

Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Guidelines on Evaluations for the India programme



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I. Introduction

The Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) has been operational in India from the early 1990s, providing financial support to local Indian organisations for a variety of charitable and developmental activities. PHF initially provided support on a one-time or an annual basis. In 1999, we began approving support for up to 3 years at a time. An external review of PHF's India programme in 2003 identified the need to be open to supporting activities for longer periods. This was made operational in 2004, when we opened the option of supporting a project for up to 7 years with 2 or 3 decision points –

- An initial approval for a short period – maybe one year.
- An approval for a period of up to 3 years.
- A second (in case the first approval was for 3 years) or third approval to continue support for another period of up to 3 years.

This is the 1+3+3 format. It was simultaneously decided that, while the initial decision/s could be based upon the concerned PHF Adviser's recommendations, the decision to continue a relationship into the longer term would need to be supported by an independent review of the project.

To make a system of reviews operational, we took the following decisions –

- The funds required for the review would be passed on to the concerned organisation so that –
 - The reviewed organisation could be the prime stakeholder and
 - It directly handles the logistics of the review
 - It negotiates with, chooses and pays the reviewers
 - It ensures that the review is done on time and budget.
 - It is responsible for the quality of the output.
 - The review could cover issues that are important to all stakeholders to the project (and not just PHF).
- PHF's representative/s would be on the table up to the point of the review questions being finalized, and then back on the table when the results of the review were being disseminated.
- A final report would be prepared after a presentation on the findings to the key stakeholders, and would incorporate their comments.
- A proposal to PHF to continue support into the third term would be prepared only after the review process was completed, and would incorporate the views articulated in the review.
- The final report would include an executive summary, and this would be shared with PHF's Trustees at the time of a discussion/decision within PHF on financial support for continuation to the project.

The following organisations have since undergone a review. These are –

Organisation	Project	Review Date	Outcome
Janarth	Women's Empowerment for Social Development	August 2003	Funding continued into final phase
Aravali	Social Analysis and Management Development Programme	July 2004	Project ended
Action for Social Advancement	Microfinance Programme in Western India	October 2005	Funding continued into final phase

CINI-Asha	Opportunities for Deprived Urban Children in School	December 2005	Funding discontinued
Navbharat Jagriti Kendra	CBR Programme for People with Disabilities	December 2005	Funding continued into final phase
Seva Mandir	Running Full-Day Pre-School Centres	December 2005	Funding continued into final phase

In addition, two organisations (Salaam Baalak Trust and Chintan) were supported into the third phase without an independent review.

The experience with independent reviews so far has been mixed. Some have been of good quality, some adequate, and some downright awful. In several cases, the organisation being reviewed has had to repeat the process with a different consultant and/or touch it up significantly to enhance quality to an adequate level. In many cases, the review has been conducted with the sole purpose of ensuring continued financial support to the project, and findings have generally not being systematically disseminated to other stakeholders and to the wider world. The purpose of a review as a learning and feedback process, both external and internal, has largely been lost. The main reasons for these were as follows –

1. Some approved project proposals were weak on articulating expected results, and there was therefore ambiguity on the aspects of project performance to review. Coupled with this was the generally inadequate baseline information on the indicators that were to measure performance.
2. There was (and is) inadequate knowledge of the fundamentals of evaluation. The importance of measuring results is not deeply ingrained.
3. Some organisations have a non-serious attitude towards evaluation, and see it as a mere formality for which quality and rigour are non-issues. Others feel that they already know everything about the project and all that is required is to find consultants to write all this down.
4. In some cases, there was poor choice of the independent reviewer. There is a genuine problem here – consultants often do work for NGOs at lower rates as a favour, and this is sometimes reflected in their attitude to the assignment and in the quality of output.

The Paul Hamlyn Foundation wants to support work that brings about change in the lives of vulnerable communities, and it is our **right** to know the extent to which the work we support is contributing to change. We also want to talk about the work we support (and enable the organisations we support to influence others) to larger audiences in a systematic way. Independent evaluations of projects are a critical means of enabling this, especially given our 'light touch' monitoring systems.

