recommendations

Avoiding too many recommendations

The fewer recommendations an evaluation makes, the more usable it is. However there is an ethical question here, in that if the evaluators have noticed problems they are duty bound to raise them and to recommend solutions if they can. One way of addressing this issue is to put minor or very specific recommendations in a technical annexe. Another approach is to use omnibus recommendations, with a general recommendation followed by a list of specific steps that could achieve this.

This is an example of minor technical recommendations, from a Danida report on humanitarian assistance in Angola.

The following comments relate to specific technical points noted by the evaluator during the field visits. Not all of the points raised refer to Danida funded activities. While some are raised in the general text, other are too specific for general comment.

Location Renovated school at Kisange.
Problem One of the roof trusses of the renovated school has cracks in the lower member. This may eventually lead to failure and collapse.
Possible solution Fixing of timber reinforcement to truss after temporary propping of the truss.
Agencies should only undertake technical work when they have the competence to supervise it.

Location Various.
Problem The latrines that have been built at the water points are not being used.
Possible solution Drop the construction of latrines at water points unless there is a community demand for these. The construction of laundry basins and washing areas is good and should be continued.

Location Renovated school at Kisange.
Problem The school desks have no diagonal bracing. Within a year of use the desks will sway from side to side, despite the dovetail joint at the front.
Possible solution Change the design to include a diagonal cross brace dovetailed into the rear of the seats or just under the seat. Alternatively use triangular gussets or a deeper cross member at the back.

Here is an example of an omnibus recommendation. After project funding cuts, a community mistakenly believed that members of the project staff were stealing from project funds.

Recommendation The agency should, within two months, improve communication with the affected population on what its plans are, and on how funds are being used.
This could be achieved by:
- providing a report on progress and plans to the community every month
- putting a signboard at all project sites with the details of the intervention, the donor, including a description, the expected completion date and an outline budget
- posting simplified accounts at each project site every month, showing the expenditure that month against the budget on labour, materials and other costs
- setting up a complaints mechanism so that community members can raise questions about the problems that they have with the implementation of specific project elements.

Usable recommendations

Recommendations are usable only if they reach the right person. The more recommendations that are made, the harder it is for them to reach the right person. Some recommendations can be delivered verbally in the field or at headquarters to the relevant members of staff. They may even not be phrased as recommendations, but perhaps as observations on how a similar problem was dealt with elsewhere. These observations can still also be included in the evaluation report.

Example of a verbal recommendation in the field to a team facing problems ensuring that only the most deserving were targeted when resources were limited:
'They faced the same problem in Malawi, of community leaders adding family members to the list for relief distribution. They got around it by having three groups – leaders, other men and other women – draw up separate lists, and including only those that appeared on all three, with a discussion on those that appeared on only one or two lists.'

For recommendations to be useful they should be:
- specific – it must be clear exactly what is being recommended
- measurable – it should be possible to tell whether the recommendation has been implemented or not
- addressed – the person or entity responsible for implementing the recommendation should be identified (responsibility may be further clarified in a management response to the report)
- realistic – recommendations need to fall within the range of the possible; this does not mean that they cannot be creative or unconventional, but they should reflect available resources

- time-bound – the timetable for implementing the recommendation should also be given
- coherent – recommendations should be coherent with each other and should neither contradict nor seem to contradict each other
- ordered by priority – so that it is clear which recommendations are of primary concern and which ones are secondary
- limited in number – large numbers of recommendations may be so demanding that none gets implemented (see above in this Step for some suggestions on limiting the number of recommendations)
- economic – the recommended actions should clearly deliver benefits in proportion to their costs.

Doing without recommendations

Evaluations don't have to produce recommendations. Stakeholders may more readily accept evaluations if they are left to develop the recommendations themselves based on the conclusions reached by the evaluation team. While an outsider will much more readily identify issues and draw conclusions from them, insiders will be far more aware of the constraints on possible solutions.

▶ Recommendations are also discussed in Section I for evaluation managers – see Manager Step 2: Refining the standard terms of reference.

Team Step 7 Writing the report

Writing an RTE report is quite challenging, as there is not the usual timeframe of several weeks after the fieldwork to digest the information, sort it, analyse it and develop the report. The report has to be written in parallel with the fieldwork to a certain extent. This is very demanding and the writers need to be very methodical to achieve this. Using a tool to manage evidence and findings can limit the amount of rewriting needed, by allowing the evaluation report to grow with the evidence.

RTE evaluation reports should make maximum use of relevant images, charts and graphics to communicate the evaluation's findings and conclusions in as few words as possible. Shorter, illustrated reports are far more likely to be read than longer, text-only reports. The more people who read the report, the greater the chance of direct utilisation. Although it is not a short report, the Mozambique Floods RTE (Cosgrave et al., 2007) made good use of illustrations.

UNHCR favours short (6,000-word) reports (around 15 pages) for immediate circulation, rather than full evaluation reports, but this does not preclude the production of full reports. Others may feel that a short report may not be sufficiently nuanced to address all the issues, and that a normal-length evaluation report (12,000–20,000 words plus annexes) is better. One argument against the normal-length report is that an RTE team does not have the same amount of time as a regular evaluation team.

Writing strategy

Some team leaders prefer to write the whole report, while others prefer team members to contribute different chapters. The first approach produces a more coherent document but places a large workload on the team leader. It is also necessary to have some mechanism of agreeing conclusions and recommendations within the team, if the team leader is to do all or most of the writing.

The team leader or other writers cannot wait until the fieldwork is finished to begin writing the report. The report has to be started in the early stages of the research, beginning with the report structure and an introductory chapter describing the context. This should be shared with the team members for comment, so that the team has a common understanding of the context.

Report structure

Setting out the report structure early on is essential if the team is to present a draft before or shortly after leaving the field. The report layout may be specified in the terms of reference, but many commissioning agencies are

▶ Section I for evaluation managers discusses the report in brief (see Manager Step 6: Reviewing the report). In Section III, see Tool 20: Evaluation report checklist, Tool 21: Executive summary checklist, and Tool 22: Methodology chapter checklist.

▶ A tool to manage evidence and findings is shown in Tool 12: Issues, evidence, findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Reference

Cosgrave, J., Gonçalves, C., Martyris, D., Polastro, R. & Sikumba-Dils, M. (2007) *Inter-agency Real-time Evaluation of the Response to the February 2007 Floods and Cyclone in Mozambique.* Geneva: Inter-agency Standing Committee. Last viewed on 8 June 2008. URL: http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2007.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/CFF788904EBDC1D7852572E6005E1600-Full_Report.pdf/$File/Full_Report.pdf

flexible on the exact structure of the main report, provided that the information needs are met.

The chapters in the report are often organised in a matrix of chapter headings and sub-headings. One approach is to use the evaluation criteria as chapter titles, with common themes as sections within chapters. Another option is to reverse the order, with themes as the chapter titles, and the evaluation criteria as sections within chapters.

> Example themes from a humanitarian evaluation, drawn from the terms of reference:
> - human resources and management systems scaling-up
> - collaboration between administration and programme offices
> - partnership
> - community capacities and needs
> - gender
> - other groups with special needs
> - programming and delivery
> - logistics including procurement and delivery mechanisms.

Possible themes include:
- categories from the evaluation terms of reference
- sectors or clusters, with separate chapters for each sector or cluster
- themes from disaster literature, such as preparedness, disaster, rescue, relief and recovery
- themes that emerge from the research, such as categories used by the affected people themselves to describe what happened
- the chronology of the response, for example you might have separate chapters for Day 0, Days 1–3, Days 4–10, etc.
- trajectory of processes in the response – for an RTE concentrating on logistics support for example, you might look at the different stages in procurement, with chapters on assessment, specification, request supply, request offers, bid analysis, purchase, delivery, receipt, storage, and distribution or consumption; an RTE looking at a grant-making organisation might divide the trajectory of a grant application into its different stages
- comparison with an ideal type, for using sections within chapters for each of the ten principles of the Red Cross/NGO Code of Conduct or the elements of the Sphere standards or some other criteria; ideal types can also be based around process or institutional models.

▶ The discussion on alternative evaluation criteria (including ideal types) may also inform the choice of report structure (see Tool 2: Alternative evaluation criteria), and alternative criteria could be used in a matrix with the traditional criteria.

Team step 8 Feeding back in the field

Feeding back in the field is a critical part of an RTE for three reasons.

1. the RTE is unlikely to influence current practice unless those responsible for current practice are aware of what the RTE has found
2. feedback from the country team may clarify any errors of understanding by the evaluation team
3. because of the compressed timeframe of an RTE, an opportunity to discuss analysis with those directly involved is particularly useful.

▶ See Tool 18: Feedback workshop checklist, in Section III.

The final debriefing before leaving the field is critical, as this is the last chance that the evaluation team will have for direct interaction with the country team. If there are sensitive issues, it might be useful to brief the head of the country team in advance of the general briefing. However, it is essential that any sensitive issues are fully exposed and discussed at this meeting so that the members of the country team are not surprised by anything that they see in the final evaluation report.

The team needs to prepare a presentation for the final feedback session that quickly describes the main findings, conclusions and recommendations. The session must be structured to allow enough time for the country team to comment on the presentation, and for discussion on any contentious issues. If there are points on which the evaluation team disagrees with the country team, these should be reflected in the evaluation report, possibly in footnotes.

Section III
Tools and Techniques

Tool 1 Standard terms of reference

The following terms of reference (ToR) is loosely based on the framework given in the Sida Evaluation Manual (Molund and Schill, 2004, p. 94). Terms of reference for RTEs should be relatively short, as longer terms of reference take more time to agree with stakeholders.

▶ This standard terms of reference should be adapted first for your particular agency so that it becomes a draft standard ToR for your own RTEs (see Manager Step 2: Refining the standard terms of reference).

Intervention background

Add: Brief context of the crisis
Add: Description of the intervention to be evaluated

Evaluation purpose

The primary purpose of this evaluation is to learn from the initial phase of the response, to identify lessons for the continuing programme. The evaluation team members will examine the appropriateness, effectiveness, coverage, coordination and coherence of the response. They will consider the extent to which general lessons from other responses have been applied in this response. Field and headquarters personnel are the main audience for this evaluation, and will use the learning from it to modify the planned response if appropriate.

Roles and responsibilities

The primary stakeholders for this evaluation are the staff responsible for executing and managing the programme, including field staff, country-level management, and management and the directly involved managers at regional and head offices.

The evaluation team will interview both the agency staff and the staff of partners. The evaluation team will bear in mind that the emergency response has already placed a large workload on staff members and will ensure that their research adds as small a burden as possible, while fulfilling the aim of the evaluation. In particular, evaluation field visits will be combined with field visits for programme operations.

