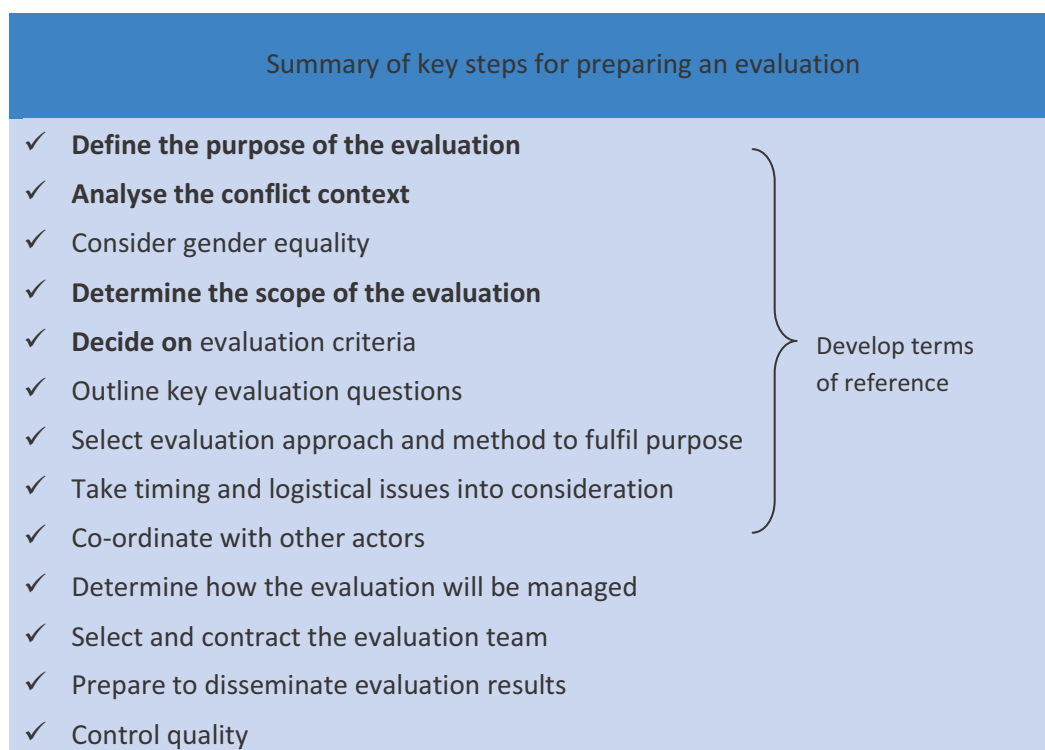


Chapter 3

Preparing an evaluation in situations of conflict and fragility

This chapter considers how evaluation commissioning agencies and planners may set up an evaluation. Its base premise is that effective preparation makes for effective evaluation. It thus examines each of the key preparatory steps, looking first at how to define the purpose of an evaluation and how to conduct (or commission) a conflict analysis. The chapter then goes on to discuss how to identify the key questions an evaluation must ask. It examines timing and logistics, co-ordination with other actors, selecting evaluation criteria, management, methods, the evaluation team, and the dissemination of evaluation results.

This chapter is designed to be of interest to those who commission evaluations (programme managers, staff or evaluation offices) and evaluation managers, as well as staff and decision makers involved in selecting evaluation topics and questions. It sets out some key steps in preparing an evaluation. The first three steps – purpose, conflict analysis, and scope – may usefully be considered together.



Defining the purpose

Every evaluation, regardless of the context, should begin with the question: What is this evaluation meant to ascertain and how will this information be used? Defining the purpose and objectives of an evaluation is the most important planning step. If the purpose is not clear, the evaluation will not be. Commissioners should think about: Who is the intended audience? Who is to receive the findings and what will they do with the results? What kind of information is needed?

Evaluations may have a number of different, sometimes concurrent, purposes. Accountability and learning are two of most frequent, and most evaluations combine them.

- **Accountability** seeks to find out whether an activity has been performed as intended and/or whether it has achieved the expected results.

- **Learning** looks to provide evidence and improve knowledge of results and performance, which can help improve ongoing or future activities and increase understanding of what works, what does not, and why.

Box 3.1 gives some examples of the accountability and learning objectives of evaluations, as described in evaluation reports.

Box 3.1. Defining the purpose of an evaluation

- **Accountability:** “The purpose of the evaluation is to assess whether Norway has, with its transitional assistance, contributed to increased security (and stability) in Haiti, and whether gains achieved are likely to be sustained.” (Norad, 2009).
- **Accountability:** “This report was prepared to ascertain whether Asian Development Bank policy conditions had been met and whether they led to achievement of the Tajikistan Post Conflict Infrastructure Programme’s stated objectives or purpose.” (ADB, 2007).
- **Learning:** “The overall objectives of this project were, first, to develop a method for assessing the impact of development co-operation in conflict zones, and second, to apply this method in North East Afghanistan.” (Böhnke et al, 2010).
- **Accountability and learning:** “The joint evaluation of conflict prevention and peace building in the Democratic Republic of Congo has a double purpose: to provide accountability to the public and to decision makers in development co-operation, and to generate lessons for improvement. The emphasis is on the learning side, with a view to developing more strategic policies and programmes.” (Brusset et al, 2011).

