United Nations Development Fund for Women

UNIFEM

Guidance Note on Developing
Terms of Reference (ToR) for Evaluations

Terms of Reference (ToR) – What? Why? And How?

These guidelines aim to assist Geographic, Thematic Sections and Sub-regional offices in the preparation of Terms of Reference (ToR) for evaluations.

What are ToR for evaluations?

The ToR for evaluation document clearly identifies how the scope of an evaluation will be defined, developed, and verified, and identifies the key information needs that stakeholders have regarding the intervention which should be addressed by the evaluation. It should also provide a documented basis for confirming or developing a common understanding of the evaluation scope among stakeholders.

Why do we need a ToR document?

ToR is the basis for contractual arrangements with external consultants, and it should clarify expectations, roles and responsibilities among different stakeholders, providing the plan for the overall activity, including follow-up. The time and effort spent in preparing good ToR has big returns in terms of quality, relevance and usefulness of the product.

Who needs ToR for evaluations?

All stakeholders: They explain the agreed expectations and process of the evaluation and are a guide to each stakeholder's specific roles.

The evaluation team: They ensure that expectations are clear and the objectives are met. For external evaluation teams TOR provide detailed information on background context and on intended audiences and uses.

When do we develop ToR?

Developing ToR is a critical early step in any evaluation. In programme evaluation, stakeholders will focus on the details on purpose and evaluation questions. For recruiting external consultants, more details on existing information sources, team composition, procedures and products, but may describe methodology and a calendar of activities only in broad terms. Then, ToR may be further refined once an evaluation team on board carefully reviewing the purpose, the key evaluation questions and further elaborating the evaluation methodology.

How do ToR look like?

ToR sums up available knowledge, specifies the objectives and scope of evaluation, defines the information needs through key evaluation questions, and outlines evaluation approach and suggested methods. They include the overall objectives, key issues to be addressed, methodology and implementations arrangements.

Are there any guiding principles?

ToR should comply with United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards and be coherent with UNIFEM evaluation policy. They have to be prepared in a participatory way and include key programme stakeholders and beneficiaries. The human rights and gender equality considerations and UNFEM's result based management principals should also guide the development of ToR. UNIFEM should ensure the independence and impartiality of the evaluation process by establishing the clear roles between the evaluators and the commissioning party in ToR and include the key stakeholders in its development.

How does the Evaluation Unit support ToR process?

The Evaluation Unit will provide quality assurance and feedback on the ToRs of evaluations selected for support [see Guidance Note #3].
The following sections indicate the contents of a ToR document. It is accompanied by a checklist (page 12) at the end to help you ensure you have completed all the information.

1. Title

State the title of what is being evaluated. Use appropriate evaluation titles and clarify the time period.

2. Background, purpose and use of the evaluation

This section of the ToR should describe briefly the background of the programme to be evaluated. It should also explain why the evaluation is to be done, what triggered it, what are the its key objectives and how the evaluation results will be used and by whom. This should be clearly linked back to the corporate, thematic, regional or sub regional evaluation plans.

Questions to consider in the background and purpose section:

➢ What is the overall programme/project/theme to be evaluated?
➢ Who initiated the evaluation? Is it a mandatory or other type of evaluation?
➢ How does the evaluation inform UNIFEM's work priorities outlined in Global Strategic Plan and Regional or Sub regional strategies? What specific development and management framework outcomes it aims to support?
➢ Why is the evaluation being undertaken now? Is it a mid-term or final evaluation?
➢ What are the objectives of the evaluation? (between 3 and 5 general objectives)
➢ How will the evaluation process and/or results be used?
➢ Who are the key users and target audiences? Is the evaluation targeting a specific information or decision-making need (strategy, planning activity, directorate)?

3. Context of the intervention (programme/project)

The context of the programme/project section of ToR should provide information on the programme/project, linking to global, national and UNIFEM's development strategies. It should also provide an overview of the programme/project and their intended outcome(s) and output(s).

