# VALIDATING METHODOLOGIES

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This is a checklist to assist evaluation managers in validating the methodological soundness of an evaluation proposal. Valid and reliable evaluation methods should be free from any consistent alignment with one point of view which would result in a lack of objectivity, fairness, or impartiality. To ensure validity and reliability in evaluation methodologies, a combination of methods are often used. Reliability refers to consistency of measurement – for example ensuring that a particular data collection instrument will elicit the same or similar response if administered under similar conditions. Please also see *Guidance Note 8 – Ratings in evaluation.*

## 1. UNDERSTANDING THE PROJECT BACKGROUND

- **Clear project description** – Having a clear description of the project being evaluated is important because it permits stakeholders to determine if the proposed methods are appropriate.

- **Described purposes and procedures** – Clearly stated purposes and procedures permit stakeholders to determine if there is good alignment between the purpose of the evaluation and the proposed methods. In the ILO, evaluations are usually conducted in order to demonstrate accountability to donors for funding received; in order to promote organizational learning; and to improve the implementation of interventions.

- **Complete and fair assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the intervention** - Evaluation methods should be implemented in a rigorous manner to permit strengths and weaknesses of the project to be identified in a complete, fair and unbiased manner.

## 2. CRITERIA AND METHODOLOGY

- **Evaluation criteria** – The evaluation design should clearly spell out the criteria against which the project to be evaluated will be assessed. The OECD/DAC Criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability guide evaluations in the ILO.

- **Methods answer evaluation questions** –The methods selected should permit information to be collected that address pertinent questions that stakeholders want the evaluation to answer.

- **Methods are appropriate for the sources of information sought** –The evaluation methods selected should be appropriate for the sources from which information will be collected. For example, statistics should not be done on a small sample size, determine the right context to conduct interviews and surveys.

- **Methods are context/culturally-sensitive** – For example, in Muslim cultures, it may not be appropriate for a man to interview an unaccompanied woman.

- **Cost-effectiveness** The methods selected should be efficient and produce information of sufficient value and that justify resources.

## 3. VALIDATION[1]

- **Quantitative and qualitative data analysis** –The techniques for analyzing quantitative information include descriptive and/or inferential statistics. The techniques for analyzing qualitative information include content analysis (i.e., determining patterns, categories, taxonomies, themes, etc.).

- **Triangulate data to verify accuracy:** Use multiple data sources – Use a mix of methods to collect data rather than relying on one source or one piece of evidence. For example, triangulate the evidence from once source (such as the group interview) with other evidence.

- **Use experts to review and validate evidence** – Credibility concerns the extent to which the evaluation evidence and the results are perceived to be valid, reliable and impartial by the stakeholders, particularly the users of evaluation results.

- **Building in strategies to verify data** – Good evaluation evidence is both consistent and accurate. Building in strategies to verify data will enhance the reliability and ensure valid results.

- **Accuracy of measurement** – Validity refers to accuracy in measurement and also refers to the extent to which inferences or conclusions drawn from data are reasonable and justifiable.

- **Consistency of measurement** – Reliability refers to consistency of measurement. For example, ensuring that a particular data collection instrument will elicit the same or similar response if administered under similar conditions.

## 4. MATRIX FOR GUIDING THE EVALUATION'S METHODOLOGY

It is recommended that a matrix be used as a methodological tool when designing evaluations. This will help improve evaluation methodology since it links evaluation criteria, questions, analyses, while also indicating how they relate to the evaluation's findings and conclusions.

1 Adapted from UNDP. *Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating Development Results.* Chapter 7 on validating methodologies, (2009).

To help organize evaluation questions and data sources, an example of a matrix is provided below. This will tighten the evaluation's design and make clear its methodology. It will also provide clearer guidance and transparency to the evaluator, client and other stakeholders of what information is import and why certain information is needed.

ILO evaluation questions are in line with international good practices. Each evaluation is expected to answer criteria on: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The criteria help formulate appropriate evaluation questions which must be tailored to the project. There should be two or three questions per criteria. The answers will guide the evaluation's conclusions and recommendations. Once the evaluation questions are established, the evaluator may begin to draft the sources that will answer the questions.

The matrix (below) can be used as a framework to guide the evaluation's methodology.

# Matrix for guiding the evaluation's methodology

| Title of Evaluation | | Data sources | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Document review | Literature review | Interviews | Case studies | Survey / questionnaire |
| **Evaluation criteria** | **Evaluation question** | | | | | |
| 1. Relevance | | | | | | |
| The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donor' policies. | Question A | x | x | x | x | x |
| | Question B | | | x | x | x |
| The extent to which the approach is strategic and the ILO uses its comparative advantage. | Question C | | | x | x | x |
| 2. Validity of intervention design | | | | | | |
| The extent to which the design is logical and coherent. | Question D | x | x | x | | |
| | Question E | | | x | x | x |
| 3. Intervention progress and effectiveness | | | | | | |
| The extent to which the intervention's immediate objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance. | Question F | x | x | x | x | x |
| | Question G | x | x | x | x | x |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4. Efficiency of resource use | | | | | | |
| A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results. | Question H | x | | x | x | x |
| | Question I | x | | x | x | x |
| 5. Effectiveness of management arrangements | | | | | | |
| The extent to which management capacities and arrangements put in place support the achievement of results. | Question J | x | | x | x | |
| | Question K | x | | | x | |
| 6. Impact orientation and sustainability of the intervention | | | | | | |
| The strategic orientation of the project towards making a significant contribution to broader, long-term, sustainable development changes.<br><br>The likelihood that the results of the intervention are durable and can be maintained or even scaled up and replicated by intervention partners after major assistance has been completed. | Question L | | | x | x | x |
| | Question M | | | x | x | x |