



1.1.8 Frequency of Monitoring

The frequency of monitoring depends on what indicators are being monitored; it can be daily (e.g. relief programming processes), weekly (e.g. distributions), monthly (e.g. prices, population assisted), quarterly (e.g. training), etc.

The bulk of monitoring happens at project implementation phase. However, context monitoring can happen at any point during a project; to make this information collected useful, it should feed into project planning and decision-making. Decisions around what data should be collected as part of monitoring will be decided at the assessment stage and when baselines are undertaken; these will then feed into planning.

1.1.9 Monitoring Questions

Specific questions for specific monitoring types are addressed in *Annex 2*. In general, however, monitoring should aim to answer the following questions:

Box 1.3: Key questions monitoring should answer

- Has there been any change in the operating environment/context? If so what and why? Are the needs still the same, or have needs evolved that the programme is not addressing?
- To what extent are the right people being targeted by the project? How does it compare to overall needs and input of other agencies? Is any readjustment required?
- Is the project activity plan on track? If not, why not and what can be done to correct this?
- If the current rate of progress continues, will project activities achieve the intended objectives (outputs and outcomes)? If not, why not and what can be done to correct this?
- Is the project having any unanticipated effects? Are these positive or negative?
- Has the project achieved the intended indicator level?

1.2 Defining Evaluation and its Purpose

This section should be read in conjunction with ACF's Evaluation Policy and Guideline.

1.2.1 Defining evaluation

ACF defines evaluation in its Evaluation Policy and Guideline as, **a coordinated process of data collection about the activities, systems, processes and outcomes of projects and / or programmes**, for use by specific people (internally and externally) to reduce uncertainties, improve effectiveness and make (short, mid and/or long term) decisions with regards to what ACF programmes are doing (see ACF Evaluation Guideline in Bibliography). Similarly, the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) defines evaluation as a systematic and impartial examination of humanitarian action intended to draw lessons to improve policy and practice, and enhance accountability (See ALNAP reference in Bibliography).

Most evaluations are based on assessing performance against the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria: **Impact, Coherence, Coverage, Relevance / Appropriateness, Effectiveness and Efficiency**. These criteria are also adopted by ACF's Evaluation Policy and Guideline, and their use is encouraged in both evaluations and meta-evaluations (see *Annex 10: Types of Evaluation*) at project and organizational level.

Evaluations may be based on assessing the extent to which projects have adhered to other frameworks, such as codes and standards (e.g. the ACF Charter, the Red Cross and NGO Code of Conduct; Sphere Standards etc) or thematic frameworks (e.g. Hyogo Climate Change Framework).

Evaluations are often confused with reviews and audits. These can be defined as:

- A **review** is a structured opportunity to reflect on a project and identify key successes and issues, and so make informed decisions about project implementation to improve its effectiveness. Reviews tend to be broader in scope, often focusing on more strategic issues, and less in depth than evaluations. After Action Review (AAR - see *Annex 9*) is an increasingly popular tool to facilitate reflection of an intervention's effectiveness.
- An **audit** seeks to assess compliance with established rules, regulations or procedures. It differs from an evaluation in this focus rather than on achievement and quality.

1.2.2 Purpose of Evaluation

Evaluations should always clarify their primary purpose around internal/external accountability or learning and their primary audience. Irrespective of whether the purpose of the evaluation is for accountability or learning, project beneficiaries should be at the heart of it. In reality, most evaluations seek to combine accountability and learning objectives however, by identifying the primary purpose, evaluation methodology will vary accordingly:

- **Accountability-oriented evaluations** – These look to hold implementers to account over the **extent to which intended objectives have been met and results (particularly impact) achieved**, and if not, why not. They tend to be externally led to allow for greater independence and objectivity.
- **Learning-oriented evaluations** – These tend to focus on **analysis and lessons learned around why some things have or have not worked**. They tend to question approach and process rather than results. These are often internally-led given the learning focus.

As a less frequent event focusing on higher level analysis rather than monitoring, evaluations seek to:

- **Assess the extent of performance against higher level results** (outcomes and impact – see section 1.7) and the resources required to achieve these.
- **Improve performance** through assessment of success and failures, analysis of what caused these and recommendations for improvement.
- Provide analysis to facilitate **decision-making**.
- Contribute to project and organisational **learning**, on how to better manage and deliver projects to affected populations. They provide opportunities to reflect upon and share experience and learning, to build on our strengths and address challenges.
- Uphold **accountability and transparency** to stakeholders by demonstrating whether or not work carried out was in line with plans and in compliance with established standards. They also provide opportunities for stakeholders, especially beneficiaries, to provide input.
- Provide information that can be used to support **communication to stakeholders, resource mobilization, advocacy**, and to recognize and acknowledge accomplishments.

