



# Evaluation Policy for Norwegian Church Aid's International Work



**NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID**

actalliance

From 2013



# Evaluation Policy for Norwegian Church Aid's International Work<sup>1</sup>

Approved by Senior Management Team in NCA 12.12.2013

## 1. The Purpose of Evaluations

Evaluations are viewed as a significant tool for management and planning in Norwegian Church Aid (NCA). The purpose of evaluations for NCA is first of all **learning**. Evaluations are used in order to improve our programmes<sup>2</sup> and projects, and also as tools for documenting results. More specifically, evaluations can be used **strategically** to change focus areas and goal hierarchy in country plans, introduce new elements in our programmes and change the involvement of stakeholders. Other purposes of evaluations are to promote and assess **accountability** towards our rights-holders and to **verify** that funds are spent according to planned objectives. NCA is a certified member of Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP). All evaluations should include a part related to how NCA is fulfilling the "Standards and Commitments" (including accountability) as spelled out in NCA's Accountability Framework<sup>3</sup>.

### Participation to create ownership

For evaluations to be credible and accountable, participation of the main stakeholders (partners, right holders, duty bearers and back donors) in the evaluation process is crucial. More specifically, NCA's main stakeholders should to the extent possible be involved in designing the objectives of the evaluations, participate in the data collection activities and also serve as sources of information. Evaluations are required to give clear recommendations for future actions and a plan should be developed for follow-up both at the Country/Area Offices and at the Head Office.

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1 Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) is grateful to our sister organisation, DanChurchAid (DCA), whose 2012 Evaluation Policy was of invaluable inspiration for the development of NCA's Evaluation Policy.

2 Programmes in NCA refer to several projects within the same thematic area, such as Climate Change Adaptation. Some evaluations are "country evaluations" that cover all programmes that a Country/Area Office in cooperation with partners is implementing.

3 NCA's accountability framework, approved by NCA Senior Management Team: 1.11.2012, and the annex "Standards and Commitments" to the Annual Plan format 12/01027-10. For countries that have developed country specific Accountability Frameworks these will be applied.

The evaluation policy is targeting all of NCAs international work. This is a public document and could be of interest to partners, right-holders and back-donors, in addition to NCA.

## 2. Definition of Evaluation

NCA will use the OECD/DAC definition of evaluations, which reads as follows:

“An evaluation is the **systematic and objective assessment** of an on-going or completed development intervention, its design, implementation and results. In the development context, evaluation refers to the process of determining the worth or significance of a development intervention”<sup>4</sup>.

We understand evaluations to be **external**; carried out by an independent third party. In some cases, the evaluation team is mixed; governed by an external evaluation consultant in cooperation with internal NCA or partner staff. The scope of each evaluation will be determined in the Terms of Reference (ToR).

### Other assessment tools

Evaluations differ from other planning and management tools.

**Reviews**, studies or programme quality assessments<sup>5</sup> tend to be less comprehensive than evaluations and are often limited to pre-identified problem areas. Reviews tend to focus more on output level analysis, whereas evaluations are focusing more at outcome and sometimes impact level results. Reviews can be conducted both externally and internally. Internal reviews can also be significant for future learning. Since they are internal the main stakeholders may feel stronger ownership and they demand a smaller budget.

**Audits** could be described as a type of assessment that often measures against given standards and criteria. NCA undertakes external audits to verify that financial reporting is conducted according to certain standards, and we do audits on the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) to assess our work against the HAP standards. Internal audits often relate to how efficient and appropriate internal work

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4 OECD 2010: Quality Standards for Development Evaluations, OECD DAC.

5 [http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/pdf/article/Reimann\\_Quality\\_Assessments\\_final%20w%20PQA%20tool\\_20121206.pdf](http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/pdf/article/Reimann_Quality_Assessments_final%20w%20PQA%20tool_20121206.pdf)

processes are, and assessment of risk management and internal control / quality assurance. In addition we have gender audits that are normally **self-assessments** of the perceptions on gender equality within i.e. NCA or a partner. A self-assessment approach is often used to check NCA's work on Standards and Commitments such as conflict sensitivity and accountability.

