Embedding Evaluation in VNRs

Training in Rapid Evaluations

25 August 2020, Virtual

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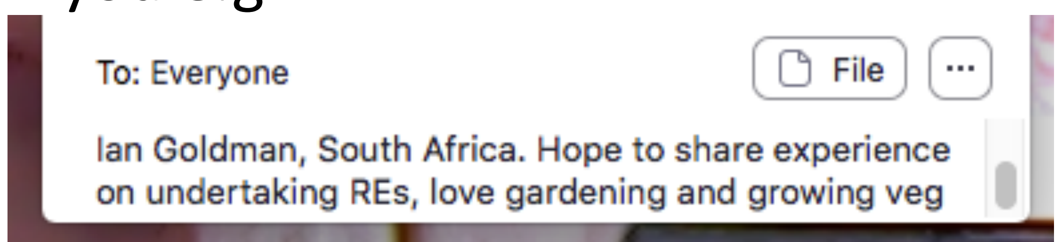
Introductions

- Facilitators:
  - Ian Goldman (English course)
  - Jenean Pretorius, producer
- Please have the Programme and Rapid Evaluation Guideline open to refer to
- Participant introductions: write in chat your name, country, what you hope to do about rapid evaluations, and one thing people might be surprised to learn about you e.g



Objectives of the support for Embedding Evaluations in VNRs

Learning outcome

By the end of the training and support participants from African countries:

1. Realise the importance of VNRs in a broad frame of the 2030 agenda which talks of country-led evaluations with a follow-up and review processes and 2063 agenda (has a M&E framework)
2. Understand the importance of evidence-based Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) that include evidence from evaluations including country-led evaluations as well as disaggregated data.
3. Understand the relevance of scaling up evidence from evaluations, to inform child and youth oriented national policies, as a means to accelerate progress towards the SDGs.
4. Have been supported to actually produce their VNR using evaluation evidence appropriately

Objectives of the Rapid Evaluation training session

Participants understand the difference between rapid and traditional evaluations, and have identified the purpose and evaluation questions for a rapid evaluation they could conduct to contribute to their VNR.

Participants have discussed issues arising in taking forward their VNR, in embedding evaluations within the VNR, and had feedback from peers, UNICEF and CLEAR-AA.

Approach

- **Support** provided over the whole process of developing the VNR
- **Blended approach** with direct interaction, online support and participants working on their VNRs
- Focus on the use of doing of evaluative work in **crisis situations**
- Synchronous contact based on **morning sessions of 4 hours**, pm group work
- Supported by a **VNR Guide** in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese
- **Interactive** as possible with plenary, breakaway and in-country groups to maximise involvement and application
- **French-English** options will be provided and some resource materials are in both languages

Critical preparation

1. You must have *read the guideline*. We will NOT go over the content in the guideline, so if you want to benefit from the training you must have read this prior;
2. Identified a *topic* for a rapid evaluation you would be interested to take forward;
3. You have accessed the Moodle site for the course (if you have problems please contact Jenean.Pretorius@wits.ac.za)

Course structure

Time	Session
8.45	Log-in
9.00	Welcome and introductions Flow of the day
9.30	Introduction to rapid evaluation
9.50	Break
10.00	Deciding how to implement rapid evaluations Ensuring robustness and speed
10.50	Break
11.05	Group work - developing an evaluation's purpose and questions
13.00	Lunch
13.30	Reflecting on the stage the VNR is at and problem solving:
15.05	Next steps Accessing support
15.15	Closing

Introduction to rapid evaluation

What do we mean by rapid

6-12 weeks to production of report

How can we reduce the time on processes around (before and after)?

How can we do with a predominantly internal team?

Is there a possibility of a facilitated evaluation?