Source: Development Evaluation Resource Centre (DEReC) website, www.oecd.org/dac/evaluationnetwork/derec.

The DAC *Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance* (OECD, 1991) state that “to have an impact on decision-making evaluation findings must be perceived as relevant and useful”. Evaluations involve real costs, including the use of resources which could otherwise be deployed elsewhere, and should therefore be judged on the value of the information they provide. Usefulness is an important principle in evaluation. Use can take many different forms, before and during the implementation of an evaluation, or even many years after. In some cases decision makers use the findings to change or modify a programme directly, based on the recommendations presented. But in many cases use is less direct. An evaluation may contribute, along with other evaluations and research, to building up general knowledge over time on a particular topic, for instance. Behavioural or organisational changes may be caused by engaging in the evaluation process itself. Factors that may influence use of evaluations, and can be kept in mind when planning an evaluation, are the institutional environment (incentives and capacity for use), the relevance of the evaluation (timing, involvement of stakeholders, credibility), and the quality of dissemination (evaluation product, communication channels and mechanisms) (Feinstein, 2002).

For evaluations involving multiple stakeholders, a shared understanding of the overall goal is crucial. In order to ensure such shared understanding and, later, the usefulness of the evaluation, involving stakeholders as part of the preparation and planning process is recommended. However, their degree of involvement depends on the evaluation’s design and purpose. An evaluation focused on learning is likely to be more participatory, whereas stakeholders would be less involved in an evaluation with an accountability purpose.

Analysing conflict

Conflict analysis helps identify the causes, drivers and dynamics of conflict and fragility. It provides an analytical framework for understanding the complex, changing context in which an intervention is implemented. A conflict analysis identifies the key factors relating to conflict and fragility and the linkages between them, pointing to the sources and dynamics of violence as well as peace. A good analysis of conflict and fragility should include (or be linked to) an in-depth analysis of the political economy and broader development context (Kennedy-Chouane, 2011).

Evaluators will always need to have an understanding of the conflict as the basis for their work, though they may not necessarily need to perform a conflict analysis themselves. The evaluation could be based on analysis provided by the evaluation target itself, the commissioning agency, an independent research institute or consultant, or a participatory process with stakeholders. An analysis may also be performed by the evaluation team as an early step in the evaluation process or used by commissioners to refine the evaluation scope and define key questions.

Box 3.2. Two examples of the use of conflict analysis – Democratic Republic of Congo and Sri Lanka

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the conflict analysis – a combination of scientific research and workshops in the field – identified four important drivers of conflict during the inception phase. The four drivers – land ownership, weakness of the state, security sector, natural resources – helped delineate the scope of the evaluation. The drivers also helped evaluate the relevance of interventions (Did they target the right drivers of conflict?) and their impact (Did the conflict prevention and peacebuilding assistance have an effect on these drivers?) (Brusset *et al.*, 2011).

In Sri Lanka, the study used the existing comprehensive strategic conflict assessments conducted in 2001 and 2005 as a point of reference and background for the analysis. Though the team recognised that the conflict had deepened since 2005, it felt its root causes remained unchanged and were sufficiently covered by the earlier analyses (Chapman *et al.*, 2009).

Source: Brusset *et al.* (2011) and Chapman *et al.* (2009).

As described in Chapter 1, a thorough understanding of the context of conflict and fragility should be part of the design and management of all interventions. If a conflict analysis has been carried out as part of developing a donor's strategic engagement or programme design, the evaluation team will need to review the analysis and assess its quality and relevance at the outset of the programme and how it was adapted (or not) over time. Evaluators will need to consider whether the underlying analysis (explicit or implicit) was sufficient and accurate, whether it was effectively translated into relevant strategies and objectives, and whether it was adapted to the situation of conflict and fragility over time. Tips for reviewing a conflict analysis are provided in Box 3.3.

There are many different models, tools and frameworks for conflict analysis used by development donors and others working in and on conflict and fragility. The aim is to gain a broad and deep understanding of the context in order to evaluate the intervention in

question. Notwithstanding the diversity of different models of conflict analysis, there is growing consensus on what is required in a good analysis:

- It distinguishes between the structural causes of conflict and fragility (both issues and people) and dynamic events and trends.
- It identifies positive as well as negative forces affecting the conflict (and chances for peace).
- It prioritises drivers of conflict and fragility and identifies which ones can be influenced by external action.
- It is operationally useful, and reflected in programme design, monitoring and evaluation.

Nevertheless, in order to avoid the trap of becoming too comprehensive (and thus difficult to operationalise), it is important to distinguish those elements of the broader context that directly influence the conflict and how they do so. For instance, if poverty is identified as an important factor in the context, conflict analysis should identify which aspects of poverty influence tensions, resentments, and violence and in what way. Box 3.3 outlines more key elements to look for in a conflict analysis.

Drawing on the outcomes of the conflict analysis, evaluators can assess the relevance and impacts of the activity or policy in question. For instance, the outcomes of the analysis will help to gauge whether or not an intervention addresses the relevant needs of the context, i.e. the causes of conflict and fragility. Additional information will, however, be needed to evaluate all dimensions of relevance and impact. For instance, the relevance of donor activities to overall country strategies or donor priorities may not be revealed through a standard conflict analysis and will have to be captured with other data, including programme documents and information on policies.