▶ See Tool 7: Terms of reference for an advisory group, for an example of the ToR for such a group.

Add: In-country advisory group membership
Add: Lead contact for in-country advisory group

The evaluation team will immediately inform the evaluation manager and the advisory group of any serious issues regarding the integrity or effectiveness of the programme encountered during the evaluation research.

The team will be answerable to the evaluation manager. The team members will decide their own fieldwork programme in consultation with the advisory group. They will inform the evaluation manager of any problems arising

Reference

Molund, S. & Schill, G. (2004) *Looking Back, Moving Forward: Sida Evaluation Manual.* Stockholm: Sida. Last viewed on 16 June 2008. URL: http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/51/26/35141712.pdf

from the detailed planning. For all issues related to safety and security, the evaluation team will be directed by the country director or her deputy.

The evaluation team will meet with the in-country advisory group on arrival in the country and will brief the group on emerging issues half-way through the fieldwork and before departing from the country. These meetings, except for the final meeting, will not exceed one hour each. The advisory group has no authority to direct the evaluation or to edit the report, but the evaluation team should take the group's views into account, and if the team takes a different approach from that recommended by the advisory group, this should be explained.

The advisory group will provide written comments on the draft report within 7 days of receiving it.

Evaluation questions

> As RTEs are often launched for specific reasons, it may be appropriate to have only two or three evaluation criteria. This standard ToR provides a menu from which you can select.
> Field staff may prefer a report framed around appraisal-type issues such as future programme direction or other frameworks such as the cluster coordination approach. Both traditional criteria and a second framework can be addressed together as a matrix of the framework and the evaluation criteria, with chapters based on the framework and sub-chapters on the criteria or vice versa.

The evaluation team should address questions under the following five headings.

Appropriateness and relevance

Appropriateness is the tailoring of humanitarian activities to local needs, increasing ownership, accountability and cost-effectiveness accordingly. Relevance is concerned with assessing whether the project is in line with local needs and priorities (as well as donor policy). The evaluation team should also address the issues of whether assistance is appropriate to the protection needs of the affected population.

- Has the assistance provided by our agency met the needs of the population?
- Which parts of the assistance have been the most appropriate and why? Which were least appropriate and why?
- To what extent have disaster-affected populations been involved in the design or implementation of the assistance programme?
- How are beneficiary needs now changing? (This raises the vital question in the RTE context of whether programmes reflect previous or current needs.)
- Have protection concerns been adequately considered in the design of assistance?

▶ The fewer the questions you ask, the deeper the answers you can get. It may be appropriate to ask only one or two questions per evaluation criterion. See the flowchart in Manager Step 2: Refining the standard terms of reference. You should refine the question list so that you are asking only questions that are essential to your purpose in mounting an RTE.

- What, if any, changes do we need to make to the programme to make it more appropriate and relevant?

Effectiveness

Effectiveness measures the extent to which an activity achieves its purpose, or whether this can be expected to happen on the basis of the outputs.

- Are the agency's interventions broadly on course to achieve their purpose?
- Which activities are the most effective or least effective and why?
- What are the biggest obstacles to the achievement of the purpose of the intervention?
- What, if any, changes could we make to the programme to make it more effective?

Connectedness and sustainability

Connectedness refers to the need to ensure that activities of a short-term emergency nature are carried out in a context that takes longer-term and interconnected problems into account. Connectedness has been adapted from the concept of sustainability – the idea that interventions should support longer-term goals, and eventually be managed without donor input (of money, management or political support).

- What types of longer-term development issues are most affected by the response and how?
- How has the response affected longer-term coping mechanisms?
- Are all the key disaster hazards for this area being considered in this response?
- What environmental impact has the response had?
- What, if any, longer-term impacts is the present programme likely to have?
- What, if any, changes could make the programme of short-term assistance a better fit with longer-term needs?

Coverage

Coverage is the need to reach major population groups facing life-threatening suffering, wherever they are.

- Which group has benefited most from our assistance, how and why?
- How has our assistance been allocated geographically?
- Has the emergency response affected men and women, poor and non-poor differently?
- Has our programme considered the differing needs of men and women, children, adults, the elderly, the able and the disabled, the comfortable and the very poor?
- What, if any, changes could we make to the programme to improve the coverage of our assistance?

Coordination

Coordination is the systematic use of policy instruments to deliver humanitarian assistance in a cohesive and effective manner. Such instruments include strategic planning, gathering data and managing information, mobilising resources and ensuring accountability, orchestrating a functional division of labour, negotiating and maintaining a serviceable framework with host political authorities and providing leadership.

- To what extent has our response been coordinated with the efforts of the broader humanitarian community?
- To what extent has our response been coordinated with the efforts of the government?
- What internal coordination problems have we faced and how have they been addressed?
- What have been the biggest successes in coordination? What were the biggest gaps?
- What, if any, changes could we make to improve coordination of the overall response?

Lessons

The evaluation team should identify what it considers to be examples of innovative good practice by the agency.

- What examples of innovative good practice can be seen in our response?
- What general lessons can we draw from this response for our preparation for future response?

Recommendations

The team should identify recommendations based on its conclusions. The conclusions and the underlying findings should be based on the evidence that the team has gathered in the evaluation, rather than on general principles.

The team should make no more than five to ten primary recommendations at the country level and at headquarters level. Any recommendations for the country team should be discussed with the country team before the departure of the evaluation team. Similarly, any recommendations for headquarters should be discussed at the presentation in headquarters before the report is finalised.

Methodology

The team will use a mixture of appropriate methods, and will triangulate data obtained. It is expected that the team will use the following methods.

- Key informant interviews: the team is expected to interview all senior in-country staff, as well as the staff of partners responsible for programme implementation, government representatives, representatives of the affected population and civil society leaders. The team will annex the interview guide or guides to the inception report and to the draft and final reports.

- Observation: the team will prioritise field visits to observe the evaluated programmes directly and to conduct beneficiary interviews.
- Beneficiary interviews: the team will interview disaster-affected people to determine their expressed view of the programme activities.
- Data analysis: where appropriate and feasible in the RTE timeframe.
- Documentary research, where appropriate and feasible.

The team will use multiple methods to triangulate their findings, and ensure that these are based on a good understanding of the current context.

Work plan and schedule

Time budget for the evaluation

Task	Team leader	Team member 2	Team member 3	Team member 4
Briefing at headquarters				
Initial reading				
International travel to country				
Initial briefing at capital				
Interviews in capital				
Submission of inception report				
Fieldwork at site 1				
First feedback to country team				
Fieldwork at site 2				
Second feedback to country team				
Writing report				
Presentation of initial findings to country team and discussion				
International travel				
Revising report				
Travel and presentation at venue 1				
Travel and presentation at venue 2				
Finalisation of report				
Total				

Key points in the evaluation process

Key point	Date	*Comments*
Briefing at headquarters		
Initial briefing in-country		
Inception report		*Should include the interview guide developed by the team*
Interim briefing		
Final in-country briefing		
Briefing presentation		
First draft report		
Headquarters presentation		
Other presentations		
Final report		
End of contract		
Total		

Outputs

The team shall provide the following outputs by the dates specified in the list of key points in the evaluation.

Output	Description
Inception report	**A brief report of 1,500 to 3,000 words setting out:** • the team's understanding of the context • the team's understanding of the intervention • the detailed itinerary for fieldwork • the team's data-collection plan • the planned methodology • any planned deviations from the terms of reference. The team's planned interview guide or guides should be annexed.
Final briefing	**A PowerPoint presentation setting out the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.**
Evaluation report	**An evaluation report with the following structure:** • executive summary of 1,500 words or less (this should not be included in the draft report, to encourage recipients to comment on the whole report and not just the summary) • table of contents • map, showing the areas visited by the team • list of acronyms • methodology (a brief chapter of no more than 1,000 words) • core report of 12,000 words or less with chapters structured to answer the questions listed in the terms of reference; each chapter should present the conclusions drawn from the material discussed and the recommendations as a result. Annexes should include: • this set of terms of reference • a list of the persons met • the team's itinerary • the question guide used • a bibliography of any written sources used
Oral briefings	**The team leader will provide oral briefings for the national government and for agency senior staff at dates to be arranged.**

All reports should be provided in Word format to the evaluation manager, with PDF copies to all others. The report should be A4 size.

Evaluation team

The evaluation team shall consist of a leader and members, as follows.

Team leader

The team leader is responsible for the overall conduct of the evaluation in accordance with the ToR, including:

- developing and adjusting the evaluation methodology
- managing the evaluation team and ensuring efficient division of tasks between the mission members

- representing the evaluation team in meetings with the advisory group and other stakeholders
- presenting evaluation findings and recommendations
- submitting all outputs on time.

Person specification for the team leader:

- extensive experience in conducting evaluations of humanitarian operations
- not less than ten years professional expertise in humanitarian action, including experience in the management of humanitarian operations
- experience of evaluation under tight time criteria
- demonstrated analytical, communication and report-writing skills.

Team members

Person specification for team members:

- experience in the evaluation of humanitarian operations
- not less than three years experience in humanitarian action
- demonstrated skill in one or more of the team technical areas.

The evaluation team should include technical expertise in specific areas. The requirements here will be specific to the evaluation, but should probably include: experience of the overall disaster type, experience of the intervention type, any specialist technical skills, knowledge of the local and agency contexts, familiarity with crosscutting issues and language skills.

▶ See also Tool 17: Evaluator selection checklist and Manager Step 4: Selecting the team.

Tool 2 Alternative evaluation criteria

OECD/DAC or other criteria?

Before considering alternative evaluation criteria, remember that a strong advantage of the OECD/DAC criteria is that their widespread use makes it easier to compare evaluations of different responses, or of the same response at different times. Evaluators too are likely to be very familiar with them, and may be better able to apply them than other criteria. However, other criteria, based on standards or ideal types, may be more familiar to operational staff. Both sets of criteria can be combined in a matrix, which can be described in a report with chapter headings for one set and the same sub-headings in each chapter for the other set.

▶ This tool can be used when considering the evaluation terms of reference (see Manager Step 2: Refining the standard terms of reference) or even when structuring the report (see Team Step 7: Writing the report).

The OECD/DAC criteria

In 1991 The Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC) defined evaluation as follows:

> *An evaluation is an assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, developmental efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of both recipients and donors.*
> (OECD Development Assistance Committee, 1991)

This definition encapsulates what are now the standard criteria for evaluating development assistance:

- efficiency
- effectiveness
- impact
- sustainability
- relevance.

