

Training Module on Terminal Evaluations

GEF Independent Evaluation Office

Introduction

This module has been prepared by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office to provide you with information on terminal evaluations. The module will discuss the importance and utility of terminal evaluations; characteristics of a good terminal evaluation; and involves an exercise that will help you to think through the key elements that are required to facilitate preparation of a good terminal evaluation. The exercise would require you to consider all the factors you will need to take into account during different stages of the project cycle and terminal evaluation preparation. The stages involve:

1. Before the start of the terminal evaluation process
 - 1a. during project preparation
 - 1b. during project implementation
2. During preparation and delivery of a terminal evaluation
 - 2a. when a terminal evaluation is planned
 - 2b. when an evaluation is implemented
 - 2c. when a draft report is prepared

Importance and utility of terminal evaluations

When a project has been completed, GEF stakeholders want to know the extent to which a given project delivered. A terminal evaluations conducted at completion of the GEF project provides:

- Information on the results of the project including outputs, outcome, and progress to impact. It also provides analysis of the risks to continuation of the progress made so far.
- Information on how the project was designed, implemented and executed. It provides information on the extent various agencies performed their responsibilities.
- It provides information on project finances including co-financing. It gives an account of how funding from the GEF and other partner agencies was used, and whether usage of resources for different project activities was in line with their respective budget. Where relevant, it reports on instances of financial irregularities, misuse and corruption.
- Recommendations to the project agencies and management on various measures that may be undertaken to ensure follow up to the project, and improve operations related to the project and improve agency performance. It also documents lessons that may be of generic importance across the GEF partnership, including for preparation or during implementation of new projects.

Terminal evaluations are important for ensuring accountability for the use of public resources. Given the valuable information they provide, it is a mandatory requirement since 1995 that agencies prepare a terminal evaluation report for completed projects. The 'Minimum Requirement 3' of the GEF M&E Policy (2010) makes it compulsory that the agencies prepare a terminal evaluation for each full size project. While terminal evaluations for medium-size projects are not mandatory, agencies are encouraged to prepare them as well.

In addition to being a valuable source of information on projects, availability of terminal evaluations allows the GEF to assess how its project portfolio is performing. Reporting on the GEF portfolio of completed projects through the Annual Performance Report (APR) prepared by the GEF IEO, and through the Annual Monitoring Report prepared by the Secretariat, is possible largely due to availability and analysis of terminal evaluations. These reports are also a valuable input to several other evaluations including on country portfolios and on long term impact. For the recipient countries the terminal evaluations are also important because they are one of the indicators that have been incorporated in the STAR performance index, which is used for allocating GEF resources to countries. Within the performance index terminal evaluation ratings provided or adopted by the GEF IEO accounts for a 12 percent weight.

Access to terminal evaluations

Terminal evaluations are accessible by project on the GEF website. These evaluations are available through the project pages at:

GEF website: http://www.thegef.org/gef/gef_projects_funding

To those of the participants that have access to the GEF Project Management Information System (GEF PMIS), may also access the terminal evaluation report through that portal.

Quality of terminal evaluations

The GEF IEO, along with the evaluation offices of some of the GEF Agencies, track the quality of terminal evaluations. The GEF IEO approach assesses quality on following parameters:

- Outcomes: how well the outcomes and other results of the project have been discussed and compared with the expectations.
- Consistency and comprehensiveness: to what extent information provided in the terminal evaluation is consistent, comprehensive and complete.
- Sustainability: how well the terminal evaluation report discusses concerns related to future progress and continuation of the progress made so far.
- Lessons and recommendations: the extent to which a terminal evaluation provides valid recommendations and lessons that are based on the project experience.
- Project finances: the extent to which information on project finances including information on co-financing is complete.
- M&E: the extent to which the terminal evaluation provides information on implementation of the M&E plan, and use of monitoring information.