One way of developing an analysis is to involve a range of stakeholders early on in the evaluation process. As it is not always possible to obtain all the competing perspectives from the different parties at the same time, it may be advisable to interview people separately to gain a deeper, wider understanding of the situation. However, evaluators should be aware that it will likely be difficult to gain consensus on the nature of the conflict as contending groups will not agree. This, of course, is a natural characteristic of conflict – and competing interpretations of history and causes may be an important dimension that the analysis captures. The outcomes of interviews, therefore, should be triangulated with secondary sources such as policy documents, programme/project notes, and grey literature such as reports from research institutes and think tanks. In interviews it can be particularly useful to engage in discussion to prioritise drivers of conflict and fragility, to understand which drivers are really important (and which less so), and to make general assertions more specific.

Most evaluations look at an intervention or overall engagement in a single country or conflict region. In that case, the conflict analysis focuses on understanding that particular conflict, and also examines sub-regional or local conflict dynamics as relevant. For evaluations that involve analysis of activities across various conflict contexts – e.g. a thematic evaluation looking at women's role in peace processes or an evaluation of a disarmament programme that operates in several different post-conflict countries – the analysis of conflict will be approached differently. Analysis could draw on existing research and empirical evidence about the (assumed) connections between the type of activities and violent conflict or state fragility in general. Case studies and comparative analysis can be

Box 3.3. Checklist for reviewing a conflict analysis

If a conflict analysis has been carried out as part of developing a donor's strategic engagement or programme design, the team will need to review the analysis and assess its quality and relevance at the outset of the programme and how it was adapted (or not) over time. In this process, the evaluation team should pose the following questions:

1. Given the resources and capacities of the agency or organisation being evaluated, was the appropriate conflict analysis approach or tool chosen to guide the design and implementation of the programme(s) or policy(ies)? Did the analysis generate adequate information for determining the relevance of the intervention to the needs of the peacebuilding process; to the effectiveness of the programme designs and implementation; and to an assessment of the appropriateness of the theory of change?
2. Was the analysis kept up-to-date from the time the programme or policy was designed through the period of time under evaluation? Does it capture the evolution of the conflict in a way that can be used to look at relevance and longer term impacts? (If not, the evaluation team may need to update the analysis.)
3. Was the process of conflict analysis appropriate and effective?
 - a) Was the analysis conducted by skilled people with an understanding of conflict and of the?
 - b) Did the analysis gather information from a wide range of sources? Did it include perspectives from all the main stakeholders in the conflict?
 - c) Was the analysis conducted in a conflict-sensitive manner? For example, did it ask questions in a way that avoided exacerbating divisions? If the analysis was conducted by convening stakeholder workshops, did the facilitators possess, or lack, sufficient skills to engage conflicting parties in productive discussion? Did the analysis process put researchers (and local partners) at risk by sending them into insecure areas? Did it put interviewees at risk by exposing them to retaliation?
4. Was the analysis done at the appropriate level? For example, if a programme was to be initiated at the provincial level, was a national analysis supplemented by an analysis of conflict dynamics within the province?
5. Were the conclusions reasonable? Were critical elements missing from the analysis? To what degree was the analysis shaped by the expertise of the agency or their general beliefs about how to bring about positive change?

Was the analysis linked to strategy? Did it actually inform implementation and activities?

used to test these hypotheses and assess the intervention's relevance, effectiveness and impact, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Given the many different conflict analysis models and frameworks, evaluation commissioners and managers need to give conflict analysis careful thought. The analysis method selected should be well adapted to the context, the evaluation scope, and available resources. It follows that funders of evaluations should ensure that resources for the conflict analysis are proportional to the task envisaged and that the evaluation team has the necessary skills to analyse conflict.

Broad questions that can be included are listed in Table 3.1, while Annex A provides further discussion on different approaches and links to conflict analysis resources.

Table 3.1. **Some key questions for conflict analysis**

Profile	<p>What is the political, economic, and socio-cultural context?</p> <p>What are the emergent political, economic and social issues?</p> <p>Are there important regional/international dynamics?</p> <p>What are the geographic dimensions? What areas that are prone to conflict and fragility, or affected by them, can be situated within the context?</p> <p>Is there a history of conflict?</p>
Conflict causes and potentials for peace	<p>What are the structural causes of conflict and fragility?</p> <p>What issues can be considered as proximate or dynamic causes of conflict and fragility?</p> <p>What triggers could contribute to the outbreak or further escalation of violence?</p> <p>What are the strategies or habits for dealing with conflict that contribute to violence?</p> <p>What new or emerging factors contribute to prolonging conflict and fragility dynamics? Have original causes shifted due to events during war and mass violence?</p> <p>What factors can contribute to peace and stability? What existing factors bring people together and can be built upon or reinforced?</p> <p>What are the most important drivers of conflict and peace? Which factors have the greatest influence on the situation?</p>
Actors	<p>Who are the main actors (people who perpetuate or mitigate the situation of conflict and fragility)? How do they contribute to or mitigate conflict?</p> <p>What are their interests, goals, positions, capacities and relationships?</p> <p>What capacities for peace and stability can be identified? Who can make a difference?</p> <p>What actors can be identified as “spoilers” (those who benefit from ongoing violence or who resist movement towards peace and stability)? Why? Are they inadvertent or intentional spoilers?</p>
Dynamics and future trends	<p>What are the relationships and dynamics among the key drivers of conflict and peace?</p> <p>What are the current conflict and fragility trends? What are the negative reinforcing cycles?</p> <p>What are the windows of opportunity?</p> <p>What scenarios can be developed from the analysis of the conflict and fragility profile, drivers and actors?</p> <p>How might different scenarios play out given likely future developments (in the short and long run)?</p>

Source: Adapted from International Alert (2007a) and Paffenholz and Reyhler (2007).