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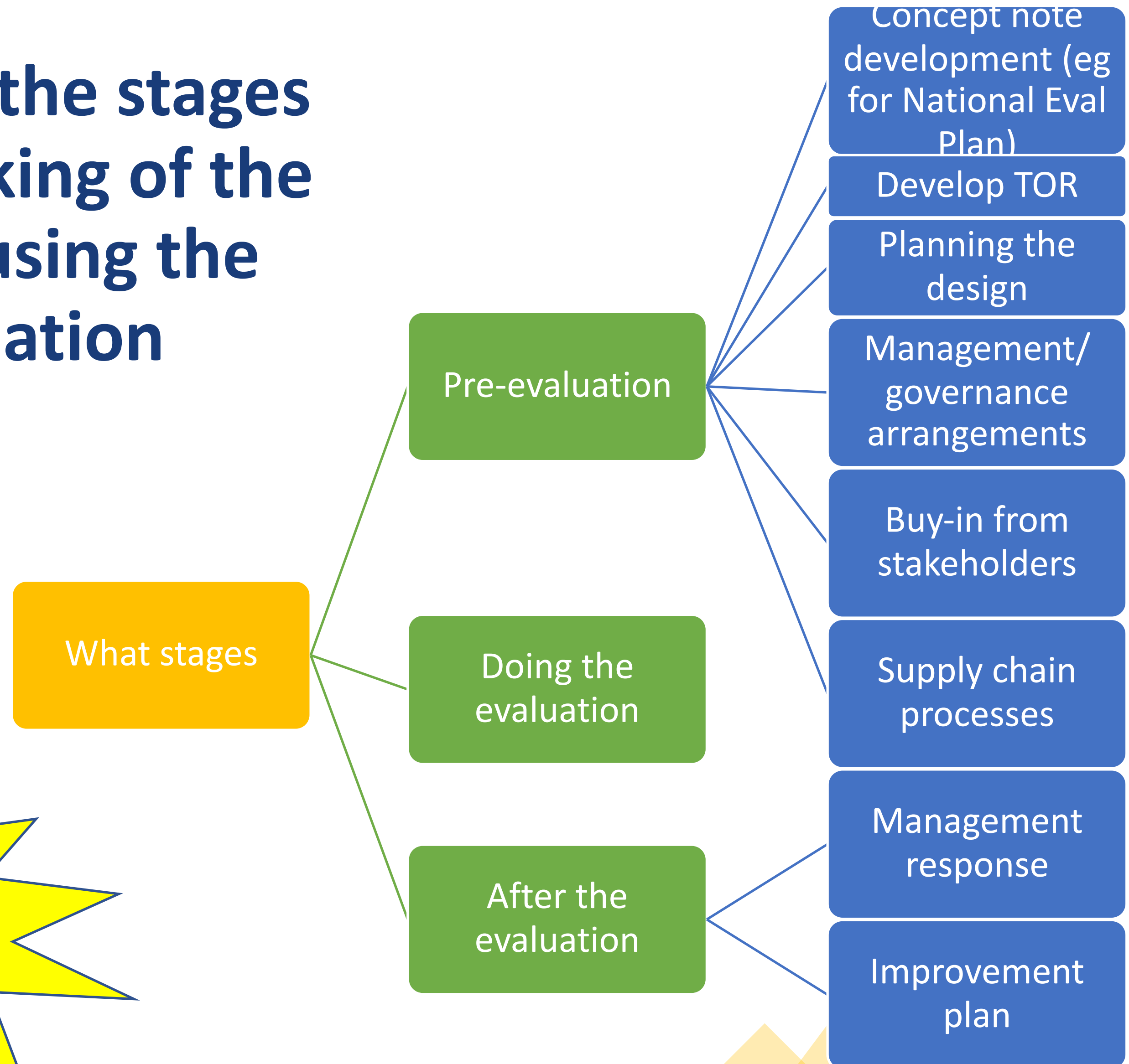
Have you ever done rapid evaluations before

- Put in chat how often your evaluations take from inception to approval of report?

What are the stages from thinking of the idea to using the evaluation



Where can we speed up but keep quality?

Stage/activity	Time now (wks)	Time revised
Preparation		
Develop TORS and decide - internal/facilitated/outsourced	2 weeks	
Possibly establish Evaluation Steercomm and Technical Working Group	1 week	
Identify data available and ensure access, as well as key documents	2 weeks	
If part of team is external, recruit (full SCM process).	Min 2 m	
For internal team get permission for them to dedicate time (How the work gets allocated in a dept is a challenge; people often feel they don’t have dedicated time to work on the evaluation specifically its additional)		
Inception	(1 month overall)	
Inception meeting	1 week	
Team works on revised proposal and detailed methodology, report structure	1 week	
Presentation of methodology to ESC and sign-off	1 week	
Steercomm ensures permission to interview, access to data etc	1 week	
Data collection		
Document review re policy background, programme	3 weeks	
Theory of change workshop	2 weeks	
Literature review if needed	4 weeks	
Plan for interviews/data collection	1 week	
Interviews/data collection	4/5 weeks	
Analysis	4 weeks	
Workshop emerging findings/recommendations	3 weeks	
Writing draft report	2 weeks	
Reporting		
Submit draft report	1 week	
Comments back	4 weeks	
Finalise report (approval by email)	2 weeks	
Evaluation steering committee meetings (including attending workshops)	1 week	

