IEA Guidance Note G5

Guidance on Evaluation Reports

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Independent Evaluation Arrangement
CGIAR

iea.cgiar.org

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List of Abbreviations

CRP	CGIAR Research Program
IEA	Independent Evaluation Arrangement of the CGIAR
ToR	Terms of Reference

Introduction

Purpose of this guidance note

1. This Guidance Note includes general guidelines for preparing a CGIAR Evaluation Report. It is intended to help evaluation team leaders to prepare high-quality reports that meet the needs of the intended users, and to serve as a guide for evaluation managers to check the completeness of reports and consistency across CGIAR evaluations.

2. According to the CGIAR Evaluation Standards, "…The final Evaluation Report should be logically structured, with a view to maximum clarity and interest for the target audience…" The Evaluation Report should contain an introduction that frames the evaluation in terms of context and methodology, and the main sections of the evaluation assessment that focus on evidence-based findings, conclusions and recommendations.

3. The Evaluation Report should be clear and concise and not exceed 80 pages, not including the Executive Summary. The sections with introductory and background content should not exceed 15 pages, leaving the major part of the report for evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.

4. The Guidance Note describes the key elements that an Evaluation Report should normally cover. The headings below do not constitute a Table of Content.

Preparation of the Evaluation Report

1. The Evaluation Report is the main product of the evaluation of the evaluation team to document and share the team's findings, conclusions and recommendations with the key stakeholders for decision-making, action and learning. The report is the basis of all other products for delivering and communicating the evaluation results to stakeholders, such evaluation brief and presentations. Due to the importance of this report, the team leader, who is primarily responsible for the final report, should refer to the evaluation Standards and Guidance Notes on evaluations in addition to using this Guidance Note.

2. Planning for the Evaluation Report should begin early on in the evaluation process. It is desirable that the outline of the Evaluation Report is drafted already during the inception phase so that it can be planned how the different pieces of analysis can be brought together in each chapter, for checking that the information compiled and analysis conducted are complete and for assigning tasks among the team.

3. The evaluation manager should not take part in writing the Evaluation Report for in any way that compromises the independence of the evaluation process. Evaluation manager can provide support in preparing tables, figures and annexes. In addition, evaluation manager has an important role in providing quality assurance that relates to the

completeness of the report, and the clarity and logic in presenting the evaluation results and linking them to the evidence.

4. Sufficient time and opportunity must be given to key stakeholders to provide comments and feed-back on the draft Evaluation Report (see Guidance Note on finalization of evaluation).

Opening pages

Cover and Title page

5. First page, inside cover:

- title of the Evaluation;
- date of the report;
- names of report authors: this may be individuals or their company, depending on the contract. If it is the company, individual names of evaluators should be listed in the acknowledgements or preface;
- commissioners of the evaluation;
- citation information: here the desired citation should be specified, using Harvard standard referencing

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6. This should include the report's main sections/sub-sections all tables, figures, and charts and the annexes.

Acknowledgements

7. This should include the names of the evaluation manager and individual evaluators, if not listed elsewhere. It should also include key interlocutors representing the evaluand who assisted in the implementation of the evaluation

Preface (if applicable)

8. This is an optional section that may be written by the head of the managing body of the evaluation (e.g. Head of Independent Evaluation Arrangement - IEA). It should be short (about 1 page) explaining the rational for the evaluation and highlighting a few key points.

Acronyms

9. This should include all acronyms used throughout the document. Note that abbreviations should always be defined in full the first time they are used in a document.

Executive Summary

10. The Executive Summary should be concise yet comprehensive enough to provide clarity in the absence of the rest of the report. Length will be between 5 to 7 pages. It is a stand-alone section that briefly summarizes the following:

Background and context

11. A short introduction of the CGIAR Research Programme (CRP), research theme or unit that was evaluated including a summary of its functions/objectives as well as the context behind the main issues that the evaluation aimed to explore.

Purpose, scope and objectives of the evaluation

12. A concise summary, which should also include the primary audience/intended users of the evaluation results.

Approach and methodology

13. A short description of the evaluation design and methodology of data collection and analysis, including main data sources used and major limitations encountered.

Main findings and conclusions

14. A brief summary of the results of the evaluation, comprising a concise overview of the major findings against the evaluation objectives, overarching questions and criteria and the key conclusions. Any lessons that have consequences to similar programs or work or to the CGIAR system broadly should be summarized briefly.

