Information for MISEREOR's partner organisations on conducting external evaluations

MISEREOR
● IHR HILFSWERK

Contents

0. Introduction and timeline

Dear readers,

These guidelines are about the evaluation of projects that are supported by MISEREOR. They are intended for organisations that implement the projects and commission external evaluations. It is particularly important to observe the provisions in the guidelines in the case of compulsory evaluations, which are an integral part of the contract with MISEREOR.

The guidelines offer tips and suggestions on designing the evaluation process, starting with the planning stage through to the application of results. The process, however, will not always unfold in the same way. We therefore encourage you to adapt the guidelines to the needs of your organisation.

The timeline on pages 7-8 provides a rough guide to the most important evaluation steps and to-dos. Here you will also find references to the chapters in the guidelines that provide more detailed information on the individual steps.

To enable you to use the evaluation results in your next project, **the report must be on hand approx. six months before the end of the project term, or by the time you start planning the new project**. This must be borne in mind when drawing up the schedule for the evaluation.

The current guidelines summarise the points that are important for MISEREOR when external evaluations are commissioned. The guidelines comprise

    a) an introduction with basic background information
    b) a timeline with an overview of the process
    c) a text that highlights and explains the individual elements
    d) a summary of practical tips in the annex.

"MISEREOR understands evaluations as comprehensive, systematic and intersubjectively verifiable assessments of ongoing or completed development projects, instruments or strategies. They examine the design, implementation and effects of development measures, assess them in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, and make specific recommendations. They encourage learning and enhance accountability." (Evaluation in the Development Cooperation Activities of MISEREOR and its Partners, 2017, p. 6)

In general, evaluations are recognised as an instrument of accountability. The evaluation report summarises the results of a systematic analysis of the work of the organisation in question and is distributed to various addressees, for example partners and donors.

Their particular potential, however, is realised only when the evaluated organisations leverage them as a source of learning that informs future work. Learning from evaluations is extremely important to us at MISEREOR. For us, the implementation of an evaluation is not just a matter of looking back, but an investment in the future.

In order to ensure that evaluations are an investment that generates added value, it is important to consider various aspects when designing the evaluation process. These points are covered in the sections that follow.

But first, we would like to mention a few aspects that we find especially important:

1) Think about how the evaluation is to be used later.
2) As the organisation being evaluated, clarify your questions relating to the project evaluation: What do you want to know? What should be the focus? Make sure the questions you consider important are raised (e.g. in the Terms of Reference) and that you receive an answer.
3) Include questions from other persons/groups participating in the project (e.g. in a workshop to draw up the Terms of Reference).
4) Make sure that the evaluation process is participatory and takes account of various perspectives. Different groups (staff of the organisation being evaluated, project beneficiaries, partners, non-participants, etc.) will perceive the work of the organisation in question differently. And perceptions within the individual groups are not always homogenous: Do women in the beneficiary families see the changes differently to men?
Find out who should be included in the evaluation process and how this can be achieved. If possible, design the process in a way that the different persons are not only approached as a source of information but so that they are able to contribute their perspectives to the interpretation of the results and to the direction that work will take in the future as well (see box on following page).

From MISEREOR's point of view, **participation in the evaluation process** is of central importance in ensuring that as many perspectives as possible are included in the deliberations and that all project stakeholders experience a shared learning process.

What exactly does participation mean and who should participate?

Participation can be understood as the involvement of the evaluated organisation or the participation of the project target groups. Both forms of participation are encouraged by MISEREOR.

Evaluated organisations and target groups should not be surveyed with the sole purpose of gaining information, but should be included in the whole evaluation process wherever possible and expedient. Firstly, this can be invaluable in terms of collecting good data and then ensuring that they are appropriately interpreted. Secondly, participation helps generate impulses for change, because all participants can better understand and relate to the evaluation results. In the ideal case, the evaluation itself can contribute to achieving a higher level of awareness through target-group participation. Poor people reflect on what was supposed to change, what has actually changed, and who must contribute what in order to ensure that the intended change comes about. The involvement of the target groups in the evaluation is possible and desirable especially in projects that work with a pronounced participatory focus.

The presence of project staff during interviews can engender confidence among the target groups and trigger important learning processes. However, it may also encourage interviewees to provide answers that are (supposedly) in line with the expectations of those present, and it may also inhibit criticism. Here, the consultant team must carefully examine whether the presence of project staff adds value and creates a framework in which the target groups can participate without being influenced. Some discussions should therefore be conducted without project staff.

In MISEREOR's view, consultants must certainly be independent, which does not mean they have to maintain a distance between themselves and the project stakeholders, but they do make their own decisions about the information they require, how they analyse this, and the conclusions they draw.

Course of evaluation (1)

1	**Planning and budgeting**

Draw up rough plans when mapping out the project and detailed plans when producing the Terms of Reference

- Draw up a rough plan of contents and procedure

- Name contact persons

- Determine dates and rough sequence

- Draw up preliminary budget (fees, travel expenses, workshops, etc.)

2	**Draw up Terms of Reference**

Three to four months before the start of the evaluation

- Identify staff and target groups to be included in drawing up the Terms of Reference

- Consider together:
  With what objective will we implement the evaluation? What do we want to use the results for later on? What questions is the evaluation to provide answers to?

