Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF)
for trade-related assistance for Least Developed Countries (LDCs)

# Mid-term Project Evaluation Guidance Note

## For EIF TIER 1 Funded Projects: Support to National Implementation Arrangements

September 2012

This document is work in progress. Any queries/comments should be directed to the Executive Secretariat of the Enhanced Integrated Framework.

# GUIDANCE NOTE FOR MID TERM EVALUATION OF AN EIF TIER 1 PROJECT

## INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The EIF programme is centred on delivering results at project and programme levels. Since EIF delivers most of its work through partner country projects, it is critical that it has a system of feedback on the design, implementation and results of on-going or completed projects. The central issue is to determine whether a project is contributing to the change that it is designed to result in, and to examine those aspects of a project that are contributing to or hindering its success. Such assessment is done through project evaluation.

The goal is to review project performance in order to provide greater insight into the operations and enable efficient and cost effective project delivery and management. The purpose is to examine and provide feedback on the implementation processes given the prevailing in-country conditions, and to determine the extent of results achieved. Project level midterm evaluation also helps to identify obstacles to performance, provide justification for extension of the project for a full 5 year phase and provide information for the global programme level evaluation.

This guidance note sets out the procedures and guidelines governing the midterm evaluation of EIF supported projects. It underlines how the evaluation of country level projects improve decision-making, organizational learning and accountability.

## 1. PREPARING FOR EVALUATION (including roles and responsibilities)

***Scope and Purpose***

The NIU should determine the purpose, scope, and main users of the evaluation outcomes. In determining the scope, NIUs need to clarify the level of effort and resources that will be allocated; sources of relevant information; which stakeholders should be involved, at what stage and how; and timeline for the evaluation. Consultation with stakeholders to determine the scope of the evaluation is a good way of identifying some important issues for the evaluation. This consultation process also helps the NIU to accommodate the key stakeholders' priorities when drafting the Terms of Reference (TOR).

When determining the purpose of the evaluation, the NIU should emphasize assessment of the relevance of the project objectives and approach, how the project activities have proved efficient and effective, the extent to which the project has achieved its planned outcomes, and whether the project is likely to be sustainable.

**Indicative Evaluation Questions**

The reference point for the evaluation is the project proposal document that includes the project logical framework which outlines the results and corresponding indicators. Monitoring and evaluation plans, progress reports and other relevant project documents are also key sources of information for the evaluation process. These documents will guide in addressing issues and formulating questions for the evaluation. Questions should be well articulated and of priority to stakeholders. The following are indicative questions to be considered by the evaluators:

1. **An assessment/overview of the overall EIF institutional set-up in the country** (Focal Point, National Steering Committee, National Implementing Unit) and the organisational links to key ministries and other relevant bodies.
    a. Titles of members of the NSC in annex, description of task, mandate etc.
    b. Brief review of activities of the NSC and assessment of it; has worked/functioned.
    c. Description of tasks, mandate (formalised in government decision) of the NIU including an organogram for the NIU. This description should include a table with staff information (name, position, date of engagement with NIU, information on staff being seconded (with indication of with or without salary top-ups), hired for project funds or hired as consultants, information on immediate, previous position held/CV for professional staff).
    d. The organisational links (including physical location) of the NIU with Ministry of Trade,
    e. An assessment of how integration/coordination has evolved during project implementation and how it is working.

2. **Results and activities for the Tier 1 project**
    a. List and describe main results from project, including time of start/completion for main activities.
    b. Is the project making sufficient progress towards achieving its planned objectives? Will the project be likely to achieve its planned objectives upon completion?
    c. Indicate activities undertaken by NIU to achieve results, including detail of the DTIS update (if any) process and state of play.
    d. Is a monitoring and evaluation system in place and how effective is it to measure progress towards results?
    e. Compare the current logframe with the original logframe, where applicable.

3. **Review of trade mainstreaming processes in the country** (In line with the EIF Logframe)
    a. Does the country have a PRSP (or other national development strategy), covering which period, when next one to be prepared?
    b. Describe how trade aspects have been integrated in existing/being integrated in the upcoming strategy and assess the complementarity between trade and development policies/objectives. How is the institutional set-up for PRSP preparation and consultations on trade aspects?
    c. Does the project receive adequate political, technical and administrative support from its national partners?
    d. Assess and describe if/how the Tier 1 project contributed to this process.