Recommendations

15. List of the numbered recommendations corresponding to those in the body of the report.

Body of the Report

16. The body of the Evaluation Report should follow the essentials as laid out in the Executive Summary and be in compliance with the Evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR). Common section headings and content generally expected for the main report are described hereafter.

Introduction to the evaluation

17. The Introduction should provide the basis for report users to assess the merits of the evaluation methodology as well as understand the logic of the conclusions and recommendation and the applicability of the evaluation results. Reference should be made to the ToR and Inception Report for which Web links should be provided. The following should be included in the Introduction.

Origins of the evaluation

18. Summarize the impetus behind the evaluation and the mandate of the commissioning agency.

Structure of the report

19. Briefly introduce the report and guide the reader through the forthcoming content.

Evaluation Purpose and Clients

20. Describe the purpose of the evaluation as per the ToR, and the primary audience or intended users of the Evaluation Report.

Evaluation Objectives

21. Spell out the types of decisions the evaluation is intended to influence and any issues related to the use of the evaluation results in those decisions.

Evaluation Scope

22. Define the parameters of the evaluation in reference to the Inception Report, for example:

- the timing and sequence of the evaluation (i.e., when it was conducted indicating the time period and phases, and why it was conducted at that moment);
- activities/components that were or were not be covered by the evaluation;
- geographic areas covered; and
- any special focus areas (i.e., gender, partnerships, etc.).

Acknowledgement of changes

23. Note any changes made from the initial ToRs or the Inception Report.

Evaluation Approach and Methodology

24. The Evaluation Report should describe: the selected methodological approaches, methods and analysis; the rationale for their selection; and how, within the constraints (e.g. time, money, timing of the evaluation), the approaches and methods employed yielded data that helped answer the evaluation questions and achieve the evaluation purposes. The text and data presented should help the report users judge the merits of the methods used and the credibility of the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

25. As applicable to the particular type of evaluation conducted, the description of data collection methods and instruments should cover the procedures used to collect data, including data collection instruments (e.g., interview protocols, questionnaires, discussion guides, checklists) and a discussion of the appropriateness of the chosen methods for specific evaluation questions or groups of questions, in terms of the reliability and validity of the evidence generated. A detailed description of the methods and data collection tools should be included in an annex.

26. In case of sampling, explain the sampling technique (i.e. random or purposeful sampling); sample size and characteristics; the sample selection criteria; and the extent to which the sample is representative of the entire target population, including discussion of the limitations of sample for generalizing results.

27. Explain the data analysis methods used; the procedures for triangulating the various sources of data and analyzing the data to answer the evaluation questions. When relevant, rating scales or benchmarks used should be explained. Potential weaknesses in the data and its analysis should be discussed, including their possible influence on the way findings were interpreted and conclusions drawn.

Quality Assurance

28. State the measures taken for quality assurance, such as role of the IEA/evaluation manager and any external quality advisory feed-back.

Organization and Timing of the Evaluation

29. This section includes information about the team, stakeholder involvement, timeline, itineraries, and delivery (as they actually occurred and with reference to the Inception Report), including:

- team composition, roles and responsibilities (a short bio-data to be included in an annex);
- stakeholder involvement;
- itinerary, including field sites visited (can be provided in detail in an annex)

- deliverables and dissemination of findings, indicating how the findings will be shared as well as feedback loops.

Main limitations or constraints of the evaluation

30. The main constraints of the evaluation (e.g. related to resources) and any limitations of the methodology should be identified and openly discussed as to their implications for evaluation, as well as steps taken to mitigate those limitations. Particular attention should be paid to methodology and sampling. In case of any potential or perceived conflict of interest, the way this was managed should be clarified.

Subject of the evaluation

31. The general description of the theme/issue/topic being evaluated needs to provide sufficient detail for the report user to derive meaning from the evaluation.

Context of the topic/issue

32. Describe the context of the evaluation in terms of the main sector(s) or issue(s) that influenced the evaluation and its expected outcomes. If useful, briefly outline the social, political, economic and institutional factors, and the geographical landscape that needed to be taken into account by the evaluation and explain the effects (challenges and opportunities) those factors on the subject of the evaluation and the evaluation outcomes.