Revision for evaluation of humanitarian action

In 1997, OECD/DAC sponsored a project to develop a modified set of criteria more appropriate for the particular challenges of evaluating humanitarian action in complex emergencies. This study culminated in an ODI Good Practice Review (Hallam, 1998), and a guidance note (OECD Development Assistance Committee, 1999). These proposed a modified set of criteria for such evaluations. The changes proposed were as follows.

- efficiency – unchanged
- effectiveness – specifically to include timeliness or timeliness addressed separately as a separate criterion
- impact – unchanged
- sustainability – replaced by connectedness (dealing with whether the

References

OECD Development Assistance Committee (1991) *Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance.* Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. URL: http://www.sourceoecd.org/content/templates/el/el%5Fissue.htm?comm=internat&action=browsenamedissue&caller=portal0&type=infobike&mnemonic=oecd%2f16080254&year=2001&volume=2001&issue=22

Hallam, A. (1998) *Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance Programmes in Complex Emergencies (RRN Good Practice Review 7). London: Overseas Development Institute. Last viewed on 8* June, 2008. URL: http://www.odihpn.org/documents/gpr7.pdf

OECD Development Assistance Committee (1999) *Guidance for Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance in Complex Emergencies.* Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. URL: http://www.sourceoecd.org/content/templates/el/el%5Fissue.htm?comm=internat&action=browsenamedissue&caller=portal0&type=infobike&mnemonic=oecd%2f16080254&year=2001&volume=2001&issue=22

emergency response takes the long-term situation into account)
- relevance (of the overall goal and purpose) to be supplemented with appropriateness (of activities and inputs)

The following additional criteria were proposed.
- coverage of the response
- coherence (of policies with humanitarian action)
- coordination
- protection.

Most evaluations of humanitarian action since the late 1990s have been based on a subset of either the DAC criteria or of the modified criteria. These criteria are the mainstream criteria for the evaluation of humanitarian action. Current best practice in the evaluation of humanitarian action is set out in the ALNAP guide on evaluating humanitarian action using the OECD-DAC criteria (Beck, 2006). However, that guide deals with coordination under the heading of effectiveness, and includes protection as a cross-cutting issue.

What are the fundamental evaluation criteria?

These criteria are so familiar to evaluators of humanitarian action that it is sometimes assumed that they are fundamental criteria, but this is not the case. These are criteria that reflect recurring areas of weakness in development aid or humanitarian assistance. Many early development assistance projects suffered from being unsustainable, having little relevance to the populations they were meant to assist, being ineffective at bringing about change, having no clear positive impact, or representing poor value for money.

Similarly, coverage, coherence, coordination, connectedness, timeliness, appropriateness and protection are all issues that have challenged the quality of different humanitarian aid responses. These criteria reflected the concerns in the humanitarian aid sector at the time when they were developed, shortly after the Rwanda crisis. If the humanitarian action evaluation guidelines were rewritten today, they would doubtless include accountability as a criterion. They might also comment on the difference between evaluations of complex emergencies and of natural disasters.

The two fundamental criteria in evaluating anything are:
- quality, a measure of how good or bad something is[1]
- value for money or return for effort, a measure of the benefits received against their cost.

Some may argue that value for money is one of the components of quality, but there is a key difference between measures of quality and measures of value for money. Measures of quality are intrinsic, and look at the intervention in its own terms. Value for money is extrinsic; it requires a valuation of the benefits received which we can make only by comparison to alternative means of spending the same amount of money in other ways.

Note

[1] For a humanitarian evaluation, quality is often expressed as 'are we doing the right thing in the right way?'

Reference

Beck, T. (2006) *Evaluating Humanitarian Action Using the OECD-DAC Criteria.* London: ALNAP. Last viewed on 8 June 2008. URL: www.odi.org.uk/alnap/publications/eha_dac/pdfs/eha_2006.pdf

Evaluations in the sector typically look at quality in terms of common problem areas and at value for money through the 'efficiency' criterion.

Alternatives to the traditional criteria

Realising that the traditional criteria are not fundamental, but merely measures of quality and value for money in areas identified as problematic, allows us to develop different evaluation criteria. As discussed in the following pages, there are three basic approaches to this:

- developing criteria around some generally agreed definition of quality, such as those provided by codes of practice
- evaluation against an ideal type
- basing criteria around specific issues identified for a particular humanitarian response.

Evaluating around quality criteria

Humanitarian action has seen a very large number of quality initiatives since the mid-1990s.[2] These initiatives include: the Sphere Project; People In Aid; the Humanitarian Accountability Project; the Compass Quality Initiative; and many others. However, the very first such quality initiative was the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief (Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response and ICRC, 1994).

The Code of Conduct was first agreed in 1994, having grown out of a 1991 proposal from the French Red Cross in response to experience in the Balkans (Borton, 1994). The Code of Conduct has been very widely adopted by humanitarian agencies, and adherence to it is required by some agency collaborative mechanisms as well as by some donors.

The ten principles of the Code of Conduct

1 humanitarian imperative
2 basis of need
3 no proselytising
4 not foreign agents
5 respect culture
6 build on local capacities
7 involve the affected population
8 reduce vulnerability
9 accountable both ways
10 respect victims as human beings.

The main advantage of the using the Code of Conduct for evaluation is that it provides a set of criteria which agencies have themselves subscribed to. Evaluations against these criteria effectively test compliance with the agencies' own standards. The evaluation of the DEC 2003 Southern Africa Crisis Appeal is an example of this approach (Cosgrave et al., 2004).

Evaluation against the Code of Conduct may be particularly appropriate for a real-time humanitarian evaluation. Sometimes evaluators are asked to perform an evaluation against quality criteria as well as against the OECD-

Note

[2] One aid agency, Oxfam, is said to be a member of no fewer than 23 different quality initiatives in the sector (Polastro, 2007).

References

Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response & ICRC (1994) *Code of Cconduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief.* Geneva: Disaster Policy Department, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Borton, J. (ed.) (1994) *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief: Network Paper 7.* London: Relief and Rehabilitation Network, Overseas Development Institute. Last viewed on 21 January 2009. URL: http://www.odihpn.org/documents/networkpaper07.pdf

Cosgrave, J., Jacobs, A., McEwan, M., Ntata, P. & Buchanan-Smith, M. (2004) *A Stitch in Time? Independent Evaluation of the Disaster Emergency Committee's Southern Africa Crisis Appeal July 2002 to June 2003: Volume 1: Main Report and Volume 2: Appendices.* London: Disasters Emergency Committee. Last viewed on 18 September 2008. URL: http://reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/OCHA-6KBAYW/$file/DECSAFeval.pdf?openelement

DAC criteria. However, such double working would not be suitable for the limited time available in a real-time evaluation.

Evaluation against an ideal type

It is possible to evaluate agency performance against an ideal type. This can be appropriate where an ideal type is implicitly or explicitly defined in strategic plans, logical frame or other documents. The project logic model can also provide an implicit ideal type which can be evaluated against.

There are two approaches to specification: specification by outcomes (leaving people free to choose the process), and specification by process (where the end result is not specified). Many of the quality standards include both, but give much more attention to outcomes (e.g. mortality rates) than to process. The same is true of the traditional evaluation criteria.

Evaluation against an ideal type facilitates process evaluation where the ideal type is a process description. Such evaluations may be particularly appropriate for evaluations of protection or advocacy, where outcomes may be very difficult to determine.

Assessment matrix used by AusAID to evaluate partners who responded to the 2005 Pakistan earthquake (after Crawford et al., 2006). This is based around an 'ideal type' of aid-agency partner, from the donor's viewpoint.

Performance dimension	Performance criteria
Organisational capacity	• Ability to deliver emergency assistance • Quality of relationships with partners and the affected population
Planning capacity	• Quality of analysis and of initial strategy • Quality of funding proposal
Implementation	• Efficiency of emergency response • Capacity for learning and accountability • Effectiveness of emergency response • Connectedness/sustainability

Evaluating around specific issues

Another alternative set of criteria can be derived by selecting a set of issues for a particular humanitarian response, and framing these as hypotheses to be tested by the evaluators. This approach demands significant pre-evaluation work on the identification of suitable issues. It has the advantage that the evaluators are answering questions which may be more directly relevant to the client.

Therefore, this approach also has the advantage of being likely to encourage the direct utilisation of the evaluation results. This approach was used in the 2006 evaluation of WFP's Darfur operations, where the evaluation set out to test a series of hypotheses developed from the pre-evaluation studies (Cosgrave et al., 2006). However, this approach is less suitable for a real-time evaluation because of the need for some prior research to highlight possible hypotheses for analysis.

References

Crawford, P., Bysouth, K., Nichols, D. & Thompson, F. (2006) CARE Cluster Evaluation: Pakistan Earthquake. Canberra: AusAid. (Last viewed on 8 June 2008. URL: http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/pakistan_eval.pdf

Cosgrave, J., Oman, A., Fadel, A.J.A. & Babiker, S.A. (2006) *Full Report of the Evaluation of EMOP 10339.0/1: Assistance to populations affected by conflict in greater Darfur, West Sudan: A report from the Office of Evaluation (OEDE/2007/002).* Rome: World Food Programme. Last viewed on 19 September 2008. URL: http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/reports/wfp117335.pdf

Tool 3 Why do a real-time evaluation?

UNHCR has made more use of RTEs than any other organisation, and sums up the three key advantages of RTEs as timeliness, perspective and interactivity (Jamal and Crisp, 2002, pp. 1–2).

- **Timeliness** A real-time evaluation is undertaken in the early phase of an operation, at a time when key operational and policy decisions are being taken. RTEs can flag up important issues that have been overlooked, by either field or headquarters, in the heat of an emergency response.
- **Interactivity** The RTE format is interactive in that sense that real-time evaluations take place in time for them to influence emergency response decisions. They are also engaged in a sustained dialogue with staff members, both in the field and at headquarters, and can provide a channel for communication between field staff and headquarters that bypasses the normal bureaucratic layers.
- **Perspective** Real-time evaluators are able to approach an emergency from a number of different angles. They should be repositories of knowledge on lessons from past emergency evaluations, and should incorporate such knowledge into the evaluation process and outputs. Unlike staff members in the field or at headquarters, evaluators do not have to focus on solving immediate problems, but have the scope to analyse critical issues – scope that those directly responsible will have only in retrospect. Evaluators will also have a broader perspective than most other actors, being able to talk to personnel at all levels, in different countries, and to the affected population, partners and government officials.

All organisations can benefit from RTEs in that the breadth of information and the analysis provided in a good RTE can clarify issues both in the field and at headquarters far faster than might otherwise happen.

▶ Evaluation managers can use this tool when putting the case for an RTE (see Manager Step 1: Deciding to do an RTE). It might also be useful for evaluation teams who face questions in feedback sessions in the field about the utility of doing an RTE (see Team step 8: Feeding back in the field).