Questions to consider in the section:

Strategic context (global, regional, national and UNIFEM)
➢ What is the overall programme/project theme?
➢ To what elements of women's human rights treaties and international commitments (CEDAW, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, SCR 1325 and MDGs) the programme/project is contributing?
➢ How does the programme/project fit into UNIFEM's thematic, regional and sub regional strategies and to what extent it relates to UNIFEMs priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan?
➢ How does the programme/project link to poverty reduction, national development strategies and gender equality plans?
➢ What is the most recent guidance on women's rights from the CEDAW committee at the country level? How does the programme/project respond to this guidance?
➢ What is the rationale of UNIFEM's involvement in the subject area?

4. Description of the intervention (programme/project)

The description of the subject in ToR should include the logic and underlying assumptions upon which the strategy was originally developed, and the implementation strategy that has actually been adopted. Any major divergences between the two should be stated and explained. The resources and management structure of the programme has to be described.

Questions to consider in the section:

➢ What is the programme/project objective?
➢ What is the programme/project strategy?
➢ What women's rights the programme is attempting to support? What capacities of rights-holders to claim their rights and duty-bearers to meet their obligations the programme/project aims to enhance?
➢ What is the programme/project logic or theory of change?
➢ What are outcome(s) and output(s)?
➢ What are the geographical scope and timeframe?
➢ Who are key stakeholders involved in the programme/project (including donors, partners, implementing agencies/organizations)?
➢ How is the programme linked to the work of other programme/project implementing partners such as other national partners and UN agencies?
➢ What is the programme/project management structure?
➢ What is the programme's budget?

5. Scope of the Evaluation

The description of the scope in ToR should specify the focus of the evaluation, this is: the timeframe to be covered by the evaluation, the geographical and the thematic coverage and the key issues to consider.

The scope defined in TOR should be realistic; it needs to be feasible given the budget and time available for the evaluation. In support of harmonization, to limit duplication and make efficient use of scarce resources, the scope should take into account other existing or planned evaluations of the same subject. The relationship between the planned evaluation and other related evaluations should be described, including how information from these other evaluations may be used.

> Questions to consider in the section:

> ➢ What are the timeframe and geographic coverage by the evaluation?
> ➢ What are the main themes or issues explored by the evaluation?
> ➢ What is the evaluation budget?
> ➢ What is the evaluation duration?
> ➢ Are there other planned evaluations connected to the area and how they are going to inform each other?

6. Evaluation questions

List the key questions the evaluation should answer – they should relate to the purpose and be precisely stated to guide the evaluator in designing the evaluation and in collecting information and data. The questions should be organized around the chosen evaluation criteria, which usually are **relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact**. Where applicable, evaluation criteria questions should be formulated with a gender and human rights perspective and the evaluation shall present findings accordingly. In addition, the programme could be assessed on alternative set of criteria, such as equality and non-discrimination, empowerment, accountability and social transformation.

> Standard questions for **relevance** include:

> ➢ Are the programme objectives addressing identified rights and needs of the target group(s) in national and regional contexts? How much does the programme contribute to shaping women's rights priorities?
> ➢ Do the activities address the problems identified?
> ➢ What rights does the programme advance under CEDAW, the Millennium Development Goals and other international development commitments?
> ➢ Is the programme design articulated in a coherent structure? Is the definition of goal, outcomes and outputs clearly articulated?

Standard questions for **effectiveness** include:

- ➢ What has been the progress made towards achievement of the expected outcomes and expected results? What are the results achieved?
- ➢ What are the reasons for the achievement or non-achievement?
- ➢ To what extent have beneficiaries been satisfied with the results?
- ➢ Is the programme cost-effective, i.e. could the outcomes and expected results have been achieved at lower cost through adopting a different approach and/or using alternative delivery mechanisms?
- ➢ What is UNIFEM's comparative advantage in designing and implementing this programme?
- ➢ Does the programme have effective monitoring mechanisms in place to measure progress towards results?
- ➢ To what extent the objectives have been achieved, and do the indented and unintended benefits meet fairly the needs of disadvantage women.
- ➢ What are the changes produced by the programme on legal and policy frameworks at the national and regional level?
- ➢ To what extent capacities of duty-bearers and rights-holders have been strengthened?
- ➢ To what extent capacities of gender equality advocates have been enhanced?