1.2.3 Types of Evaluation

There are a number of different evaluation types (see *Annex 10: Types of Evaluations*). The most common types of project evaluations include:

- **Mid-term evaluations** – These are formative evaluations to assess performance against plans and whether any external or internal factors changed requiring an alteration in plans. They are undertaken half-way through project implementation to assess whether any changes are required for the remainder of the project cycle.



- **End-of-project evaluations** – These are summative, and are undertaken at the end of a project to assess performance against intended objectives. These tend to be externally led to allow for an independence and objectivity.
- **Impact evaluations** – These are conducted some time after project activities cease to assess long-term changes achieved relative to a project’s goal and purpose, and the sustainability of the change.
- **Meta-evaluations** – Are designed to aggregate findings or draw common findings from a series of evaluations, so that an organisation can address these. Meta-evaluations are a key part of ACF’s Evaluation Policy and Guideline and are encouraged annually.
- **Real-time evaluations (RTEs)** – These are conducted during a project’s implementation to get real-time analysis of progress against higher-level objectives and facilitate immediate recommendations on changes to the project to improve implementation.

1.2.4 Differences between evaluation and capitalization

Capitalization of knowledge is defined as a process meant to build up a capital from information or knowledge available in an organisation, in order to develop (the organization) by making knowledge available to other institutions or actors. It is designed to ensure that every individual’s experience is not confined to him or herself alone, but serves the community in a knowledge sharing movement. The implementation of new projects or the conduct of new actions, are facilitated by the preservation and transmission of acquired experience and knowledge (see ACF Capitalization Manual in Bibliography). Much like an After Action Review (see Annex 9), capitalization encourages analysis of experiences.

Box 1.4: Key questions capitalization should answer

- What happened?
- How did it happen?
- Why did it happen?
- What were the lessons learned?
- What were best practices and recommendations that we should capitalize?

The overall **purpose of capitalization is to make knowledge, experiences and lessons learned accessible** and useful for ACF staff members and other stakeholders.

Capitalization differs from evaluation in that it seeks to facilitate **internal learning** around what was done, and **how and why the project did or did not achieve objectives**, with recommendations focus on **approach and best practices**. To that end, it tends to involve internal staff, or those who have lived the experience.

Evaluations seek to assess whether results were achieved, and if so whether this was done effectively, efficiently and in a sustainable manner. Recommendations and learning can be used to make decisions about the current project or shape future projects or policies. Most evaluations are done for accountability purposes and do not always ask questions around why certain processes were followed. Evaluations are usually carried out by external consultants or internal staff not directly involved in the project.

Box 1.5: Differentiating between evaluation and capitalization		
	Evaluation	Capitalisation
Objective	To assess whether project/ policy/ organization results were achieved, if this was done effectively, efficiently and sustainably. Most evaluations are done for accountability purposes.	To learn lessons of best practice for future application through the build up and sharing of information or knowledge within and between organizations.
Methodology	Internally or externally facilitated, including desk reviews, interviews and field research.	Internally facilitated desk and workshop-based reviews of project or organizational lessons around what was done, how and why.
Timing	Project mid-point, end or real time.	Mainly at project end.
Results	Findings (positive/negative) on achievements and recommendations on improvements.	Lessons learned (neutral) around how approaches were used.
Audience	Field/HQ staff, donors, beneficiaries.	Field/HQ staff and partner organizations.

1.2.5 Evaluation criteria and questions

Evaluations will tend to focus on more strategic questions about longer-term performance, processes and policy, and the quality of delivery.

Box 1.6: Key questions evaluations will often try to answer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking at what the project or organization intended to achieve – was the change or impact intended achieved? If not, why not? • Looking at the project plan, organizational strategy, or specific thematic policies - was there a clear plan/strategy/policy in place? Was this utilized to shape activities? Did the plan/strategy/policy work? If not, why not? • Looking at processes - was there an efficient use of resources? What was the opportunity cost of resource allocation? How sustainable is the way the project or organization works? What are the implications for the various stakeholders in the way the organization works?

Most evaluations will tend to use the OECD DAC criteria as a framework (see Section 2. 8).

1.2.6 Frequency of evaluations

There is no set frequency for undertaking evaluations; it will depend on the time frame of the project and the resources available. **Most projects tend to have a mid-term and end-of-project independent evaluation for accountability purposes.** The challenge is that these can become rigid and are not fully utilized to draw out lessons and improve performance. The use of a Post Evaluation Action Plan (see *Toolkit 1*) can help in capturing responses to evaluation findings and recommendations, and mapping out a documented action plan for addressing these.

Increasingly RTEs and AARs are also being used during the life time of the project to facilitate real time lesson learning.