Reference

Jamal, A. & Crisp, J. (2002) *Real-time Humanitarian evaluations: Some Frequently Asked Questions* (EPAU /2002/05). Geneva: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Evaluation and Policy Unit. URL: http://www.unhcr.org/research/RESEARCH/3ce372204.pdf

Tool 4 Top ten reasons for doing an RTE

With acknowledgement to Claude Hilfiker and Andreas Schuetz of OCHA, who suggested that this list could be a useful tool, here are the top ten reasons for doing an RTE.

1. **Reduce the danger** that inappropriate early operational choices cause critical programme problems in the longer term, and thereby reduce the organisational risk inherent in any large-scale operation.
2. **Bring in an external perspective** at a key point in the response.
3. **Provide managers** both in-country and at headquarters with a solid basis of information when they are faced with difficult decisions.
4. **Answer specific research questions**, such as what approaches have worked in the past for any particular problem that is being faced, or what approaches are working well in other areas.
5. **Create a space** for reflection during an ongoing operation.
6. **Facilitate improved communication** and understanding between HQ and the field by providing field staff with a communication channel direct to top management.
7. **Enable programming** to be influenced as it happens, and permit agencies to make key changes at an intermediate point in programming based on learning from the programme.
8. **Provide a space** for reflection and analytical insight into the issues facing the operational teams. This may include conducting an after-action review for the country team.
9. **Provide HQ with a quick overview** of the whole programme, which is far richer than progress reports, as RTEs will normally include the perspectives of disaster-affected populations, partners and the independent evaluation team.
10. **Offer deeper consultation** with the disaster-affected populations than is possible for the very busy operational team.

Tool 5 Replies to the top ten reasons for not doing an RTE

With acknowledgement to Claude Hilfiker and Andreas Schuetz of OCHA, who suggested that this list could be a useful tool, here are counter-arguments for reasons often given for not doing an RTE.

1. **It is too early...**
   The earlier you conduct the RTE, the lower the risk of the programme going off in the wrong direction.
2. **Our field personnel are too busy...**
   The lessons we can learn from an RTE will allow our personnel to make better use of their time so that they can achieve a bigger impact for their effort.
3. **RTE – that sort of analysis is what we pay our managers for...**
   Managers are fully occupied dealing with the day-to-day issues – they don't have time to take a broader view. An RTE can enable them to take decisions based on good-quality information rather than just their best guess.
4. **We already have a planned programme of evaluations...**
   RTEs provide us with information about the early phase of the response – when there is the greatest potential for life-saving – that regular evaluations may miss.
5. **There is a problem with the programme at the moment...**
   An RTE offers a good way to explore a problem and to maximise learning from it. It may be that what is perceived as a problem from HQ may be seen differently by field staff or the affected population.
6. **The well-respected agency X has never done one...**
   This is an opportunity for us to move ahead of agency X in terms of learning about our programmes.
7. **We could never contract a team quickly enough...**
   I have already got a potential team lined up.
8. **We don't have the resources to support an evaluation team in the field at this moment...**
   We can use a team of only two people. If that is a problem we could even use just one very experienced evaluator.
9. **The way we have always done things is good enough. We don't need to change...**
   Humanitarian action is changing rapidly, and the way we work has changed also. RTEs give us the chance to improve the fit between our response and the nature of the needs.
10. **We have never done one before...**
    There is a first time for everything!

Tool 6 Examples of previous RTEs

Many parts of the humanitarian system have used RTEs in recent years. Here are some well-known examples.

- The Inter-Agency Standing Committee piloted interagency RTEs in Mozambique, Pakistan and Myanmar, also generating key lessons for ongoing humanitarian reforms, and for improving RTE quality.
- UNHCR has worked with RTE-like mechanisms since 1992, in 10 countries. It continues to use and promote RTEs, for example a 2007 five-country review of the cluster approach and IDPs, as well as sharing guidance material which has proved invaluable for other agencies piloting RTEs.
- UNICEF has played an important role in bringing together different actors around RTEs, generating discussion and debate, reviewing past experience, and pushing for clarity on the minimum requirements for an RTE.
- WFP has commissioned two RTEs – in Southern Africa and Asia – as well as promoting lesson-learning from this process.
- FAO has carried out RTEs related to assessment of avian influenza and tsunami programming.
- ECHO has commissioned RTEs in the food-aid and health sectors, and has experimented with longer-term approaches.
- IFRC has commissioned RTEs in Southern Africa and Asia.
- OXFAM has started the process of institutionalising RTEs as part of its response framework, with five RTEs already completed.
- CARE International has carried out RTEs in Darfur and Iraq.
- HAP has carried out RTEs as part of the process of piloting Humanitarian Accountability Frameworks.
- The Groupe URD Iterative Evaluation Process with Mini-Seminar, while not termed an RTE, uses a similar methodology.
- The UK Disasters Emergency Committee has used monitoring missions which have much in common with RTEs.

▶ This list may be useful when you are making the case for doing an RTE, to demonstrate that some of the leading humanitarian agencies are using them (see Manager Step 1: Deciding to do an RTE).

Tool 7 Terms of reference for an advisory group

The following is a draft terms of reference (courtesy of Jock Baker) developed for the RTE advisory group for the Interagency RTE of the Cyclone Nargis response.

▶ See Tool 24: Joint or interagency real-time evaluation, for further pointers on interagency RTEs.

Together with the UN Country Team in Myanmar, the Nargis Real Time Evaluation (RTE) Advisory Group will serve as the main link between the RTE Team, RTE Evaluation Manager and key stakeholder groups involved and, in the case of communities, impacted by Cyclone Nargis.

The RTE Advisory Group has two main roles:

- Provide advice and support to the RTE Team so they emerge at the end of the evaluative process with practical and useful guidance for in-country stakeholders – despite time and other constraints.
- Help promote ownership of respective stakeholder groups of the RTE process and subsequent use of the report (and related deliverables).

Specific areas of engagement in the RTE include:

- Provide appropriate advice and support to the RTE team to help them in prioritising issues and collecting the necessary supporting data to put together a comprehensive and credible evidence base to be used in analysis and development of recommendations.
- Review and provide appropriate and timely feedback on draft documents related to the RTE (i.e. ToR, Inception Report, draft(s) of the final report).
- Consolidating comments on drafts if appropriate.
- Facilitate the engagement of key stakeholder groups in consultations around draft documents to ensure that their perspectives are adequately represented and that there is broad ownership of the results (i.e. recommendations should 'resonate' with targeted stakeholder groups).
- Facilitate processes associated with development of action plans by stakeholders to follow up on recommendations, including monitoring of implementation of recommendations (either by the Advisory Group or another body).
- Assist with developing and implementing a communication strategy in support of RTE processes, which should include providing appropriate feedback to communities directly affected by cyclone Nargis.
- Help in ensuring that the RTE remains an independent, objective process.

Membership of the RTE Advisory Group is based on a 'mapping' of key stakeholder groups that have been directly involved in the response to Cyclone Nargis. These comprise UN agencies, international NGOs and Myanmar NGOs.

Tool 8 A sample interview guide

Interviews with key informants are the one of the main tools for humanitarian evaluations. The following is an edited version of the topic list used for semi-structured interviews with aid agencies for the RTE of the cluster response to the 2007 Mozambique floods (Cosgrave et al., 2007). A different set of questions was used for beneficiary interviews and yet another for focus groups.

Your topic list should fit on half of an A4 or letter-size sheet of paper. Print your list in landscape mode with the left hand margin set to over half the landscape sheet width so it looks like the example (right). You can then tape the sheet into the back of your notepad so that you can read the question when you fold out the list.

Not all questions are asked of all interviewees, and the selection of questions should vary in response to the area of knowledge of the interviewee. This is a long topic list.

▶ Preparing interview questions is discussed in the team guide (see Team Step 2: Drafting an interview guide).

Warm-up questions

1 What role did you play in the response? (then deepen and expand)

The cluster approach overall

2 What do you know about the cluster approach?
3 What role have you played in clusters? Outside clusters? If outside, why?
4 Which cluster has performed best? Why?
5 Which cluster has been the weakest? Why?
6 What has the level of participation in clusters been like?

Delivery against cluster performance

7 For the clusters you are most involved in, has the cluster approach:
- i helped fill sector or geographic gaps in the mobilisation of humanitarian agencies?
- ii enhanced partnerships between UN/RC/NGOs and government on the ground?
- iii improved strategic field-level coordination and prioritisation?
- iv made operational partners accountable to the Humanitarian Coordinator?

8 What is the biggest constraint the cluster approach has faced? Is there any way to overcome this?

Performance of cluster leadership

9 For specific clusters you are involved in, has the cluster lead delivered on:

Reference

Cosgrave, J., Gonçalves, C., Martyris, D., Polastro, R. & Sikumba-Dils, M. (2007) *Inter-agency Real-time Evaluation of the Response to the February 2007 Floods and Cyclone in Mozambique.* Geneva: Inter-agency Standing Committee. Last viewed on 8 June 2008. URL: http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2007.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/CFF788904EBDC1D7852572E6005E1600-Full_Report.pdf/$File/Full_Report.pdf

Continued ▶

   i coordinating the analysis of needs and information-sharing?
   ii securing and following up on commitments to respond?
   iii acting as the provider of last resort?
   iv managing quality control in the cluster?
   v acting impartially without favouring their own operational role?

10 How well has the Resident Coordinator functioned as the link between clusters and the government?

Fundraising

11 Has the Flash Appeal and CERF contributed to a timely response?
12 What affect, if any, have they had on your funding?
13 How coherent has fundraising by the Humanitarian Country Team been?
14 Was the response to Cyclone Favio faster than for the Floods? If so, or if not, why?
15 What problems did you have in shifting from development to relief? What problems did the UN have in this area?

Disaster-risk reduction

16 How does this response compare to previous such emergencies?
17 Have you seen any impact from prior investment in disaster-risk reduction?
18 Is the response to this emergency leaving people better prepared for the next? If so, how?

The affected population and local institutions

19 What needs of the affected population have been best met? Least met? Why?
20 What was the quality of needs assessments? Were they shared in the clusters?
21 How well have agencies worked with local institutions?
22 How appropriate is the cluster approach for a country with a strong government?

Learning questions

23 Have the clusters added anything to the response? If so, what?
24 How could the cluster approach be improved?
25 Are there any questions that you are surprised I have not asked?
26 What lessons have you learned, or had reinforced by the response?What would you do differently the next time? What lessons have you (re)learned?

Tool 9 Facilitating an after-action review

After-action review: a structured discussion of an event to focus on drawing learning from that event. It looks at the divergence between the planned and the actual, and then identifies what went well or badly. The aim of an after-action review is to improve personal and collective performance in the future by identifying lessons from a past event.