Evaluations differ from and are complementary to **monitoring**, which is a systematic and continuous process of collecting, analysing and documenting information. Monitoring is normally an internal exercise which enables regular reporting on the progress of project implementation over time. Finally, **assessments (or pre-assessments)** give the basis for deciding whether or not to initiate an intervention by assessing the relevance, feasibility and sustainability of a potential development intervention. This could also be useful tools for establishing baseline data, and important background documents for evaluations and reviews as they provides information on the starting point of the project/ programme. They could be both internally and externally conducted.

### **Types of evaluations in NCA**

Different evaluations will cover diverse scopes and levels of the organization. The Country/Area Office will be responsible for the majority of evaluations. However, the International Department at HO will be responsible for initiating and commissioning global/cross-regional evaluations.

Evaluations may be conducted at different stages of a project. A **mid-term evaluation** presents an opportunity for learning and making changes whilst a project is ongoing. An **end evaluation** should take place after the implementation of a project has been completed in order to learn from the experiences. Evaluations or reviews of pilot projects could also be useful for future learning.

NCA has the following main evaluation categories:

Evaluation Type	Characteristics
Project Evaluation	Assessment of an individual project in a specific country abroad
Emergency Response Evaluation	Evaluation of appropriateness, effectiveness, connectedness, efficiency, coverage, coherence and coordination of NCA or partner initiated emergency response.
Thematic Programme Evaluation	Assessment of NCA's professional contribution to the thematic programme in the country as well as the choice of partners
Country Programme Evaluation	Particular focus on NCA's strategy and added value in the country and the choice of thematic programmes and partners. Responsibility for this type of evaluations will normally be placed at HO
Partner Evaluation	Study of the partner organisation, methodology, achievements and the partnership, if possible in cooperation with other co-funders/other ACT Alliance members
Global/cross-regional evaluations	Assessment of NCA's global programmes or Standards and Commitments such a gender mainstreaming, accountability, strengthening of civil society and conflict sensitivity. Responsibility for this type of evaluations will normally be placed at HO

Evaluations are often mandatory requirements and integral parts of funding agreement with the back-donors. Extra evaluations or reviews can also be initiated by back donors<sup>6</sup>.

A special approach is needed to support learning and accountability in contexts of conflict and fragility where the change processes are non-linear, engagement is politicised, and where data are often missing and unreliable. Conducting evaluations in fragile states requires a particular emphasis on transparency, accountability, participation and conflict sensitivity to ensure that findings of these evaluations can be used to inform policy making, programme design and implementation<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> In several cases, NCA's back-donor Norad has initiated reviews of programmes, that Norad has guided.

<sup>7</sup> Guidance on Evaluating Peacebuilding Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility 2012 (OECD/DAC <http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/development/evaluating-donor-engagement-in-situations-of-conflict-and->

### 3. Evaluation Requirements

All of NCA's international work must be evaluated regularly at project and programme level, and the requirements for evaluations are determined by the scope of the project/programme. NCAs projects/programmes varies from being humanitarian responses in emergency situations, to long-term development or in between the two since we work in many protracted emergencies. Most projects/programmes in NCA have advocacy components and some are also pure advocacy interventions. The type of intervention affects the **duration** of the project/programme, which may vary from a few months to several years<sup>8</sup>. Another central factor is the **size** of the intervention; NCA has projects with very limited financial grants and programmes of a considerable size.

Back-donors have different evaluation requirements for what evaluations should take place and how, and NCA aligns with each donor's requirements. Some donor's might request to approve the ToR before implementation of the evaluation. If the donors' standards are more comprehensive than what is spelled out here, NCA will align with the donor requirements. NCA should also strive to coordinate its evaluation efforts with other donors, and for instance initiate joint evaluations with other ACT members where feasible.

ACT Alliance, of which NCA is a member, requires that all humanitarian interventions that are part of so-called ACT Appeals with a total expenditure of more than 1 million USD must be evaluated, regardless of duration.

