

Evaluation and Learning Principles

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Global Fund Independent Evaluation Function: Evaluation & Learning Principles

A. Background

Evaluation & Learning Principles (“the Principles”) reflect the application of the core values of the Global Fund to the Evaluation Function¹ and are intended to guide the professional and ethical conduct of related activities by the Evaluation and Learning Office (ELO) of the Secretariat, including any independent evaluators supporting its work. The Principles are also intended to be considered by the Independent Evaluation Panel (IEP) in carrying out its mandate. Developed jointly by the ELO and the IEP, this document sets the overarching principles that support the operationalization of the independent Evaluation Function as envisioned by the Board² and aims to strengthen accountability, evidence-based decision-making, and enhanced learning from independent evaluation evidence.

The application of some these Principles is further reflected in various documents such as the Evaluation Function Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), and will be further operationalized in future tools, as relevant. The evaluation principles refer to relevant areas of the ELO SOPs. Conversely in future revisions, the SOPs will include references to these Principles. Going forward, ELO’s Request for Proposals (RFPs) for evaluations will provide a link to these principles requesting bidders to propose how they would execute the evaluation principles through the evaluation processes. This would enable operationalization of the principles within the ELO’s work and evaluations and will be monitored by the ELO and IEP.

The evaluation function is a shared responsibility between Governance bodies and the Secretariat. Independent evaluation is delivered through two structures: the ELO established within the Office of the Executive Director of the Secretariat and led by a Chief Evaluation and Learning Officer (CELO), and an IEP advising and providing assurance to the Strategy Committee (SC) and the Board. The roles and responsibilities of these entities are detailed in the relevant Charters, Terms of Reference and Job Descriptions, complemented by the SOPs and other internal guidance as may be adopted by these structures within their respective mandates.

Independent evaluation is a core component of the Global Fund Monitoring & Evaluation Framework for the 2023-2028 Strategy.³ Evaluations strengthen accountability by providing an

¹ As established through GF/ B46/DP06

² Independent Evaluation Function 46th Board Meeting GF/B46/05 revision 1 8-10 November 2021, Virtual. In case of contradiction or conflict between these Principles and this document, the latter governs.

³ GF/B48/04 Annex 1

additional assessment of the organization's performance against pre-established goals and targets. Whereas audits and internal control mechanisms include a focus on compliance, evaluations focus mainly on understanding what works and what does not, why, and how in relation to results, outcomes and impact. Of equal emphasis for the Global Fund's Evaluation Function is learning: improved uptake of learning from evaluation alongside targeted dissemination of evaluation evidence to specific audiences including governance bodies and country level stakeholders.

The Evaluation Function is informed by the United Nations Evaluation Group's (UNEG) norms and standards, including on the definition of evaluation - an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate evaluation criteria such as relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability⁴. The Evaluation Function will also further advance or reframe criteria where warranted.

Independent evaluations can be, but are not limited, to the following categories: Strategic Evaluations; Thematic and Programmatic Evaluations; and Country Evaluations⁵, as well as Impact Evaluations. These are further detailed in the Board paper on the independent evaluation function⁶. The type of evaluation will depend on the need, context, feasibility and on specific requests from the Board, governance committees and the Secretariat, as approved through an Annual Evaluation Workplan, informed by a Multi-Year Evaluation Calendar.

B. Purpose

The purpose of the Principles is to inform on guidelines and standards for conducting evaluations in a rigorous and credible manner. They help ensure the professional and ethical behaviour of evaluators, ELO staff, and IEP members, at all stages of the evaluation process from the initial scoping, through evaluation design, implementation, reporting, and ultimately the interpretation and use of the evaluations – including the interaction with stakeholders and partners. They also inform the expectations of the Secretariat with respect to independent evaluations.

The Principles are also expected to help foster a culture and use of evaluations across the Global Fund and facilitate conformity of its evaluations with best practices and accepted norms and

⁴ United Nations Evaluation Group (2016), Norms and Standards for Evaluation. New York: UNEG.

⁵ GF/B46/05 revision 1 section 5

⁶ GF/B46/05 revision 1

standards. These Principles build upon the norms and principles for evaluation of the United Nations system and of other development partners⁷.