The role of the facilitator is to take the process forward and to maintain the learning nature of the event by avoiding detours into self-justification or blame. The facilitator should also keep the discussion focused on emerging issues.

The first task for the facilitator is to create the right climate, emphasising that the focus is on learning and that what is said is confidential, in so far as it will not be attributed directly or indirectly to the particular person who said it. The climate needs to be one of trust and openness.

The facilitator needs to emphasise the professional and candid nature of the review, and that it is not a complaint session or an evaluation, but concentrates on what the different participants have learned. In many cases this learning will not be explicit because people have not had a chance to reflect on it. It is the job of the facilitator to draw out the points of learning.

▶ This tool can be used by the evaluation team during fieldwork (see Team Step 4: Conducting the fieldwork). The team or the evaluation manager can use a simplified version of the same technique to review the evaluation process.

After-action reviews can range from an informal self-examination to a formal process after an event. Our focus here is on formal, facilitated after-action reviews. After-action reviews can work only if there is full participation by the group in an open, learning atmosphere.

The four key questions

As discussed on the following page, the four key questions for any humanitarian after-action review are:

- What did we plan? What was expected to happen?
- What actually happened?
- What went well, and why?
- What can be improved, and how?

What did we plan? What was expected to happen?

The first question illustrates the military origins of this technique. The military invests a great deal of effort in planning, whereas humanitarian action tends to be more immediate. So asking what was planned may not be such an appropriate question in humanitarian response, which tends to be managed according to staff experiences of other emergencies. One way of drawing out lessons is not to compare the planned with the actual, but the expected with the actual.

> Ask participants individually to cast their minds back to the start of the operation, then ask them to record briefly on a card what was planned and what they expected at that time.
> Then ask participants to think back to when their expectations first changed in a major way and ask them to put their new expectations on a dated card. Have them do this for two or three changes of

> expectations or plans, and then put the cards on flipchart paper on the walls with a timeline on it.

The purpose of asking people about what was planned or expected is to remind them about how plans and expectations changed over time. Such changes often reflect implicit lessons that the after-action review should draw out explicitly. Full participation in an after-action review is more likely if the review is enjoyable and relaxed in atmosphere.

> Ask participants if they can think of anyone's expectations that seem funny in retrospect – such as someone expecting that the operation would be over quickly enough for them to go on holiday. Use humour to help the group to relax.

What actually happened?

The aim here is to get staff to construct a timeline for what happened. This serves a number of purposes, including providing a timeline for the evaluator, but as with the first question it helps to encourage people to look back and see what changed during the response.

> Ask participants, in small teams, to prepare a timeline (or a flowchart if they prefer) for what actually happened. You may need to go back to the planned timeline at this stage.

What went well, and why?

The two previous questions (what was planned and what happened) should have laid the groundwork for this question.

> You may find that this works best with all the participants seated in a circle around a standing facilitator. Ask what when well, and ask a helper to note these points on a flipchart outside the circle. To check that you have understood, rephrase the point as a lesson and see if you have agreement on it.

What can be improved, and how?

Looking at what did not go well is often more difficult, as participants may be afraid to identify areas of weakness that might be seen as criticisms of colleagues or might reveal weak spots in their own performance. The facilitator needs to emphasise that emergencies are very difficult contexts to work in, and that no one can get it right all the time when taking decisions with poor information.

> As a facilitator, you can help to create the right atmosphere by giving an example of when you did not succeed in something, and learned from it. Another approach is to ask everyone to write down their rating (out of ten) for the response, and then ask 'what would have made it a ten for you?' List these responses and then use the list to ask why these issues were problems and how they could be improved. Rephrase

this as a lesson for anyone facing a similar situation and see if you have agreement for your reformulation.

When lessons or learning points are agreed by the group, note them and display them on the walls or a flipchart. The facilitator can also use these notes to check how the participants view the validity of any lessons generated.

Check to see if people have come up with other ideas during the workshop. It is a good idea to try and capture these by revisiting the lists and asking people if they would like to make any changes or additions.

At the end of the workshop, place the lessons that have been generated on flipcharts and then ask everyone to vote for what they regard as the three most important lessons.

In a real-time evaluation, holding an after-action review early on is most useful, as the evaluation team can then use the lessons identified as starting points for further questions.

One of the lessons identified at the after-action review was the need to get staff transport sorted out more quickly. Do you think that this was a problem (and why)? What do you think the agency could do to improve this in future?

Resources

USAID has published a useful guide for conducting after-action reviews (USAID, 2006). There is also useful short guidance on the UK's National Library for Health website (Robertson and Brún, 2005). ODI has published a set of tools for knowledge management and organisational learning aimed specifically at development and humanitarian organisations (Ramalingam, 2006).

References

USAID (2006) *After-action Review* (Technical Guidance PN-ADF-360). Washington. Last viewed on 16 September 2008. URL: http://events.fcw.com/events/2007/KM/downloads/USAID_Wallace_The%20After%20Action%20Review.pdf

Robertson, S. & Brún, C.D. (2005, 12 January) *National Library for Health: Knowledge Management Specialist Library: After Action Management Reviews.* Retrieved 16 September 2008, from http://www.library.nhs.uk/KnowledgeManagement/ViewResource.aspx?resID=70306&tabID=290&summaries=true&resultsPerPage=10&sort=TITLE&catID=10403

Ramalingam, B. (2006) Tools for Knowledge and Learning: a Guide for Development and Humanitarian Organisations. London: ODI. URL: http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/publications/Documents/KM_toolkit_web.pdf

Tool 10 Focus group interviews for RTEs

Focus group interviews are good for investigating topics in depth. They are particularly useful for getting beyond polite but uninformative responses to questions about the usefulness of assistance. However, unlike key informant interviews, where the issues of concern may emerge from the interview, focus groups need a detailed discussion guide. This has to be prepared beforehand, and so the RTE team has to identify some of the key issues before holding these interviews.

RTEs can present other challenges for focus group interviews. A normal requirement for holding focus groups is a comfortable environment where people can relax and concentrate on the issues under discussion. Relaxation is key to achieving the kind of self-revelation that focus group interviews strive for. Achieving a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere may be quite difficult under field conditions in the early stages of a humanitarian response.

A final problem is that of analysis. Traditionally, focus group interviews are recorded and transcribed for analysis, with a considerable time devoted to analysis. This is not realistic in the context of an RTE. Here the analysis must accompany the interview itself, with only limited opportunity for follow-up analysis.

▶ This tool can be used by the evaluation team during fieldwork (see Team Step 4: Conducting the fieldwork). It should be read in conjunction with the sample discussion guide (Tool 11: A sample focus group discussion guide).

Planning the focus group discussion

The first step is to identify your topic, and the group of people who could illuminate it. Next, you will need to prepare your focus group discussion guide. The following section contains an example of a discussion guide.

Examples within the discussion guide help to channel the thinking of participants, and so need to be used with care. Traditional focus group discussion guides avoid providing categories to participants but develop the categories from the discussion. This is less useful for RTEs because of the limited analysis time. Instead, discussion guides for RTEs may suggest categories to the group through providing examples in the questions.

You can deal with only two to four topics in a typical focus group interview. You can start the discussion on each topic with a group question, asking each member in turn to respond to the question. This is followed by probing questions, a final group question, a summary and a quick check that nothing has been missed.

Selecting participants

The participants in any focus group should be relatively homogeneous. Participants should be from similar socioeconomic background and broadly share a common experience of the response. Men and women should be consulted in separate focus groups, as should displaced and host populations, adults and young people.

Running the focus group

Each focus group requires a facilitator and a recorder. The facilitator moderates the discussion and keeps it focused on the area of interest, while the recorder notes what is said. You can record the focus groups, and this is essential if you want to undertake further analysis (although this is unlikely within an RTE). However, recording is also useful if there is later any disagreement about what was said during the discussion.

The facilitator should begin the session by establishing rapport with the group, and should introduce the facilitator and recorder. Participants should then introduce themselves. In many cultures, some initial hospitality can help to establish a relaxed atmosphere: perhaps tea and biscuits or whatever refreshments are familiar to the participants.

Over refreshments, the facilitator can explain the purpose of the interview, the sort of information sought, how participants were selected, and how the information will be used. If the session is to be recorded, permission should be requested from the participants. It is important to explain that participation is voluntary and anything said in the group will not be attributed to a particular individual.

The three main tasks of the facilitator are to:

1. steer the discussion between the participants by:
   - injecting new questions
   - using verbal cues and body language
   - repeating the question
   - broadening and narrowing discussion through asking questions
   - taking advantage of pauses politely to cut off the over-talkative
   - encouraging the less talkative by directing questions at them
   - opening up topics for the group by asking, 'does anyone else feel the same way, or have a different view?'
2. probe to bring out the meaning by:
   - rephrasing the question
   - rephrasing answers
   - asking when, what, how, where, who, and which, to deepen topics
   - asking for details or examples
   - prompting by asking 'anything else'
3. summarise, and ask if the summary is right.

The recorder should record:

- date, time, place
- number and characteristics of the participants
- general description of the group dynamics (level of participation, presence of a dominant participant, level of interest)
- opinions of participants, with a particular eye for strong quotes that could be used to illustrate those opinions in the report; non-verbal

opinions should be recorded also (as when group members' body language or non-verbal gestures indicate strong interest or agreement with what is being said)
- key themes emerging from the discussion
- any relevant spontaneous discussion between the participants outside the formal session.

If you have a three-person RTE team, you might use two recorders.

Analysis

Immediately after the discussion ends, the recorder should read the notes back to the facilitator and between them they should deal with any differences of memory or understanding. The team should confirm that it has a common understanding of what was said.

The team members should then discuss anything that was said that surprised them, if the discussion has changed their views on any topic, or how it has opened up new issues for further research in the evaluation. They should consider if any of the issues raised can be triangulated through interviews, other research or observation. In particular they should consider if any points should be amended in the discussion guide for further focus groups, or in the interview guide for key informant interviews.

Payment

In market research, focus group members are paid for their time but this might be inappropriate in the RTE context, because agencies normally do not pay focus group participants. It might be appropriate however to give small gifts of a symbolic nature (such as a T-shirt or a cap, or a pen set) to participants, to acknowledge that they have given their time.

Resources

Krueger (2002) gives a good, short step-by-step guide to focus group interviewing, and there is an older USAID guide on focus group interviews that is more oriented to the aid context (USAID, 1996). Krueger and Casey (2000) provide detailed guidance on all aspects of focus groups.