Among these criteria, the GEF IEO gives more weightage to discussion on outcomes, and consistency and comprehensiveness of information. There are several other characteristics of the good terminal evaluation that are not covered in the GEF IEO criteria. These may also play an important role in preparation of terminal evaluation of good quality:

- Transparency: the extent to which the process through which terminal evaluation was conducted adds to its credibility.
- Timeliness: timeliness of the terminal evaluation ensures that the evaluators had access to relevant information sources and it ensures that the information coming out of the evaluation is readily available to the GEF stakeholders.

- Candor: Candor is very important in ensuring that the weaknesses identified in the project results, implementation process, and design, are documented, analyzed and presented so that these may be avoided in future.
- Balance: the evaluation should provide information on different perspectives on project performance. It should provide a balanced coverage to these perspectives based on their relevance.
- Utility: a good terminal evaluation should also be backed up with efforts to ensure its utility. Thus, it should be part of a larger knowledge management system that ensures its utility to the partnership.

Given the emphasis that the GEF IEO puts on candid reporting of results, a point that the participants of this module may like to think about is the extent to which a project's performance and the quality of its terminal evaluation is the same. These are two entirely different things and should not be thought of as the same. One may have a good terminal evaluation for a project with low performance and vice versa. The quality of a terminal evaluation is primarily based on the quality of information and analysis that it presents. Although to some extent this may depend on the factors that are generally associated with the project performance. More information on preparation of terminal evaluation guidelines is available at the GEF IEO website:

<http://www.thegef.org/gef/Guidelines%20Terminal%20Evaluations>

Examples

Some of the examples of good terminal evaluations that may be accessed through the internet are:

GEF ID #394: http://www.thegef.org/gef/project_detail?projID=394

GEF ID #1599: http://www.thegef.org/gef/project_detail?projID=1599

GEF ID #1188: http://www.thegef.org/gef/project_detail?projID=1188

GEF ID #1348: http://www.thegef.org/gef/project_detail?projID=1348

Minimum Requirements of the GEF M&E Policy 2010¹

The GEF M&E Policy (2010) specifies minimum requirements that must be followed in relations with project and program M&E plans, implementation of M&E plans, project and program evaluations, as well as engagement of OFPs in M&E activities.

Minimum Requirement 1: Design of M&E Plans

All projects and programs will include a concrete and fully budgeted M&E plan by the time of CEO endorsement for full-size projects and CEO approval for medium-size projects. Project logical frameworks should align, where appropriate, to the GEF's focal area results frameworks. This M&E plan contains the following as a minimum:

- SMART indicators for results and implementation linked appropriately to the focal area results frameworks; additional indicators that can deliver reliable and valid information to management may also be identified in the M&E plan
- Baseline for the project or program, with a description of the problem to be addressed, with indicator data or, if major baseline indicators are not identified, an alternative plan for addressing this, by CEO endorsement

¹ The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy 2010: <http://www.thegef.org/gef/Evaluation%20Policy%202010>

- Identification of reviews and evaluations that will be undertaken, including midterm reviews and terminal evaluations
- Organizational set-up and budgets for M&E

Minimum Requirement 2: Application of M&E Plans

Project and program monitoring and supervision will include implementation of the M&E plan, comprising the following:

- SMART indicators for implementation actively used
- SMART indicators for results actively measured, or if not, a reasonable explanation provided
- The baseline for the project fully established and data compiled to review progress, and evaluations undertaken as planned
- The organizational set-up for M&E is operational and its budget is spent as planned

Minimum Requirement 3: Project and Program Evaluation

Each full-size project and all programs will be evaluated at the end of implementation. This evaluation will have the following minimum requirements:

- The evaluation will be undertaken independent of project management, or if undertaken by project management, will be reviewed by the evaluation unit of the GEF Agency or by independent quality assurance mechanisms of the Agency.
- The evaluation will apply the norms and standards of the Agency concerned.
- The evaluation will assess at a minimum:
 - achievement of outputs and outcomes, and provide ratings for targeted objectives and outcomes;
 - likelihood of sustainability of outcomes at project or program termination, and provide a rating for this;
 - whether Minimum Requirements 1 and 2 were met, and provide a rating for this.
- The report of this evaluation will contain at a minimum:
 - basic data on the evaluation:
 - when the evaluation took place,
 - who was involved,
 - the key questions, and
 - the methodology—including application of the five evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, results, sustainability);
 - basic data of the project or program, including actual GEF and other expenditures;
 - lessons of broader applicability; and
 - the terms of reference of the evaluation (in an appendix).
- The report of the evaluation will be sent to the GEF Evaluation Office immediately when ready, and at the latest, within 12 months of completion of project or program implementation.