What is an evaluation? What do we want to achieve through evaluations? What are the minimum standards that we expect from evaluations? How should findings be shared? The purpose of this paper is to address these and other questions by drawing up a set of guidelines for evaluations for projects and organisations supported by PHF. Section II provides a conceptual backdrop to evaluations, section III describes the evaluation process and section IV discusses post-evaluation issues.

II. A Conceptual Backdrop

II.a What is an evaluation?

To the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, an evaluation is a systematic and objective assessment of a planned, on-going or completed intervention – its design, implementation and results – to determine its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the lessons learnt to feed into decision-making processes of both PHF and the partner NGO.

We use the terms **review** for an evaluation conducted during the intervention and **appraisal** for an evaluation conducted ex-ante.

By **relevance** we mean – the extent to which the objectives of the intervention are consistent with the beneficiary community's requirements.

By **efficiency** we mean – the measure of how economically resources/inputs are converted to results.

By **effectiveness** we mean – the extent to which the intervention's objectives were/are being or can be achieved.

By **impact** we mean – positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects of an intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.

By **sustainability** we mean – the probability of continued benefits after the project period.

Evaluation is distinct from, but complementary to, monitoring. Monitoring is a continuous process of collecting and analysing information to compare how well a project is performing against expected results. Evaluation is a one-time activity with a strong analytical component. The attached table demonstrates the complementarities.

Monitoring	Evaluation
Clarifies project objectives	Analyses why intended results were or were not achieved
Links activities and resources to objectives	Assesses causal contribution of activities to results
Translates objectives into performance indicators and targets	Examines implementation process
Routinely collects data on indicators and compares actual results with targets	Explores unintended results
Reports progress to project management and alerts them to problems	Provides lessons, highlights accomplishments or potential and offers recommendations for improvement

Good evaluations have the following characteristics –

- Impartiality
- Technical adequacy
- Usefulness
- Stakeholder involvement
- Value for money
- Feedback/dissemination

II.b Why Evaluation?

The Paul Hamlyn Foundation has four reasons for requiring independent evaluations of the projects we support.

1. To learn: We feel that there are lessons to be learnt at each of our supported interventions for the implementing NGO, the beneficiary community, us at PHF and the wider development sector, and that we can gain from these by incorporating them into future policies and activities.
2. To know: It is important for us to know the efficacy of the interventions we support and the extent to which results are being achieved and desired change is being driven.
3. To support decision-making processes: Under the 1+3+3 system, the decision to continue financial support to an intervention into its final phase (and, under extraneous circumstances, beyond) will need to be supported by independent evaluations.
4. To document: Evaluation reports can serve as documentation of project design, its implementation and processes, and its outcomes and results.

It is therefore a requirement that all long-term PHF-supported projects are evaluated independently at mid-term and end-term. We will not consider continuation of support in the absence of an independent evaluation.

II.c Project Requirements

Evaluation requires thought from the project formulation stage onwards. Good evaluations require conceptual clarity on the project's expected achievements and monitoring systems that measure performance consistently, reliably and regularly.

Projects have to have –

- Clearly articulated objectives, activities, outputs and expected outcomes.
- Monitoring systems that include –
 - Indicators to measure each outcome.
 - Baseline data for each indicator.
 - Regular data collection and analysis.
 - Dissemination of monitoring information within the organisation.
- A budget amount earmarked for evaluation.

The approved project proposal is the most important background document for an evaluation. Many project proposals are not sufficiently detailed in these aspects to be useful for effective evaluation. PHF therefore advises organisations looking for long term support to concentrate upon building these up in the first year (year 1 of 1+3+3), and to let the initial proposal reflect this. The decision to continue support into the second phase will be based upon whether projects have been clearly conceptualised, whether the expected results have been clearly articulated, and whether systems have been developed to measure performance effectively.