References

Krueger, R.A. (2002) *Designing and Conducting Focus Group Interviews*. St Paul: University of Minnesota. Last viewed on 20 Septermber 2008. URL: www.shadac.umn.edu/img/assets/18528/FocGrp_Krueger_Oct02.pdf

USAID (1996) *Conducting Focus Group Interviews* (Performance monitoring and evaluation tips: 10). Washington: USAID Center for Development Information and Evaluation. Last viewed on 20 September 2008. URL: http://www.usaid.gov/pubs/usaid_eval/pdf_docs/pnaby233.pdf

Krueger, R. & Casey, M. (2000) *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research* (3rd edn). Sage Publications Inc. URL: http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=BPm4izC3prUC&oi=fnd&pg=PR11&dq=focus+groups&ots=VWjvKXn-ad&sig=XxEZneID23eh8tWZj3xWoMsH7NQ

Tool 11 A sample focus group discussion guide

Introduction

Introduce yourself as facilitator and introduce whoever is recording. Let participants introduce themselves. Explain that:

- you are here today because aid agencies want to find out how they could do better at the beginning of a response
- you are particularly interested in finding out:
  - the types of aid that are most useful (and that this can vary between different people)
  - the most important sources of assistance
  - who benefited most from the assistance
- there are no right or wrong answers, only differing views
- the moderator is there only to guide the discussion, and that participants should address each other
- whatever is said will not be attributed to any individual directly.

▶ This tool can be used by an evaluation team developing their own focus group discussion guide (see Team Step 4: Conducting the fieldwork and Tool 10: Focus group interviews for RTEs).

Sample questions and notes for the discussion

Topic 1: The usefulness of types of aid

Explain that almost all aid is of some use, and even unwanted items could be sold. The interest here is to find out which sorts of aid are the most useful so that in future agencies can provide more of them and less of the less useful sort. This can be a difficult topic as disaster-affected populations are often reluctant to identify any type of aid as being less useful.

General question (asking each group member in turn): 'Of all the different assistance that you received from any source, for example being rescued, water, food, shelter, jerry cans, blankets or cash', examples being chosen to explain what sort of aid and services are being considered, 'which item or service was the most useful?'

If this question is answered with 'everything was useful', ask someone if they have a coin or a note, then offer them a smaller-denomination coin or note in exchange. If they refuse, ask why, as, from what they are saying, they don't see any difference between them. (If they don't refuse, ask for all the money they have in exchange for the smallest coin or note that you have.) The point is that, while both denominations are useful, one is more useful than the other.

Main probes • What made it the most useful assistance? • How could it have been more useful than it was? • What sort of assistance would you like to have had more of? • What was the least useful aid that you got? • How well did the aid-giver know your needs? • What factors do you think led the aid-giver to provide that aid?

Closing general question: 'If you wanted aid agencies to learn one thing about how aid could be more useful for you, what would it be?'

Topic 2: The sources of aid

General question: 'As I have been travelling around, I see that there are lots of organisations providing assistance. When you think about national and international aid organisations, about national and local government, national and international military, your neighbour, your family, local traders, churches and others, which of them have been the most important sources of assistance to you?'

If you meet reticence because people think that ranking aid providers will be insulting to the lower ranked, give the example that most of us have two parents, who help us through life. However our mother and our father may help us differently and at different points in our lives.

Main probes • What factors made a particular source of assistance important for you? • Was it the same for everybody else, or was it only some people that these were the most useful for? Why? • Did the most useful provider change over time? How? • What were the factors that made particular providers the most useful at different times? • Given what you know now, would you have approached different aid providers in a different way? How?

Closing general question: 'How has your opinion of the sources of aid changed over the response?'

Topic 3: Coverage of the response

General question: 'No matter what happens, some people benefit more than others. If it rains, farmers might be happy, but the person who has just done the laundry may be annoyed. If the sun shines, the person doing casual work will be happy, but someone drying fish to take to market will be even happier. So the question is – which group do you think benefited most from the aid?'

Main probes • How do you think that they benefited more than others? • Was it fair that they benefited more than other people? What are their relative positions now, compared with before? • Who benefited most: men or women? Why do you say that? What are their relative positions now, compared with before? • Who benefited most: rich or poor? Why do you say that? Can you give an example? • How much redistribution of aid was there within the community? What motivated this?

Closing general question: 'How do you think that aid could have been distributed more fairly?

Summary and final questions

After the discussion on each topic, summarise the discussion and ask if the summary is adequate. Ask also if you have missed anything.

Tool 12 Issues, evidence, findings, conclusions and recommendations

This is a simple spreadsheet tool to ensure that the evaluation team avoids one of the most common problems with evaluations: that recommendations are not clearly based on conclusions, or conclusions on findings, or findings on evidence. It is often easier for us to identify a finding, and then the evidence that led to that finding, than it is to try and build up a picture from large amounts of evidence.

This tool can also be used to share issues, evidence, findings, conclusions and recommendations among the members of the evaluation team, to help them develop a common understanding of the problems and to agree conclusions and recommendations. Issues can be raised from the use of any data-collection method but ideally the evidence supporting any conclusion should be drawn from a variety of sources.

Issue	Finding	Evidence	Conclusion	Recommendation

This tool is intended for use during fieldwork (see Team Step 4: Conducting the fieldwork, and Team Step 5: The chain of evidence). It is probably most useful as a spreadsheet, due to the ease with which the columns can be sorted and filtered in a spreadsheet.

Tool 13 Persons met: recording contacts and interviews

Data item	Example	*Notes*
Surname, and name	Smith, James	*Putting surnames first allows sorting by surname for your final list. This makes it easier for people to find their details and check them.*
Agency and function	MSF, Water Engineer	*This helps readers to judge how relevant your sources are to your findings.*
Gender	♂	*This allows you to check that you are not privileging one gender more than the other.*
Interview method	SSI: semi-structured individual interview	*You can use a list of abbreviations or codes for this, and restrict entries to these codes.*
Category of interviewee	N (code for NGO)	*You can use a list of codes for this and restrict entries to these codes.*
Place interviewed	Lilongwe	
Country	MW (ISO country code for Malawi)	*You can use a list of codes for this, and restrict entries to these codes. You could replace 'country' with 'district' or 'region', as appropriate for your evaluation.*
Date interviewed	Monday 2 March 2009	*Format your dates to give the day as well as the date.*
Interviewer	TF	*Use initials of the team member present during the interview.*
Most detailed	Yes (indicating that this was the most detailed of all inter-views with this person)	*This is useful to prevent double counting of people who are interviewed more than once.*
Telephone – direct	Phone number for any follow-up questions or clarification	*This will not be included in your report, but is useful for managing your contacts during the evaluation.*

▶ This tool is intended for use during fieldwork (see Team Step 4: Conducting the fieldwork). It is probably most useful as a spreadsheet, with the data items on the table as column headings, due to the ease with which the data can be analysed in a spreadsheet to provide summary tables.

Continued ▶

Data item	Example	*Notes*
Telephone – mobile	Phone number for any follow-up questions or clarification	
Email	Email address for sending a copy of the draft report or for any follow-up questions or clarification	

Example of an interview summary table

Function	T	No	% of total	of which female	
Agency (a)	a	69	30%	23	33%
Beneficiary (b)	b	113	48%	61	54%
Donor (d)	d	17	7%	7	41%
Government (g)	c	34	15%	6	18%
Total		**233**		**97**	**42%**

Key informant interviews are the main method used in humanitarian evaluations. Including a full list of those interviewed, along with their agency, role and other details, allows readers to judge how well grounded are your findings and conclusions. Again, as direct utilisation is often the goal of RTEs, it is important to establish the quality of the evaluation by demonstrating the breadth of the underlying research.

Tool 14 Listing group meetings

Many evaluation interviews may take the form of meetings with large groups of people. It is not appropriate in such cases to take everyone's name (as relatively few people have an opportunity to speak), but to record summary details of the meeting. Providing details of general meetings that you have had with disaster-affected populations and others allows readers to judge how much reliance can be placed on your findings and conclusions.

This tool is intended for use during fieldwork (see Team Step 4: Conducting the fieldwork). It is probably most useful as a spreadsheet, due to the ease with which the totals can be added up in a spreadsheet.

Column headings for a record sheet for group meetings

Date	Attendees	No. of men	No. of women	Location	Chair	Duration	Topics	Team

The lists of individual interviews and group interviews should be kept separate, to avoid overstating the amount of consultation on which your evaluation is based. Evaluation quality is a key factor in utilisation, and you need to demonstrate that your research is broadly based, to persuade readers to apply the results of your RTE.

Extract from a meeting record sheet

Date	Attendees	Number of men	women	Location	Chair	Topics	Team
Mon 21 Jan	DC and staff	13	4	Ri Bhoi,Meghalaya	DC	DRM, planning, EOC, training, effectiveness	jc
Tue 22 Jan	Village DMC, volunteers, DMT	30	25	Urksen Wahpathaw, Meghalaya	Block Nodal Officer	Mock drill, training DRM effectiveness	jc
Tue 22 Jan	Block officials	5	4	Urksew, Meghalaya	Block Nodal Officer	DRM, planning, training, impact	jc
Tue 22 Jan	State Steering Committee Members	14	6	Shillong, Meghalaya	Chief Minister	DRM, planning, budgets, plans	jc
Wed 23 Jan	Stake holders in Assam	42	6	Guhawati, Assam	State Secretary	DRM, EUVR, training, DRF, bye-laws, microzonation	jc ra ms
Fri 25 Jan	Village DMC, volunteers, DMT	60	10	Guit, WB	ADM	DRM, planning, effectiveness, training	jc ra ms
Fri 25 Jan	GP Members, NGOs, volunteers	15	50	Rainai, WB	ADM	DRM, planning, impact, needs, effectiveness	jc ra ms
Fri 25 Jan	Block officials	15	2	Khandachosh	BDO	DRM, training, impact, effectiveness	jc ra ms

Tool 15 Team itinerary

This simple tool shows the itinerary for the evaluation team, giving the date, location and activity undertaken by each team member during the evaluation. The itinerary is important as it establishes the trajectory of the team's evaluation, and allows readers to judge how well founded the opinions offered in the evaluation report are. An itinerary that shows extensive fieldwork at a number of sites increases the authority of the evaluation recommendations.

The itinerary is particularly important for real-time evaluations, because it demonstrates what the team had the opportunity to observe. Observation can play a larger role in data-collection tools for RTEs than for other evaluations.

▶ This tool is intended for use during fieldwork (see Team Step 4: Conducting the fieldwork). It is probably most useful as a spreadsheet, due to the ease with which the data can be sorted and rearranged in a spreadsheet.

