



Evaluation Annual Report 2019/20



July 2020

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1. Introduction

Evaluation enables DFID to learn about what works to tackle poverty and promote growth at country and international level. This Evaluation Annual Report provides an update of our progress on evaluation within DFID, as part of our ongoing commitment to transparency.

DFID has Evaluation Advisors embedded across departments and country offices, to ensure monitoring, evaluation and learning responds to information needs. Evaluation Advisors form part of a professional cadre for peer support, learning and development (see section 3).

DFID's central Evaluation Unit provides support to DFID and other government departments on evaluation. The Evaluation Unit manages central programmes that strengthen standards, quality and design of evaluation, provide technical assistance and generate robust evidence to support DFID policy priorities and fill critical evidence gaps. The Evaluation Quality Assurance and Learning Service (EQuALS), managed by the Evaluation Unit, provides independent quality assurance and technical support for evaluations of Overseas Development Aid (ODA) funded programmes implemented by DFID and other UK government departments.

This year's Evaluation Annual Report covers key achievements in delivering the Evaluation Strategy from April 2019-March 2020, an update on our evaluation capacity and an overview of the number of evaluations published by DFID from April 2019-March 2020. Links to reports published during this period are included in Annex 1.

2. Progress against the strategy

In early 2019, the updated Evaluation Strategy was approved by DFID's Investment Committee. The Evaluation Strategy sought to move away from a purely decentralised approach to evaluation towards a combined centralised-decentralised approach, in which the centre plays a more strategic role.

The Evaluation Strategy seeks to maximise value for money by focusing on evaluations that provide high-level learning on identified evidence gaps, and utilising other tools to ensure learning and accountability at individual programme level, such as monitoring, high frequency data and beneficiary feedback. The strategy provides space to explore opportunities for systematically assessing longer-term impact and returns on investments, whilst recognising the importance of support, capacity and strong systems to ensure quality and rigour in all evaluations. These strategic priorities will enable DFID to address shortages of evaluations in critical areas (for example, from fragile and conflict affected settings), or about aid modalities (such as payment by results) and will facilitate learning across policy areas, programmes and geographies. The strategy commits to driving work forward under four strategic priorities:

1. Enhancing monitoring processes for country level programmes
2. Generating knowledge on Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) for adaptive management
3. Investing in strategic, rigorous evaluations at central and regional levels
4. Using a broad range of evidence outputs to inform, shape and prioritise our evaluation investments.

We have continued to support decentralised evaluation in DFID, ensuring quality is upheld through EQuALS (see box 1) and renewing our Ethical Guidance for Research, Evaluation and Monitoring Activities.¹ We have updated our documents and guidelines in line with the revised HM Treasury Magenta Book on evaluation² and the updated OECD DAC Criteria.³ We have developed internal guidance to support teams in deciding when to evaluate and how to procure and manage evaluations, and updated guidance on using theories of change for an evidence-based approach to programme design.

¹ DFID Ethical Guidance on Research, Monitoring and Evaluation (2019): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfid-ethical-guidance-for-research-evaluation-and-monitoring-activities>

² HM Treasury (2020) Magenta Book: Central Government guidance on evaluation https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/879438/HMT_Magenta_Book.pdf

³ OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation (2019) Better Criteria for Better Evaluation Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

The COVID-19 crisis emerged at the end of this reporting year and required a quick response to meet the changing need. A strong, coordinated monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) system is required to ensure accountability for decision making and resource allocation, as well as to ensure that DFID and other government departments learn from and use evidence to improve current and future responses to crises in developing contexts.

Updates on our progress towards each of the four strategic priorities are set out below, including information on how we are supporting MEL for the COVID-19 response.

1. *Enhancing monitoring processes for country level programme*

This priority focuses on maximising programme and portfolio level learning and making better use of evaluation resources through improved monitoring systems. More evaluative and analytical processes can be used in designing monitoring tools and analysing data to maximise learning at output and outcome level. This allows us to learn in real time, generating evidence at the programme level that is timely, relevant and used in decision making.

In this reporting year we have:

- Convened a working group to strengthen linkages between monitoring work on results, systems and programming to ensure coherence and complementarity. This includes work on specific collective outputs, for example, on guidance and standards
- Established the Independent Monitoring Process Evaluation Regional Framework Agreement (IMPERFA), which has six lots for procuring independent monitoring assignments
- Developed tools and process on monitoring to supplement our quality assurance processes, through EQuALS (templates, technical assistance and quality assurance)
- Updated our guidance on monitoring, evaluation and learning to support better theory of change development and use, updated guidance on which evidence tools are most appropriate for different programmes; and supported new guidance on beneficiary engagement
- Held a professional development session for evaluation cadre members on real-time monitoring, attended by over 40 DFID and other government department staff.

