C-19: Summary Checklist for Assessing USAID Evaluation Reports

High quality, evidence-based evaluation reports with a clear focus on decision-making for USAID and other key partners are critical for improving USAID's development effectiveness. USAID and evaluators need to work collaboratively to ensure high quality evaluations using clear and specific standards. The Evaluation Report Checklist is used to review and strengthen draft evaluation reports. The following is a summary version of the Evaluation Report Checklist. Staff may reference the longer version when desired.

This summary checklist consists of the twenty (20) critical items of the Checklist that should be addressed in early drafts of the evaluation report. As the report is finalized we recommend that you assess it against the full seventy-six (76) factor checklist to ensure high technical quality, a strong executive summary, and the targeting of recommendations for decision-making purposes. One of USAID's main responsibilities with evaluations is to ensure that they are broadly disseminated--and actively communicated--for learning, program improvement and accountability purposes. Make sure to pay attention not only to the technical quality of evaluations but to promoting their use and impact.

SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT CHECKLIST - V1.0
GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENTS OF AN EVALUATION REPORT[i]
Keyed to USAID's ADS Guidance

Title of Study Being Reviewed: _____ _____

Main Implementer(s): _____

Reviewer: _____

Date of Review: _____

EVALUATION REVIEW FACTOR	1	2	3	4	5	Reviewer Comments
STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT						
1. Is the report well-organized (each topic is clearly delineated, subheadings used for easy reading)?						
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY						
2. Does the evaluation report begin with a 3- to 5-page stand-alone summary of the purpose, background of the project, main evaluation questions, methods, findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned (if applicable) of the evaluation?						
INTRODUCTION						

EVALUATION REVIEW FACTOR	1	2	3	4	5	Reviewer Comments
3. Is there a clear statement of how the evaluation will be used and who the intended users are?						
4. Does the evaluation address all evaluation questions included in the Statement of Work (SOW)?						
4.1. Are any modifications to the SOW, whether in technical requirements, evaluation questions, evaluation team composition, methodology or timeline indicated in the report?						
4.2. Is the SOW presented as an annex?						
4.3. If so, does the annex include the rationale for any change with the written sign-offs on the changes by the technical officer?						
SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY						
5. Is there a clear description of the evaluation's data collection methods (summarized in the text with the full description presented in an annex)?						
5.1. Are all tools (questionnaires, checklists, discussion guides, and other data collection instruments) used in the evaluation provided in an annex?						
6. Are all sources of information properly identified and listed in an annex?						
7. Does the evaluation report contain a section describing the limitations associated with the evaluation methodology (e.g. selection bias, recall bias, unobservable differences between comparator groups, small samples, only went to villages near the road, implementer insisted on picking who the team met with, etc)?						
ANALYSIS						
8. Are charts and graphs used to present or summarize data, where relevant?						
FINDINGS						
9. Are FINDINGS specific, concise and supported by strong quantitative and qualitative evidence?						
9.1. As appropriate, does the report indicate confirmatory evidence for FINDINGS from multiple sources, data collection methods, and analytic procedures?						

Key: 1 = Not addressed; 2 = Poorly/partially addressed; 3 = Adequately addressed; 4 = More than adequately addressed; 5 = Exemplar.

EVALUATION REVIEW FACTOR	1	2	3	4	5	Reviewer Comments
CONCLUSIONS						
10. Is every CONCLUSION in the report supported by a specific or clearly defined set of FINDINGS?						
RECOMMENDATIONS						
11. Are all RECOMMENDATIONS supported by a specific or clearly defined set of FINDINGS and CONCLUSIONS? (Clearly derived from what the evaluation team learned?)						
12. Are the RECOMMENDATIONS practical and specific?						
13. Are the RECOMMENDATIONS responsive to the purpose of the evaluation?						
14. Are the RECOMMENDATIONS action-oriented?						
15. Is it clear who is responsible for each action?						
LESSONS LEARNED						
16. Did this evaluation include lessons that would be useful for future projects or programs, on the same thematic or in the same country, etc.?						
BOTTOM LINE						
17. Does the evaluation report give the appearance of a thoughtful, evidence-based, and well organized effort to objectively evaluate what worked in the project, what did not and why?						
18. Does the evaluation report explicitly link the evaluation questions to specific future decisions to be made by USAID leadership, partner governments and/or other key stakeholders?						
19. Does the evaluation report convey the sense that the evaluation was undertaken in a manner to ensure credibility, objectivity, transparency, and the generation of high quality information and knowledge?						
REPORT DISSEMINATION						
20. Has a dissemination plan been developed for this report?						

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DEFINITIONS:

Performance evaluation: focuses on descriptive and normative questions: what a particular project or program has achieved (either at an intermediate point in execution or at the conclusion of an implementation period); how it is being implemented; how it is perceived and valued; whether expected results are occurring; and other questions that are pertinent to program design, management and operational decision making. Performance evaluations often incorporate before-after comparisons, but generally lack a rigorously defined counterfactual.

Impact evaluation: measures the change in a development outcome that is attributable to a defined intervention; impact evaluations are based on models of cause and effect and require a credible and rigorously defined counterfactual to control for factors other than the intervention that might account for the observed change. Impact evaluations in which comparisons are made between beneficiaries that are randomly assigned to either a —treatment‖ or a —control group provide the strongest evidence of a relationship between the intervention under study and the outcome measured.

Theory of change: A tool to design and evaluate social change initiatives. It is a blueprint of the building blocks needed to achieve long-term goals of a social change initiative.

Development Hypothesis: Identifies causal linkages between USAID actions and the intended Strategic Objective (highest level result).

External Validity: The degree to which findings, conclusions, and recommendations produced by an evaluation are applicable to other settings and contexts.

Findings: Empirical facts collected during the evaluation

Conclusions: Interpretations and judgments based on the findings

Recommendations: Proposed actions for management.

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[i] In addition to the USAID 2011 Evaluation Policy, good practices in evaluation reporting have also been drawn from:

Morra Imas, Linda and Ray C. Rist. 2009. *The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effective Development Evaluations.* Washington, DC: The World Bank.

Scriven, Michael. 2005. *Key Evaluation Checklist.*

Stufflebeam, Daniel L. 1999. *Program Evaluations Metaevaluation Checklist*.

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