4. **Trade Policy/export development strategy**
    a. Does the country have a trade policy and/or export development strategy? Which period does it cover and when will it be updated?
    b. Does the country have sector strategies with trade integrated into them?
    c. How has inter-ministerial coordination on trade issues been organised to support elaboration, implementation and monitoring of such strategies?
    d. Assess and describe if/how the Tier 1 project contributed to this process.

5. **Engagement with Private sector and other non-governmental stakeholders on trade and trade policy issues**
    a. Does the country have a functioning public-private sector consultation mechanism?
    b. Assess and describe if/how the Tier 1 project contributed to this process.

6. **Donor coordination on trade related assistance**
    a. Are there government and donor consultations on trade related matters?
    b. How is it (are they) organised in the country?
    c. Assess and describe if/how the Tier 1 project contributed to this process.

7. **Wider mobilisation of funds for TRA – formulation of tier 2 projects**
    a. State of affairs with formulation of new trade related assistance and identification of funding sources.
    b. Assess and describe if/how the Tier 1 project contributed to this process.

8. **Sustainability**
    a. How effective has the project been in establishing national ownership?
    b. Has the project prepared for an exit plan to ensure a proper hand-over to the national government and institutions after the project ends?
    c. Are national stakeholders been involved in project implementation, and are willing and committed to continue with the project?
    d. Are the project results likely to be durable? Are results anchored in national institutions and can the national institutions and implementing partners be likely to maintain them financially once external funding ends?

## 2. IMPLEMENTING THE EVALUATION

During project implementation, the NIU ensures that midterm evaluation takes place in a timely manner. Staff in the NIU, with support from the Focal Point, play the important role of supervising and monitoring the progress of the midterm evaluation. This process can be led by the NIU Coordinator and/or the M&E contact person. In preparing for the mid-term evaluation, the NIU is required to:

- Determine the key evaluation questions the evaluation should answer and the target audience for the evaluation;
- Prepare a draft TOR for the evaluation (final approval is given by the NSC) and send a copy of the approved TOR to the ES and TFM for endorsement;
- Search and identify, through the appropriate procurement or selection processes as applicable in the country, the independent evaluation consultants, and obtain final approval for their recruitment from the NSC;
- Support implementation of the evaluation: collect information, provide logistical and practical support to the evaluation team, and ensure smooth organization of the evaluation process;
- Ensure proper stakeholder involvement in the entire evaluation process, including the ES and TFM;
- Manage the process of preparing the evaluation report (including circulating the draft report and collecting comments and ensures follow-up);
- Submit the final evaluation report to the NSC through the FP and send copies to relevant national stakeholders, including the ES and TFM; and
- Ensure proper follow-up on the recommendations and dissemination of results and lessons learned.

Implementation of the midterm evaluation should take place as specified in the TOR. The NIU is responsible for providing practical support in a timely and informed manner to ensure the most efficient use of resources by:

- Preparing the TOR
- Hiring the Consultant

***Preparing Terms of Reference***

The TOR is the key guide for the evaluation. It clarifies the reasons for the evaluation, highlights issues that have become apparent, indicates the general depth, scope and methodology required, and the mix and qualifications of the consultants on the evaluation team. The NIU/FP is responsible for ensuring that clear and focused TOR guides the evaluation.

ES/TFM will assist, where necessary, including reviewing the Terms of Reference, helping in the consultants' selection process such as reviewing the short list etc.
**(See annex 1 for TOR requirements)**

***Hiring Consultant(s)***
Qualified trade/development experts and evaluators should undertake the evaluation. It is strongly recommended that local experts be recruited to conduct country level midterm evaluation.

Before contracting the consultant, the NSC must approve the choice, following the appropriate procurement or selection process as applicable in the country. Upon request, the NIU/FP shall send to the ES/TFM the proposed evaluators Curriculum Vitae, and a brief explanation of why they were selected as per the procurement/selection process.

***The evaluator(s) should have the following skills***:
- Be skilled in implementing evaluations particularly in trade related programs and projects;
- Good knowledge of trade, particularly aid for trade, and development issues;
- Knowledge of, and experience in applying, qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods;
- Data analysis and interpretation skills;
- Good report writing skills; and
- Adherence to good evaluation practices and ethical principles.

