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# CGIAR Evaluation Framework

MARCH 2022

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# Related Documents

- CGIAR Evaluation Policy 2022
- CGIAR Evaluation Guidelines

# Abbreviations

AR4D	Agricultural Research for Development
GDI	Gender, Diversity, and Inclusion
KM	Knowledge Management
MEL/IA	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning/Impact Assessment
PRMF	Performance and Results Management Framework
TOC	Theory of Change
QA	Quality Assurance
QoR4D	Quality of Research for Development

The CGIAR Evaluation Framework (the Framework) establishes the overall approach to process and performance evaluations in CGIAR.<sup>1</sup> It positions CGIAR's evaluation practice within relevant global frameworks and CGIAR's own internal governance and management frameworks. Setting out a theory of change (TOC) and core standards and principles for the practice of evaluation in CGIAR, this Framework also anchors CGIAR's Evaluation Policy, mandating the use of certain pillars in the conduct and use of process and performance evaluations.<sup>2</sup>

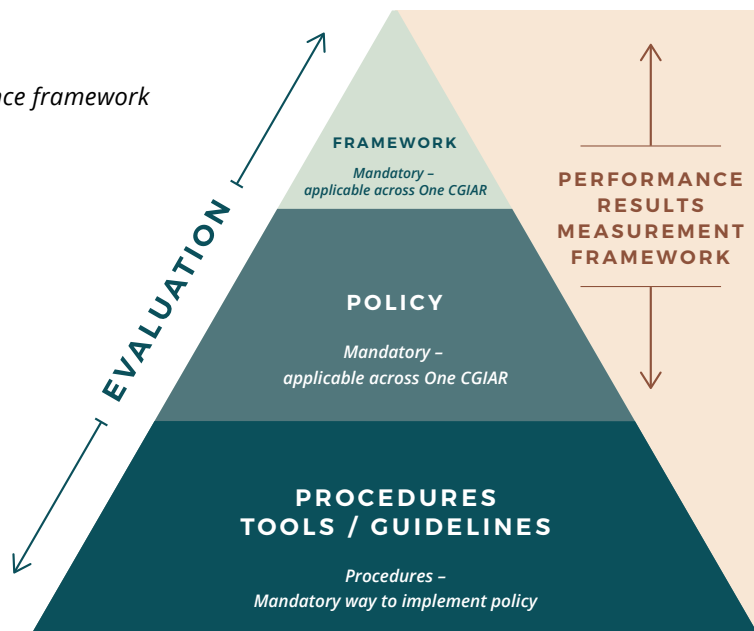
The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide the global frame of reference for funding and evaluating development cooperation. Further, CGIAR has adopted a [Quality of Research for Development \(QoR4D\) framework](#) as a guide to assessing research and innovation for development outcomes. The QoR4D framework complements this Evaluation Framework and underpins the CGIAR approach to evaluating science quality.

CGIAR is a global organization with an integrated governance, management, and operational structure. The [CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy](#) (the CGIAR

Strategy) is operationalized through research-for-development programming supported by a broad range of funders and investors, including investments in a prospectus of Initiative [projects](#). The CGIAR [Performance and Results Management Framework 2022-2030](#) (PRMF) measures the results of these efforts.<sup>3</sup> The CGIAR Strategy and PRMF embrace the use of TOCs and systems thinking in efforts to deliver on CGIAR's mission.

The Evaluation Framework assumes that responsibilities pertaining to evaluation will be carried out by the CGIAR governance, management, and operational units and independent assurance, as detailed in current governance [frameworks, charters](#), and similar documents<sup>4</sup>. It similarly assumes the implementation of established terms of reference for relevant, responsible governance bodies and committees, independent advisory and evaluation services, and units within the operational structure that pertain to monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) across CGIAR.

**Figure 1:**  
*Evaluation within a performance framework*



<sup>1</sup> CGIAR is currently transitioning to One CGIAR. For consistency it is referred to as CGIAR throughout.

<sup>2</sup> The CGIAR Evaluation Framework and Evaluation Policy come into effect upon the decisions of the CGIAR System Board and CGIAR System Council and supersede the 2012 CGIAR Policy for Independent External Evaluation.

<sup>3</sup> The CGIAR Performance and Results Management Framework 2022-2030 complements the CGIAR Strategy and Results Framework 2016-2030.

