

UNDEF Project Evaluation Guidelines

First Round

In line with its terms of reference and funding guiding principles the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) has developed these project evaluation guidelines in order to assist UNDEF grantees in planning and commissioning an evaluation of their projects in line with UNDEF requirements. While no specific format for the report is requested, there is a need to provide in a **clear and accessible manner** as a minimum all the information requested in this document with **detailed examples and illustrations**. These guidelines should be considered as an appendix to UNDEF's monitoring and reporting guidelines.

As a project funded by an external donor, there is a need to show donors that the project was implemented well and that the project objectives are being achieved. Although the project implementation has been monitored through project progress reports submitted to UNDEF, a more comprehensive and objective evaluation by external and independent entities or experts is deemed necessary to validate results reported and to highlight project successes. For UNDEF, the evaluation results will be used to inform, develop and refine further UNDEF's strategic and funding priorities. The lessons learned from the evaluation will be used as a knowledge product that will be shared with a larger audience.

UNDEF Evaluation Arrangements Key Principles

- The Executing Agency is responsible for the evaluation activities and for submitting to UNDEF a final evaluation report that clearly identifies the activities, outputs and outcomes achieved during the life of the project, as well as the overall impact of the project, lessons learned (etc.) that can inform future project design.
- All projects are entitled to a financial provision of up to ten percent of the project budget to cover the costs of high quality monitoring, evaluation and reporting and financial audit services. For projects over \$250,000 this provision is capped at \$25,000.
- UNDEF strongly recommends these services be conducted by external and independent entities or experts.
- The project evaluation should be results-based and developed in line with the results framework developed in the project document
- UNDEF strongly recommends using a participatory methodology involving direct beneficiaries and interested stakeholders.
- The Evaluation report should be signed by: the Executing Agency, the Implementing Agency(ies) and the evaluator

Evaluation objectives and criteria

The objective of the evaluation is to undertake an in-depth analysis of an UNDEF funded project in order to generate comprehensive and specific evaluation feedback of the project. The evaluation report must fully and comprehensively:

1. Assess the **effectiveness** of the project
The extent to which the project's stated objective(s) is/are achieved or the likelihood that it/they will be achieved. The effectiveness of the project should be assessed in accordance with the activities, outputs and outcomes detailed in the results framework enclosed in the project document. Factors contributing to and detracting from results should also be included in the analysis.
2. Assess the **sustainability** of the project
The extent to which benefits from the project will continue or are likely to continue after UNDEF support has come to an end (i.e. follow up projects, visible and permanent results)
3. Assess the **relevance** of the project
The degree to which the project was justified and appropriate in relation to the need and situation on the national/regional/global level
4. Assess the **efficiency**
The analysis and the evaluation of the overall project performance, the outputs in relation to the inputs, the financial management, the implementing timetable
5. Assess the **impact** the project achieved and is likely to achieve in the future, measuring both the positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen changes to and effects on society caused by the project as well as the project catalytic effects

The evaluation report should also clearly;

- Analyze the challenges to the project's success and the lessons learned from managing them
- Highlight the lessons learnt from the project on the results achieved, the process followed and strategy applied and provide recommendations
- Analyze the overall impact of the project in targeting gender and marginalized groups
- Highlight good practices, success stories, anecdotes
- Analyze the added value of UNDEF funding

Annex 1 provides an overview of key questions the evaluation should answer to in relation to the above criteria.

Timeline and requirements

1. The evaluation is expected to be undertaken in a **rigorous manner** to produce reliable information on which UNDEF can rely. It is expected also that the Evaluator will conduct a **participatory evaluation** that will involve project implementers and target beneficiaries.

2. It is essential that **comprehensive evaluations** are undertaken which can provide UNDEF with useful feedback on the project implementation and objectives, successes and failures.
3. The cover letter of the evaluation report should be signed by the Evaluator and the Executing and Implementing Agencies
4. The evaluation report should be sent to UNDEF, together with the Final Certified Financial Statements¹, **no later than 3 months** after the completion date of the project as stated in the project document or, when applicable, the project extension.
5. Should UNDEF decide on further evaluations, the Executing Agencies shall extend their cooperation

Evaluation report contents

While no specific evaluation format is requested, as part of the detailed evaluation the following information should be contained in the evaluation report sent to UNDEF:

1. Context/background of the project

- The report should review the project aim and strategy with regard to the situation analysis developed in the project document, describing the overall democratic context in which the project was proposed and the specific problem it intended to address
- The report should list the key project stakeholders, partners and beneficiaries

2. Programmed objective and components

- the appropriateness of the general objective of the project
- the value of the planned outputs and outcomes
- the success of the activities that were implemented
- the total project budget and its adequacy
- the utility of participants feedback forms

3. Information about the external evaluator and the evaluation process²

- The description of the organization and of the evaluation team (composition and areas of expertise)
- The goal of the assignment
- A short but concise description of the methodology followed (field visits, interviews, review of relevant literature, documentation review, questionnaires, participation of stakeholders, etc.)
- The work plan of the evaluation
- The duration of the evaluation

4. An evaluation summary

A summary of the key findings and conclusions of the evaluation should be integrated to the evaluation report.

¹ Please refer to UNDEF 1st Round Monitoring and Reporting Guidelines available on UNDEF website http://www.un.org/democracyfund/Docs/1RMR_Guidelines_E.pdf

² Please annex to the report a copy of the Terms of Reference

Annexes

The annexes should list any document deemed necessary to give a complete overview of the project and its evaluation that have not been attached to the final narrative progress report (interviews, questionnaires, interim reports, interim project evaluation, photos, press clippings etc.). These documents can either be sent by email or on a disc sent by post as part of the project costs.

Annex 1

Evaluation Criteria – Related questions

Addressing the evaluation objectives will require the evaluator to provide answers to the following questions:

1. Effectiveness

- To what extent have the project's objectives been reached?
- To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not?
- Were the project activities adequate to realize the objectives?
- What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?
- Have any significant developments taken place since the project started, if so, explain how they affected the project goal and activities and evaluate the impact on the project?

2. Relevance

- Were the objectives of the project in line with defined needs and priorities?
- Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs and priorities? Why?
- Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks?

3. Sustainability

- To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support the continued implementation of the project?
- Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)?
- Are the project outcomes likely to be sustainable? If not, why not? Which remedial actions would have been good to take?

4. Project design and performance assessment/Efficiency

- Was the project design appropriate? If not, why not?
- Was the project, including its finances, human resources, monitoring, and oversight and support managed efficiently?
- What was the role played by the implementing agency(ies) and, where applicable, the executing agency in leveraging resources, internal or external, and expanding partnerships with other actors to support and expand this project?
- Assess the appropriateness of current formal and informal communication channels between national stakeholders, implementing and executing agencies and UNDEF staff, including recommendations for improvement

5. Impact

- To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address and on the targeted beneficiaries?
- To what extent the project has caused and is likely to cause changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on society?
- Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Please provide examples
- Have the needs of project beneficiaries been met by the project? If not, why not?