## 3. EVALUATION REPORT

The evaluation report is the key output of the evaluation. The evaluation report (draft and final) will provide answers to the project-specific evaluation questions. The evaluation report should not usually exceed 30 pages **(See Annex 2 for sample structure and explanations)**. The following are procedures for producing the report.

- The evaluators prepare a complete report according to the TOR and submits this first draft in electronic form to the NIU/FP;

- The NIU/FP submits the draft, without changes, to the key stakeholders of the evaluation, including the ES and TFM;
- The stakeholders review the report and submit comments on the content to the NIU/FP, with a copy to the NSC, by a date specified by the NIU/FP;
- The NIU/FP forwards the consolidated comments to the evaluators to prepare the final report. As much as possible, comments should be anonymous;
- The evaluators are expected to incorporate the comments into the report, as appropriate.
- The evaluators complete the final report according to the TOR and submit it in electronic form to the NIU/FP;
- The NIU/FP forwards it (without modifications other than formatting) to key stakeholders who have participated in the evaluation and to the NSC for approval; and
- The NIU/FP submits the final evaluation report to the ES/TFM for endorsement.

***Feedback and Follow- up***

The evaluation does not end with production of the final report. The outcome of the evaluation process should enable NIU/FP and partners to take informed decisions. After the evaluation, the NIU/FP is advised to prepare and implement a follow-up plan which focuses on capturing lessons learned and making them accessible to interested users. Most notably, it will form part of the request for the two year extension of the Tier 1 project, and its conclusions should be reflected in that request.

The NIU is encouraged to disseminate the executive summary, or an evaluation summary report prepared from the final evaluation report that highlights the most important lessons learned from the midterm evaluation. Disseminating results is easier if a dissemination plan is developed before the final evaluation report is produced.

## ANNEXES

### Annex 1: PREPARING THE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE EVALUATION

(Sample EIF TOR attached)

**Procedure for drafting and circulating the TOR**

- The NIU/FP prepares the first draft of the Mid-term Evaluation TOR.
- During the process, the NIU/FP consults with, and receives inputs from, the project staff, NSC, the donor facilitator and other key stakeholders.
- The draft TOR is then circulated to the ES and TFM for comments within a specified time frame.
- The NIU integrates the comments into the draft TOR, as appropriate, and submits the TOR to the NSC for final approval and to the ES/TFM for endorsement.

**Structure and content of the TOR**

The content of the TOR should follow the outline as explained in detail below:

1. Brief background on project and context
2. Purpose and scope of the evaluation
3. Suggested evaluation questions
4. Methodology to be followed
5. Main outputs/deliverables
6. Competencies of evaluators
7. Management arrangements, work plan including cost, and timeframe
8. Ethical codes of conduct
9. Annexes

***Brief background on project and context***

It provides a summary of the project's context, management and development over time. A clear description of the project goals, objectives and the intended outcomes, how and when it started should be stated. Reference should also be made to the national socio-economic and political contexts of the project and to the EIF context. It should also explain why the evaluation is to be done and what triggered it.

***Scope of the evaluation***

The purpose describes the reason for the evaluation and the project stakeholders. The scope specifies the coverage of the evaluation, i.e., whether the evaluation is looking at the whole project, or some components. It further specifies key issues and aspects on which the evaluation should focus as suggested by the key stakeholders including the ES and TFM. It includes the timeframe to be covered by the evaluation**.** The scope should be realistic; it needs to be feasible given the budget and time available for the evaluation.

***Evaluation questions***
It suggests evaluation questions addressing the major issues that should be explored by the evaluation. The questions should relate to the purpose, specific objectives and scope of the evaluation, with the project level logframe as reference point. Questions should be precisely stated to guide the evaluators in designing the evaluation and in collecting data.

***Methodology***
Methodology refers to the data collection and analytical methods to be used to answer the questions, the stakeholder groups to be consulted and their main interests and concerns about the project.

***Main outputs/deliverables and timeline***
It should identify the main outputs of the evaluation and how and when (indicative timeline) they should be delivered. The main output of the mid-term evaluation is a *final evaluation report* aimed at decision-makers inside and outside the project. If a certain format or layout of the evaluation report is required, these should also be specified.

If required, the winning bidder should produce *a methods paper* before signing the contract, which specifies the mid-term evaluation objectives and scope, description of evaluation methodology, evaluation questions, method of data collection and analysis, work plan and reporting requirements. It is advised to hold a briefing meeting with the consultants for the NIU/FP to discuss the project, as well as information availability. This meeting can inform the drafting of the methods paper.