Situations favouring more robust (longer) or rapid evaluations

<table>
<tr><th>Situation favours longer (more robust)</th><th>Situation favours rapid</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">Where you need to be very sure that the picture is correct:
• Where the programme or policy is very large and you need a very clear picture of benefits and how it is working;
• Where the implications of the policy/ programme is critical and will affect peoples lives and communities at large;
• Where much is at stake, or there is a lot of contention about the programme or policy so it is key that the result can’t be challenged.</td><td>Where realtime feedback is needed</td></tr>
<tr><td>Where you have to get the results in 2-3 months</td></tr>
<tr><td>Where the primary purpose is formative to feed-in to ongoing policy and planning processes</td></tr>
<tr><td>For organizational learning and problem solving</td></tr>
<tr><td>Where the evaluation budget is very limited</td></tr>
<tr><td>Where you can anticipate and plan for the decision points by scheduling the evaluation well in time</td><td>Where focusing on narrower topics and/or specific geographical areas</td></tr>
</table>

Deciding how to implement rapid evaluations

Group task: Deciding how to implement rapid evaluations

In random groups of 5

Task

1. Remind yourself of the relevant content in the guide (p5-7) (5 mins)
2. Discuss what else could be done to minimise duration while keeping reasonable quality (15 mins)
3. Each group reports back on what is mentioned in the guide and any additional suggestions (2 mins each)

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Capture ideas

- **Preparation/supply chain**
  - TOR focused – limited questions, develop quickly
  - Ethical approval planned
  - Ensure resources in place
  - Procurement – have an approved list of people
  - Focused stakeholders – and senior people
  - Discuss prep carefully
- **Data collection**
  - Pragmatic
  - Use key informants, existing data
  - Identify literature on time
  - Triangulate
  - Focus on representative data not whole population
  - Collection and analysis simultaneously
- **Teams/outputs**
  - Evaluation plus prog expertise – needs to be experienced
  - Collection and analysis expertise
- **Governance**
  - Decision making simplified
  - Selective on steercomm members with time – can approve report quickly

Ideas from previous course

- **Supply chain/preparation**
  - Hybrid/facilitated model – build on existing relationship.
  - This training can be a way of getting people on board quickly to develop the TOR, saving time.
  - Establish panel of experienced evaluators, what skills needed to complement (Dept of Transport – what was their experience, they use CHEC) – write a paper on it
  - Need to be specific on purpose and scope
  - Data available and access
- **Data collection**
  - Ensure key stakeholders part (access to data, consensus)
  - Use secondary data
  - Telephone interviews
  - Use social media
  - Case study
  - Online survey (build on CSO?)
  - Clarify scope
- **Teams/outputs/governance**
  - Governance - using existing structures eg clusters to get buy-in – using nerve centre
  - Team – use resources in other depts, cluster lead part of team
  - Outputs – scoping with stakeholders
  - Format – short report, evidence briefs

Undertaking the rapid evaluation

- **Good preparation with focused enquiry** – so limited scope and evaluation questions;
- **Limiting scope** – so few evaluation questions and limiting geographical scope for data collection;
- **Focusing the evaluation questions** around specific and well-defined evaluation needs and developing a detailed evaluation matrix (particularly working with the internal team to define data/information sources);
- **Pragmatic (truncated) methods (see next slide)**
- **Working in teams**, ensuring data collections happens in parallel, so if you have a team of 4, each taking one site/respondent, not having 2 people at one site. This also facilitates discussion and analysis of results as they emerge;
- **Accessible outputs** – short reports, short videos, evidence briefs.

Pragmatic (truncated) methods:

- Reducing the **literature review** – eg a few critical international papers. Judicious use of key international examples could give inspiration on good practice;
- Narrowing the **secondary data** – reducing the reports that are looked at;
- Depending more on **existing data** rather than collecting new data – existing administrative data, survey data, big data, monitoring reports, with less reality testing in the field;
- Where **new data**:
    - Reducing data points: 2 districts, not 5; sample points per district; number of interviews with more focus on a few key respondents;
    - More group work rather than individual interviews: workshops, using focus groups; PRA with beneficiaries;
    - Phone interviews rather than face to face;
    - Short surveys, e.g. online but bias?