Internal structural changes have enabled closer working and alignment between the Statistics and Evaluation Cadres to further enhance our efforts in this area. We are now utilising the tools and processes outlined above to meet the needs of the COVID-19 response (see Box 2).

2. *Generating knowledge on MEL for adaptive management*

Adaptive management is an approach to programme delivery that seeks to improve desired outcomes and impacts through the systematic, iterative and planned use of emergent knowledge and learning throughout programme implementation. Strong MEL is vital to enabling iterative programme design. Adaptations are made in a structured way, based on testing links and assumptions in the theory of change using robust evidence.

In this reporting year we have achieved the following:

Box 1: Evaluation Quality Assurance and Learning Service (EQuALS)

EQuALS delivers:

- **An independent quality assurance service** for evaluation outputs, including terms of reference, inception, baseline and final reports
- **Specialist technical evaluation advice** to support evaluations and complement in-house expertise.

Cumulatively, EQuALS has received 690 requests over the last 13 quarters: 459 requests for quality assurance, 135 for evaluation technical advice and 14 for learning reviews. From August 2018-January 2020, 12.3% of the spend on reviews was for other government departments and funds. There were 40 requests overall to EQuALS from April 19 to March 20.

- Tested different approaches through a centrally managed programme,⁴ developing tools to represent adaptive theories of change and profiling case studies.
- Provided direct technical assistance, guidance and support to teams designing adaptive programmes.
- Considered how to embed adaptive technical support and approaches across DFID's central evaluation mechanisms.
- Held face-to-face trainings and webinars for DFID and other government department staff on how to do adaptive MEL throughout the programme cycle, and on how adaptive approaches to MEL can help us pivot our programmes in an evidence-based way.
- Co-managed an adaptive champions network to disseminate learning about adaptive approaches.

In response to COVID-19, we are increasing our support to adapting programmes using an evidence-based approach (see Box 2).

3. Investing in strategic, rigorous evaluations at central and regional levels

Strategic, rigorous evaluations at central and regional levels will enable a response to critical knowledge gaps of DFID strategic priorities, providing evaluative evidence on what works and how for policy and programming decisions at the global level. Better evidence will be generated on the costs of programmes and effective approaches to delivering interventions at scale.

In this reporting year, we have worked through our programmes to support central evaluations to fill evidence gaps. The Centre of Excellence for Development Impact and Learning (CEDIL) is establishing partnerships with DFID programmes to address the most difficult evaluation challenges. Examples include a government reform programme in Nepal; reducing forced labour/trafficking from Bangladesh and Nepal to Jordan and Lebanon; and improving refugees' livelihoods in Ethiopia. The Fund for Impact Evaluation, with funding from DFID, has conducted 31 impact evaluations on key topics such as governance and WASH, including studies in fragile and conflict afflicted states.

Going forward, we are ensuring our strategic focus responds to the needs of COVID-19 (see Box 3). Upcoming programmes such as the Evidence Fund will enable centrally led thematic evaluations on critical topics.

4. Using a broad range of evidence outputs to inform, shape and prioritise our evaluation investments

Box 2: COVID-19 response on MEL and adaptive programming

Our centrally managed programmes provide tailored support to meet the challenges of MEL in the COVID-19 crisis. This includes:

- Promoting ongoing importance of monitoring and broader MEL in COVID context.
- Seminars on MEL during COVID, e.g. on adaptively managed programmes, remote data collection, using process evaluations, using big data.
- Developing guidance: utilising existing MEL contracts, remote data collection options, ethics and safe approaches to data collection.
- Call down technical support, particularly for adaptive, nimble and innovative methods.

Box 3: COVID-19 response on strategic, central, thematic evaluations, synthesis and learning reviews

- Identifying key areas for strategic evaluations, thematic evaluations, learning review or other evidence generating activities to maximise learning from the crisis response.
- Working with other government departments and other donors to collaborate and share resources.
- Briefs and policy documents summarising relevant evaluations (see for example [this brief](#) on health systems, supported by DFID).
- Dissemination of guidance on learning mechanisms and knowledge management best practice.

⁴ The Global Learning for Adaptive Management initiative (GLAM) is funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). More information at <https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-205148>

Through this strategic priority, we seek to maximise learning from the evaluations that take place across DFID and across the sector every year. This includes improving access to existing evaluations and conducting evidence synthesis, to inform future evaluation priorities and programmes within DFID.

In this reporting year we have achieved the following:

- Completed a review to draw together lessons from recent evaluations of DFID-funded commercial agriculture programmes in Africa, and initiated learning reviews on Beneficiary Engagement and Girl's Education.
- Improved systems for management information to generate higher quality, more useable data.
- Initiated projects to explore machine learning opportunities for synthesis of evaluation and evidence more broadly.