Minimum Requirement 4: Engagement of Operational Focal Points

Projects and programs will engage operational focal points in M&E-related activities. The following requirements shall be applied:

- The M&E plan will include a specification of how the project or program will keep the relevant GEF OFP informed and, where applicable and feasible, involved, while respecting the independent nature of evaluation.
- During implementation, GEF OFPs will be informed by the Agencies on M&E activities in the projects and programs that belong to their national portfolio.
- The GEF OFPs will be informed of midterm reviews and terminal evaluations and will, where applicable and feasible, be briefed and debriefed at the start and end of evaluation missions. They will receive a draft report for comment, will be invited to contribute to the management response (where applicable), and will receive the final evaluation report within 12 months of project or program completion.
- GEF Agencies will keep track of the application of the conditions specified here in their GEF-financed projects and programs.

Exercise

This exercise is designed to help you to think through the key requirements for delivering a good quality terminal evaluation. This exercise may not turn you into an expert evaluator but it does aim to help you to think of what needs to be taken care of at different stages of the project cycle if you ever are required to do so. Your group should:

- First discuss and record your group's response (in bullet points) on what needs to be done during the project design and implementation stages.
- Next you should discuss and record your group's response (in bullet points) on what needs to be taken care of during different stages of preparation and delivery of terminal evaluations.

Please use the response form to record your group's answers. After 20 minutes, a group will present its bullet points for what needs to be done at a given stage. Other groups may add to it if they have identified something that has not been reflected in the response of the group that presented its discussion.

First discussion

The participants should discuss what needs to be done during:

- 1A. Project preparation: when project design including the M&E plan is being developed
- 1B. Project implementation: when project – including project M&E plan – is under implementation

You may discuss issues such as the key objectives and deliverables of the project, M&E planning, tracking tools, human and financial resources, learning from past projects, and other topic that you consider important.

Second discussion

The second discussion should be about things that need to be done for preparation of a terminal evaluation. Discuss requirements at three different stages of the terminal evaluation process:

2A. Start by discussing a situation where a project is about to be completed. It is mandatory for the Partner Agencies to undertake a terminal evaluation of this project. What should be done at this stage to ensure that it leads to a good terminal evaluation? You may consider issues such as evaluation framework, evaluators, timing, resources, information needs, etc., and other topics that you consider important.

2B. You should then discuss the issues related to the period when the terminal evaluation is underway. An evaluator / or evaluation team has been brought onboard. As a manager, how can you facilitate a good terminal evaluation? You may consider issues related to access to records, tracking tools, key knowledgeable individuals, logistical arrangements, etc., and other topics that you consider important.

2C. You should then discuss the situation where a draft report has been prepared. At this stage what needs to be done to ensure quality of the terminal evaluation? This discussion may cover issues, such as sharing of the draft terminal evaluation report with the key stakeholders, feedback, approach in situations where major weaknesses have been identified, etc., and other topics that you consider important.

Terminal Evaluations Exercise Response Form

Please write down your group's answers in a bullet format below.

First Discussion:

What needs to be done before and during project preparation and implementation to ensure a good terminal evaluation?

1A. At the project preparation stage

1B. During project implementation

Second Discussion:

What needs to be done during preparation and delivery of a terminal evaluation to ensure a good terminal evaluation?

2A. At the stage of commissioning of a terminal evaluation

2B. At the stage of the conduct of a terminal evaluation

2C. At the stage of finalization of the terminal evaluation