- Record the results in the Terms of Reference (see annex "Recommended Structure for the Terms of Reference")

3	**Select consultants**

After drawing up the Terms of Reference

- Review CVs of the consultants and possibly offers

- Conduct selection interviews

- Document the decision

4	**Conclude contract and preparatory /assignment-clarification meeting**

A few weeks before the start of the evaluation

- Agree on the number of consultant (fee) days and the expected work results and specify this in the contract

- Agree on fees and payment intervals

- Conduct discussions to clarify the assignment: Clarify deadlines and practical questions, state expectations of the evaluation, clarify methodological procedure and formal conditions

- Collect important documents (project contract, project reports, organisational chart, planning documents, monitoring data, etc.) and make available to consultants

Course of evaluation (2)

Steps 6 to 8: at the end of the evaluation process

5	Implement field phase/data collection

6	Debriefing/presentation of results

7	Assessment of the report

8	Action on results

Duration as required (usually 2-2.5 weeks for most evaluations)

After data collection or submission of the draft report

After submission of the draft report

When the evaluation results are on hand and have been discussed

- React flexibly to necessary modifications in the consultant's approach
- Possibly organise a joint interim reflection session on the process
- Provide logistical support to consultant
- Make documents / information available

- Consider at an early stage who is to take part in the debriefing and find a suitable location
- Allow sufficient time for the presentation and discussion of the results!
- Jointly derive and discuss consequences for further work from the evaluation results

- Examine the quality of the evaluation report based on the 'reporting requirements' as laid down in the annex
- Accept report or request revision by consultant
- Examine final report once more if necessary and accept (contract acceptance); subsequently pay consultant

- Discuss what action to take with regard to recommendations and draw up plan of implementation
- Send final version of the evaluation report and the implementation plan to MISEREOR
- Draw MISEREOR's attention to the intended changes in project implementation
- If you like: Forward your assessment of the evaluation process to MISEREOR and the consultant

1. Planning and budgeting

As the party commissioning the evaluation, you are responsible for planning, supporting the implementation process, formally accepting the products (e.g. the evaluation report) as well as deciding on the follow-up (what action to take on the recommendations), so that you can actually make use of the results later in your work.

Ideally, the evaluation should be planned when the project is drawn up so that the necessary resources can be budgeted. The planning of the content-related and organisational details should then proceed together with the drafting of the Terms of Reference (see Chapter 2), at the latest three to four months prior to the evaluation.

You should consider the following points:

- Content and basic approach
    o With what objective will we implement the evaluation? What do we want to use the results for later on?
    o What questions are important for us and should be answered in the evaluation?
    o Who will take on which tasks? (responsibilities/roles)?
        ▪ Preliminary considerations on the consultant team: How will roles be allocated in the team if several consultants are involved in implementing the evaluation? What tasks will the consultants assume, and which ones will we take over ourselves?
        ▪ Who is the contact person for the consultants? Who will negotiate/draw up the contract?
        ▪ Who will take care of practical questions/logistics, etc.?
        ▪ Who will undertake the communication tasks with other actors who are to participate in the evaluation?
        ▪ Etc.
    o Participation: Who should be included in order to ensure a diversity of perspectives? How can this be achieved?
    o Consultant team: What qualifications (specific to the field of work/sector, methodological) must they have? (If necessary, contracts can be offered to two consultants that complement each other.)
- Date and duration
    o When must the evaluation results be on hand (e.g. so that they are available in good time for planning the new project)?
    o What steps are necessary and how much time is needed?
      (e.g. joint preparation, field visits, joint reflection on the initial results, discussion of the results)

> **Important:** A sufficient number of days must be set aside for discussions with those persons directly involved in the project (staff, target groups), for interviews with external persons and the production of the report!

- Budget (fees, travel expenses, workshops, etc.)
  - What level of fees is usual for NGOs in the country in question? (use this as a guide)
  - Are you obliged to obtain offers or to put the evaluation out to tender?

➡️ *When planning the evaluation budget, please also refer to the "Checklist for drawing up the budget" in the annex on p. 17*

2.   Draw up the Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference set out the content-related requirements for the consultants. A draft version should be available approx. three to four months before the start of the evaluation.

Normally, the Terms of Reference have to be prepared in stages with various actors. For example, the central content-related questions have to be collected in advance by those responsible for the project and the target groups and then laid down in writing in the Terms of Reference. The proposal for the methodological approach, however, is generally drawn up by the consultants (and must perhaps be expanded or revised in the Terms of Reference following the preparatory discussion). In addition, the consultants should have the opportunity to comment on the Terms of Reference (for example in the preparatory discussion) in order to further adapt questions if necessary (see also "Quality Criteria for an Appropriate Evaluation Methodology" in the annex).

When drawing up the Terms of Reference, please use the MISEREOR template in the annex ("Recommended Structure for the Terms of Reference of Evaluations"). Please do not just copy the sample questions, try to **formulate your own questions** that are to be answered in the evaluation. The easiest way is to first collect questions together with the target groups and the project staff and then to channel these into formal Terms of Reference.

It may be helpful for you to consider the following questions when you start drawing up the Terms of Reference:

- Who should be involved in drawing up the Terms of Reference?
  - Staff and target groups should be involved in formulating the questions.
- With what objective will we implement the evaluation? What do we want to use the results for later on?

- What questions is the evaluation to provide answers to?
  - ➢ It is important to focus on areas that are particularly important for the future work. Too many questions can overload an evaluation!

➡️ *When drawing up the Terms of Reference for the evaluation please refer to the "Recommended Structure for the Terms of Reference of Evaluations" in the annex on p. 18*

3. Selecting consultants

It is a good idea to start looking for a consultant (or if required a team of two consultants) at an early stage, as experienced experts often have many commitments. You should do this shortly after the Terms of Reference have been drawn up so that the preparations can commence.

