



## 1. Evaluation as an element of dialogue with partners and shared learning

Evaluations are an important part of the cooperation between Kindernothilfe (KNH) and its partners on projects and programmes. The main priority for KNH is shared learning rather than verifying the achievement of objectives. Therefore, KNH mainly supports interim evaluations.

These are undertaken by analysing the experience gained in projects and programmes, documenting successful strategies and concepts, and using the results to improve ongoing work by reinforcing approaches that work well and developing solutions for problems and challenges.

It is especially important to ensure that the chosen approach is participatory and actively involves the target groups, particularly children and young people. Discussion of the provisional findings of the assessment with the target group fosters dialogue at all levels of the development process and contributes to the empowerment of the target group.

Evaluations are part of a monitoring and evaluation system that is indispensable for every project and programme, in order to accomplish work effectively and achieve objectives in a systematic way. While continuous monitoring is necessary for all projects and programmes, the timing, frequency and scope of an evaluation (i.e. how many of the projects and programmes it should cover) depend on the type of project or programme and the objectives of the analysis.

### 1.1. Definition

KNH understands evaluation as the systematic review and assessment of the design, implementation and results (outcome and impact) of ongoing and completed projects and programmes. This is carried out on the basis of professional methods which generate verifiable, credible and useful information.

### 1.2. Purposes of evaluations

Evaluations can be carried out for a great number of different purposes. Among other things,

- they are an important instrument of dialogue on conceptual planning between KNH and its partners;
- they perform a quality assurance function, contribute to learning and are action-oriented, and provide a means of enhancing the professional, methodological and organisational quality of KNH and its partners;

- they raise the level of mutual knowledge and awareness of activities, strategies and achievement of objectives. On the basis of verifiable data, the development work accomplished is made transparent and assessed jointly with the partner. This also improves the ability of KNH to provide information about its work;
- they shed light on intended and unintended outcomes and impacts achieved on the target group and its context;
- they form a basis for making decisions on implementing additional projects and programmes, or adjusting existing programmes, and are helpful for defining programme-planning priorities;
- they support the accountability of KNH to financial donors, especially its institutional donors;
- they contribute to a deeper knowledge and understanding of development policy issues;
- They raise the sustainability of impacts by means of review and strengthening of adequate strategies.

### 1.3. Criteria

However diverse the types of project, the economic and cultural framework conditions and the partners' structures, a consensus has emerged in the development policy debate on important criteria and key questions that should be considered in every evaluation. These are based on the *Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance*<sup>1</sup> of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

#### a) Relevance

Assessment of the extent to which objectives and activities are compatible with the priorities and interests of target groups, taking into consideration the context of the given society and any underlying problems:

Are the objectives, concepts, strategies and activities consistent with each other? Are they suitable means of achieving significant impacts in this context?

#### b) Effectiveness

Assessment of the programme's success in terms of achieving its objectives:

Have the implemented measures brought about the expected results, or will they do so within a foreseeable time-frame? Which factors of success or failure can be identified on the implementation level and/or in relation to the framework conditions?

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,2340,en\\_2649\\_34435\\_2086550\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,2340,en_2649_34435_2086550_1_1_1_1,00.html)  
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### c) Efficiency

Assessment of effectiveness in relation to the resources expended:

Are resources (money, staff, equipment, etc.) being deployed economically and in accordance with the objectives? Are activities organised in such a way as to make optimum use of the available resources? How is the partner's capacity appraised?

### d) Impact

Assessment of the effects of the project or programme, including effects beyond the immediate target groups:

What positive and negative, intended and unintended changes have been brought about, directly or indirectly, by the project? How is it contributing to solving a development problem or changing a situation? What side-effects can be observed? To what extent are guiding principles of development policy – such as the realisation of child rights, poverty reduction, or the advancement of women's and girls' interests – being put into practice?

### e) Sustainability

Whether a project or programme has a sustainable impact is a question that can only be answered with certainty once it ceases to receive financial support. During the implementation phase, however, important prerequisites for sustainability can be assessed:

How does the organisational and financial capacity of the promoter organisation safeguard project impacts? Is the intended exit strategy of the project adequate and realistic? What other factors favour or inhibit the sustainability of the impact?