Column headings for a team itinerary sheet

Date	Team leader	Team member 2	Team member 3	Team member 4

Excerpt from an RTE team itinerary

Mon 09 Apr	Team meeting. Presentation of initial findings to HCT. Interview with World Vision.	Team meeting. Presentation of initial findings to HCT.	Presentation of initial findings to HCT. Interviews with World Vision and UN-Habitat representative.	Team meeting. Presentation of initial findings to HCT. Interview with World Vision.	Team meeting. Presentation of initial findings to HCT.
Tue 10 Apr	Interviews with the Resident Coordinator, WFP, Unicef, and the Mozambican Red Cross.	Travel to Caia via Beira. Field work in accommodation centres in Caia and Sena and travel to Mutarara.	Travel to Caia, fieldwork in Mopeia area camps.	Travel to Caia via Beira. Field work in accommodation centres in Caia and Sena and travel to Mutarara.	Travel to Caia, fieldwork in Mopeia area camps.

Tool 16 Listing references

You may choose to use specialist reference-management software (or the bibliographic features offered by some office software suites), but this may not be useful unless all team members have and use such software. Collating references is much easier if they are in a consistent format.

One approach is to provide team members with a spreadsheet template for recording references. This makes it much easier to collate the references. You will need separate templates for books and reports, web pages and journal articles.

▶ This tool is intended for use during fieldwork (see Team Step 4: Conducting the fieldwork). It is probably most useful as a spreadsheet, due to the ease with which the data can be manipulated and listed in different formats.

Sample templates for books/reports, web pages, articles

Authors	Book or report title	Published by	in city	date	or URL if available on the web	Viewed if on web	Notes	Comments/abstract
ActionAid	The evolving UN cluster approach in the aftermath of the Pakistan earthquake: an NGO perspective	ActionAid	London	2006	www.actionaid.org.uk/doc_lib/234_1_un_cluster_approach.pdf	04-Sep-08	English version	Presents a critical NGO perspective of the cluster system. Points out areas where the system needs to improve, including the quality of leadership.

Authors or institutional author	Title of web page	Published by	Last update	Date accessed	URL	Notes
Norwegian Mission to the UN	Norway gives 57 millions USD to UN fund	Norwegian Mission to the UN	08-Dec-06	02-Jul-07	http://www.norway-un.org/NorwegianStatements/OtherStatements/donor+cerf.htm	Despite its teething troubles, Norway believes that the CERF has been a success. It is clear, however, that it requires ongoing development.

Authors	Article title	Journal title	Vol	Iss	Start page	End page	Year/ date	URL	URL access date	Notes
Dhar, S., Manzoor A. Halwai, Mohammed R. Mir, Zaid A. Wani, M.F. Butt, Masood I. Bhat and Arshiya Hamid	The Kashmir Earthquake Experience	European Journal of Trauma and Emergency Surgery	33	2	74	80	2007	http://www.springerlink.com/content/v3173714q117n07j/	02-Aug-08	(URL to abstract only)

If you have the necessary software skills, you can use your spreadsheet to generate a list that your reference-manager programme can import, or even use mail-merge to create a list of formatted references.

Tool 17 Evaluator selection checklist

Candidate characteristics

- A sufficiently deep knowledge and experience of humanitarian action to be accepted by our field team as someone who could add value to our team's efforts.
- Experience of conducting humanitarian evaluations.
- Able to complete evaluations to tight time constraints and to deliver reports on time.
- Organised enough to meet the demands of an RTE.
- The leadership skills to lead the evaluation team.
- The political skills to negotiate with staff in the field for access and time.
- Good knowledge of the context of the region.
- Good knowledge of the context of the agency or structure to be evaluated.
- Good communication skills.
- Available for the time needed to complete the evaluation.
- The technical knowledge to deal with any specific technical aspects.
- Flexible and able to cope with changed plans.

The following is loosely based on Jones et al. (2004, pp. 38–39).

▶ This tool can be used when selecting evaluators. Another approach is also presented in the manager's guide (see Manager Step 4: Selecting the team).

Reference

Jones, R., Young, V. & Stanley, C. (2004) C*IDA Evaluation Guide*. Ottawa: Canadian International Development Agency. Last viewed on 28 June 2008. URL: http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/INET/IMAGES.NSF/vLUImages/Performancereview5/$file/English_E_guide.pdf

Tool 18 Feedback workshop checklist

The following is loosely based on Gullickson and Stufflebeam (2001) and Stufflebeam (1999). The checklists apply both to intermediate workshops and to the final workshop. However some items are applicable to only one type.

▶ This checklist can be used when organising workshops to provide feedback (see Team step 8: Feeding back in the field).

Before the workshop

- Schedule your feedback workshops at the initial in-country briefing.
- Ask the hosting agency to invite stakeholders to whom the final evaluation report will be submitted to participate in the workshops.
- Plan for your full team to participate in the workshops.
- Draft a brief workshop agenda and circulate this one week before each workshop.
- Prepare your presentation for the workshop.
- Check that all the logistic arrangements are in hand (e.g. meeting space, audiovisual equipment, refreshments).

During the workshop

- Thank the participants for coming.
- Review and affirm the workshop agenda.
- Brief those present about what work you have done so far (and where) so that they can judge if that is biasing your findings.
- Point out that in such a short time there is a very real risk of errors of fact or analysis and thank people in advance for any corrections or clarification that they can provide during the workshop.
- Brief those present on your findings (and on your conclusions and recommendations at the final workshop).
- Discuss the relevance and applicability of findings.
- Invite stakeholders to identify problems of ambiguity and fact.
- Invite those present to identify problems of analysis.
- Resolve misunderstandings as much as possible.
- At the final workshop, invite stakeholders to discuss whether the conclusions and recommendations are based on the findings.
- Review, discuss, and adjust evaluation plans as appropriate, including content needed in future reports and the schedule for future evaluation events.
- Discuss, as appropriate, how those present can facilitate further data collection and other evaluation activities.
- Project the changes/improvements to be made in the report.
- Complete the workshop session by asking each stakeholder to identify/summarise one or more salient points regarding the presented findings.
- Thank participants for their time and for their contribution.

After the workshop

- Revise the issues list based on the workshop meeting, correcting all identified factual errors and ambiguities.
- Adjust plans for future evaluation activities (if not the final workshop).
- As appropriate, share the updated evaluation plan with the evaluation manager and the advisory group.
- Carry through the updated evaluation plan, according to any changes that were made.

References

Gullickson, A. & Stufflebeam, D.L. (2001) *Feedback Workshop Checklist*. Kalamazoo: The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University. Last viewed on 28 June 2008. URL: http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/checklists/feedbackworkshop.pdf

Stufflebeam, D.L. (1999) E*valuation Contracts Checklist*. Kalamazoo: The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University. Last viewed on 28 June 2008. URL: http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/checklists/contracts.pdf

Tool 19 Inception report checklist

Inception report contents

- Does the inception report demonstrate a clear brief understanding of the context?
- Does the inception report demonstrate a clear understanding of the intervention?
- Does the inception report demonstrate a clear understanding of the purposes and intent of the evaluation?
- Is there a clear plan of work?
- Is it realistic?
- Will the plan conflict with any planned programme activities?
- Does the plan of work identify the key dates for all activities and outputs?
- Are roles within the team clearly set out and responsibilities assigned?
- Does the plan demonstrate a clear logical progression?
- Does the plan clearly allow for the likely constraints?
- Are all planned travel itineraries and dates given?
- Is the proposed methodology clear?
- Will the methodology proposed and the fieldwork allow the team to answer the evaluation questions?
- Has the team given adequate consideration to the role of the advisory group? Has the advisory group accepted the report?
- Does the team demonstrate an awareness of the possible concerns of stakeholders?
- Has the team annexed the interview guide/s?

▶ This tool can be used either when writing the inception report or when reviewing it (see Manager Step 5: Reviewing the inception report, and Team Step 3: Writing the inception report).

Tool 20 Evaluation report checklist

The following is loosely based on the checklist presented in ALNAP et al. (2005, p. 192).

▶ This tool can be used when writing the evaluation report (see Team Step 7: Writing the report) or when reviewing it (see Manager Step 6: Reviewing the report). It might also be used when developing the terms of reference (see Manager Step 2: Refining the standard terms of reference). See also Tool 22: Methodology chapter checklist.

Front matter elements	*Notes*
☐ Title page with date	
☐ Data page	*Optional. But this may include the administrative details of the evaluation, a caption for any cover photograph, the overall evaluation cost, and the contract number. A suggested citation for the evaluation report can be included on this page.*
☐ Executive summary	*The executive summary should not be included with the first draft of the report. This is to ensure that comments are based on the report and not just the executive summary.*
☐ Table of contents with page numbers	*Any modern word-processing software can quickly produce tables of contents, if styles are used for the headings.*
☐ Map or maps	
☐ Acknowledgements	*This is not a requirement of the ALNAP proforma, but every evaluator should be careful to give thanks to those who have facilitated the fieldwork and other aspects.*

Main text of the report	*Notes*
☐ Introduction	*This should include the purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation, and the team composition.*
☐ Methodology	*This may be included in the introduction, or as a separate chapter or even an appendix. (See Tool 22: Methodology chapter checklist, for details of what this should contain.)*
☐ Context chapter	*Setting out both the context of the disaster and the context of the response.*
☐ Findings	*These can be organised along the line of whatever framework is specified in the terms of reference or whatever analytical framework has been used. This chapter or chapters should set out the evaluation findings and the basis for the findings.*
☐ Conclusions	*For an RTE the best format is probably to include the conclusions related to a particular topic at the end of the chapter presenting the findings for that topic. This helps to ensure that the conclusions are directly related to the findings.*
☐ Recommendations	*Again for an RTE, it is probably best to present the recommendations directly after the conclusions to which they relate, i.e. at the end of the chapter on a particular topic.*

Reference

ALNAP, Mitchell, J., Christoplos, I., Minear, L. & Wiles, P. (2005) *ALNAP Review of Humanitarian Action in 2004: Capacity Building.* London: ALNAP. Last viewed on 8 June 2008. URL: http://www.alnap.org/publications/rha.htm

Continued ▶

Annexes	*Notes*
Terms of reference	
Disaster chronology	*This is particularly important in real-time evaluations because of the time criticality of actions at the start of a humanitarian response.*
List of interviewees	
Team itinerary	
Short team biographies	*Together with the interview list and the itinerary, the team biographies allow readers to judge how much weight to give the evaluation findings.*
Interview guides, discussion guides and survey forms	
Other annexes	
Bibliography	
Management response	

Tool 21 Executive summary checklist

Item

- The name of the commissioning agency.
- The names of the evaluators, if they are not credited as the authors on the title page.
- A brief statement of the context.
- A brief description of the response being evaluated, including financial parameters and main activities.