Deciding the scope of the evaluation

The scope of the evaluation should be clearly defined. The scope specifies the issues, funds, or types of interventions to be covered, including the time period and geographical coverage. When determining an evaluation’s scope, it is important to clarify and agree which types of aid it will cover and how. Evaluations may consider all or part of aid in a particular context, including explicit peacebuilding efforts, other forms of development assistance and humanitarian aid. Table 3.2 provides an overview of the hierarchy of evaluation scopes and some real-life examples for reference.

Table 3.2. **Examples of evaluation scopes**

Type of evaluation	Definition	Example
System-wide or country-level	Evaluation of the response by all (or most) international partners in a particular country or to a particular armed conflict or outbreak of violence.	Multi-donor evaluation of Support to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities in Southern Sudan 2005-2010 (Bennett <i>et al.</i> , 2010).
Partial system	Evaluation of a part of a system (e.g. thematic or sector study), which may include cross-country or cross-conflict analysis.	Joint Evaluation Programme on theme of Support to Displaced Persons (Borton <i>et al.</i> , 2005). Evaluation of the German Civil Peace Service (Paffenholz, 2011).
Single-agency response	Evaluation of the overall response to a particular country or armed conflict by one international partner (funding, channelling, or implementing agency).	Evaluation of Norwegian Support to Peacebuilding in Haiti 1998-2008 (Norad, 2009).
Single project	Evaluation of a single project, programme or policy undertaken by a single agency.	Evaluation of the “Open Fun Football” School Programme in the Balkans region (Danida, 2011).

Source: Examples drawn from the DAC Evaluation Resource Centre (DEReC), www.oecd.org/dac/evaluationnetwork/derec.

The scope should also spell out specific policies to be addressed in the evaluation – country memorandums of understanding or (joint) donor engagement strategies, for example. Conflict analysis can inform the process of determining the scope of the evaluation.

Box 3.4. Using conflict analysis to inform the scope of an evaluation in the Democratic Republic of Congo

A multi-donor evaluation was launched in 2008 to assess the role of external partners in supporting peacebuilding and conflict prevention in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. The use of a conflict analysis was very helpful for determining what key conflict factors – both the obvious and the less obvious ones – should be covered in the evaluation. At first, the evaluation focused on sexual and gender-based violence, child soldiers, and natural resources, which the commissioning evaluation departments considered to be key factors in the conflict. At that time (2008), these were generally accepted as important but the choice of those three factors was not based on a conflict analysis. Once the evaluation got underway, the team used conflict analysis to identify land issues and the weakness of the state as major conflict drivers, and these became part of the evaluation scope.

Source: Brusset et al. (2011).

To tailor an evaluation's scope to its purpose and available resources, planners should ask these questions: What activities and policies will be covered? How far along the “results chain” will the evaluation go? Will it look for immediate impacts or on broad conflict dynamics? The answers to these questions will influence the selection of criteria and methods as described in the next two sections.

Selecting evaluation criteria

When planning an evaluation and drawing up its terms of reference, commissioners will need to determine which criteria will be analysed. The criteria to be examined are usually included in the key evaluation questions (see below) and will make up the main analytical content of the evaluation.

The five OECD DAC criteria for evaluating development assistance – relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact – are usually considered, though it may be more manageable to focus the evaluation on looking at a few criteria in-depth, depending on the evaluation purpose and intended use. Additional considerations that may be particularly relevant to situations of conflict and fragility, namely coherence and co-ordination, could also be subject to examination. Chapter 4 features a section, “Criteria for evaluating interventions”, that discusses use of the criteria in an evaluation.

Outlining key evaluation questions

Evaluation managers should develop a list of questions (or lines of inquiry) that an evaluation will answer. The type of intervention, the stage of implementation, and what the evaluation hopes to achieve determine the specific evaluation questions. In some cases, questions will be specific at the outset of an evaluation. In others, general questions will be refined through an iterative process during the evaluation. When considering

evaluation questions, evaluation managers should also think about which methods to apply for answering the questions and whether those methods are feasible in the available time and budget?

When evaluating peacebuilding or statebuilding support and development interventions in fragile or conflict-prone contexts, evaluators might (in addition to assessing conflict sensitivity) pursue the following lines of inquiry:

- Is the intervention addressing the driving factors of the conflict? Does (or could) it address key tensions that have been identified as key factors in past, current, or possible future conflict?
- Has an analysis of conflict and fragility dynamics been undertaken and has it influenced programming and implementation choices?