When awarding the contract, you should take account of customary local procedures and statutory provisions. This may entail putting the contract out to tender.
For MISEREOR it is important that the following criteria are observed when selecting consultants:

1. The person must have the professional experience needed to analyse and assess the project.

2. He/she must have the methodological expertise necessary for conducting evaluations. (For more details see "Quality Criteria for an Appropriate Evaluation Methodology" in the annex)

You can examine the first two points by referring to the written CV of the potential consultant and by conducting a personal interview if necessary. If you are still not sure, you can also request submission of an offer with a brief description of the methodological approach. This will enable you to see if the selected approach is consistent with your ideas and expectations.

3. The person must have sufficient distance to you as the project executing agency and to the project to be evaluated. The following are therefore excluded:

- Staff and former staff as well as their spouses and immediate family.

- Members of supervisory bodies as well as their spouses and immediate family.

- Persons who have advised you in the course of project planning or implementation.

- Persons who are otherwise dependent on the project or on you as the project executing agency.

Consultants who have had previous contact with the project – but exclusively as evaluators – may be commissioned.

4. Concluding the contract and organising a preparatory meeting to clarify the assignment

The contract is the legal basis for cooperation. It should clearly set out quantities and prices (What are the daily fees and how many consultant-days will be paid? What additional costs will be reimbursed?). It should clearly state the agreed payments and the basis for the acceptance of the consultant assignment.

Please allow a sufficient number of days for discussions with project stakeholders, interviews with external persons and for drafting the report!

Before the start of the actual evaluation, we recommend that you meet the consultant in order to discuss the assignment in detail and to clarify what exactly you expect from the evaluation. The discussion can thus serve to illustrate and reach a better understanding of the Terms of Reference. It can also lead to the Terms of Reference being supplemented or revised.

The contract and Terms of Reference must be consistent with each other, e.g. with regard to the schedule and number of days. There should be a written record of all points discussed.

It is important that you collect all documents relevant to the evaluation (project contract, project reports, organisational chart, planning documents, monitoring data, etc.) and make these available to the consultant!

➡ *When drawing up the contract with the consultant, please refer to the "Specimen Agreement with Consultants" in the annex (p. 25)*

➡ *When preparing the preparatory discussion please refer to the "Checklist for preparing the preparatory/assignment-clarification meeting" in the annex (p. 28)*

5.   Implementing the field phase/data collection

The field phase and data collection are primarily steered by the consultant. However, your support will be required, especially for the following points:

- Practical aspects:
  - o Transport
  - o Organising meetings
  - o Translations, if required
  - o Support for surveys, if required (this does not necessarily entail on-site presence during the interviews themselves, and in fact this could be counterproductive. However, it may be helpful to introduce the consultant team to the interviewees.)
- The consultants will need your support on a regular basis during the implementation of the evaluation, especially to ensure the close integration of the target groups/participants.
- During the evaluation, the consultant will need to reflect on and if necessary adapt his/her approach. You should therefore plan in enough time and opportunities for joint reflection between yourself and the consultant in order to check whether the process is still on track and delivering the desired information.
- In order to be able to adapt the procedure to the specific circumstances, you should aim to be flexible during the field phase so that you can provide organisational support to the consultants should programme modifications be necessary.

➡️ *For information on MISEREOR's quality criteria for evaluation methodology please refer to the "Quality Criteria for an Appropriate Evaluation Methodology" in the annex (p. 23)*

These quality criteria should be forwarded to the consultant.

6.   Debriefing/Presentation of results

When data collection is complete, a final workshop is held in which the consultant presents the results of the field visit and of the interviews. You have the opportunity to comment on these and to ask questions.

We recommend that sufficient time is allowed for a clear presentation and detailed discussion. It is important that the workshop is not reduced to a mere presentation of results. It is also intended to give you an opportunity to comment on and discuss the results, and if needed to give the consultant supplementary information.

13

In the concluding discussion, attention should also focus on the implications of the evaluation results for your future work, and what further specific steps are planned.

You may also find it helpful to spread the discussions over several meetings and to include discussion of the report into these meetings. We certainly encourage you to adapt the process design to your own requirements.

It has proven beneficial to invite as many stakeholders as possible (including target-group representatives) to the concluding discussion. It may be useful, directly following data collection, to conduct brief assessments of the initial results for the local participants in the individual project locations.

7. Assessment of the report

In particular in evaluations that are compulsory under the terms of the contract with MISEREOR, it is most important to refer to the "Minimum requirements to be met by evaluation reports" in the annex.

As a final step, you must formally accept the report. Normally, the evaluation assignment with the consultant reaches its conclusion with the acceptance of the report. Check whether the report meets your quality criteria and those set out in the annexes. You can demand improvements from the consultants if the report does not satisfy the formal requirements or if it has shortcomings with regard to the project analysis. **The content-related statements and conclusions, however, lie within the purview of the independent consultant!**

When assessing and accepting the evaluation report please refer to the "Minimum requirements to be met by evaluation reports for projects funded by MISEREOR/German Catholic Agency for Development Aid (KZE)" in the annex (p. 29)

8. Action on results

After the acceptance of the evaluation report, your involvement in the process is not yet finished. The evaluation results are to be used in mapping out your future work. Changes can affect both the ongoing or follow-on project as well as internal organisational structures and management.