- The purpose of the evaluation including:
  - the intended audience of the evaluation report
  - the expected use of the evaluation report
  - why it was decided to use an RTE.

- The objectives of the evaluation and key evaluation questions.

- A short description of the methodology including:
  - the reason for the choice of data sources and methods, and which sources were used
  - any major limitations implicit in the methodology.

- The most important findings and conclusions.
- Main recommendations and lessons learned.

The shorter the executive summary, the greater the number of people likely to read it. The following is a checklist for executive summaries, loosely based on World Bank (2007, p. 106).

▶ This tool can be used when writing the executive summary (see Team Step 7: Writing the report) or when reviewing it (see Manager Step 6: Reviewing the report).

Reference

World Bank (2007) *Sourcebook for Evaluating Global and Regional Partnership Programs: Indicative Principles and Standards.* Washington: The Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank. Last viewed on 28 June 2008. URL: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTGLOREGPARPRO/Resources/sourcebook.pdf

Tool 22 Methodology chapter checklist

The methodology chapter in an evaluation report should leave the reader clear about what methods and data sources were used by the evaluators, how they selected their data sources and what measures they took to ensure the reliability and accuracy of the data they collected. In particular, the methodology chapter should address the points laid out in the following checklist.

Item

- A clear statement of what data sources and methods were used.

- Description of data-collection methods and analysis including:
  - any question guides used
  - levels of precision for any quantitative analysis
  - value scales or coding for any quantitative analysis.

- Description of sampling including:
  - criteria for selection of interviewees
  - numbers of persons interviewed
  - itinerary of sites visited
  - list of persons interviewed
  - any limitations on the sampling.

- Any standards or benchmarks (e.g. Sphere) used by the evaluators.
- Any deviations from the evaluation plan.
- A description of what types of triangulation were used.
- A statement of the ethical standard adopted by the evaluation team (e.g. use of the Chatham House Rule, treatment of notes).
- Any particular limitations that the research faced.

An additional resource here is the ALNAP Quality Proforma (ALNAP et al., 2005, pp. 181–192). The following checklist is loosely based on World Bank (2007, p. 107).

This tool can be used when writing the methodology chapter (see Team Step 7: Writing the report) or when reviewing it (see Manager Step 6: Reviewing the report).

References

ALNAP, Mitchell, J., Christoplos, I., Minear, L. & Wiles, P. (2005) *ALNAP Review of Humanitarian Action in 2004: Capacity Building.* London: ALNAP. Last viewed on 8 June 2008. URL: http://www.alnap.org/publications/rha.htm

World Bank (2007) *Sourcebook for Evaluating Global and Regional Partnership Programs: Indicative Principles and Standards.* Washington: The Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank. Last viewed on 28 June 2008. URL: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTGLOREGPARPRO/Resources/sourcebook.pdf

Tool 23 Multi-agency response tool

This tool is based on the form used by the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) to get feedback on the recommendations from monitoring missions. Despite their title, DEC monitoring missions are really a form of real-time evaluation. They take place five months into an emergency, as soon as possible after the submission of the first report at the end of month four (covering the first three months). The monitoring-mission team holds a workshop in country at the end of the field visit, to provide immediate feedback and clear up any factual issues.

The form below is used to list the major recommendations from the team's report. This is sent to member agencies who submit it along with their report for the first six months of programming. The headings are based on DEC (2008).

Recommendation from Monitoring Mission Report	Member Agency Response
	Please include what changes your agency has been able to effect as a result. If no action has been taken, or if your member agency disagrees with a recommendation, please explain why.

▶ This tool can be used for multi-agency evaluations where a single management response would be inappropriate (see Manager Step 7: The management response). For more on joint or interagency evaluations in general, see Tool 24: Joint or interagency real-time evaluation.

Reference

DEC (2008) *DEC Form 12 DRP Report 2 (Monitoring Mission) (DEC Manual Forms).* London: Disasters Emergency Committee

Tool 24 Joint or interagency real-time evaluation

As a recent innovation in joint evaluations, joint or interagency real-time evaluation (IA RTE) is intended to improve humanitarian operations and accountability. Single-agency real-time evaluations have been used for longer, originally designed as rapid, participatory evaluations looking at a snapshot in time during the early stages of an emergency operation or humanitarian response. Adapting and building on this approach, to allow for use on a broader, interagency level, has been the focus of a pilot programme approved by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

To date, three IA RTEs have been undertaken in Mozambique, Pakistan and Myanmar, employing a variety of approaches. IA RTE provides a unique framework for interagency system-wide evaluation by reviewing the overall direction, coordination and implementation of an emergency response, rather than solely agency-specific aspects, affording a view of the broader effects at the level of the humanitarian system.

An IA RTE may be defined as a rapid, participatory evaluation looking at a snapshot in time during a relief operation or humanitarian response that employs a light footprint, rapid turnaround and immediate use of findings and recommendations. As it is interagency in nature, substantive involvement of a cross-section of stakeholders in its development, coordination, administration, implementation and/or follow-up is central to the evaluation.

Purpose

IA RTE is intended to facilitate improvements in performance and accountability during the implementation stage of a response, offering the opportunity to make such changes while the operation is still unfolding. The primary end users are in-country or field personnel engaged in the humanitarian response. As such, their inputs to the development of the terms of reference (ToR) to define each IA RTE should be given appropriate weight.

This does not preclude use of IA RTE by senior management outside the country of operation, especially at headquarters level, and it is likely that lessons learned and potential policy prescriptions may also result. The focus of IA RTE, however, is not systemic or policy issues at the global level, but operational and systemic aspects specific to the context under review.

Timing

As recommended by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, IA RTE is conducted within the first six months of a sudden-onset emergency, or a complex emergency that has experienced a rapid deterioration or surge in violence. Within these first few months, IA RTE is best timed to coincide with the easing of operational constraints, availability of staff time, and a point in the operation of particular interest to field staff (e.g. in Myanmar, the start of the transition from relief to early recovery).

Activation

An IA RTE may be activated in several ways. Because it is still a relatively new innovation however, understanding and awareness of IA RTE in the field remains limited. Therefore an IA RTE is currently most likely to be triggered at headquarters level. In future, if the usefulness of this approach is acknowledged more widely, increased activation from field level seems likely.

Management

The IA RTE managing agency appoints a staff member to oversee the management of the evaluation. Depending on the resources available, the managing agency may appoint a staff member in the field, send an HQ-based staff member on mission, or hire a separate individual, to coordinate and support the IA RTE in country.

Management of IA RTEs requires effective negotiation of all aspects of the evaluation. It is most important to maintain a continuous flow of information between stakeholders at headquarters level, and between headquarters and the field. This will allow for key stakeholders in different places to comment throughout the evaluation, especially on the development of the ToR, inception report and final report, and will help to nurture a sense of ownership and buy-in at all levels.

Before the evaluation team starts work, a preparatory mission undertakes to:

- elicit engagement of all relevant stakeholders, including UN organisations, international NGOs, national NGOs, and government entities, as appropriate to facilitate a sense of ownership among the country-level primary end users
- take part in discussions of key issues and questions of interest in development of the terms of reference
- identify and convene an in-country advisory group
- outline the geographical scope for the evaluation, identifying potential locations/sites and beneficiary populations
- prearrange logistics.

Methodology

As with single-agency RTEs, the methodology of IA RTEs is mainly inductive, drawing general conclusions from particular instances or samples. Qualitative methods predominate, as is typically the case for evaluations undertaken in humanitarian contexts. However, quantitative methods will also be employed wherever appropriate.

Because the evaluation is conducted mainly (but not solely) in ‘real-time’, rather than retrospectively, this allows the evaluators to study the implementation process itself at a key interval, and derive insights into what works and what does not. This information can then be used to inform the next stage of the same response.

Tool 25 Interagency RTE checklist

This checklist is based on a lessons-learned paper by Francine Pickup, drawing on experience of managing two interagency real-time evaluations (Pickup, 2007). Interagency RTEs are particularly difficult because of the conflict between, first, the need to act quickly to capture data from the early stages and, second, the need to build a consensus within the interagency group.

- Get prior agreement on what triggers will lead to an interagency real-time evaluation (IA-RTE) taking place. Prior agreement is needed to avoid long delays while the interagency group strives to reach consensus.
- Get prior agreement on an outline terms of reference (ToR) that can be adjusted for a particular RTE.
- Set up an HQ-level steering committee with direct or indirect representation of all of the IA group members. Indirect representation can include one agency representing the interests of agencies of the same type.
- Encourage the establishment of a local-level advisory group with clear ToRs. Membership should reflect membership of the IA group.
- Balance the need to conduct the RTE early enough to capture useful data against the risk that no one has time for the team.
- Brief the team leader at HQ or at a regional headquarters at the beginning of the fieldwork.
- If possible, the evaluation manager should conduct a pre-mission to the field to agree basic issues around the RTE.
- Select an in-country agency for the support role, with the necessary administrative, political and logistical capacity to facilitate the work of the evaluation team.
- Either include the IA RTE in the Flash Appeal and lobby actively for funds, or obtain a commitment from donors to the process. In the past, typical IA-RTEs have cost around US$100,000.
- Ideally, the team should consist of three people (unless the emergency is very large and requires multiple teams), including a gender balance, knowledge of the local context and knowledge of the key humanitarian actors and humanitarian reform issues. The earlier the RTE, the smaller the team needs to be.
- Consider the development of a training course to help build a more diverse roster of evaluators. Such a roster would facilitate the fast and efficient recruitment of consultants.
- Explore alternative techniques to time-consuming surveys for rapidly collecting information from disaster-affected communities.
- Consider asking the team to use tools such as a matrix of evidence, which is a useful, quick and transparent way to triangulate and ensure accurate findings.

Reference

Pickup, F. (2007) *Lessons Learned from the IASC Pilot Inter-Agency Real-Time Evaluations Conducted in Mozambique (May 2007) and Pakistan (September 2007): Draft*: 26 December 2007. New York: OCHA

- The evaluation team should hold country-level debriefings for the IA group membership at the beginning of the fieldwork (to brief the membership about the planned evaluation activities) and at the end of the fieldwork (to brief the membership about the emerging findings).
- Ensure a transparent and inclusive commenting process by circulating the draft report widely to stakeholders. Ideally drafts should be circulated in a non-editable format with comments made on forms. For transparency, collated comments should be circulated to all of those commenting.
- Include evaluation consultants in the communication strategy, which should be planned for the outset, and should involve presentations to HQs and the broader IA group.
- As a minimum, the executive summary of the report should be translated into the relevant local language.
- Ensure that there is a strategy in place to follow up on recommendations addressed to inter-agency groups as well as specific agencies.