Humanitarian activities in conflict situations are guided by the core principles of neutrality and impartiality, and other *Principles and Good Practices of Good Humanitarian Donorship* agreed in Sweden in 2003 (GHD, 2003). Evaluations are likely to focus on assessing the extent to which a humanitarian intervention abided by the principles and the results it produced. And because humanitarian actions may have unintended (positive or negative) influence on conflict dynamics, evaluations must also consider conflict sensitivity. If the scope of an evaluation takes in all external engagement in a particular country, the relevance and effectiveness of humanitarian aid in relation to the conflict and fragility dynamics should also be considered. When examining the entire portfolio of assistance in a country affected by conflict, fragility, or prolonged humanitarian crises, evaluators might include humanitarian interventions in their analyses in order to assess the overall impacts on peace and conflict of interventions by external partners. They might also wish to consider the balance between humanitarian aid and other types of assistance.

Some questions an evaluation might ask about humanitarian aid include:

- Does the intervention avoid creating tensions within the crisis-affected community; between displaced people and host communities; between agencies over the type and quantity of assistance?
- Does the provision of humanitarian aid impact the role and legitimacy of the state or have an influence on statebuilding processes?
- Is there coherence between humanitarian activities and other types of assistance?

Because peacebuilding and statebuilding interventions may affect men and women differently, commissioners will often include questions on gender inequalities. Questions may focus on disparities in the family, the community, the marketplace, the state, and consider issues like gender-determined division of labour and role assignment; unequal access to and control over resources, benefits, and services; disparate participation in public and private spaces; and gender-specific practical or strategic needs such as protection from violence. A gender analysis can form the basis for studying gender dimensions in the evaluation.

It is important to be realistic about what an evaluation can achieve, particularly when selecting evaluation questions. The testing phase of this guidance revealed a tendency for commissioning agencies and consultants to have overly ambitious expectations in respect to scope, content and timelines. For example, some evaluation terms of references contained dozens of evaluation questions, making it difficult for the evaluation team to answer all of the questions properly within the expected timeframe. One solution may be to provide a few broad evaluation questions at the outset, which can be examined in

greater depth, or added to, as part of the evaluation analysis. In an evaluation of the German Civil Peace Service (Paffenholz, 2011), the evaluation team first did a pilot of one of the eight case studies (Uganda) and used that experience to fine-tune the evaluation questions. They realised that several questions in the terms of reference could not be answered in the individual case studies and had to find other ways to address those questions.

Incorporating gender equality and women's empowerment

Those planning an evaluation will need to determine how it will cover gender issues. Field experience and extensive research show that women and men and boys and girls experience, engage in, and are affected by violent conflict in different ways. Educational levels, responsibilities and mobility are some of the factors that can vary with gender and may affect the resources available to women and men in a conflict or post-conflict situation. Conflict itself can play a role in forming or changing a society's understanding of gender roles – i.e. what it expects of different individuals in a given context. In many cases, conflict increases the burden placed on women. Systematic violations of women's rights and their exclusion from economic, social and political spheres are barriers to development and may affect conflict dynamics. A clear, critical understanding of gender equality within a particular conflict context is, therefore, important for policy makers and practitioners, as well as for evaluators.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSC, 2000) was the first Security Council Resolution to link women's experiences of conflict to the international and peace security agenda. It established that equality between men and women was essential to achieving and sustaining peace, and that equal participation in peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction efforts was critical to peacebuilding and statebuilding. It also called for the protection of women and girls and the inclusion of gender equality considerations in peacekeeping operations and training.

In line with Resolution 1325, gender dynamics are part of conflict analysis. This requires differentiating between the roles, experiences and perspectives of men, women, girls and boys, as well as among women and men of different social, ethnic, religious or economic groups. Such analysis should not, however, fall into the trap of gender-based stereotypes. In the past, development agencies viewed women and girls primarily through the lens of victimhood. As a result they were too often left out of peacebuilding and statebuilding processes. In light of UNSCR 1325, there is growing consensus on two dimensions critical to understanding women's roles in conflict situations: the targeting and victimisation of women and girls and the key part they play in peacemaking and rebuilding societies. This approach can help to ensure that peacebuilding processes take women's needs into account and include making space for women in government and in key post-conflict decision-making processes. That being said, it should be acknowledged that women may also be perpetrators of violence, just as men may be victims.

Those commissioning an evaluation should determine how it addresses gender-related issues in accordance with its focus and the activity or policy it is assessing. Planners may choose to make gender a cross-cutting theme or specific focus (some development agencies have particular requirements for the coverage of gender equality in evaluations). A programme that does not have adequate understanding of different gender needs and roles, or fails to adjust to them, may lack effectiveness, impact and relevance. Such issues might be included in the evaluation questions. "Criteria for evaluating interventions" in Chapter 4 gives several examples of questions on gender equality.

Evaluation managers might decide to include certain requirements on gender equality and women's empowerment in the terms of reference as a way of ensuring that they are integrated into the evaluation's objectives. For instance, commissioners may request that the evaluation team include a gender expert and use gender-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators.

An example of how gender could be incorporated into a conflict evaluation would be the evaluation of an infrastructure reconstruction project in a conflict setting that also looks at whether jobs created by the project have affected the livelihoods of working age men and women differently and whether this impacted on conflict drivers. As part of their efforts to ensure a conflict-sensitive approach, the evaluation team should examine how considerations of gender equality may affect their own work – in the make-up of their team or their engagement with stakeholders, for example.