Ensuring robustness and speed

Representivity if possible to be able to make inferences from results (external validity)

Rigour of individual **methods** (but limited by time)

Triangulation:

Comparing different sources/questions to ensure that getting consistent results

Integrating evidence from sources

Contradictory information – check on data sources (dig deeper)

Make sure got **key stakeholders** eg for interviews

Make sure have a **360 degree picture**

Use of **expert panels**

Validation by people who know the situation

Focus of evaluations

We are focusing here

Overview of design process

- Developing the **focus** of the evaluation (purpose; evaluation questions; users and stakeholders; scope)
- **Research design (**Overall design**,** methods, research matrix, sample)
- Developing the **research plan**
- **Defining methods** in more detail
- Defining the **deliverables**
- Developing the **activities**, **schedule** and milestones
- Developing the **management arrangements**
- Defining the **team**

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Purpose of the rapid evaluation

Similar to that of any evaluation - what is it that we want to understand about the intervention? However it usually has a stronger formative side (for learning), and also is likely to more specific in focus.

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Typical questions	Type	Rapid evaluation purpose
What is the current situation and root cause of the problem?	Diagnostic	Works as a purpose if there is enough existing data (eg evaluations) to draw from. If not focus on specific province
Is the logic of the intervention design robust and likely to work?	Design	Works. An evaluation focusing specifically on design can be quite rapid.
Is the intervention being implemented as specified (and in some cases are the outcomes being achieved), and why?	Implemen -tation	Works. However the number of data points will be more limited. Many rapid evaluations are likely to be around whether implementation is working or not and why.
How have beneficiaries' lives changed as a result of the intervention?	Impact	Not easy. Could do a theory-based evaluation for a small geographic area as an exploratory study.
What are the costs in relation to the benefits? Is the programme providing value for money?	Economic	Can be done. Need to to access good data on benefits/ effectiveness. Can do estimate of effectiveness from specific geographical areas but generalisability limited.
What is the evidence from all evaluations related to the topic in question?	Evaluation synthesis	Works. Synthesis is good method for rapid evaluations as can then use existing evaluations and focus interviews etc on how to strengthen.

P10 of guideline

Evaluation questions

Typically *rapid evaluations* have a more limited set of evaluation questions in comparison to bigger evaluations.

These questions are linked to the purpose of the evaluation, and emphasise establishing what the *results* or *performance* of policy/programme/strategy delivery has been, or to make urgent improvements because there is already evidence that there are/may be obvious problems.

These can then inform key strategic decisions needed relatively soon.

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Questions may relate to DAC Criteria (as amended)

Using five main DAC criteria: five of the six standard "lenses" for evaluation are recommended, with impact being the least easy to accommodate in a rapid evaluation.

- Policy *relevance* and stakeholder appropriateness;
- *Effectiveness*: of policy/programme/project/ service delivery;
- *Efficiency*: of resource utilization, as well as management and administration;
- *Coherence (new):* the compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution;
- *Impact* – the most difficult to cover unless there is existing data that can be used e.g. see box 1. The issue of contribution to impact can be covered in looking at whether there is evidence the theory of change is working;
- *Sustainability*: of funding, institutionalisation and expertise.

Typical rapid evaluation questions

- What **results** have been achieved? (effectiveness, impact, cost/effectiveness);
- Is the **theory of change** underlying the intervention working and the intervention has contributed to the results seen? (you won't have a counterfactual, and you are more likely to be able to talk about contribution rather than attribution);
- Have the **right things** been done? What do people think about the value of the various outcomes they have experienced? (addresses relevance, effectiveness);
- Have things been **done well**? (efficiency, effectiveness);
- How are **other government programmes/policies/ procedures** affecting achievement of programme results? (coherence);
- Are the results **sustainable**?
- What are the **gaps** and how could the intervention be strengthened in the future?

How to deal with **impact questions** if it is rapid?