### f) Target-actual comparison

Control of project implementation:

Is the implementation of the planned activities satisfactory in terms of quantity and quality? What are the reasons for any deviations from plan? Are any corrections to the plan necessary?

Depending on the objective of an evaluation, these criteria are differently weighted. While some points focus on the quality of projects without questioning the project objectives, others direct attention to the complex relationship between development policy objectives, the programme, and the specific framework conditions. Sophisticated impact indicators and qualitative research methods must be used to assess this.



## 1.4. Types of evaluation

In accordance with these different focuses of interest, various types of evaluation can be employed in practice:

### a) Project evaluations

The main focus of this type of evaluation is an individual project. Here, it is possible to apply all of the criteria mentioned in the previous section. Possible objectives may include adaptation or further refinement of the conceptual project plan, reviewing the achievement of objectives and accountability reporting.

### b) Programme evaluations

In addition to the aspects of a project evaluation, the focus of a programme evaluation is on the “strategic value” of the programme. Projects are not analysed for their own sake but in relation to their development policy relevance in the context of a particular set of development problems.

### c) Cross-cutting evaluations

The focus of interest with this type of evaluation is the summative and comparative analysis of several projects/programmes in a particular sector (e.g. non-formal education) or a region. In the case of cross-cutting evaluations, the top priority is the contribution to learning. Their primary aim is to continually develop sectoral approaches and to enhance the quality of our work.

### d) Organisational evaluations

This type of evaluation considers an organisation in its entirety, including its structures and systems. The objective is to review their appropriateness and to further refine them on the basis of new developments and standards.

### e) Self evaluations

Unlike the types of evaluation mentioned above which are generally carried out by external advisers, in a self-evaluation people consider their own sphere of work and the context in which they are working.

An additional aspect is the timing of an evaluation. Whereas the priorities of interim evaluations, as described above, are to support shared learning and project or programme improvement, the main focus of final evaluations is directed at the achievement of objectives, the documentation of experience and, if appropriate, the planning of a further project phase. Ex post evaluations are



carried out mainly to assess the sustainability of impacts after an intervention has been completed, and to draw conclusions that inform future work.

## 1.5. Methods

Evaluations should comply with the DeGEval Evaluation Standards as far as possible.<sup>2</sup> These emphasise that utility, feasibility, propriety and accuracy are required attributes of evaluations. In relation to evaluations by KNH and its partners, these have the following meanings:

The utility standards are intended to ensure that the evaluation is guided by the purposes of the evaluation, as jointly agreed between the partner and KNH, and the information needs of its intended users, including the target group or its organisations. To this end, it is important that objectives are defined clearly and documented in the terms of reference, and that the findings result from a participatory and transparent approach (e.g. clearly stating the basis on which assessments are made). Special thought should be given to securing the active participation of children and young people. Furthermore, evaluation reports must provide all essential information in a form that is logical and easily understandable. The findings must be discussed with representatives of the target group, who must also be actively involved in planning the follow-through of findings that affect them.

The feasibility standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation is planned and implemented in a realistic, thoughtful, and cost-effective way. Thought should be given to appropriate evaluation procedures. They should be chosen in such a way as to ensure that burdens on the evaluand, or the stakeholders and affected groups, are proportionate to the expected benefits of the evaluation. Furthermore, the procedures must take account of the educational level, the life experiences and the cultural context of the people involved and, in the case of children, their stage of development as well. Evaluations should be planned and implemented so as to achieve the greatest possible acceptance among the different stakeholders and affected groups for both the evaluation process and its findings.

The propriety standards are intended to ensure that during an evaluation all affected individuals and groups are treated with respect and fairness. Evaluations should be planned and implemented in such a way as to protect the security, dignity and rights of the people involved in an



evaluation. Evaluations should review and present the strengths and weaknesses of the evaluation target as completely and as fairly as possible, so that the strengths can be built upon and the weak points addressed. The evaluation should take into account that stakeholders and affected groups will have different views about the evaluand and the evaluation findings. Reports should clearly reflect the impartial position of the evaluation team, as should the entire evaluation process. Assessments should be reached fairly, leaving personal feelings aside as far as possible.