Looking at the big picture

Experience in fragile and conflict-affected contexts has resulted in a growing emphasis on the need to look beyond individual projects, development assistance, and individual actors in order to understand peace and development processes more broadly. An individual activity may successfully achieve its short-term outcomes, such as training police officers or providing new livelihoods for former soldiers. However, these micro-level successes have widely been seen as not “adding up” to real progress towards peace. There is often a paradox between programme reports or self-evaluations that show successful programmes with good results and a simultaneous lack of progress towards peace – or even escalation of violence – at the macro level (sometimes called “peace write large”).

The success of individual development or humanitarian activities and the outcome of overall peace and statebuilding processes generally depend not on the actions or strategies of a single funding or implementing agency, but on other factors. For instance, external shocks, government policy decisions or the diplomatic pressure that the international community exerts – or does not exert – on governments and warring parties might drive conflict and peace dynamics. Such factors are beyond the scope of the evaluated activity, but evaluators must nonetheless consider them in order to draw reasonable conclusions and attribute results. Evaluations that focus narrowly on donor engagement or look only at the programme or sector level may fail to identify important system-wide effects or constraints.

It would not, of course, be realistic for every single evaluation to cover the entire policy arena or all dimensions of conflict and fragility in a given context. Activity or programme-level evaluations are also valuable. Nevertheless, development agencies should also plan evaluations that capture strategic issues or may ask evaluation teams to examine questions related to the broader context during an evaluation of a single programme or activity.

Selecting the best-fit evaluation methodology

There is no single blueprint methodology for evaluating donor engagement in fragile and conflict-affected situations. Rather, the golden rule is to apply the right tools and methods to the right questions. Methods should be chosen according to the evaluation purpose and key objectives and should involve a credible approach to attribution that avoids potential biases. The complex nature of interventions in fragile and conflict-affected

situations generally makes it necessary to combine different methodologies in order to answer the evaluation questions. Many favour a mixed-method approach, using both qualitative and quantitative methods and data. All the evaluations that tested this guidance used such mixed-method approaches. Planners should examine questions of methodology, deciding, for example, where there will be comparison groups (to inform discussion of counterfactuals), single case studies, and time or single series data.

Extensive literature exists on the strengths and weaknesses of evaluation methods and their applicability to different contexts and purposes. Several types are listed in the glossary. An overview of methods and their suitability to conflict prevention and peacebuilding work may be found in Church and Rogers (2006) and in OECD (2008b).

Encouraging participation of both women and men and knowing the informal rules of communication between men and women, is central to selecting a gender-sensitive approach. The incorporation of both women and men in the sample or study population should be ensured and potential obstacles to women's participation in the evaluation addressed. For instance, it could be difficult for evaluators to speak directly with women and women may not express themselves freely in the presence of men. The methodological implications of these gender dynamics should be considered.

Dealing with timing and logistics

Schedules and evaluation plans are often decided well in advance. However, the timing for evaluating conflict prevention and peacebuilding interventions should be determined not only by the phase of the policy, programme, or project cycle, but also in relation to current conflict realities. The timing of the evaluation should be appropriate to the current dynamics of conflict and fragility and useful for informing policy discussion and/or programme adjustments (according to objectives). Commissioning organisations may have to adjust their expectations in the light of conflict and fragility-related constraints.

The terms of reference should be clear about realistic time frames. To identify the right time and good entry points for an evaluation, the questions below should be considered, bearing in mind the outcomes of the conflict analysis. Clear terms of reference will help ensure the conflict sensitivity of the evaluation process itself, particularly how it proposes managing logistics and timing.

- What is happening in the situation of conflict and fragility? At what stage is the conflict cycle? Watch carefully for potential conflict triggers (elections, controversial celebrations, etc.).
- Would an evaluation at this moment be disruptive to the policy, project, or programme itself?
- Would an evaluation spark political reaction that could undermine the intervention by calling attention to it or by inadvertently feeding political forces in opposition to it?
- Would an evaluation put stakeholders at personal or political risk? Will there be sufficient access to stakeholders, or sufficient safeguards, to avoid bias that might endanger the policy, programme or project and the staff and stakeholders.
- Has the activity been in place long enough to provide useful experience and learning? Is the assessment of outputs, outcomes, and impacts based on a realistic time frame?

- How long has it been since any previous evaluation or review was performed (either of a donor's own activities or of relevant or similar activities of other donors)?
- Are there any logistical issues that must be taken into consideration (security restrictions, election process, weather patterns, major national holidays, access to transport, etc.)?

Box 3.5. Conflict-related constraints on evaluations in Sri Lanka and the Democratic Republic of Congo

In Norway's evaluation of peace efforts in Sri Lanka during the period 1997-2009, the team faced a challenging task. The evaluators were granted full access to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' archives and Norwegian individuals involved in the peace process. However, they could not gain access to a number of key people in Sri Lanka. They included senior figures in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (dead), second-level cadres (in prison), and the incumbent government. The team sought to compensate by studying secondary sources, such as published research (including the team's own), unpublished reports, and media coverage. In addition, international and national actors, experts and observers were interviewed.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, a first attempt in 2008 at evaluating peacebuilding support in Eastern DRC was cancelled due to a resurgence of violence. A rebel group, the National Congress for the Defence of the People, launched an offensive in North Kivu and the safety of the evaluators in the field could not be guaranteed. In 2009, there was a fresh attempt at conducting an evaluation. This time the set-up was different. Greater emphasis was placed on policy analysis and document-based study and interviews. Had there been a fresh upsurge in violence, the new set-up would have made it possible to continue the evaluation. However, without the field missions the evaluation would have also shifted in focus, looking at donor policy only and not assessing results in the country.