This policy stipulates specific criteria for the timing of an evaluation, based on duration and size of a project/programme. **Please see figure 3.1.** For projects/programmes of *more than three years* duration, an *end evaluation* should be conducted by an external consultant. This goes for both long-term development projects/programmes and emergency responses. In addition, end evaluations are required for projects of a *considerable size* (more than NOK 5 000 000) where the duration is shorter<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, a *mid-term review or evaluation* is required for projects which are both considerable in size and have a long duration. Finally, reviews are strongly *recommended* as a normal routine for any projects/programmes.

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8 NCA often engage in one-year project agreements with partners (often the case for Norad funded projects), unless the project agreement is part of a framework agreement that runs over i.e 3-5 years (could be the case for private donors, multilateral organisations, MFA and Norwegian Embassies).

9 The project could consist of more than one donor.

**Figure 3.1**

**Average annual budget in NOK**

<b>Duration</b>	<b>Less than 5 000 000,-</b>	<b>More than 5 000 000,-</b>
One year or less	Review recommended. <i>If projects with one-year partner agreements is being continued over several years, project evaluations are required every five year.</i>	Mid-term review/evaluation recommended End evaluation required <i>If projects with one-year partner agreements is being continued over several years, project evaluations are required every three year.</i>
Three years or more	Mid-term review/ evaluation recommended End evaluation required	Mid-term review/evaluation required End evaluation required <sup>1</sup>

In addition to these requirements, the Head of International Department should select a minimum of **two projects/programmes** for evaluation annually. This may be a thematic programme or a cross-cutting issue where we particularly want to learn from our experiences and could include more than one Country/Area Office. Evaluations of emergency responses in countries where NCA have no country office is also applicable in this regard. It could also be relevant to consider evaluations in situations where the context has changed considerably, or where evaluations might be useful in order to improve risk management, or provide learning for starting-up or phasing out a project. Evaluations of NCAs compliance with “Standards and Commitments” should always be included.

## 4. Responsibility

### Management Teams

Evaluation Plans are a part of NCA's long-term Country Plans. In addition each office is required to include an Annual Evaluation Plan in the Annual Plan. The Management Team in the Country/Area Office is responsible for initiating evaluations.

The Civil Society team leader at HO is responsible for the two evaluations that will be initiated by the Head Office, in coordination with the Management Team of the International Department. NCA's Senior Management Team can request evaluations of certain projects/programmes. The Civil Society team leader should ensure that evaluations are well coordinated with each other and also with other global functions within NCA.

In order to promote organizational learning, key recommendations and a follow-up plan should be shared widely within the organization. Global meetings, Communities of Practice and Weeks of Meetings are arenas that are considered suitable for ensuring that we learn from evaluations, and that learning is communicated across also to those not being directly involved in the evaluation. It is the responsibility of the Management Team to plan for learning.

### Budget

The vast majority of evaluations should be covered by the project budget and if possible included in the donor application. In addition NCA Head Office will have an annual budget to cover the two selected evaluations that will be carried out each year.

### Steering Group

For all evaluations and external reviews a Steering Group should be created. This group should create and **approve** the TOR for the evaluation. In coordination with the relevant Procurement Committee and according to the Procurement Manual this group should decide on the **selection** of evaluators<sup>10</sup>. The group is responsible for assessing preliminary findings and recommendations and for giving feedback to the evaluators. Finally the group should make a strategy for how the evaluation will be disseminated and used in order to ensure improvement of the affected implementation. The follow-up plan will be approved by the Management Team.

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10 Ref. Section 5: "How should evaluations be carried out?"/"Tendering Process"

A Steering Group should include **four persons** with both men and women represented. The group shall consist of both representatives from the Country/Area Office as well as representatives from the Head Office. The relevant PMER advisor at HO shall be included in the steering groups for all evaluations in order to increase quality and harmonization of evaluations, and also to support the country offices. As an example a Steering Group may be comprised of the Programme Manager and the Finance Manager at the Country/Area Office, the relevant Area Team Leader and the PMER advisor from the Civil Society Team. Other advisors (i.e. from thematic programme or emergency response unit) should be included where relevant. If possible a partner representative may also participate in the group.