The following steps might be helpful in transforming the discussions from the evaluation into specific plans for the changes that are necessary:

- Building on the discussion with the consultant in the final workshop, conduct a further discussion of the results within your organisation. Involve other stakeholders and target groups wherever necessary and expedient.
- Draw up an implementation plan that clearly shows how you intend to act on the evaluation recommendations.
- Send the final version of the evaluation report and your action plans in response to the results and recommendations to MISEREOR. Please also make clear which recommendations you cannot or do not wish to implement, or which you can only implement in part.
- If you would like to see changes in project implementation as a result of the evaluation, please inform MISEREOR.

➡️ *When planning and implementing the evaluation recommendations please refer to the "Grid for monitoring the implementation of the evaluation recommendations" in the annex (p. 32)*

MISEREOR would very much like to hear your assessment of the evaluation process and of the consultant's work.

Annexes

Drawing up the budget

Checklist for drawing up the budget

In planning the evaluation budget, you should consider the following questions:

☐ Will the evaluation be conducted by one or several consultants?

☐ Which areas/project regions are to be included in the evaluation?

☐ What individual steps and field visits are to be undertaken during the evaluation?

☐ How many work days (approx.) will the consultant need (for preparation, collecting information, reporting)?

☐ What is the average local and/or international daily rate for consultants?

☐ What are the approximate costs of transport, accommodation, other logistical services and ancillary items, such as communications/material supplies/meals/ workshops?

☐ Will there be additional costs for taxes for example VAT?

☐ Is the evaluation report to be translated into other languages?

☐ Will it be necessary to hire rooms for group discussions or for the presentation?

☐ Will it be necessary to cover the costs of transport and/or meals for community representatives, government representatives or experts, etc.?

☐ Will translators/interpreters be needed for data collection? How much will this cost?

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Recommended Structure for the Terms of Reference of Evaluations

The Terms of Reference (ToRs) outline the requirements and conditions that underpin the work of the consultant team. They set out the objectives and questions to be addressed by the evaluation, and are agreed between all parties involved in the task to be performed by the evaluation team. In order to ensure that the evaluation fulfils the expectations of all stakeholders, it is necessary that the ToRs are formulated as clearly and precisely as possible. The following information and explanations may be of help in this task.
*The ToRs are to be formulated **individually for each evaluation** in order to ensure that they are appropriate to the individual project setting and the evaluation objectives.*

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1. **Introduction and background**

   This section should briefly describe the project to be evaluated and explain how the evaluation came about.

   - How long has MISEREOR been supporting the project? When was it last evaluated?

   - What are the key activity areas of the project? Who are the target groups? What strategy is the project pursuing in order to bring about changes?

   - Who initiated the evaluation?

   - Why was it initiated?

   - What time frame does the evaluation cover (e.g. the current project or one or more previous projects)?

   - What is the subject of observation? (Is the project supported by MISEREOR the sole focus? Alternatively, is it expedient and is there a desire to take a broader look at other aspects of the work of the organisation?)

   If necessary:

   - General background information on the region and sector.

2. **Objectives of the evaluation**

   MISEREOR takes a learning-oriented approach to evaluations. An evaluation is intended to provide impetus for learning and improvement. Of course, external evaluations also serve as an instrument of accountability. In order to clarify the expectations made of the evaluation, it is important in this section to describe as accurately as possible the objectives you want the evaluation to achieve. This is especially important for the evaluation team, as the evaluation objectives critically affect exactly what information is collected and the collection methods applied.

   - What exactly is the purpose of the evaluation (e.g. upcoming strategy development, planning of the next project phase, feedback on an innovative approach …)?

3. Questions to be answered by the evaluation

We recommend that the key issues to be addressed in the evaluation are formulated as specific questions.

When drawing up these questions, the DAC criteria[1] for evaluations are to be taken into account: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The following table includes a description/explanation of each criterion with sample questions. These key questions should be tailored to the requirements of the individual evaluation (i. e. they can be modified, formulated more precisely, added to, or omitted). The order of the DAC criteria can be changed if necessary.

We recommend firstly that open discussions are held with staff and target groups, etc. to decide what questions the evaluation is to provide answers to. In the next step, the most important questions are selected and aligned as far as possible with the DAC criteria set out below. If the sample questions below are also included, it is important to adapt these to the individual evaluation. The Terms of Reference should provide a clear picture of the questions the evaluation is to focus on.

It is possible that some important questions do not match up with the DAC criteria. In this case, additional headings can be added to the five DAC criteria (e.g. on organisational structure or other topics).

- What questions is the evaluation to provide answers to?

- What questions are important with regard to the individual DAC criteria?

Relevance: The extent to which the project is suited to the priorities and policies of the target groups, the organisation responsible for the project and the donor organisation, and to the framework conditions.

Examples of questions that can be included under the heading relevance:

- What direct and indirect target groups does the project address and why were they selected? Do they belong to particularly disadvantaged population groups?
- To what extent is the intervention important for the target groups (for example, does it focus on an important problem/bottleneck)?
- Is the project approach appropriate with a view to improving – either directly or indirectly – the life situation of particularly disadvantaged groups?
- What framework conditions are important for the project? To what extent have they been taken into account?
- To what extent are the initial objectives of the project still appropriate?
- Is the project strategy coherent and likely to be successful with a view to achieving the planned project objectives?

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[1] See: http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,2340,en_2649_34435_2086550_1_1_1_1,00.html

Effectiveness: A measure of the extent to which a project attains its objectives as laid out in the Project Contract, i. e. a comparison of the intended with the observed effects (cf. "Effects" below).

Examples of questions that can be included under the heading effectiveness:

- To what extent were the objectives achieved/are they likely to be achieved? What information is available in this respect with regard to the agreed indicators? What other information is available with regard to the achievement of objectives?
- How many people were reached through the project and how does this compare with the planned number?
- What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of objectives?
- Which activities and outputs made a particularly important contribution to the achievement of objectives and which were not so important?
- Were the initial objectives realistic? Are the objectives formulated as outcomes (i.e. direct effects)?