Source: Norad (2011) and Brusset et al. (2011).

Co-ordinating with other actors

In line with the evaluation quality standards drawn up by DAC (OECD, 2010c) and the widely endorsed principles of aid effectiveness (OECD, 2005), evaluation work should be co-ordinated where possible and purposeful. To facilitate co-ordination, it is important to examine the institutional, organisational, and project-level context of the intervention in order to identify key stakeholders. Actors may include development agencies, bilateral donors, and multilateral institutions, providers of South-South assistance, implementing agencies, non-state actors, civil society, humanitarian actors and military forces. Commissioners should consider the interests different actors might have and contributions they could make in terms of data and decide if and how they might be involved in the evaluation. For example, non-governmental organisations that play a major role in the sector could be invited to serve on an evaluation reference group to lend the evaluation additional scope and reach. Or military actors that have access to data about the security situation may be asked to contribute this information without actually joining the evaluation process. For an evaluation looking at support to education, the Ministry of Education could be engaged and contribute to defining key evaluation questions and understanding potential links between education and conflict.

Increasingly, development agencies, humanitarian organisations and security forces are working together in situations of conflict and fragility. The current emphasis among

many countries on “whole-of-government” approaches can often involve a great variety of actors from diverse backgrounds in any one evaluation. Co-ordinating such a diverse cross-section requires special consideration when setting up the management structure. If handled carefully, bringing together different development assistance players in a single evaluation can be a learning experience in that it broadens the scope of analysis and affords an opportunity for assessing differences in intervention methods and theories of change. However, a very large number of actors, ill-defined roles, or unclear objectives can make co-ordination a real problem.

“Criteria for evaluating interventions” in Chapter 4, which discusses the importance of ensuring the coherence and co-ordination of an evaluated activity, also considers the involvement of different actors.

Working with local and country stakeholders

Evaluation managers may decide to invite local stakeholders (country offices or embassy staff, national governments, civil society organisations, beneficiaries, implementing partners) to take part in planning and conducting an evaluation – especially when learning and using the results are of the essence. It is generally accepted that there is a need for external partners to increase the involvement of local people and intended beneficiaries in evaluation. Local involvement may contribute to ensuring a more transparent, stronger relationship between external actors and local communities, in line with the *Fragile States Principles* and extensively borne out by evaluation experience. Engaging with knowledgeable local people and those targeted by programmes can provide critical input for understanding the context and conflict and carrying out the evaluation analysis. Involvement of people from different sides or with different perspectives on the conflict can be critical to understanding links between the intervention and conflict dynamics. Nevertheless, planners must take great care when deciding whom to involve, and how to involve them, in the context of fragility and violent conflict. The need to protect those involved and safeguard the objectivity and impartiality of the evaluation may influence such decisions.

Development interventions that affect daily activities, resources, roles and responsibilities, opportunities and rights of the beneficiaries may have different implications (intended and unintended, positive and negative) for women and men and boys and girls. Evaluation managers must make sure that different points of view are included throughout the evaluation process. This may require considerations about what to analyse, which questions to ask stakeholders, what data collection procedures to adopt, what type of report to write and how to disseminate it. In some contexts it requires including female members in the evaluation team.

Evaluation planners will also need to determine how to handle the participation of partner country government institutions and what level of involvement is appropriate and useful in a specific conflict context. This issue is of critical importance for the feasibility of the evaluation, for ownership of the process and its results, for transparency, and for potential interest in and use of the findings. Donors generally carry out their conflict prevention, peacebuilding and statebuilding actions in support of and in partnership with host governments. A logical extension of that co-operation is working together in evaluation. Such partnerships, however, may pose challenges where governments lack legitimacy or are primary actors in an ongoing conflict. The political context and its high stakes not only affect external partners, they are also likely to have very real impacts on

how and why partners engage in an evaluation process. Donors need to learn more about managing partnerships in evaluations in fragile, conflict-affected settings.

Considering a joint evaluation

Joint evaluations that bring together different actors (development agencies, partner countries, etc.) can contribute to harmonised approaches where analysis and follow-up are shared. They are also seen as promoting opportunities to generate additional learning about how a variety of activities “add up” to produce an overall development impact. Joint evaluations often have a broader scope, capturing a more complete picture of development co-operation in a particular context. Some will cover many – even all – interventions in a particular conflict and fragility zone to assess their combined impacts. For example, by pooling information from several partners, the multi-donor evaluation in Southern Sudan was able to cover some 85% of the entire donor portfolio (Box 3.6). The OECD DAC Evaluation Network’s *Guidance for Managing Joint Evaluations* (OECD, 2006) contains a number of practical suggestions and details as to why joint evaluations are conducted in development and how to conduct them.

Box 3.6. A joint evaluation in Southern Sudan

A major joint evaluation of peacebuilding efforts in Southern Sudan brought together a large number of development partners along with representatives of what would soon be the independent Government of South Sudan. A reference group in Southern Sudan was established and chaired by the transitional Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning to oversee and interact with the evaluation team during the evaluation. This group also involved representatives of government institutions, donors and agencies, the United Nations, the Joint Donor Team, and the NGO Forum Secretariat.