For comprehensive evaluations there is a need to create a Reference Group as well<sup>11</sup>. The group will consist of members of the relevant local communities that will be evaluated to ensure accountability to all stakeholders. The Reference Group will be involved in designing the objectives of the evaluation, participate in data collection, in addition to overseeing the process and reviewing the draft evaluation report<sup>12</sup>.

### **Management Response**

An evaluation report should be supplemented by a management response from NCA within **four weeks**. A management response should comment on the main findings and recommendations and state what **actions** that will be taken within a given time frame and who is responsible for each action point. The management should also make it explicit if they disagree with the findings and recommendations in the evaluation.

The Management Team in the Country/Area Offices is responsible for making a response to all evaluations initiated by or directed to this office. The Management Team in the International Department is responsible for making a management response for evaluations initiated by Head Office. The Senior Management Team may also request the International Department on what actions have been taken in the aftermath of an evaluation.

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11 By “comprehensive evaluations” we mean evaluations of projects/programmes that have run for three years or more and have an annual budget of more than NOK 5 000 000,-.

12 The use of Reference Groups will be piloted in a couple of evaluations during 2014 in order to assess the practical implications of this new evaluation practice in NCA.

Relevant advisors at HO or CO will be called upon to assist in developing the action plan. Advisors working on specific issues that have been evaluated should ensure that learning is reflected in future programme development.

### **NCA's Board**

In order to secure accountability and transparency NCA's Board will get an annual overview of all evaluations that have been conducted, including the key points for organizational learning and how they are being followed up . They may also request for specific evaluations to be presented at board meetings. In addition they may request for specific evaluations to be carried out.

### **Databases**

The Civil Society Team in the International Department is responsible for making the evaluations public on NCA's website. The Team is also responsible for updating an internal database of evaluation reports, including a list of external and internal evaluation consultants that could be recommended depending on requested competencies.

In addition, NCA will annually carry out an internal, comparative analysis of evaluations in order to enhance the organizational learning from evaluations. The purpose will be twofold; (1) to extract lessons from all evaluations of value to all NCA operations and strategic positioning, with a view to inform internal debates and to improve procedures globally; (2) to extract lessons in order to inform evaluation procedures, policies and format. The analysis should be presented as an annual report and should be conducted by a member of the Civil Society Team at HO.

## Annex 1: How should Evaluations be carried out?

### Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference (ToR) for evaluations should follow the template that NCA developed in 2013<sup>13</sup>. The implementing partners should participate in the development of the ToR. In short the ToR should contain a description of the context, the stakeholders and their participation in the evaluation, the purpose of the evaluation and methodology issues. It should clearly state what one expects the evaluations to look at and provide recommendations for. Evaluation questions should be addressed such as OECD/DAC's five basic criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance<sup>14</sup> and standards and commitments as defined in the Accountability Framework. The ToR should define timing, logistics and facilities, as well as the qualifications requested by the evaluation team. Lastly, reporting requirements should be spelled out. The ToR is required to be an annex to the evaluation report.

### Evaluation reporting

The evaluators are required to submit an evaluation report within the length of **1-3-25 pages**: One page: Recommendations. Three pages: Executive Summary. 25 pages: Presentation of the findings<sup>15</sup>.

The final report or an executive summary with recommendations should be provided in the **national language** to those stakeholders that do not sufficiently command the language used by NCA (English, French, Spanish or Portuguese). In addition as a minimum the executive summary should be provided to English for donor purposes. Findings and recommendations should also be communicated back to the stakeholders who have been consulted and provided information for the evaluation, in a timely and culturally adapted manner.

A good quality report is characterized by having the design and methods that provide answers to the key questions as defined in the ToR, and where the choices are well argued and performed with self-critical reflection. The presentation should demonstrate a coherent structure and style, as well as a solid understanding of the substance. Creativity and innovation in the evaluation process should not be neglected as

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13 See NCA's Template for Evaluation ToR (2013) in Annex 2.