⁷ United Nations Evaluation Group (2016), Norms and Standards for Evaluation. New York: UNEG, Global Environment Facility Independent Evaluation Office (GEF IEO), *Guidelines for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of Full-Size Projects*, Washington, DC: GEF IEO, 2023. World Bank Group, Evaluation Principles, April 2019

C. The Principles

Global Fund Evaluation & Learning Principles
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Utility: Evaluations serve a useful purpose. Relevance and timeliness of evaluation processes and findings for accountability, decision-making and learning. Feasibility and applicability of recommendations. 2. Credibility, Rigor, and Innovation: Sound and robust methodological approaches and data collection tools and techniques applied with rigor. The presented evidence and findings are valid and reliable. Employ innovative approaches and methods in evaluation and learning processes. 3. Independence: Structural, operational, and behavioural independence in the execution of the evaluation function. Absence of bias and conflict of interest. 4. Ethical practice: Compliance with ethical conduct standards. Conform to the 'do no harm principle'. Evaluators, the IEP, the ELO, and the Global Fund Secretariat are accountable for their actions and integrity of evaluation processes. 5. Transparency: Evaluations are carried out in a transparent manner from scoping, design, implementation, reporting through to the management response, learning and dissemination stages. 6. Human Rights and Gender Equality: Evaluations will incorporate internationally accepted norms and principles of gender equality, equity, and human rights. 7. Foster Emerging Talent: Foster and engage emerging talent in recipient countries, especially in LMIC. 8. Engagement and Coordination: Adequate and inclusive consultation and transparent communication with key stakeholders, countries, and communities. Coordination with other partner organisations where the object of the evaluation is in an area of common interest, to realize synergies and for cross learning.

These Principles comprise the expectations, standards, and spirit with which the Evaluation and Learning Function will conduct evaluations and learning activities. They operate as a foundation and framework for evaluation practice and instruct evaluators and all others involved in evaluations on how to produce rigorous and credible work that can be used to inform decision-making.

1. **Utility** – Utility refers to the relevance and timeliness of the evaluation topic, evaluation processes, findings and recommendations to accountability, organizational learning and decision-making. Learnings from evaluations are expected to inform governance discussions; strategy and policy formulation; grant planning cycles; grant implementation; and course correction. The ELO is currently establishing mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of evaluation recommendations and for assessing their influence on learning and decision-making within the organisation.

2. **Credibility, Rigor and Innovation** – Rigorous methodological approaches, appropriate expertise, objectivity and innovation serve as the hallmark for credibility. The evaluations will employ rigorous methodologies and criteria that conform to internationally agreed norms and principles⁸. Accessible and valid data will be used in evaluations supported by appropriate quantitative and qualitative analyses. The evaluations will be conducted by evaluators with appropriate knowledge, skills, experience, and the required level of professionalism. Professionalism involves adherence to ethical standards, competencies in evaluation, and ability in communicating results in an unbiased manner. Inclusive methods in engaging stakeholders and effective quality assurance systems are also essential components of credibility.

The Evaluation Function will pursue smart and future-oriented innovative evaluation, learning, and dissemination methods, practices, and use of new technology to strengthen credibility and rigor of evaluation and learning processes. The ELO defines innovation as the use of new technologies / processes or making changes that adds value and rigor to the evaluation and learning function. This includes transferring or translating methods or technique that are new to the organization; gathering elements into a new approach and systematizing existing practices that are currently ad hoc and tacit. This will foster a culture and use of innovation across the Global Fund.

3. **Independence** - An independent evaluation function supports credibility and integrity and strengthens accountability. Independence is achieved through structural, operational and behavioural components. Structural independence refers to organizational arrangements that ensure an independent evaluation function. The ELO, whilst positioned within the Global Fund Secretariat under the Office of the Executive Director (OED), is independent from the operational, policymaking, management and decision-making functions in the Secretariat. The dual reporting line of the CELO to the OED and IEP also serves to protect the CELO's organizational independence from the Secretariat. The IEP is not involved in the day-to-day management of independent evaluations, which serves to safeguard its own independence over the evaluation process and over the assurance it provides to the Board. Operational independence relates to the independence of the evaluation process from internal and external influences, conflict of interest and bias. Behavioural independence focusses on the behaviour and attitudes of the evaluators. Both these components are broadly achieved through selection of independent evaluators based on their expertise; their independence from the intervention and/or entity being evaluated; and through clear reporting lines to the ELO. The evaluators will be expected to approach their work objectively and are expected to declare any conflict of interests. Following the completion of each evaluation, the IEP will provide an assessment of quality and independence of the evaluation. It will also provide an implication analysis on the findings, conclusions and recommendations including key areas of

⁸ <https://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>

policy, process and implementation that require specific attention of the Strategy Committee (SC) and/or Board.