Efficiency: Efficiency measures the products and outputs (qualitative and quantitative) of the project in relation to the inputs. It may also be helpful to consider the observed effects of the project in relation to the resources used.

Examples of questions that can be included under the heading efficiency:

- What evidence is there to indicate that the project was implemented with due regard to economic efficiency under the given circumstances? Was the project implemented economically and cost-consciously?
- On what parameters is this assessment based (e.g. costs per project output: costs per training course or trainee, per hectare of agricultural land converted to ecological farming, per beneficiary, etc.)? Are any benchmarks for these parameters available from other projects or institutions?
- How well does the organisation perform? Possible areas to consider may include management and administration systems, communication structures, an appropriate PME system, regional and thematic breadth or concentration.

If appropriate:

- What is the relation between the observed effects and the resources used?

Effects (direct and indirect – outcomes and impacts[2]): The positive and negative changes produced by a project, directly or indirectly. The evaluation should focus on both intended and unintended outcomes and impacts.

Examples of questions that can be included under the heading effects:

- What exactly has changed for the beneficiaries as a result of the project? The focus here should be on social, economic, political, cultural and environmental changes with consideration given to gender aspects and other relevant social differentiations.
- Which other factors contributed to the changes, and to what extent can the changes be attributed to the project activities (plausibility)?
- Does the relationship of cause and effects as they were actually observed match the effects logic/theory of change[3] in the project plans? If not, what are the differences?

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[2] In MISEREOR terminology, the term 'effects' includes 'outcomes' (direct effects achieved by the end of the project funding period) and 'impacts' (long-term and possibly indirect developmental effects). Cf.
https://www.MISEREOR.org/fileadmin//user_upload/MISEREOR_org/Cooperation___Service/englisch/compilation-introduction-of-effect-orientation-into-pme-systems.pdf

[3] What we mean by 'theory of change' here is not so much the comprehensive planning methodology but simply the basic concept of how the project activities are supposed to bring about the planned changes.

> **Sustainability**: Sustainability is concerned with measuring whether the benefits of a project are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn. Benefits are intended to be socially and environmentally sustainable, and where applicable economically and technologically sustainable as well.
>
> Examples of questions that can be included under the heading sustainability:
> - To what extent are the benefits of the project likely to continue once donor funding has ceased?
> - What were the major factors that influenced the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the project?

If there are any cross-cutting themes relevant to the context and project, we recommend that the corresponding questions are included in the evaluation. This may include, for example, questions on gender aspects, human rights, citizens' participation, peacebuilding and civil conflict transformation, good governance, civil-society participation, HIV/AIDS, health or environmental protection.

4. Methodology

It is important that a methodological approach is drawn up for each evaluation individually. Generally, the commissioning organisation presents some preliminary considerations before the consultant team draws up the detailed methodological approach. As a minimum, the Terms of Reference should therefore refer to the following questions:

- What is important for us with regard to methodology?

- Which people is it essential to speak to, and which locations is it essential to visit?

Below are some general tips on the methodological procedure; these may help to determine more precisely what is important in each case.

It is important to bear in mind that the project does not only affect a single homogeneous target group, but various groups with different interests and perspectives (e.g. women and men, the young and the elderly, various ethnic groups, agricultural and livestock farmers, large and small landowners, etc.). The social differentiation of the groups the project works with should therefore be analysed, and the perspectives of these groups taken into account.

Generally, a set of varied and adapted methods is applied (usually taking a gender-sensitive approach) that focuses on quantitative and qualitative aspects in the following steps of the evaluation:

- Prior to field work: document review, preparation of interview guidelines, assessment of the available regional and technical analyses and data, preparation or implementation of quantitative surveys designed by the project team where this seems appropriate ...
- During field work: kick-off workshop, document review, participant observation, quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews (open, semi-structured), focus group discussions, participatory methods e.g. from PRA or the NGO-IDEAs 'Impact Toolbox', context analyses, interviews with key persons, debriefing workshop ...
- The debriefing workshop is an important element for the triangulation/validation of the data collected, critical discussion of conclusions and elaboration of practical recommendations. As far as possible, it should be based on a solid analysis of the data collected and involve the participation of the key project stakeholders (incl. target groups whenever possible). In addition, the debriefing workshop should be used to start the processes of reflection on the results of the evaluation and of learning from the evaluation. The willingness of the participants at this stage to enter into detailed

discussions should be taken into consideration when deciding on the length of the workshop.

5. Organisation of the mission

This section includes details of:

- the members of the evaluation team, the required expertise, their methodological skills and their roles;
- support provided to the evaluation by the organisation being evaluated (logistics, contact persons for the evaluation team ...);
- the schedule:
    - duration of preparatory activities,
    - dates of the mission (including kick-off workshop),
    - date of the debriefing workshop at the project location, which should provide the organisation being evaluated with an opportunity to give feedback on the preliminary results of the evaluation team,
    - deadline for submission of the (draft) report, and further procedure for submission and acceptance of the report.

6. Report

Evaluation reports submitted to MISEREOR should meet a number of requirements. Some of these are binding; others can be adapted to the corresponding situation. These requirements are listed in the document "Minimum requirements to be met by evaluation reports for projects funded by MISEREOR/German Catholic Central Agency for Development Aid (KZE)".