14 "Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Result Based Management", OECD, 2010.

15 Ref. DanChurchAid's Evaluation Policy 2012: "Evaluating for Learning and Accountability".

these aspects are tied to learning. The report should ensure quality of information, especially in its conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations.

To ensure accountability and transparency all evaluations should be made public and available on NCA's website<sup>16</sup>.

### **Tendering Process**

Selection of external evaluators should be done according to the requirements in DCA/NCA's **Procurement Manual, Chapter 7: Service Contracts**<sup>17</sup>. The Terms of Reference should be developed ahead of the recruitment process in order to make an informed decision. According to the Manual a Procurement Committee shall be established before any procurement activities are initiated<sup>18</sup>. NCA's Country/Area Offices are required to have a Procurement Committee. The purpose of a committee is that all procurement is carried out **objectively** in a fair and transparent manner in order to prevent conflict of interests and corruption. For evaluations the Procurement Committee should be replaced by a Steering Group.

The procedures to be applied are determined by the financial frames of the evaluation. For evaluation budgets between NOK 80 000 – 1 200 000, a Negotiated Procedure should be applied<sup>19</sup>. A Negotiated Procedure requires that a minimum of three candidates are invited simultaneously to submit a proposal based on a Request for Proposal. The evaluation may preferably be advertised openly as it will generate competition and promote transparency and accountability. The Contract shall be awarded to the most compliant candidate.

DCA/NCA's Service Contracts should always be issued for procurement above the value of NOK 16 000.

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16 NCA plans to develop an evaluation database in 2013.

17 In April 2013 NCA signed an agreement with DCA for the use of the DCA's "Procurement Manual. Procurement of Supplies, Services and Work" (4th Edition 2012).

18 Ref. 2.4 in the Procurement Manual.

19 Ref. 7.2 in the Procurement Manual and Annex SER3: "Evaluation Grid for Negotiated Procedure".

## Evaluation Team

The evaluation team is required to have knowledge about the context, have the language skills needed and be familiar with the main stakeholder groups. The team should have competency in relevant thematic areas and in the project management cycle. To ensure accountability towards right holders, the team should ensure that representatives from main stakeholder groups are consulted during the process. Both women and men should be included in the team. Gender awareness as well as conflict sensitivity is significant. All evaluations should be carried out in a conflict sensitive manner in order not to aggravate conflicts and to be viewed credible among the rights-holders<sup>20</sup>. The team may consist of external local consultants and external international consultants.

Evaluation Teams may be **mixed** of external and internal resources and include NCA staff from country offices or head office, or partner staff. This has proved to be an appropriate model in order to ensure learning and follow-up within the organization, and NCA would therefore like to continue developing this way of organizing evaluations.

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<sup>20</sup> Evaluation team should be familiar with NCA's accountability Framework, and "Standards and Commitments".

## **Annex 2: Terms of Reference (TOR) for evaluations in NCA (2013)**

### **1. Context and Programme Background**

- Description of the context of the programme
- The programme strategy and results framework
- Brief stakeholder analysis/partner information

### **2. Purpose of the Evaluation**

- The objectives of the evaluation
- The intended use of the evaluation for the different stakeholders

### **3. Methodology**

- Stakeholder involvement
- Evaluation design including data collection
- Gender and conflict sensitivity

### **4. Evaluation Questions**

- DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance:  
Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, Sustainability
- NCA added value
- Cross-cutting issues (gender and conflict sensitivity etc.)
- Participation and complaints handling

### **5. Timing and Responsibilities**

- Time frame and site visits
- The qualifications of the evaluators / evaluation team composition

### **6. Deliverables and Budget**

- Budget within existing frames
- Inception Report, Draft Report and Final Report
- Feedback from stakeholders to draft report
- Evaluation report within the requirements: **1-3-25**: One page: Recommendations. Three pages: Executive Summary. 25 pages: Presentation of the findings <sup>21</sup>
- Presentation of evaluation report including recommendations

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21 This format is taken from DCA' Evaluation Policy.

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