<sup>4</sup> See the accompanying Evaluation Policy for additional discussion (2022).

# Key Concepts and Theory of Change

CGIAR defines evaluation as a systematic and objective assessment of the design, implementation, and results of an ongoing or completed project, program, initiative, policy, or operational modality in CGIAR, in line with this Evaluation Policy and standards and principles under the Evaluation Framework.

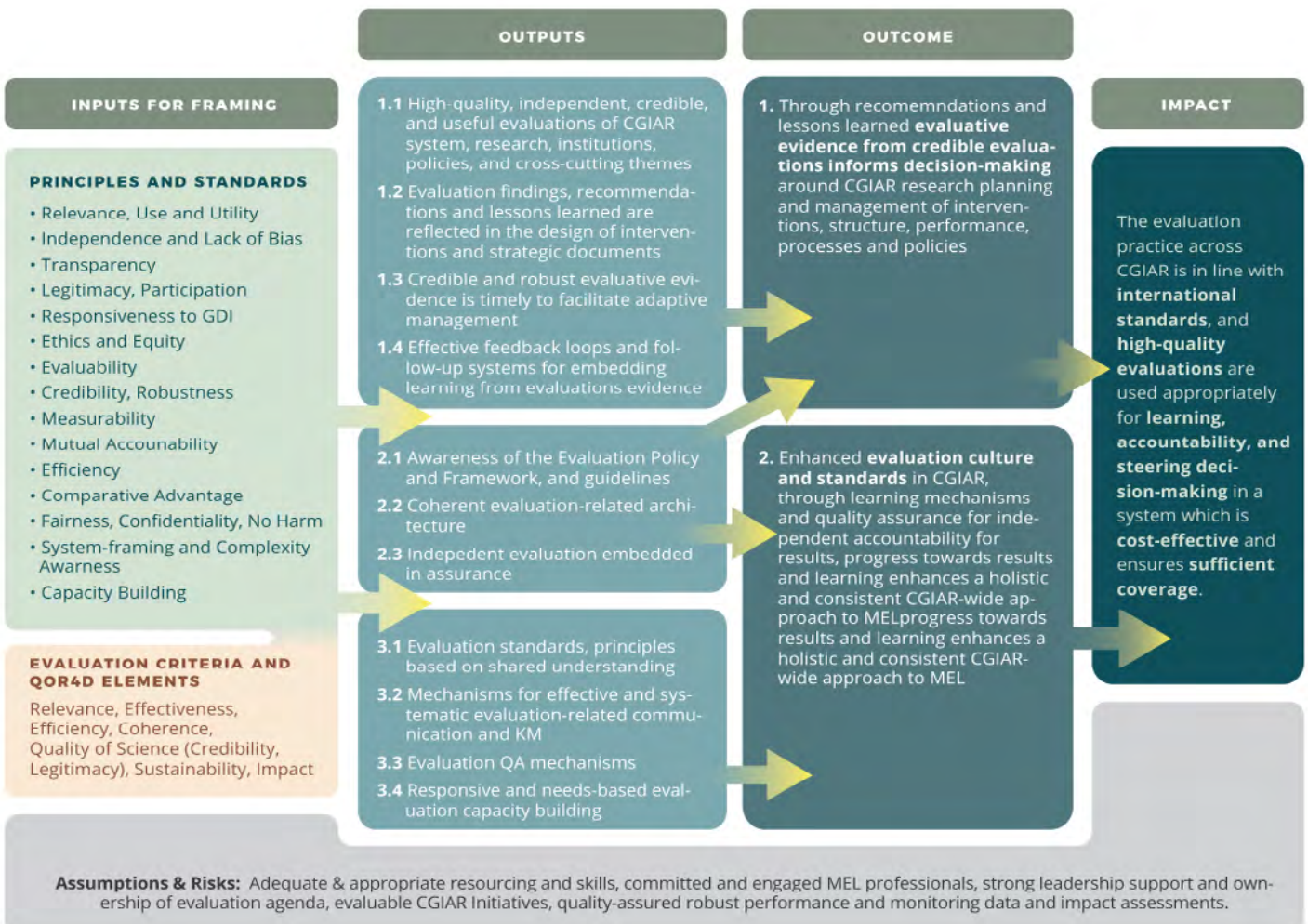
The function of evaluation is to help CGIAR and its stakeholders measure and assess the process, results, and consequences of CGIAR's work.