Standard questions for **efficiency** include:

- ➢ What measures have been taken during planning and implementation to ensure that resources are efficiently used?
- ➢ Have the outputs been delivered in a timely manner?
- ➢ Could the activities and outputs been delivered with fewer resources without reducing their quality and quantity?
- ➢ Have UNIFEM's organizational structure, managerial support and coordination mechanisms effectively supported the delivery of the programme?
- ➢ To what extent are the inputs and outputs equally distributed between different groups of women, and have the potentials of disadvantage women (poor, racial, ethnic, sexual, ethnic, and disabled groups) been fully utilized to realize the outcomes?
- ➢ How does the programme utilize existing local capacities of right-bearers and duty-holders to achieve its outcomes?

Standard questions for **sustainability** include:

- ➢ What is the likelihood that the benefits from the programme will be maintained for a reasonably long period of time if the programme were to cease?
- ➢ Is the programme supported by national/local institutions? Do these institutions demonstrate leadership commitment and technical capacity to continue to work with the programme or replicate it?
- ➢ Are requirements of national ownership satisfied?
- ➢ What operational capacity of national partners, also known as capacity resources, such as technology, finance, and staffing, has been strengthened?
- ➢ What adaptive or management capacities of national partners, such as learning, leadership, programme and process management, networking and linkages have been supported?
- ➢ Do partners have the financial capacity to maintain the benefits from the programme?

Standard questions for **impact** include:

- ➢ What are the intended and unintended, positive and negative, long term effects of the programme?
- ➢ To what extent can the changes that have occurred as a result of the programme be identified and measured?
- ➢ To what extent can the identified changes be attributed to the programme?
- ➢ What are the positive and negative changes produced directly or indirectly by the programme on the opportunities of different groups of women, and on the socioeconomic conditions of their localities?
- ➢ What is the evidence that the programme enabled the rights-holders to claim their rights more successfully and the duty-holders to perform their duties more efficiently?
- ➢ To which extent efforts have been successful to stop harmful and discriminatory practices against women?

The standard questions included in these guidelines are just an orientation. It is important to prioritize these criteria according to the information needs identified with stakeholders and the evaluability of those aspects.

7. Existing information sources

The existing information sources section of TOR should identify information sources that exist and are available, such as monitoring reports and systems, previous evaluations. It should also provide an appraisal of quality and reliability of the information sources.

8. Evaluation Approach, Process and Methods

Evaluation Approach
The evaluation approach to be taken will depend on the purpose and objectives of the evaluation. It will also depend on the nature of information available to the evaluator(s), such as indicators, baseline information, and specific targets.

Questions related to Evaluation Approach to consider in the section:

- ➢ Whether and how the evaluation was considered in programme/project design.
- ➢ Details of the outcome and outputs indicators that have been proposed / used to measure performance, with associated baseline and target data.
- ➢ Information on what monitoring has actually taken place.
- ➢ Strengths and weaknesses of original M&E design and the quality of data that have been generated.
- ➢ Availability of relevant global, regional, national data.
- ➢ Availability of data on gender and human rights.
- ➢ Availability of complementary data (from similar programmes/projects).
- ➢ Evaluation methodologies should consider how quantitative and qualitative data collection can be conducted to both respect human rights and gender equality, such as: reviewing relevant information sources (international and regional human rights

instruments, reports to CEDAW committee, etc); facilitating the engagement of key stakeholders, particularly marginalized and vulnerable groups.

Evaluation Process

The section should outline how the evaluation will be managed, including overall flow of the evaluation process. Specify key tasks evaluator(s) are responsible for carrying out and a schedule for completion. For instance:

Questions related to Evaluation Process to consider in the section:

Meetings, consultation, workshops with different groups of stakeholders.

Key points of interaction with a reference group.

Process for verification of findings with key stakeholders.

Presentation of preliminary findings and recommendations.

Evaluation Methods

Data collection methods to answer the evaluation questions should be described. You may define methodology in broad terms, as defining the detailed evaluation methodology will require the involvement of the evaluator(s). It should ultimately define:

Questions related to Evaluation Methods to consider in the section:

Identify a wide range of information source for data collection (e.g. documents, filed information, institutional information systems, financial records, beneficiaries, staff, funders, experts, government officials and community groups).