The Accuracy Standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation produces and communicates valid and useful information and findings about the chosen evaluand and the questions addressed by the evaluation. The evaluation target, the purposes of evaluation, the questions to be addressed and the evaluation procedures, including the methods to be applied, should be described and documented accurately so that they can be identified and assessed. The information sources used in the course of an evaluation should be documented with sufficient precision that the reliability and adequacy of the information can be assessed. The conclusions drawn in an evaluation should be backed up with an explicit rationale, so that the intended audiences can assess them.

## **2. Implementation of evaluations**

### **2.1. Planning**

Most evaluations are part of an ongoing project agreement between partners and KNH. In addition, some evaluations are initiated by partners or KNH, e.g. organisational evaluations and cross-cutting evaluations.

If an evaluation is part of an existing project agreement, the partner should initiate the joint planning process with KNH at least three months before it plans to carry out the evaluation, and embark on consultations concerning the specific procedure. As well as specific details of who is responsible for what and the desired composition of the adviser team (local or international advisers, etc.), consultations should also cover the core content to be addressed by the evaluation. To arrive at this point, the objectives and focuses of interest must be clarified openly and comprehensibly and agreed between KNH and its partners. Agreement also needs to be reached on the analysis procedure, and how the findings and recommendations will be utilised.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.degeval.de/calimero/tools/proxy.php?id=19084>





## 2.2. Preparation

### a) Terms of reference

The first step is the drafting of the terms of reference which defines the objectives of the evaluation. Normally, this is drafted by the partner and subsequently negotiated with KNH.

The terms of reference contain the direct project-related questions to be addressed, as agreed between the partners and KNH, details concerning the choice of evaluation focus, the desired composition of the evaluation team, and information about the methods of data collection so as to make it transparently clear how findings and conclusions were reached and to avoid misunderstandings. Hence, the terms of reference are the central reference document for the implementation phase of the evaluation as well as the subsequent phase of analysing the findings. It should be tailored for every evaluation, but structured in accordance with a standard model. It should take account of the criteria specified above, if at all possible, in order to enable cross-cutting analyses.

KNH offers model terms of reference for evaluations of different sectors, which are intended to be of use in producing 'tailor made' terms of reference.

### b) Invitation to tender

Evaluations are advertised for public tender as a matter of policy. This is done in accordance with normal practice in the country, in the press, via networks, databases etc.

In individual cases where it is justified, partners and KNH can agree on a limited public tender, in which case it is necessary to ensure that an adequate number of qualitatively acceptable offers have been received.

### c) Selection

The selection of advisors is coordinated by the tendering organisation with reference to clearly comprehensible criteria, such as the advisor's experience with similar tasks, the appropriateness of the proposed methodology, the costs and the like. After the written analysis of the offers, these are exchanged between partners and KNH. A consensus decision is to be reached on the advisors to be commissioned.

The basis for this selection is assessment of the offers. These must include a technical document which sets out the advisers' understanding of their brief, the planned methods, the envisaged use of said methods (where, with whom, and how often, etc.), a schedule, the calculation of costs, and the curricula vitae of the advisers. For a selection at least 5 offers should have been received.





To support the selection procedure, KNH has developed model criteria for the selection of advisers, which can be adapted or enlarged upon on a case-by-case basis.

#### d) Appointment

The advisers selected for the evaluation are normally commissioned to conduct it by partners. There may be exceptions, in the event that advisers are not based in the country in which the evaluation is taking place, or KNH happens to be commissioning the study.

KNH has developed a model contract for the appointment of consultants, which should be adapted individually. It should assist with the rapid completion of the evaluation, and protect the rights of partners and KNH to the evaluation work.

### **2.3. Implementation**

The implementation of the evaluation is normally monitored by the partner unless KNH is the commissioning organisation.

Depending on the type and duration of the evaluation, monitoring consists of commenting on the evaluation tools, making regular progress checks, and paying the fee in instalments, retaining the last instalment until the partner and KNH have approved the final report.

Thought must be given to making the approach participatory, as mentioned above. It should include a workshop at which the provisional findings are discussed, particularly with representatives of the target groups. Care should be taken to involve representatives of children and young people and to ensure, by means of the methodology, that they are able to participate actively and that their views are heard.

A key component of monitoring is commenting on, and acceptance of, the evaluation report. Depending on the agreement reached during the planning phase, the partners and KNH comment on drafts of the report. Here, the principal concern is to ensure that the advisers have fulfilled all aspects of the terms of reference, and have applied the methods specified in the technical document as described. Deviations from this plan can be agreed during the implementation phase in exceptional cases with reasoned justification.