*Draft mid-term evaluation report* which should be delivered within adequate time to allow stakeholder discussion of the findings, recommendations and lessons learned.

***Competencies of evaluators***
The TOR should outline the skills, experience and qualifications that will be needed to effectively conduct the mid-term evaluation. Specifically:

- It has to specify the size of the team required and an estimate of the number of person-days required;
- If more than one consultant, identify the composition and competencies required;
- The team should always demonstrate:

- Technical competence in trade issues, particularly Aid for Trade;
- Knowledge of and a strong record in designing and leading evaluations (both qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods);
- Skills in data analysis;
- Facilitation skills.

***Management arrangements***

This section of the ToR describes the role of the NIU/FP in managing the mid-term evaluation. A task manager could be dedicated to coordinate the mid-term evaluation process. It should contain:

- The timeframe, with deadlines for each major step in the process; and
- The budget limit for the evaluation (if permitted under the procurement/selection process).

***Ethical code of conduct***

This section outlines the code of conduct for evaluators in conducting the mid-term evaluation. It sets out the procedures to be used in specific ethical situations, such as conflicts of interest or the acceptance of gifts.

***Annexes***

These are support material that provide additional information to the consultants to compete in the bidding process and could be used in the overall conduct of the mid-term evaluation. The following documents could be appended to the ToR:

- Project document
- EIF compendium
- Criteria for selection of proposals

## Annex 2: Sample Structure and content of an Evaluation Report

1. Cover page
2. Executive summary
3. Brief background on the project
4. Purpose and scope of the evaluation and clients of evaluation
5. Methodology
6. Review of project implementation
7. Presentation of findings
8. Conclusion
9. Recommendations
10. Lessons learned
11. Annexes

**Cover page**

- Key project data: Project title, project number, project start and completion dates, plan and final cost of project, country.
- Key evaluation data: Type of evaluation, start and completion dates of the evaluation mission, names of the evaluators/firm, date of submission of evaluation report.

**Executive summary** (Maximum of 3-5 pages)

- Concisely states the most important findings, conclusion, and recommendations of the evaluation, and
- Should be read and understood as a stand-alone document.

**Brief background on the project**

- Brief description of the project's goal and rationale;
- Summary of the project's context, management and development over time; and
- Clear description of the project objectives and the intended outcomes

**Purpose, scope and stakeholders of evaluation**

- Type of evaluation and reason for the midterm evaluation;
- Brief description of the scope of the midterm evaluation;
- Specify key stakeholders for whom the midterm evaluation was conducted and others that it may be useful to; and
- Recapitulation of the terms of reference and midterm evaluation questions.

**Methodology**

- A brief narrative of the evaluation methods used and the limitations;
- Types and sources of data, data collection technique including data limitations; and
- Remarks on problems encountered in data gathering and analysis, if any.

**Review of Project design and implementation**

- Brief review of project design and governance processes;
- Brief review of the main stages in the implementation of the project highlighting main milestones and challenges; and
- Stakeholders involved, institutional context.

**Presentation of findings**

- Findings should be based on the evaluation questions;
- Findings should cover the evaluation criteria but concentrating on key issues and specific concerns; and
- Analysis and discussion of quantitative and qualitative information

**Conclusions**

- Reflecting evaluators' assessment and interpretation of the findings; and
- Main message(s) of the evaluation.

**Recommendations**

- Recommendations should be based on evaluation findings, including possible proposals for review of project processes;
- Recommendation should be provided in simple language aimed at improving the ongoing project, future projects, and general EIF operations; and
- Presented in a clear, concise and actionable manner, making concrete suggestions for improvements i.e., "who should do what to improve what".

**Lessons learned**

- This highlights experiences about what has been tried that produced good results and why it worked well. It reflects good practice in project implementation that could be generalized and/or replicated; and
- It includes observations, insights, and practices extracted from the evaluation that are of general interest beyond the domain of the project and contribute to wider organizational learning.

**Annex**

- Offers additional material that explains evaluation methods, data collection instruments, schedules,  documents reviewed;
- Should include the TOR and list of persons contacted and interviewed; and
- Can include any other relevant information, i.e., statistical tables with supplementary data, survey questionnaires, etc.