

Oxfam GB Programme Evaluation Policy

Section 1: “Key Data”

- 1 Title of Policy: **Oxfam GB Programme Evaluation Policy**
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- 3 CMT sponsor: **Penny Lawrence**
- 4 Area of Governance: **Programme Learning and Accountability**
- 5 Date for renewal: **January 2014**
- 6 Approved by [Council/CMT]: **CMT**
- 7 Geographical Scope [GB or Global]: **Global**
- 8 Confidentiality: **This policy will be made public**

Section 2: Policy Details

Policy Statement

Oxfam GB undertakes timely, relevant and professional analyses of the performance of our programmes that inform our future programme and policy development and help us to be accountable for the resources with which we have been entrusted.

Procedures for implementation

What is a programme evaluation?

A programme evaluation is a systematic and objective assessment of the design, implementation and results of an ongoing or completed programme, as defined by a PIP. Its aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of programme objectives, development 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 the recipients and donors.¹

There are many types of evaluation that can be used to assess a programme’s effectiveness such as real-time evaluations, participatory evaluations and impact evaluations. The most appropriate type of evaluation in any given situation will depend on the context of the programme, the objectives of the evaluation and the resources available. A description of different types of programme evaluations together with a summary of when and how they may be used can be found in the resources that accompany this policy.

Why do we do programme evaluations?

¹ Based on the OECD DAC definition

Programme evaluations provide us with independent and rigorous analyses of the effectiveness of our programmes at a particular point in time. They help us to learn about what does and doesn't work towards overcoming poverty and enable us to be accountable to our wide range of stakeholders. Programme evaluations complement our ongoing monitoring activities and build our institutional knowledge. They form a vital part of our Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system.

Who is responsible for programme evaluations?

Programme Managers are responsible for undertaking evaluations of their programmes. Line managers are responsible for ensuring that evaluations are carried out, used and shared in accordance with this policy.

When do we do programme evaluations?

Programme evaluations can be costly, and so it is important that we carefully consider when we carry them out in order to make the most of our investment to improve our accountability and learning.

Any PIP Manager or Country Director may decide to carry out a programme evaluation when there is a strong rationale for doing so and it is clear how the findings will be used to improve the quality of our programmes. For example a programme evaluation may be undertaken to learn what did or didn't work before developing a new programme strategy, or an evaluation may be undertaken of a new, innovative programme to inform decisions about whether or not to scale-up work in this area.

However, to ensure that we are accountable for the resources with which we have been entrusted, **we will carry out a mid-term and a final evaluation at least once every 5 years:**

- **Of all major campaigns;**
- **Of all large programmes with an overall PIP value of £1M or more;**
- **Of all high profile, complex or risky programmes where there is significant learning potential.**

How do we do programme evaluations?

(i) Plan and budget for them

Forward planning and sufficient resources are critical to ensuring the quality of a programme evaluation. All new PIPs in OPAL should include a Monitoring and Evaluation plan that provides details of: outcome level indicators; plans for a baseline survey and timings of Monitoring Reviews. If required, they should also include timings of a mid-term evaluation and a final evaluation. The time and money required to carry out these activities should be calculated and included in the appropriate budget.

(ii) Involve the right people

Global and regional MEL Advisors can help commissioning managers to design and run good quality evaluations. Before carrying out an evaluation, commissioning managers should contact a MEL Advisor to discuss its objectives and the most appropriate methodology to use.

To help ensure the objectivity and therefore the credibility of the results of programme evaluations, all final evaluations should be led by independent evaluators who are unconnected with the programme.

Programme evaluations are most likely to be relevant and practical if the programme teams have been part of the evaluation and feel ownership of the process and the findings. This is most likely to be achieved when the programme staff and partners play a strong role in the evaluation, even if the evaluation is led by an independent evaluator, and when the evaluation team carry out a debrief with the programme team prior to drafting the evaluation report, to discuss evaluation findings and to jointly identify lessons learnt, recommendations and action points.

(iii) Focus on important issues

Programme evaluations should not try to cover everything, but should instead focus on a few carefully identified research questions. These will vary from programme to programme. However, at a minimum, all final programme evaluations should include an assessment of:

- The programme's outcomes or impact
- Our contribution (or 'added value') to the programme
- The programme's cost-effectiveness

How do we respond to programme evaluation findings?

The most important part of any evaluation is responding to its findings. At a minimum:

- Findings and recommendations from mid-term evaluations should be fed into the next Monitoring Review.
- A management response to the findings and recommendations of all final evaluations should be written by the appropriate line manager.
- Clear actions arising from all evaluations should be agreed and then acted upon. These should be monitored by the appropriate line manager and reported on through the appropriate regional reporting channels.
- Lessons from the programme evaluation should inform future programme development.

How do we share the findings of programme evaluations?

To make the most of the lessons coming out of a programme evaluation, each evaluation should have a clear strategy for communicating its results to the full range of stakeholders.

(i) Oxfam staff and managers:

All mid-term and final evaluations and management responses should be uploaded onto OPAL and sent to the Country Director, the RPM, the Regional MEL lead and the global MEL team within 3 months of completion. These evaluations will be made available to Oxfam staff and managers via the intranet unless they include content of a sensitive nature.

(ii) Partners and affected populations:

All mid-term and final evaluation findings should be communicated to partners and affected populations in an appropriate manner (as agreed with those stakeholders in the design stage of evaluations).

(iii) Donors

Evaluation reports should be sent to the programme donor/s via the Programme Funding Department in accordance with donor requirements.

(iv) Oxfam supporters and aid sector

Key trends and lessons emerging from programme evaluations will be synthesised annually. In accordance with our Open Information Policy, this review report together with all programme evaluations will be made available on our website and the website of key allies

and networks. Exceptions will be made where evaluations deal with issues of a sensitive nature and/or pose a risk to our staff or partners. Where this is the case, Country Directors should indicate in writing that the evaluation is not appropriate for external audiences and why. This should accompany the evaluation and the management response.

Summary of minimum standards

	Minimum standards
When do we do programme evaluations?	<p>A mid-term and a final, independent evaluation are undertaken at least once every 5 years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of all major campaigns • Of all programmes with an overall PIP value of £1M or more; • Of all high profile, risky or complex programmes with significant learning potential.
How do we do programme evaluations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans and resources required for mid-term and final evaluations are included in PIP Monitoring and Evaluation plans in OPAL. • Evaluation methodologies are discussed with regional or global MEL Advisors. All final evaluations are led by independent evaluators. Programme staff and partners play a strong role in all evaluations. • Evaluations cover: assessment of the programme's outcomes or impact, cost-effectiveness and Oxfam's contribution.
How do we respond to programme evaluation findings?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All evaluation recommendations are discussed, action points are agreed and learning is fed into future programme development. Managers are responsible for writing a management response and ensuring that action points are followed up.
How do we share the findings of programme evaluations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All evaluations and management responses are uploaded onto OPAL and sent to the Country Director, the Regional MEL lead and the global MEL team. If relevant, concerns about the sensitivity / risk of including them on our website or Intranet are raised. • Findings from evaluations are shared with partners, affected populations and donors as appropriate.

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