The evaluation concluded that support to conflict prevention and peacebuilding had been only partially successful. Donor strategies did not fully incorporate key drivers of violence, which resulted in an overemphasis on basic services and a relative neglect of security, policing and the rule of law, all essential to state formation. Assistance in preparing Southern Sudan for secession was insufficient. There was an over-use of nominally “good” practice – particularly with respect to ownership and harmonisation – at the expense of much needed in-depth knowledge and field presence. While harmonisation, co-ordination and alignment do not run counter to conflict prevention and peacebuilding *per se*, they are not in themselves sufficient responses to state fragility.

Source: Bennett *et al.* (2010).

Writing terms of reference

The preceding steps should inform the development of an evaluation’s terms of reference, which outline what is expected of the evaluator or evaluation team and from the evaluation process itself. As such, it is a key instrument for managing expectations of evaluations and helps guide the evaluation process. The terms of reference or scope of work is usually written by the person(s) commissioning or managing the evaluation. Terms of reference should specify whether or not a final report will be published and other requirements for completion of the process. It may be useful to describe in the terms of reference what dissemination is planned and who will be responsible for it. Annex C contains a sample terms of reference document.

Setting up evaluation management

Commissioners and planners should set out the procedures for managing an evaluation. They should state clearly who is responsible for what (headquarters, field office, evaluators, partners, etc.), the team's degree of independence, the role of the evaluation team leader, decision-making processes and procedure for the clearance of reports. Experience has demonstrated the importance of being clear about whom the evaluation team should report to and how, including criteria for acceptance of different reports (length, content, writing style, etc.). Additional critical questions to be addressed are:

- How will management of the process be handled and what will the role of the different parties be? How will relations with the partner government(s) and conflict parties be managed?
- Should there be a reference or steering group? A reference group is an advisory committee that serves as an intermediary between management and the evaluators. It may also provide independent oversight of the evaluation. The group is usually made up of a variety of stakeholders and experts and can be used as a way of including stakeholders who are not otherwise directly involved in the evaluation.
- Will there be a management group? Who will be involved? A management group is useful when conducting a joint evaluation – it is made up of a group of selected representatives from those donors and agencies commissioning the evaluation and is responsible for the management of the evaluation process, including contracting and overseeing consultants (on behalf of the other donors and agencies).

Calendars, deadlines, and funding should be clearly and realistically determined and sufficiently flexible to adapt to a rapidly changing context. To the extent possible, the evaluation management should ensure a balance of genders in steering, management and reference groups.

Selecting the evaluation team

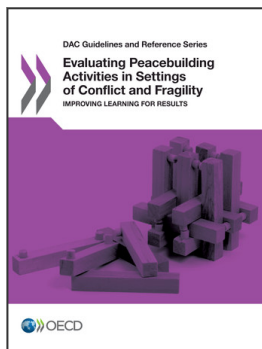
An evaluation team made up of members with complementary skills tailored to the task ahead is recommended. Planners and commissioners should specify the required competencies in the terms of reference and, if relevant, the tender document. They should spend time on this task, as it will be decisive in the evaluation process. People who are knowledgeable about conflict and peace – and the different priority areas within the field relevant to the evaluation subject – are critical to the quality of evaluations of donor engagement in situations of conflict and fragility. However, it is equally important to have knowledgeable evaluation experts in the team. As stated above, performing a gender-sensitive evaluation may well require gender experts in the evaluation team.

Particular attention also needs to be given to the perception of bias in the team. When hiring staff from the conflict-affected region or conflicting groups, it is important to take into consideration and adjust to possible threats to them, the rest of the evaluation team, and the credibility of the evaluation itself, which their involvement may jeopardise. The risk of the team being perceived as biased, or not being given access to certain information, should also be weighed, and the report should address and describe any implications for data collection or analysis.

Controlling quality

Ensuring the quality of the evaluation process and products – including reports – is key. There are several ways to organise quality assurance. The *DAC Quality Standards for*

Development Evaluation (OECD, 2010) can provide guidance as to what to emphasise. In some cases, often when dealing with challenging or complex multi-donor evaluations, internal or external experts review draft evaluation products for quality. They can do so prior to sharing the products with the wider stakeholder group, which can, in addition to improving quality, save time and money by reducing the number of rounds of revisions with the wider group. Product quality assurance and approval may also be tied to payment schedules.



From:
Evaluating Peacebuilding Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility
Improving Learning for Results

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264106802-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2012), "Preparing an evaluation in situations of conflict and fragility", in *Evaluating Peacebuilding Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility: Improving Learning for Results*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264106802-7-en>

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document and any map included herein are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

You can copy, download or print OECD content for your own use, and you can include excerpts from OECD publications, databases and multimedia products in your own documents, presentations, blogs, websites and teaching materials, provided that suitable acknowledgment of OECD as source and copyright owner is given. All requests for public or commercial use and translation rights should be submitted to rights@oecd.org. Requests for permission to photocopy portions of this material for public or commercial use shall be addressed directly to the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) at info@copyright.com or the Centre français d'exploitation du droit de copie (CFC) at contact@cfcopies.com.