The following questions should be clarified in the Terms of Reference:

- Who will write the report? Who will have overall responsibility?
- How long is the report expected to be?
- What should be included in the report?
- What are the requirements with respect to the reporting format?

Quality Criteria for an Appropriate Evaluation Methodology – Information for Consultants[4]

A. Participation and independence

Preliminary remarks: Participation can be understood as the involvement of the evaluated organisation or the participation of the project target groups. For us, participation means more than simple requests for information. MISEREOR recommends that evaluations be participatory in design, firstly because both parties can provide important information and contribute to an appropriate interpretation of the data, and secondly because participation in both cases is more likely to lead to impulses for change and ideally to a strengthening of the partner's own evaluation expertise. Accordingly, the independence of the consultant team should be evident not so much in terms of maximum distance to the project participants, but rather in terms of the independent organisation of data collection as well as independent analysis and assessment.

- Partner organisations are involved in specifying the methodological approach (generally during the kick-off workshop). The consultant team ensures that the project areas to be evaluated (regions, groups, etc.) and the key providers of information are selected impartially. For example, it is important to visit not only those groups with whom cooperation functions best.
- The (monitoring) data collected by the partner organisation are used wherever expedient; if necessary comments are added to the data.
- Whenever expedient, the partner organisation is involved in the learning process in the course of the evaluation, i.e. the consultant team informs the partner of their observations, and presents and discusses their interpretations and assessment benchmarks.
- The (preliminary) evaluation results are presented to and discussed with the partner organisation at the end of the on-site mission.
- Any clearly divergent assessments on the part of the partner organisation are documented in the report.
- The target-group perspective is firmly integrated into the evaluation through the information collected in interviews and/or participatory surveys. The heterogeneity of the target groups is to be taken into account (ethnicity, sex, age, social groups, etc.).
- The presence of project staff during the target-group interviews can engender confidence among the target groups and trigger important learning processes among the project staff taking part. However, it may also encourage interviewees to provide answers that are in line with (their perception of) the expectations of those present, and it may also inhibit criticism. Here the consultant team must be particularly careful not only to ensure the participation of project staff, but also to provide a suitable framework in which the target groups can participate without being subject to external influence. Part of the discussions should therefore be conducted without project staff (except in the case of assisted self-evaluations).
- If there are language barriers, it is important to consider whether an interpreter should be recruited for a limited period.

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[4] From Evaluation and Quality Management (EQM), MISEREOR, 2017: "Evaluation in the Development Cooperation Activities of MISEREOR and its Partners"

B. Accuracy and credibility

- Data and observations are validated using triangulation techniques. This is done by obtaining various perspectives and applying different methods. Unsubstantiated statements are labelled as such in the report.
- Interview partners are selected so as to ensure a diversity of perspectives; perspectives from outside the project are also included.
- Samples are selected so as to minimise bias, e.g. by ensuring that random samples are sufficiently large, or by consciously selecting stronger, average and weaker elements in a statistical population. The selection criteria and processes are set out clearly in the evaluation report.
- Both quantitative and qualitative data are collected.
- Whenever possible statements are quantified (not "The women say…", but "Three out of five of the groups interviewed…" or "60% of interviewees…").
- The methods applied, the interviewee numbers and selection criteria, and the sample size and selection criteria are clearly described in a chapter on methodology or in the annex. The limits of informational relevance are stated.

C. Effects assessment

- If not already available, effects hypotheses, a set of cause-and-effect correlations or a theory of change are elaborated on the basis of the document analysis and discussed on site (e.g. in the kick-off workshop).
- In order to record all the important effects of the project, it makes sense firstly to conduct a broad-based and open effects assessment and then to a) retroactively establish links to the set of cause-and-effect correlations and b) analyse the effectiveness of the project based on the objectives and the corresponding indicators.
- Effects are differentiated in line with the heterogeneous nature of the target groups.
- The consultant must examine (and document in the report) whether the observed changes can be plausibly attributed to the project by considering the counterfactual case: What would have happened without the project? (What changes can be attributed to the project?) Possible methods include an influence matrix, interviews with key players, interviews with non-participants in a similar situation or interviews with control groups.
- It is important to look not only at the achievement of objectives/intended effects, but also at unintended effects (positive and negative). This involves looking at aspects of the lives of the target groups that are not directly addressed by the project. Such additional fields of observation may emerge from the joint development of cause-and-effect correlations, or through the cross-cutting themes addressed by the organisation/MISEREOR.
- It is important to examine whether further indirect effects can be observed (e.g. copy-cat effects/broad-scale impact).

Specimen Agreement with Consultants

between the

commissioning organisation

with address

- Commissioning Party -

and

Consultant
with address

- Consultant -

hereby agree the following:

I. Object of the assignment

The Commissioning Party awards the Consultant the contract to carry out the following consulting services: (more detailed information, see ToRs Annex 1)

II. Implementation of the assignment

(1)   The Consultant commences his/her work activity with the start of the preparations for the consulting services.   days are planned for the preparation of the assignment and   days for the follow-up work (incl. reporting/assessment). The Consultant shall reach agreement with the Commissioning Party on the dates of a field visit lasting   days. The Commissioning Party shall also stipulate when an assessment meeting shall take place with the Consultant following submission of the report.

(2)   The Commissioning Party shall provide the Consultant with all information necessary for the performance of his/her tasks in good time before the commencement of the field visit.

(3)   The Consultant shall produce a report (see Annex 1 for more details). The report shall be written in *(language)* .

   The report shall be submitted to the Commissioning Party by *Day Month Year* (by email; **the complete report as a single Word or PDF file**); if necessary the Consultant shall produce a revised version following the assessment discussion.