III. The Evaluation Process

III.a Conceptualising the Evaluation

Forming an evaluation committee: The implementing organisation needs to form a committee that will drive the evaluation process and see it through. This can be purely internal, or can include representation from other stakeholders to the project. The evaluator can be a member of the committee, or separate and reporting to it. The committee members should have sufficient intellectual prowess and organisational pull to identify and negotiate with possible evaluators, handle an evaluation's logistical requirements (including setting up meetings and visits), approve expenditure and generally support the evaluation process within the organisation.

Forming the evaluation questions: All projects have multiple stakeholders (the implementing organisation, the beneficiary community, the project management team, PHF, other donors, local government, etc.) and it is a useful first step to get everyone to articulate the questions they want the evaluation to address. The evaluation committee can then streamline these into a set of questions that will provide direction and foundation for the evaluation. Identifying and defining the evaluation questions is critical – there is little payoff from an evaluation if important questions are overlooked or trivial ones allowed to consume evaluation resources.

Identifying an Evaluator: This is neither simple nor trivial – there is no better way to guarantee a bad evaluation than to turn it over to someone inept. PHF prefers an external evaluator for the following reasons –

- The greater likelihood of impartiality and distance from the project.
- Credibility to internal and external audiences.
- This enables an NGO to draw on evaluation expertise beyond that possessed by its staff.
- A fresh outside perspective.

External evaluators would, of course, need to be supported by people within the NGO as a part of an evaluation team so that knowledge of the project and the organisation and familiarity with the interests, concerns and influence of stakeholders are brought in.

Evaluators need to have the following characteristics –

- Impartiality – the ability to handle the politics of the evaluation and the pulls and pressures of the stakeholders while maintaining rigour and intellectual honesty.
- Technical adequacy – the ability to focus the evaluation and use the methodologies and techniques that may be required.
- Credibility and stature with stakeholders and outside audiences.
- Communication skills – both written and oral. The final outputs need to be of acceptable standards to meet their purposes.
- Management skills to administer the evaluation within time and budget.

Identifying the evaluator/s is the responsibility of the evaluation committee. PHF would, in time, build up a list of evaluators who committees can call upon (while always being open to others based upon the NGO's opinion).

Designing the evaluation: The evaluator and the evaluation committee need to determine what information is needed to answer each evaluation question, and then work out a structure that will collect, collate, analyse and report this. This would lead to a detailed methodology, a time frame and a budget.

These guidelines do not look to suggest evaluation types and methodologies – each project is unique and it is the responsibility of the evaluation committee and the evaluator to work these matters out. We would, however, like to make the following suggestions –

- Evaluations need to have an appropriate mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, and not be one or the other.
- The project's monitoring information (baselines and performance measures against indicators) should provide inputs into its evaluation and raise issues that require further enquiry.
- Evaluations must deal with money matters such as – has money been spent appropriately and has the project provided value for money?
- The review of background information, including the project proposal, monitoring and financial information, other evaluations and documents relating to the sector and area within which the project operates, etc., needs to be thorough.
- Sampling techniques need to be logical and thought through.
- There should be scope for the evaluators to exercise their own judgement and use their own experience and knowledge throughout the evaluation.
- Case studies should be used purely for illustrative purposes.

Arriving at a Terms of Reference (ToR): Conflicts can (and do) happen in the course of an evaluation, and it is important to have a well documented agreement between the evaluator and the client spelling out authority, responsibility and answerability on procedures, duration, outputs and budget. Payment matters (amounts, milestones, etc.) should also be addressed here.

A note detailing the possible contents of a ToR is available as Appendix I.

III.b Undertaking the evaluation

The actual acts of collecting, collating and analysing information and arriving at conclusions on project performance will always throw up surprises, and it is therefore important to have –

- Clear lines of communication between the evaluation committee and the evaluation team throughout the duration of the evaluation.
- The flexibility to address new questions that come up in the course of the evaluation and to return to the field to further enquire into matters.

III.c Dissemination of evaluation findings

For PHF, the evaluation process needs to disseminate findings, conclusions and recommendations in at least three phases. They are –

- Presentation and discussion with stakeholders – this can (but need not) be in two separate phases, an internal presentation to the client NGO and subsequently another to a larger group of stakeholders and other interested parties. The purpose would be to share findings, conclusions and recommendations and get feedback on the evaluation and the project.
- Presentation of an interim report – this would be to the evaluation committee and may or may not be shared with other stakeholders.
- Presentation of a final report –
 - The report should be less than 40 pages in length. All additional matter can be included as annexures.