Project the methodological framework (e.g. case study, sample survey, comparative experiment and/or multimethod field study).

Determine the instruments and methods for collecting the needed information (e.g. interviews, observations, focus groups, literature, survey, rating, knowledge test, site visits).

Specify the sample procedure(s) with each method (e.g purposive, probability).

Ensure that main evaluation questions are addressed by multiple methods and data.

Project a schedule for information collection.

Specify who will be responsible for making the information available.

9. Stakeholder participation

The section of stakeholder participation of ToR should specify involvement of key stakeholders (such as internal stakeholders, programme/project partners, donors etc.). Their roles might include liaison, technical advisory, observers etc. or more active participation in evaluation planning and design, data collection and analysis, reporting and dissemination and follow-up.

Be clear about where they would participate, i.e. in evaluation planning and design, data collection and analysis, reporting and dissemination and follow-up.

10. Expected products

ToR should describe the type of products (reports, briefs or other) that are expected from the evaluation, who will use them and how they will be used. TOR should also specify the expected formats for such products.

- ➢ Specify Deliverable 1: **An inception report** which contains evaluation objectives and scope, description of evaluation methodology/methodological approach, data collection tools, data analysis methods, key informants/agencies, evaluation questions, performance criteria, issues to be studied, work plan and reporting requirements. It should include a clear evaluation matrix relating all these aspects.

- ➢ Specify Deliverable 2: **Power point presentation** of preliminary findings to the key stakeholders. The comments made by key stakeholders should inform the draft report.

- ➢ Specify Deliverable 3: **Draft evaluation report** which should be delivered with adequate time to allow stakeholder discussion of the findings and formulation of recommendations.

- ➢ Specify Deliverable 4: **Final evaluation repor**t which should be structured as follows:

    > Executive Summary (maximum five pages)
    > Programme description
    > Evaluation purpose
    > Evaluation methodology
    > Findings
    > Lessons learnt
    > Recommendations
    > Annexes (including interview list – without identifying names for sake of confidentiality/ anonymity, data collection instruments, key documents consulted, Terms of Reference).

- ➢ State the language, which the deliverables are to be written in. This will usually be English and the languages of the countries where evaluation took place.

- ➢ Draw up an indicative timeframe indicating when the deliverables are due and to whom. Include any key meetings such as presentation of emerging findings to stakeholders.

It is recommended to include in the inception phase an activity consisting on a Workshop facilitated for the evaluation team to revise and discuss with the programme team the intervention's internal and external logic and results as well as the information availability and the programme's context. This initial participatory activity is very important to develop the evaluation design because allows the evaluation team to understand the programme's logic.

11.Evaluation team composition, skills and experience

TOR should outline the skills, experience, qualifications and other relevant competencies - such as language capabilities - that will be needed to conduct the evaluation effectively (whether by a consulting firm or by individual consultants). It has to specify the size of the team required and provide the estimate the number of person-days required.

➤ Identify the composition and competencies required. The team should always demonstrate:

    (a)   Extensive knowledge of, and experience in applying, qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods;
    (b)   A strong record in designing and leading evaluations;
    (c)   Data analysis skills;
    (d)   Technical competence in sector or issue to be evaluated;
    (e)   Process management skills such as facilitation skills;
    (f)   Experience in gender analysis and human rights. Detailed knowledge of the role of the UN and its programming is desirable.

➤ Additional qualifications and skills areas that might be specified include:

    (a)   Language proficiency;
    (b)   In-country or regional experience.

➤ State that large evaluation teams should be multicultural with gender balance and geographic representation.

➤ State that the evaluators are required to **submit two or three examples of evaluation reports** recently completed when responding to the Terms of Reference.

12. Management of evaluation

This section of ToR outlines the key responsibilities of UNIFEM in the process of the evaluation and identifies the logistical support needed such as materials and office space.