III. Duration of the Agreement

(1)   This contractual relationship ends with the acceptance by the Commissioning Party of the report mentioned in Section II.3 above.

IV. Fee and reimbursement of costs

(1)   Fee: For the preparation, the field visit and the production of the report the Commissioning Party pays the Consultant

a daily fee of *currency* (in words *currency*) or

a lump-sum fee [1] of *currency* (in words *currency*)
as per account rendered.

(2)   For the duration of the necessary field visit, the Commissioning Party pays daily and overnight accommodation allowances to the amount of (daily allowance) and (overnight accommodation allowance). If overnight accommodation or meals are provided free of charge, no daily allowances or overnight accommodation allowances will be paid.

(3)   In addition, all necessary transport and travel expenses will be reimbursed upon presentation of receipts up to the amount of . Other necessary expenditures (communication costs, costs of materials and copying, possibly visa fees and preventive travel health measures) are reimbursed up to the amount of upon presentation of receipts (except for the costs of the Consultant's insurance policies). **In exceptional circumstances**, ancillary costs may also be reimbursed as a lump-sum payment.

(4)   Upon request, the Commissioning Party grants an advance payment of up to for travel expenses and fees. The remaining amount is paid after the end of the assignment as per account rendered.

(5)   Notices of termination of any kind shall be made in writing. If important reasons exist, the contractual relationship can be terminated without notice (extraordinary termination).

(6)   If a report, either as a whole or in part, is submitted late due to reasons for which the Consultant is responsible, the Commissioning Party can grant an appropriate extension, pointing out that the remuneration will be reduced by 10%.
If the Commissioning Party fails to deliver the report by this new date, the Commissioning Party can withdraw from the Agreement. In the case of withdrawal, only the costs of equipment and materials as set out in section IV.2.3 will be reimbursed on submission of corresponding evidence. If a report is inadequate, based on the definition in section I, the Commissioning Party can set a deadline by which the shortcomings are to be remedied at the cost of the Consultant. If the remedial work is not satisfactory, the Commissioning Party can withdraw from the Agreement. In this case, only the material costs as set out in section IV.2.3 will be reimbursed on submission of corresponding evidence.

(7)   The final invoice shall be submitted after completion of the assignment.

(8)   The Consultant is liable for the payment of all taxes and charges arising in connection with this Agreement.

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[1] A lump-sum fee can include daily and overnight accommodation allowances; this information must be documented.

V. Insurance

(1) The Consultant confirms that there are no health concerns with regard to his/her field visit.

(2) The Consultant shall take out and pay for an insurance policy, in particular to cover risks to life and health.

(3) The Commissioning Party shall not be liable for any damages incurred by the Consultant that arise due to a failure to observe the foregoing provisions.

VI. Dissemination of information

(1) The Consultant undertakes to keep secret any information that becomes known to him/her in connection with the implementation of this assignment and shall not disclose any related information without obtaining the prior approval of the Commissioning Party.

(2) The Consultant undertakes to observe the confidentiality of the data collected. This means that the Consultant shall collect, process or use only those personal data that are necessary in order to complete the assignment.

VII. Final provisions

(1) Amendments and supplements to this Agreement shall not be valid unless they are made in writing.

(2) The parties to this Agreement undertake not to offer – either directly or indirectly – advantages of any kind to third parties, nor to accept – either directly or indirectly – any financial rewards or gifts either for himself/herself or for others, nor to procure or agree to accept other advantages that are or could be deemed to be unlawful practice or bribery. Violations or non-observance of this clause will lead to claims for repayment.

(3) If any of the provisions of this Agreement become invalid, this shall not affect the validity of the other provisions.

...................................., ..., ...
Location of Commissioning Party   Date   *Location of Consultant   Date*

....
(For the Commissioning Party)   *The Consultant*

Checklist for preparing the preparatory/assignment-clarification meeting

Adequate time should be allowed for this exchange discussion as further questions often emerge and there is frequently need for clarification. The following list contains questions that may help you in planning the assignment-clarification meeting. These questions are optional and intended only as support.

☐ 1. Basic information (e.g. vision, mission, size) on the **organisation commissioning the assignment.**

☐ 2. What precisely is the **object of the evaluation** (e.g. a project, a specific approach, specific instruments, several projects, a certain project component, etc.)? What is the **period under review**? Who are the **target groups** and **stakeholders**? What are the **framework conditions**?

☐ 3. What exactly does the commissioning party want to achieve with the evaluation? (**objectives**)

☐ 4. How exactly will the results be used? (**use**) Who is to benefit from the results? (**addressees of the recommendations**)

☐ 5. Why is there interest in the results in the first place? Why now? (**occasion**)

☐ 6. What **methods** are to be used to collect data?

☐ 7. When are the products to be delivered? (**deadlines**, possibly also for interim results) Has the organisation commissioning the assignment clarified the **deadlines for comments** (e.g. for the draft of the final report)?

☐ 8. Which groups/persons should be interviewed about their views on the project or the framework conditions? (e.g. government representatives, other organisations)

☐ 9. Which **provisions** – general quality requirements and formal requirements (e.g. from the donor) – have to be complied with (minimum requirements for the final report)?

☐ 10. What baseline data, monitoring data and evaluations are already available in the project or from forerunner projects? (upstream products)

☐ 11. Discussion/clarification of the **evaluation questions** in the Terms of Reference. Are any points **unclear**? What results will **probably not be achieved** (due to external conditions)? What may have to be **adapted** in order to achieve results (e.g. more time)? Will some questions possibly have to be deleted or modified?