Used in the context of **agricultural research-for-development (AR4D) programming**, evaluation considers the pathways from research activities within the sphere

of control to the contributions that outputs make to outcomes and impacts for end users. In the context of evaluating **institutional and thematic phenomena**, evaluation contributes to the understanding of processes of change and end results. Evaluation supports examination of why and how change occurs.

To describe the use of evaluation in CGIAR, this Framework adopts a generalized theory of change for process and performance evaluations conducted in CGIAR, illustrated in Figure 2. The ToC is driven in part by a vision that CGIAR evaluation practice will support transformational learning and change<sup>5</sup>.

**Figure 2: Theory of Change for evaluation practice in CGIAR**



<sup>5</sup> The TOC depicted in Figure 1 is subject to iterative co-development with the community of the CGIAR MEL practitioners (Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Community of Practitioners (MELCOP) at the time of development of this document) and evaluation users- it will evolve as part of the One CGIAR transition.

Within CGIAR, evaluation is either an external, completely independent study (commissioned by the System Council and conducted through the CGIAR Advisory Service/evaluation function) or a largely independent study (commissioned by an initiative or project) of an in-depth nature that uses evaluation criteria in line with the CGIAR Evaluation Policy<sup>6</sup>. Together, these create a CGIAR-wide evaluation practice.

The aim of the CGIAR-wide evaluation practice is to produce evaluations that provide **accountability, support decision-making, and learning**, and furnish lessons for improved and more cost- and time-effective benefits in three interconnected ways:

1

**Accountability and communication:**

Evaluations give account of the use of funds and related achievements. The account is conveyed via reporting and communication of findings.

2

**Learning:**

Evaluations support institutional learning and contribute to the ongoing improvement of the quality and effectiveness of CGIAR's delivery of its mandate.

3

**Steering:**

Evaluations supply reliable findings that contribute to the evidence-based planning of AR4D objectives and underpin strategic and operational decision-making.

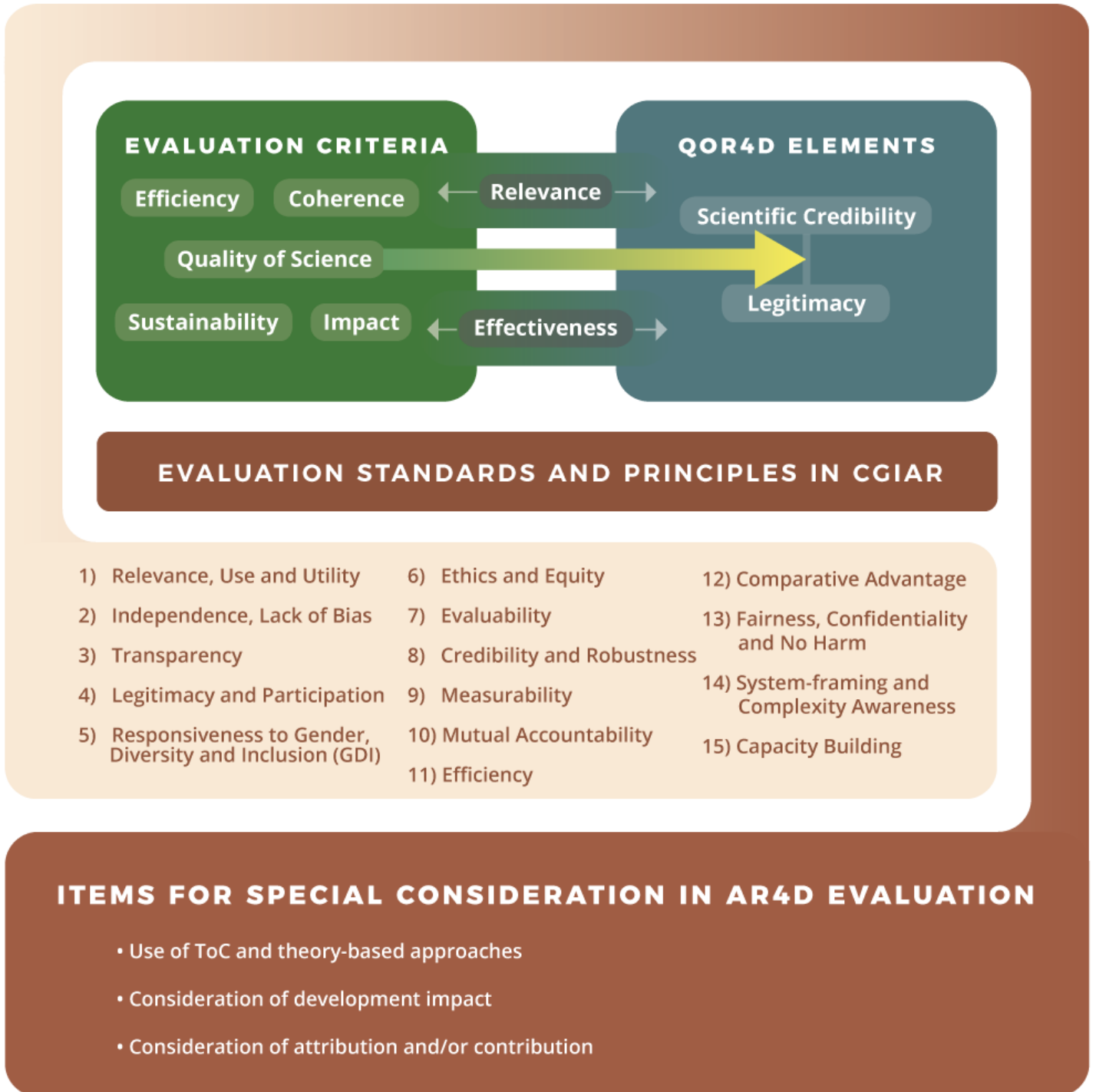
<sup>6</sup> This definition is adapted to CGIAR from the glossary of the OECD Development Assistance Committee <https://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/> and Evaluation Network and the Norms and Standards for Evaluation, United Nations Evaluation Group (2016). <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>. A full spectrum of evaluation-related definitions is available in the most recent CGIAR MELIA/PRMF glossary.