Background on the subject of evaluation

33. Provide background information on the CRP, research theme or unit that was evaluated, including key stakeholders as applicable. This description should outline the key aspects of the structure, objectives, governance and finances relevant for the subject of the evaluation in the CGIAR context.

Structuring the presentation of the main findings and conclusions

34. There are several ways to structure the evaluation findings and conclusions so that report users can readily make the connection between what was asked and what was found. A typical report structure follows the main dimensions (including in CRP evaluations programmatic and organizational performance) and key criteria as presented in the Inception Report. The report may also follow a different structure depending on the focus of the evaluation and the characteristics of the evaluand. However, it is important that the evaluation criteria are explicitly addressed and highly visible in the report: the overall assessment of the performance of the evaluand should also be clearly presented. Cross-cutting issues (such as gender and capacity building) related to the scope of the evaluation also need to have explicit presentation in the report. As stated in the evaluation standards,

the overarching aim for structuring the findings should be maximum clarity and interest for the target audience

Main findings

35. The analysis of results must address all evaluation criteria and questions included in the final agreed ToR or Inception Report.

36. Findings must be based on the analysis of the data. They must be specific, concise and supported by evidence. Sources of information should be clearly identified, with additional details included in the annexes where, for example, key evaluation data and lists of major stakeholder groups or individual interviewees can be made available (if not in breach of confidence). Insofar as possible, scientific and other technical information should be explained in a way that can be comprehended by a general reader.

Conclusions

37. All conclusions presented in the report should be clearly supported by findings and analysis. It is crucial that the reader be able to follow the logical links through the report from findings and analysis to each conclusion. Conclusions should be comprehensive and balanced, and summarize the strengths and weaknesses the program including variances observed. They should be well substantiated by the evidence and logically connected to evaluation findings. They should respond to key evaluation questions and provide insights into issues pertinent to the decision-making of intended users.

Recommendations

38. The report should provide practical and feasible recommendations that are directed to the intended users of the report. The recommendations should be linked to the findings and derive logically from the conclusions around key questions addressed by the evaluation. They should focus on priority issues for actions by management or governing bodies, address any issues of sustainability and, when appropriate, provide specific advice for similar programs or activities. Where possible, responsibility for each recommended action should be defined (with organizations or sections, not individuals). While there is no set limit on the number of recommendations, they should be focused on a practical number of priority issues to be addressed mainly by management or governing bodies (see Guidance Note 1[1]).The evaluation team may also provide working level suggestions that derive from

[1] http://iea.cgiar.org/sites/default/files/G1.pdf

the findings and conclusions but these do not have the same formal status as the recommendations in terms of presentation and management response.

Lessons learnt (if applicable)

39. As appropriate, the report should include a discussion of lessons learnt from the evaluation if they represent significant contributions to similar context or have CGIAR system level relevance.

Annexes

40. The annexes need to contain sufficient evidence to back up the main report, including details of methods and data sources. Web links to the ToR and Inception Report should be provided in the introduction and there is no need to annex them in full to the Evaluation Report. As annexes may be quite long, they may be published in a separate document on a website.

41. The following are typical annexes in a CGIAR evaluation.

- Short biographies of the evaluators
- Itinerary of the evaluation (including sites visited and itineraries for field visits)
- List of stakeholders interviewed or consulted
- Expanded Annex on the Evaluation Methodology
- Details on the evaluation methodology, as applicable, for example:
    - Interview Guides
    - Questionnaires
    - Observation templates
- Additional data on, for example:
    - Summary tables of findings, such as tables displaying outputs or progress towards goals
    - Data sets supporting findings, for instance aggregate survey results
- List if literature and supporting documents reviewed
- Bibliography of publications cited if not in the previous
- Summaries of any supporting studies or issues papers (if applicable)
- Detailed responses to evaluation criteria by question (optional)

The IEA has issues the following Guidance Notes:

Guidance Note 1:	Guidance for Managing the Independent External Evaluation of CGIAR Research Programs (CRPs)
Guidance Note 2:	Guidance for CRP-Commissioned External Evaluations (CCEEs)
Guidance Note 3:	Guidance on Evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR)
Guidance Note 4:	Guidance on Evaluation Inception Reports
Guidance Note 5:	Guidance on Evaluation Final Reports
Guidance Note 6:	CRP Evaluation: Process for Finalization, Feedback and Decision-making