3. Evaluation capacity

The Evaluation Cadre ensures DFID generates timely and high quality evidence that is relevant and focused on the needs of decision-makers and programme managers. Advisers also work in collaboration with other organisations and partners to produce and synthesise monitoring and evaluation and share learning.

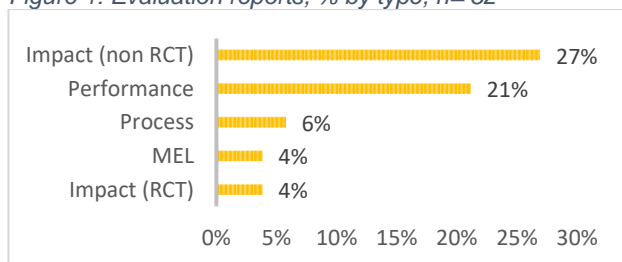
The Evaluation Cadre consists of 51 advisers based in the UK and across the DFID country office network who are formally accredited in a rigorous process aligned with the cross-HMG Government Social Research profession.⁵ To optimise development and help advisers provide quality evaluation advice, the evaluation advisers are offered support through a Technical Quality Assurer, line manager advice, Heads of Professions and Cadre Managers, networking and learning opportunities.

A professional development event, "Evaluation Week", was held in January 2020. Attendance was open across government departments and professions and over 70 staff participated. Sessions enabled experts and non-experts to refresh their knowledge on minimum evaluation standards, policy, strategy and options for support. There were in-depth discussions on innovative methodologies for hard-to-measure concepts and on the future of evaluation, and we are reviewing options for further professional development options in light of the positive feedback.

4. Overview of DFID evaluations

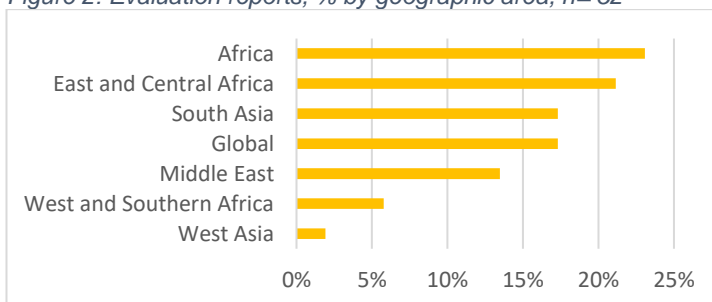
All DFID evaluation reports are required to go through our independent quality assurance service (EQuALS) prior to publication. From April 2019- March 2020, 52 evaluation reports were quality assured. These reports give a helpful indication of the breakdown of evaluations completed during this period – see figures below with breakdown by evaluation type, geography and thematic area.⁶

Figure 1: Evaluation reports, % by type, n= 52



Does not include responses marked 'other' or left blank

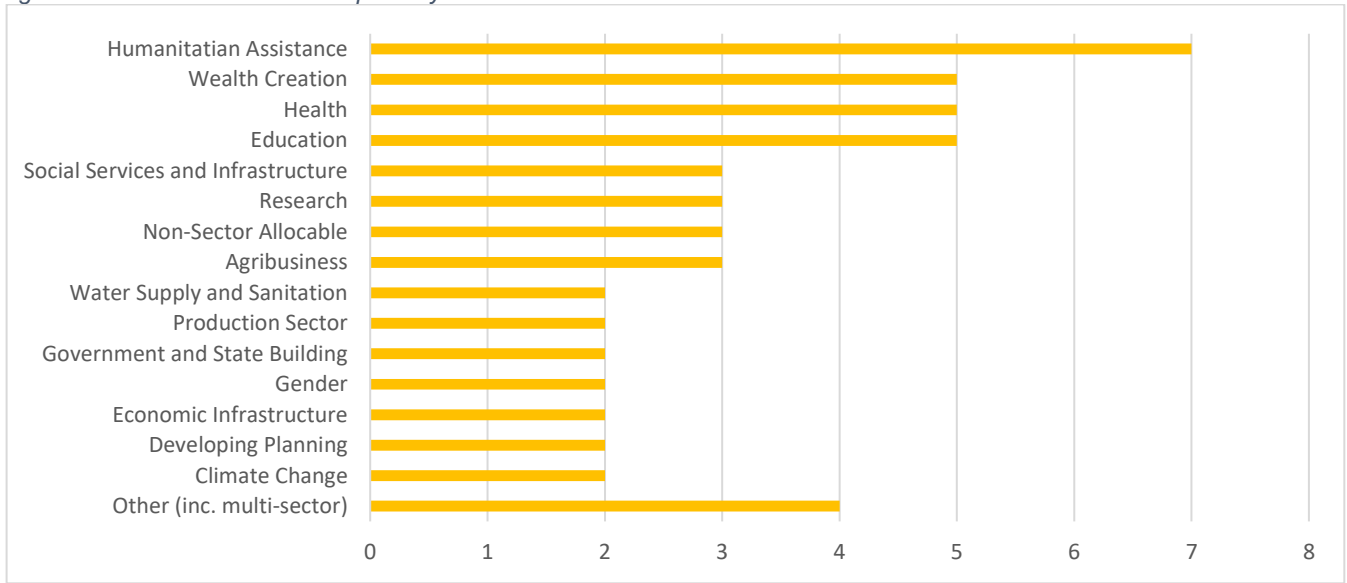
Figure 2: Evaluation reports, % by geographic area, n= 52