4. **Ethical Practice** – The Evaluation Function will aim to ensure that all evaluations uphold the highest ethical standards⁹. They will conform to the ‘do no harm’ principle, which requires evaluators and all others involved in the evaluation process to strive to minimize harm that may be caused inadvertently due to their activities¹⁰. This includes treating individuals and communities with respect and dignity and being sensitive to cultural norms and values. The ELO and evaluators will ensure the security and confidentiality of data. Participants of focus group discussions, key informant interviews and surveys will be requested for their consent before their participation. Additionally, the Final Evaluation Report, the IEP Commentary and the Management Response will be reviewed to identify potential risks, and inaccurate or confidential information. Evaluations will also strive to contribute to the common good and balance the interests of relevant stakeholders, mitigating potential risks of exacerbating historic disadvantage or inequity. Evaluators, the IEP focal points and ELO evaluation managers are responsible for their activities and integrity of the evaluation process.
5. **Transparency** – The Evaluation Function will ensure that evaluations are carried out in a transparent manner from scoping, design, execution, reporting through to the management response, learning and dissemination stages. Findings and recommendations from the evaluations will be communicated clearly to the stakeholders. The Final Evaluation Report together with Management Response and the IEP Commentary will be published on the Global Fund website. Transparency will promote stakeholder ownership of the evaluation findings and promote trust and accountability.
6. **Integration of Human Rights and Gender Equality** - Internationally accepted norms and principles of gender equality and human rights will be employed in all phases of the evaluation, relevantly applied. To support the commitment to the principle of "no one left behind," evaluators and ELO will ensure that these principles are recognized, addressed, and promoted. Specifically, evaluations will address human rights-related barriers to health. These include stigma and discrimination; gender inequality and violence; punitive practices, policies, and laws; and social and economic inequality. The evaluators and all others involved in an evaluation will also conform to the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) guidelines¹¹. This aligns with the Global Fund’s Sustainability, Transition and Co-financing Policy that requires all countries, regardless of income level, to include programs to address these barriers in their proposals¹².

⁹ These Principles are supplemental to the Global Fund Codes of Conducts and other Global Fund policies and procedures which are otherwise applicable to the stakeholders of the Evaluation Function.

¹⁰ <https://emergency.unhcr.org/protection/protection-principles/humanitarian-principles#:~:text=One%20such%20principle%20is%20the,actions%20on%20the%20affected%20populations.>

¹¹ <https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/policies-and-protocols>

¹² <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/human-rights/>

7. **Foster Emerging Talent** – New and emerging evaluators and firms, especially from Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs), will be identified as potential partners for evaluations. This would include identifying existing capacities, especially from the Global South, and removal of bottlenecks to working with a wider pool of service providers. The Global Fund will also work closely with other global health institutions to ensure continued focus and practical solutions to this effort.
8. **Engagement and Coordination** – Engagement is a key pillar to how learning will be encouraged. Independent evaluations will involve consultations with relevant stakeholders, such as the Secretariat, the IEP, Global Fund governance officials, governments, partners, community representatives and program recipients, where feasible. Evaluations will benefit from insights and expertise from country representatives who have first-hand experience and understanding of program implementation and outcomes. This will enhance credibility and legitimacy of the evaluation process and evaluation outcomes. It will also promote interpretation, nuancing, and ownership of the evaluation results and recommendations. Where applicable and feasible, the ELO will coordinate with other partner organisations when carrying-out evaluations and encourage cross learning, especially where the focus of the evaluation is an area of common interest. This may include pooling together of resources and expertise; sharing data and documents; best practices; and lessons gained that allow for more thorough and comprehensive assessments.

D. Commitment to learning, support and follow-up.

Learning will be facilitated throughout the evaluation process. The Evaluation Function will ensure a deliberate process to facilitate organizational learning to inform governance discussions, grant planning cycles, operational activities and policy formulation. It will also create accessible learning products to increase awareness on evaluation insights and recommendations. Utilization of the Final Evaluation Report will be facilitated by the development of the IEP Commentary and a comprehensive Secretariat Management Response, endorsed respectively by the IEP and the OED. Recommendations will be routinely and systematically followed-up and reported. The ELO will monitor how and to what extent evaluations have been utilised to influence learning and decision-making within the organisation.