### **2.4. Analysis of findings**

When the final evaluation report is available, KNH expects the partner to give a formal response to the conclusions and recommendations. Depending on the type of evaluation, it is recommended that this be drafted jointly with representatives of the target group or their organisations.



KNH evaluates the findings of all evaluations by means of a grid, in the aim of documenting lessons learned and using the findings as a basis for producing annual cross-cutting analyses of evaluations.

## 2.5. Utilisation of the findings

The final report and the partner's formal response are the basis for the follow-up phase. Therefore, the report should not merely take stock of existing practice, but should give an unequivocal statement of findings and conclusions in relation to the questions to be addressed, as specified in the terms of reference. The recommendations in the final report must be formulated unequivocally, must be relevant to practice, and implementation-oriented.

In addition to discussion of the conclusions drawn and actions recommended in the evaluation report, depending on the type of evaluation, the most important aspect of the follow-up phase is to agree on concrete activities for the purpose of putting selected recommendations into practice. This is usually done by means of an action plan which defines deadlines, assigned responsibilities and necessary resources.

## 3. Embedding of evaluations at KNH overseas departments

Evaluations are an element of quality development and quality assurance at KNH and must be integrated into interdepartmental corporate planning and controlling. This is ensured by means of continuous cooperation between the departments in charge of overseas work and the Department for Project Development, Sector Affairs and Evaluation (hereafter referred to as **RPS**, which is the German abbreviation of the Department), with case-by-case involvement of the Controlling Department. Responsibility for the design and systematic updating of the instrument of "evaluation" rests with RPS.

The task of conceptual development involves further content-related and methodological development of evaluation as an instrument for partner dialogue, the discussion of basic policy positions and criteria for carrying out impact studies and, in the medium term, the development of a PME system. In the course of analysing the findings of evaluations, RPS gathers suggestions on sectoral or cross-sectoral questions to be addressed by possible cross-cutting analyses and follows them up. On the basis of the analyses of all evaluations, these cross-cutting analyses are conducted annually by RPS.



Responsibility for operational matters and the content of planning, implementing and analysing the findings of project and programme evaluations rests with the overseas departments, except in the case of co-financed projects, for which RPS takes the coordinating role.

For organisational evaluations, depending on the interest of KNH and the questions to be addressed, responsibility for operational matters and content resides either with RPS or the overseas department. This is determined jointly on a case by case basis.

The responsibility for cross-cutting evaluations generally resides with RPS because of the fundamental importance of such evaluations to the overseas work of KNH. In exceptional cases, an overseas department can also take overall charge.

The normal channel for communication with partners is via the department which is responsible for the evaluation.

In the course of annual planning for programme quality development, the RPS is responsible for gathering and compiling the suggestions from the overseas departments for evaluations as part of interdepartmental corporate planning. It is also in charge of coordinating evaluations of higher-level interest, which are carried out in consultation with the regular conference of the heads of the overseas departments.

All evaluations concerning overseas work are recorded in a central, department-wide data base in which the agreed responsibilities for preparation, monitoring and analysis are documented. These are used both for coordination purposes and for the analysis of statistical indicators. For every evaluation, the department in charge completes an analysis using the analysis grid. This is done in order to summarise the lessons learned, and together with the control files, forms the basis for annual cross-cutting analyses.

To assist the overseas departments with the handling of individual projects and programme evaluations or impact studies, at the request of the overseas departments, RPS fulfils an advisory and support function. This may comprise any of the following elements, leaving the precise scope to be agreed on a case-by-case basis:

- Discussion of the objectives and questions to be addressed in the planned evaluations or impact studies, as well as the project-specific assessment criteria and indicators
- Participation in preparatory meetings at the department or with partner organisations



- Drafting of the Terms of Reference or the response to drafts by partners
- Advice with regard to analysis methods and survey instruments
- Advice on the assessment of offers from advisors
- Seeking suitable appraisers
- Responses/comments on evaluation reports
- Participation in analysis discussions
- Advice on the negotiation of action plans to ensure that evaluation findings are followed through.

For this support to function effectively, during the preparation and analysis phases the overseas departments need to involve RPS systematically and at an early stage in its discussions and information flows, and to make all relevant information available to it in good time.