This Evaluation Framework and the aligned Policy draw on the quality standards and principles for evaluation specified by [2019 OECD Development Assistance Committee \(OECD/DAC\) evaluation criteria](#), the [United Nations Evaluation Group \(UNEG\)](#) and the [Evaluation Cooperation Group \(ECG\)](#) of the international financial institutions. Elements of the [Quality of Research for Development \(QoR4D\) framework](#) further guide assessment of the quality of science, considering CGIAR's positioning in the research-for-development space. The standards and principles provide a point of reference for the professionalism of research-for-development evaluation and dictate how evaluation is conducted in CGIAR. The Evaluation Policy furnishes a detailed description of evaluation criteria (CGIAR Evaluation Policy, section 5), which align with OECD-DAC 2019 criteria and QoR4D and describe the areas under review.

### 3.1 Standards and Principles

- **Relevance, use, and utility:** All evaluations are applicable to the question(s) at hand and designed in a responsive and timely manner for use in decision-making, accountability, and learning processes.
- **Independence and lack of bias:** Evaluations instill confidence among all users that the evaluation is as objective as possible with the highest ethical standards and codes of conduct, impartial with a system in place against conflict of interests, and unafraid to raise constructive feedback on critical issues, being unbiased operationally and analytically.
- **Transparency:** Processes (including methods) and results are transparently disclosed, traceable, and accessible to the public.
- **Legitimacy and participation:** Evaluations include relevant informants and use consultative processes to prepare terms of reference and the evaluation matrix. Such processes ensure the quality of the process, including, where appropriate and feasible, representatives of end and intermediate users of evaluation outputs.
- **Responsiveness to gender, diversity, and inclusion (GDI):** Evaluation design and conduct, the commissioning of teams, and the reporting strive to fully address GDI parameters. Evaluations will consider who is engaged in the work and who benefits from it.
- **Ethics and equity:** Evaluations consider questions of ethics in research and outcomes and integrate ethical and equity considerations in the evaluation design and implementation.
- **Evaluability:** Evaluability refers to the extent to which an intervention can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion; the concept is central to a culture of results. A strong focus on evaluability at the design stage facilitates overall measurability, monitoring, and subsequent evaluation.
- **Credibility and robustness:** Methods employed are credible and replicable. The quality of an evaluation depends on the professional and methodological competency of the evaluators and the use of reliable, triangulated data.
- **Measurability:** Sound methods underpin measurability and replicability. To the extent possible, evaluations measure, using quantitative and/or qualitative methods, the performance of CGIAR. Measurability provides comparability between time frames, groups, or alternative theories.
- **Mutual accountability:** In CGIAR, expectations for evaluation are matched with adequate investments in requisite financial and human resources. The capacity and systems for data collection and real-time information underpin mutual accountability.
- **Efficiency:** Evaluation avoids unnecessary duplications, costs, or redundancy to other evaluative assessments.
- **Comparative advantage:** Evaluation gives due consideration to exploring the comparative advantage of CGIAR in contributing to the achievement of quality research-for-development results.
- **Fairness, confidentiality, and no harm:** The evaluators and commissioning office(s) are responsible for ensuring and protecting the confidentiality and anonymity of information, as required. In line with a do-no-harm approach, evaluators attend to actions, omissions, and unconscious choices throughout evaluation design and implementation.
- **System framing and complexity awareness:** Evaluations consider the contextual realities in terms of boundaries, interrelationships, dynamics, and perspectives that delineate the systems that CGIAR aspires to improve incrementally or to transform. Evaluation attends to nonlinearities, emergence, uncertainties, turbulence, and adaptive capacity, in line with complexity awareness.
- **Capacity building:** Learning and evaluation-related capacity building will be embedded into evaluation practice to promote coherent monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL).