The scope in addressing these questions may need to be limited

VNR guide can help

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4.1 TYPES OF EVALUATION

4.1.1 Implementation/process evaluation

Key question	Is the intervention working or not working and why? This seeks to improve the efficiency and efficacy of operational processes and will evaluate whether an intervention's operational mechanisms support achievement of the objectives or not and why. It looks at activities, outputs and outcomes, the use of resources and causal links.
Examples of evaluation purpose	The purpose of an implementation evaluation is to understand how a policy, plan or programme is working and how it can be strengthened. An example of an evaluation purpose is: • To assess whether the business process services scheme is being implemented as specified, to explain the performance and propose how to strengthen it.
Typical evaluative questions	• What theory of change best describes how the intervention was intended to operate? • How is the theory of change working in practice? Are there variations of implementation at different sites or by different service deliverers? • What factors influence the way the programme is implemented? • What have been the start-up and continuing costs of implementation? • What are the strengths and weaknesses of the programme (from the point of view of staff, clients, experts)? • How might the programme be strengthened/upscaled/replicated?
Key evaluation criteria	Relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability
Implemented when	An implementation evaluation can happen any time after the programme has been implemented, as a standalone evaluation, as part of a series of evaluations or as one component of an impact or economic evaluation. Typically, it would be undertaken after two to three years.
Methods	An implementation evaluation can be rapid, primarily using secondary data, or in-depth with extensive field work. It has a strong formative element (learning how to improve) using process/qualitative tools, but will likely also involve quantitative elements (e.g., assessing uptake of services). It may involve case studies. It is likely to involve a review of the theory of change and the design.
Typical tools	• Document review/literature review of comparative interventions • Development and review of theory of change and log frame • Key informant interviews and document review for case studies • Field work at different sites to assess implementation in practice • Workshopping/interviews with stakeholders • Reviewing budget and expenditure data
Key issues to consider	• To what extent do you want to get a picture of the likely achievement of outcomes? • Having reasonable monitoring data is important
Key resources	• DPME Guideline on Implementation Evaluation No. 2.2.12[32] • https://betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/case_study

Group task: Deciding how to implement rapid evaluations

In country groups till 12.10

Task

1. Decide on facilitator and someone to capture/edit the TORs and share screen
2. Develop a short purpose statement (1-2 sentences). Check:
    - Is it appropriate?
    - Is it feasible for a rapid evaluation?
3. Develop 5-6 evaluation questions
4. Check:
    - Are the questions important, necessary to address the purpose
    - Are there missing questions
    - Is it realistic for a rapid evaluation – what difference is there from a full evaluation?

Feedback on the focus of the evaluations

Each group presents the purpose statement and questions (2 mins each)

Feedback will be given later by the facilitator

Any general comments

Reminder of the design process

We are focusing here

- Developing the **focus** of the evaluation (purpose; evaluation questions; users and stakeholders; scope)
- **Research design (**Overall design**,** methods, research matrix, sample)
- Developing the **research plan**
- **Defining methods** in more detail
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Lunch till 13.30

Stay online to be assigned to groups

Status of VNR process and challenges

Group task: Status of VNR process and challenges

In country groups till 14.15

Task

1. Decide on facilitator and someone to capture/edit and share screen
2. Reflect on your action plan. How is it going? Does it need updating? Please do so. (25 mins)
3. What challenges are you facing?
4. What do you need help with?
5. You will report back on your challenges and the support you need?

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Feedback

1. Country reports back and indicate challenges (5 mins)
2. Groups raise hand to suggest how the challenges could be addressed (5 mins)
3. Repeat for next country

Next steps and accessing support

What support will cover:

- You have the Guides
- General Discussion Forum – where share questions and answers with everyone
- Online support from UNICEF /CLEAR-AA (request by email) – some may get posted on Forums for everyone
- Responding to questions with answers/resources
- Follow up remote sessions with countries
- Materials and resources on the Moodle site
- 4 training sessions focusing on topics you want more information

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What support will cover:

- Keep the peer learning going – including the regional workshops, March?
- Join the networks – the national Evaluation Associations, AFREA, Africa Evidence Network, APNODE, EVALSDGs….
- Support from UNICEF/CLEAR, community of practice and access to resources
- Consider piloting rapid or longer evaluations (and you can use this to develop how you want country evaluation systems to work), or some rapid synthesis (training September 23). Where no time consider evaluative workshops (training in October).
- Build bridges between M&E units, National Statistical Offices and sections responsible for SDGs – often a divide
- Consider training for researchers/gov in evidence synthesis eg from Makerere and contracting support, eg from local universities

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Objectives of the Rapid Evaluation training session

Participants understand the difference between rapid and traditional evaluations, and have identified the purpose and evaluation questions for a rapid evaluation they could conduct to contribute to their VNR.

Participants have discussed issues arising in taking forward their VNR, in embedding evaluations within the VNR, and had feedback from peers, UNICEF and CLEAR-AA..

Thank you/asante sana/ merci beaucoup/obrigado

Next session 23 September on Synthesis

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