- The report should be accompanied by an executive summary (2 to 4 pages in length depending upon the complexity of the evaluation) that encapsulates why and how the evaluation was conducted and what important information it yielded.
- The language should be correct, concise and understandable to the report's audiences. Jargon should be avoided! Detailed technical analysis can be in annexures.
- The report should be clean and well packaged.
- Last but not least, the report should avoid being boring.

A possible table of contents for a final report is detailed in Appendix II.

IV After the Evaluation

NGO's report on the evaluation: The client NGO may or may not agree with all the final findings, conclusions and recommendations. If, despite all the discussion in the dissemination phase, there are important areas of disagreement these should be included in a report that outlines the NGO's thoughts on the evaluation and its proposed action on the recommendations.

Development of a proposal to continue support: PHF would begin discussions on continuation of support to a project after its evaluation is completed and a final report is available.

APPENDIX I THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Terms of Reference (ToRs) are an explicit statement of the roles, resources and responsibilities of the evaluators and the evaluation client. They should detail out –

- Why and for whom the evaluation is being done
- What it intends to accomplish
- How will it be accomplished
- Who will be involved in the evaluation
- When milestones will be reached and when the evaluation will be completed

While the ToRs of any evaluation process will need to be tailored to its particulars, there are some generic elements that ToRs should include.

1. The ToRs should provide concise **background information** about the project to be investigated – the nature of the problem being addresses, historical information and the organisational context in which the evaluation will occur. It should also situate the important stakeholders.
2. A section on **purpose/objectives/rationale for the evaluation** that addresses the question: Why are we doing the evaluation?
3. The ToRs should specify **the intended uses and users** of the evaluation.
4. The **issue** to be studied and the **questions** to be answered should be clearly detailed.
5. The **principles and approach** that will guide the evaluation should be expressed.
6. The methods of investigation should be articulated in a section on **methodology**. This should provide as much detail as possible on –
 - a. Data collection instruments, protocols and procedures.
 - b. Information sources and documents to be reviewed.
 - c. Sampling procedures.
 - d. Procedures for analysing qualitative and quantitative data.
 - e. Data presentation and dissemination methods.
7. The **roles and responsibilities** of all those involved in the evaluation process need to be clearly delineated to avoid administration and communication problems, i.e. specify who should do what –
 - a. Who will collect and analyse the data?
 - b. Who will present/disseminate findings?
 - c. Who will write the report?
 - d. Who will participate in what meetings/workshops?
 - e. Who will make logistical arrangements?
 - f. Who will provide information and access to documents?
 - g. Who from the client will serve as a liaison with the evaluator / evaluating team?
 - h. Who will approve the final outputs?
8. The **reporting requirements** should be clarified – format, language, content, length, whether the report should include recommendations, etc.
9. An accurate and detailed **estimation of the cost** should be presented.
10. A section should be allocated to detailing the **timeline and milestones** that will be achieved.

Appendix II
A Generic Table of Contents for an Evaluation

- I. Executive summary
- II. Introduction to the report
 - a. Purpose of the evaluation
 - b. Audiences for the evaluation report
 - c. Limitations of the evaluation
 - d. Overview of report contents
- III. Focus of the evaluation
 - a. Description of the project
 - b. Evaluation questions or objectives
 - c. Information needed to complete the evaluation
- IV. Brief overview of the evaluation plan and procedures
- V. Presentation of evaluation findings
- VI. Conclusions and recommendations
 - a. Criteria and standards used to judge the project
 - b. Judgements about the project
 - c. Recommendations
- VII. Minority reports or rejoinders (if any)
- VIII. Appendices
 - a. Description of evaluation design, instruments and data analysis and interpretation
 - b. Detailed tabulation and analysis of quantitative data and transcripts or summaries of qualitative data.
 - c. Other information, as necessary