☐ 12. What will certainly have to be avoided or taken into consideration during the evaluation? (critical topics or formulations, cultural taboos, etc.)

☐ 13. The next steps: Who communicates with whom (e.g. **who in the organisation commissioning the assignment is responsible** for announcing and introducing the consultants, for example to the target groups and stakeholders)? From whom will the consultants receive the necessary documents and data?

☐ 14. Is the planned **schedule** for the evaluation realistic and has it been agreed with all participants (e.g. target groups, stakeholders, etc.)? Will the schedule have to be modified?

☐ 15. What support will the consultants need in terms of **logistics, transport, accommodation, translation/interpreting, etc.**? Who is responsible for this?

☐ 16. Information about **important points in the agreement**, e.g. **invoicing** (what is needed for the invoice, which vouchers have to be submitted, deadlines, etc.), **confidentiality clause,** etc.

☐ 17. If there is a consultant team: Are the **roles and responsibilities** clear, e.g. with regard to reporting?

Minimum requirements to be met by evaluation reports for projects funded by MISEREOR/German Catholic Central Agency for Development Aid (KZE)

Evaluation reports are generally between 25 and 40 pages in length (excluding annexes) and must include the following components:

a. **Cover page with following details:**
   - Name and location of the project to be evaluated
   - Name of the project executing agency
   - Project number (under which the project is managed at MISEREOR)
   - Evaluation number - in the case of EQM evaluation
   - Names of all members of the evaluation team, name of person responsible for the report
   - Date of creation of the report (with the addition: draft/final version)

b. **List of abbreviations**

c. **Contents (clearly structured, with subchapters and page numbers)**

d. **Summary, around 2-3 pages with following contents:**
   - Brief description of the project that was evaluated
   - Purpose and objectives of the evaluation
   - Important results with reference to the main evaluation questions in line with the Terms of Reference and an overall assessment of the work performed (conclusions)
   - Important recommendations

e. **Description of the evaluated project, the project context and the reason for and objectives of the evaluation**
   - Project context and framework conditions
   - Project target groups
   - Project objectives and intervention logic: What does the project aim to achieve and how?
   - Structure and management of the organisation implementing the project
   - Nature and scope of cooperation with MISEREOR (and also – if applicable and relevant – with other organisations, e.g. in the case of cofinancing)
   - Reason for and objectives of the evaluation

f. **Chapter on methods with following contents:**
   - Description of the data collection methods employed
   - Description of the sample: Who, how many (subdivided according to gender and possibly other characteristics, such as ethnicity, age, etc.) and what criteria were used in the selection?

Good practice:

> *Provide an insight into the practical approach in an annex on methods, e.g.: Who collected the information or gathered the data and how? How were the evaluation methods put together and - circumstances permitting - tested (pretest) prior to implementation? How was the collected information evaluated (in particular if quantitative methods/surveys were employed)?*
>
> *Mention any major restrictions/limitations with respect to the evaluation (e.g. restrictions on ability to travel in the project region due to the security situation, limited number of villages visited due to tight schedule, etc.)*
>
> *Explain the limits on the informational value of the methodological approach: How reliable and compelling were the methods employed in this evaluation?*
>
> *Explain any resulting limitations on the ability to interpret the data.*

g. Presenting the results of data collection and evaluation

Back up your descriptions with quantitative evidence and differentiate by group (male/female, ethnicity, age, level of poverty, etc.) whenever possible; separate the description and facts from the assessment.

Good practice:

> *Present the cause-and-effect correlations drawn up together with the partners*
>
> *Provide a separate summary of the data, including financial monitoring data, collected in the project monitoring activities*
>
> *Indicate data sources, workshop documents, etc. in the annex*
>
> *Present selected results using diagrams or tables, use maps if appropriate (e.g. to illustrate regional distributions and differences)*
>
> *Incorporate illuminating examples or quotes (transcripts/recordings taken from the interviews)*

h. Assessment of the information collected
- Based on the evaluation questions
- Based on DAC criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability

Good practice:

> *In a separate chapter/section, identify and outline the lessons learned that apply to the whole sector or to the strategy of the projects in the sector in general*

i. Overarching conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions are to be presented in the form of a compact synthesis that builds on the answers to the evaluation questions and goes a step further in the assessment – not an abridged version of the facts as presented.
Recommendations should focus on the essentials in order to give the follow-up a realistic chance (learning evaluation).

Good practice:

> *Show clearly how the conclusions were derived from the collected data*
>
> *Prioritise recommendations: Which are most important?*
>
> *Address recommendations to specific actors as far as possible: Who should do what?*
>
> *Discuss recommendations in advance in the debriefing workshop and examine their suitability for implementation*

j. Annexes (minimum):

- Terms of Reference
- Timetable: evaluation programme (table with date, details of location, persons affected/interviewed)
- List of interviewees[5]
- List of documents referred to in the report
- Documentation of the introductory and final workshop

Good practice:

> ✳ *Documentation of the survey instruments employed (e.g. questionnaires, interview guidelines)*
>
> ✳ *Photos or transcripts of flip charts, visual records, etc.*
>
> ✳ *Detailed evidence to back up arguments in the main section (e.g. detailed quantitative data overviews)*

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[5] It is important to observe any confidentiality and data protection regulations relevant to the particular case and the country context.

Grid for monitoring the implementation of evaluation recommendations

Recommendations	Management Decision (agree/ disagree, partially agree)	Planned Action	Deadline/ Responsible	Status/ Comment

Source: betterevaluation.org; grid from UNDP