Figure 3: Evaluation standards and principles and evaluation criteria with QoR4D elements



## 3 Standards and Principles

### 3.2 Items for Special Consideration in AR4D Evaluation

- **Use of theories of change and theory-based approaches:** Theories of change (ToC) describe the pathways to impact—which can be complex, intersecting, and often nonlinear—drawing on insights from the social sciences, including economic and international relations theory. When theory-driven interventions are evaluated, the evaluations assess the relevance of the ToC against the development problem, including the assumptions and risks it describes, and use of the ToC towards measuring and explaining results and conditions for achieving outcomes and ultimate impact.
- **Consideration of development impact:** Evaluations will consider the potential and actual sustainable development impact, as appropriate. Impact assessments, including studies sponsored by the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA), will be integrated into evaluation data sources.
- **Consideration of attribution and/or contribution:** Evaluations will propose and use methods that seek to describe CGIAR attribution and contribution vis-à-vis specific outcomes. That is, they will delineate and estimate CGIAR's particular contribution (attribution) or describe the part played by an intervention in bringing about a result where full causality cannot be established (contribution).

### 3.3 Quality of Research for Development (QoR4D)

CGIAR has adopted the [Quality of Research for Development \(QoR4D\) framework](#). The QoR4D framework guides and enhances the quality of R4D at all levels, from strategy to research activities. It expresses CGIAR System-wide agreement on the nature and assessment of the quality of science and the likelihood of achieving development outcomes. QoR4D was established through a consultative process involving representatives from entities across CGIAR who are involved in managing or assessing science quality. QoR4D design principles and assessment criteria are integrated with evaluation criteria to reflect the CGIAR context (see Figure 3).



Successful implementation of CGIAR's Evaluation Framework and Evaluation Policy relies on alignment of quality assurance across CGIAR, including in management, performance monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL). This condition implies appropriate and adequately resourced MEL structures, systems, and culture, adaptively managed in response to the evolving needs of internal and external stakeholders. The Evaluation Policy details the roles and responsibilities of CGIAR governance entities, management, and MEL practitioners, including the independent evaluation function; it also explains management response.<sup>7</sup>

Integrating evaluation into a common assurance framework allows CGIAR governance and management to leverage the utility of the Evaluation Framework and Evaluation Policy for the purposes of securing third-line, independent assurance. Thus, as applicable, this Framework cross-references joint assurance approaches and frameworks of CGIAR.

Investment in the training and development of MEL practitioners will improve evaluation capability, communications, and quality. Enhancing and building evaluative capacity will help CGIAR embed evidence-based, evaluative thinking in its ways of working, including processes of prioritization and decision-making. Over time, this training and capacity building will help lead evaluation to be perceived less as merely a compliance exercise and more as an integral part of decision-making during the design of interventions, strategies, and operational set-ups.

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<sup>7</sup> A co-designed guideline supporting management engagement and response establishes a clear road map to operationalize sections 6 and 7 of the CGIAR Evaluation Policy.