- ➢ Describe the role of UNIFEM's section in managing evaluation, including preparation, evaluation study and the follow up. A task manager should be dedicated to coordinate the evaluation process.
- ➢ Specify whether the evaluation will have advisory panel, reference group or any other mechanism to facilitate the participation of stakeholders.
- ➢ Specify the responsibilities of the evaluation team and the donor:
  - **Evaluator:** The evaluator will commonly be responsible for logistics: office space, administrative and secretarial support, telecommunications, printing of documentation, etc. The evaluator is also responsible for the dissemination of all methodological tools such as surveys, but the UNIFEM section managing the evaluation will facilitate this process to the extent possible by providing contact information such as email addresses and phone numbers.
  - **Donors:** The donor might be requested to provide planning documents, mission reports or other relevant documents.

13. Ethical code of conduct

The UNEG Ethical Code of Conduct for Evaluation is inserted here

Annexes. The following documents should be appended to ToR when provided to the evaluator(s):

- Quality Criteria for Selection of Proposals
- UNEG norms and standards for evaluation
- Programme document
- UNIFEM RBM manual

14. Quality Checklist for the TOR

The following checklist provides a basis for reviewing the quality of the TOR. It may be used by the drafters of evaluation TOR to ensure that all necessary elements are contained with the TOR document. This checklist is aligned with the United Nations Evaluation Group Standards for Evaluation in the UN (2005).

1.	**The purpose of the evaluation is clear and realistic**
☐	Is there an explicit mention of who requires the evaluation results and what they will do with them?
2.	**The subject of the evaluation is elaborated**
☐	Are the conceptual linkages between the strategy and the intended outcome(s) clearly explained?
☐	In the case of a thematic or cluster evaluation, are the specific projects to beconsidered clearly mentioned, including their timelines, executing agencies and budgets?
☐	Is there a clear description of the external political, economic and social context within which the programme(s) and/or project(s) are situated?
☐	Is there a description of the intervention's contribution to UNIFEM's strategic Plan and relevant women's rights treaties and international commitments?
3.	**The scope of the evaluation is clear and consistent in relation to the purpose and the questions**
☐	Is the scope of the evaluation, including time period, phases in implementation, geographical area, parameters with respect to the subject and stakeholders being examined made explicit?
4.	**The evaluation questions address the contribution to development and organizational effectiveness.**
☐	Do the questions address the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the programmes or projects being evaluated, as well as the sustainability of results?
☐	Do the questions address the value-added of the programmes and projects in comparison with alternatives?
☐	Do the questions address UNFEM's partnership strategy with national actors and its relation to effectiveness in achieving the outcome?
☐	Do the questions address UNFEM's strategic positioning and its comparative advantage?
☐	Do the questions require the evaluation to provide disaggregated information by gender, ethnicity and other relevant criteria?
5.	**The evaluation questions should include an assessment of the extent to which programme design, implementation and monitoring have taken the following cross cutting issues into consideration:**
☐	Women's human rights (CEDAW)
☐	Capacity development
☐	Institutional strengthening
☐	Changes in discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes
☐	Innovation or added value to national development
6.	**The TOR should reflect the findings of an assessment of evaluability assessment, or require such an assessment prior to the definition of the evaluation approach and methodology.**
7.	**The evaluation should be manageable within time requirements and budget allocation.**
8.	**The product(s) of the evaluation respond to information demands identified in the statement of purpose**
☐	Does the TOR clearly describe the deliverables or product(s) and the audience(s) of such product(s) in terms of format, structure and length?
☐	Do they define which audience(s) requires what products?
☐	Is there a proposed structured for the final report that meets the requirements for evaluation reports in UNIFEM?
9.	**The composition, skills and experience required are commensurate to the task**
☐	Does the TOR outline the requisite skills, experience, qualifications and other relevant competencies for the tasks outlined?
☐	Is there a requirement for the independence of the evaluators, meaning that they have not been involved in the design, implementation or monitoring of the programmes or projects to be evaluated?
10.	**The legal and ethical bases for conducting the evaluation are outlined**
☐	Is the TOR accompanied by the code of conduct for carrying out the evaluations?
☐	Is the TOR accompanied by the UNEG norms and standards?