⁵ 33 are currently in Evaluation Advisory roles, numbers accurate as at July 2020

⁶ Data from EQuALS, including reviews of evaluation reports from April 2019-March 2020. Note that the categories are self-reported by the staff member requesting the review: they are therefore subject to bias, omission, misinterpretation and error. Duplicates (due to re-review) have been removed. The evaluation portfolio may not necessarily reflect DFID's investment portfolio as the decision to evaluate or not rests with the programme team or spending unit and is based on criteria including but not limited to strength of existing evidence, timeliness, value for money.

Figure 3: Number of evaluation reports by thematic area n=52



DFID has committed to publish all completed evaluations on DevTracker in line with the UK government’s transparency commitments. Between April 2019 and March 2020 DFID published a total of 32 evaluation products (see Annex 1 for a complete list).⁷

⁷ Note there is a discrepancy between the number of evaluation reports published and those quality assured. This is due to the time lapse between report completion, finalisation and publication, and some ‘partner-led’ evaluations being published through the partner’s systems.

Annex 1: Evaluation publications

Below is a list of evaluations that were published between April 2019 and March 2020.

Project Title & Link	Department	Published date
Punjab Education Support Programme II	DFID Pakistan	Apr-19
Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme: greater use of evidence and innovation in humanitarian responses	Research Department	Apr-19
New Alliance (ICT) Agriculture Extension Challenge Fund	Research Department	May-19
Institutional Support to the Electoral Process	DFID Malawi	Jul-19
Integrated Control of Schistosomiasis and Intestinal Helminths in Sub-Saharan Africa (ICOSA) - Phase 1 & 2	Human Development Department	Jul-19
Nigeria: Tackling Neglected Tropical Diseases through an Integrated Approach	Human Development Department	Jul-19
Forest Governance, Markets and Climate	Forest Governance, Markets and Climate	Jul-19
Programme to pilot the use of Development Impact Bonds - a new payment by results tool - to achieve development outcomes (DIBs Pilot).	Private Sector Department	Jul-19
Climate Public Private Partnership Programme (CP3)	Climate and Environment Department	Oct-19
Eastern and Southern Africa Staple Food Markets Programme	Africa Regional Department	Aug-19
West Africa Regional Food Markets Pilot Programme	Africa Regional Department	Aug-19
Community Led Infrastructure Finance Facility (CLIFF) Phase 2B	Private Sector Department	Aug-19
Trade in global value chains initiative	Trade for Development	Aug-19
Tackling Visceral Leishmaniasis (VL) in Asia & Africa Lot 1 and Lot 2	Human Development Department	Sep-19
Supporting Nutrition in Pakistan (SNIP)	DFID Pakistan	Sep-19
Stimulating global markets for Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Foods (Amul - Valid Nutrition)	India Global Programme Department	Sep-19
Expansion of the stamping out and prevention of gender based violence programme	DFID Zambia	Sep-19
UK Action Against Corruption Programme (UKACT)	Governance, Open Societies & Anti-Corruption Dept	Oct-19
Eliminating Blinding Trachoma	Human Development Department	Nov-19
Regional East Africa Integration Programme Phase II - performance evaluation	Africa Regional Department	Jan-20
Regional East Africa Integration Programme Phase II - Gender Impact study		
Summary - preliminary evaluation findings		
Evaluation- Strategic Objective 1		
Preliminary Relevance and Sustainability Assessment		
Evaluation- Strategic Objective 2&3		
Trade and Growth - Impact Study		
Value for Money assessment		
River blindness control	Human Development Department	Jan-20
Nigeria: Tackling Neglected Tropical Diseases through an Integrated Approach	Human Development Department	Feb-20
Climate Proofing Growth and Development in South Asia	Asia Regional Team	Feb-20
Promoting more inclusive and accountable democratic institutions in Tanzania	DFID Tanzania	Mar-20
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene results programme to support scale-up efforts	Human Development Department	Mar-20

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