KEA GUIDELINES ON WRITING AN EVALUATION REPORT

I. **Introduction:** A good evaluation report must be guided by the criteria of utility, credibility, and relevance/appropriateness. It should consider the needs of target audience even before the evaluation begins. It should address the basic question of what difference the government intervention or non-intervention has made to the lives of citizens and how the situation can be improved. Evaluation reports should use a blend of existing information and new evidence/data/facts to convincingly answer this basic question. The report must prove to the reader that the answer to this question is being provided after a thorough and genuine inquiry. Evaluations are essentially about making judgments by comparing to a pre-program situation or without the program scenario. It is immensely useful for the evaluator to put down the outlines of final evaluation report right at the planning stage itself to understand the data needs and also to examine the critical details in sufficient detail.

II. **Style and format of the evaluation report:** A good evaluation report strikes a balance between depth and length. As a general rule, total length of the evaluation report should not exceed 50-60 pages in case of dip-stick evaluations; 60-100 pages in respect of program evaluations; and about 100-125 pages in respect of impact evaluations excluding the front and back matter (annexures). Report should be written in 1.5 line spacing, 12 point Times New Roman font. Given this space limit, it is essential that the report should be clear, concise and written in powerful and persuasive language. Data should generally be presented in the form of easy to understand graphics. Report should be lucid and written in non-technical style. For page settings, citations and other editorial details, authors may follow Turabian Style Guide or any other standard manual but the styles should not be mixed up. Broadly the report should contain three parts –front matter, body of the report and the back matter. It should be neatly bound in book form.

III. **Front matter:** It includes cover page, title page, copy right page, preface, introduction, acknowledgements and table of contents. Title page should reveal essential details like the name of Client Department (implementing department), name of the Sponsor (funder) if it is other than the Client Department, name of Evaluation Agency and the month of report. Preface / foreword should be written by KEA; introduction should be written by the Chief of the Client Department, and acknowledgement by the authors. A list of acronyms used also should follow. The front matter should in no case exceed about a dozen pages.

IV. **Components of the main evaluation report:** Main body of an evaluation report should contain the following chapters:

1. Executive summary
2. Introduction
3. Log frame /Theory of Change/Program Theory
4. Progress review
5. Problem statement
6. Objectives and the issues for evaluation
7. Evaluation design

8. Evaluation methodology
9. Data collection and analysis
10. Findings and discussion
11. Reflection and conclusions
12. Recommendations

In dip stick evaluations, body of the report can be written as a single chapter with the above headings as sections instead of chapters. A brief description about the contents of each section and the probable length are given hereunder:

1. **Executive summary:** It is an abbreviated version of the most important parts of the report meant for busy audience and executives. Ordinarily, its length is one or at the most, two pages. It provides a window to understanding the original problem, the government intervention logic, shortcomings of the program if any, main evaluation questions, a non-technical description of the evaluation approach and methods, key findings, major conclusions and recommendations. It is based entirely on the contents of the main report and therefore written at the end of report writing.

2. **Introduction:** This section provides the socio-economic background context to the study. It includes a brief account of demography, spatial or regional distribution and the socio-economic status of the primary stakeholders, statement of the problem, nature of government intervention, reference period, degree of success achieved so far, unresolved issues and problems, previous evaluations on the subject matter etc. The purpose is to present an overview of why the evaluation is being conducted at this point in time; who are the primary audience or users of the evaluation study and how the evaluation results will be put to use. Expected length of this section is about 2-3 pages.

3. **Basis for government intervention:** In this section, the evaluator should first explain the logic of government's intervention with the help of log frames, theory of change, "if –then" flow charts etc. It should help the reader to discover the underlying theory of development. If such information does not exist, the evaluator should derive this from literature survey or from their interaction with the client. Expected length of this section is about 2-3 pages.

4. **Progress review:** In this section, the evaluator should explain the nature and scope of government intervention (program/scheme/Act/Rules/changes in the administrative set up etc), resources committed, results achieved so far, significant revisions to the intervention etc., with reference to the baseline. If the baseline data is not available, then the evaluation team should try to reconstruct it as best as they can. Expected length of this section is 2-3 pages.

5. **Problem statement:** In this section, the evaluator should review the progress with reference to the objectives of intervention, check and see where are the gaps, weaknesses, shortcomings and lingering problems in implementing the planned intervention successfully. ToR is the basis for writing this section. Evaluator may also add to the content based on their understanding. Expected length of this section is 2-3 pages.

6. **Scope, objectives and evaluation questions:** This section explains the scope of evaluation (e.g. reference period for evaluation, segments of the target population included, geographic coverage, specific components, outputs or outcomes/impacts etc) and sets out the guiding objectives for the

evaluation. Each issue or problem identified in the previous section will be framed as a researchable question. If necessary, each question may be reframed into several sub-questions. Expected length of this section is 2-3 pages.

7. **Evaluation design:** This section will identify the information sources to answer the evaluation questions and explains how generalized and established ways of research methods (like qualitative or quantitative surveys, experimental trials, participant observation, case study etc., or a combination thereof commonly known as mixed methods) were used to collect the data. It is important to explain the rationale for choosing a particular evaluation method. In addition, this section will also describe the evaluation criteria like the unit of analysis, indicators and their threshold values, comparison between baseline and expected changes in the indicators (i.e. the effect size or the performance standard) for making judgements about the success or failure of the government intervention, ways of triangulating the data, desired level of accuracy and reliability (i.e. statistical significance), issues of attribution etc. Length of this should not exceed about 3-4 pages.

8. **Evaluation methodology:** This section describes the procedures that were actually adopted by the evaluator in the study. It explains the sample and sampling frame (rationale for sample selection, sample size, sample selection criteria etc); how comparison and treatment groups were assigned; type of data collected from different sources, instruments used for data collection and their adequacy to capture the essential information; protocols put in place for data collection, ethics observed etc. Constraints faced in field work, inadequacy of baseline/benchmark data, non-response or incomplete responses rates etc., along with the steps taken to mitigate are also summarized. Actual data collection instruments are provided in the appendices. Expected length is about 4-5 pages.

   This and the previous section should let the reader judge whether the evaluation design, method of data collection and the tools used were appropriate and whether the results are generalizable to the larger population.

9. **Data collection and analysis:** This section describes the extent of actual coverage against the plan for data collection; sequential processes followed in field data collection, digitization and data cleaning; statistical tools used; analytical techniques adopted and the results. Quantitative data should be presented in simple descriptive form like frequencies, percentages or averages in charts, lists, graphs or summaries before advanced statistical analysis and presentation of various types of test statistics (e.g. confidence limit, power test and so on). Qualitative data is used to summarize the patterns/categories/themes detected in the study population. Data gaps and limitations and their potential influence on the findings are mentioned. Expected length is about 4-5 pages.

10. **Findings and discussion:** Findings are statement of facts based entirely on analysis of the data gathered during the study and its reorganization in the form of descriptive data, statistical correlations, charts, summarized qualitative data etc., to find patterns. They should be structured around the evaluation criteria and questions to enable the reader to readily make the connection between what was asked to be evaluated and what answers were found. If there are several sub-questions related to a single main question, the answers should be bundled in a manner that contributes to answering the main question. Findings should address one question at a time and provide answers. Interpreting of findings is not to be done at this stage.

    Findings should be presented in two parts: process related findings and outcome related findings.

Process related findings will check and see if the implementation processes interfered with or advanced the achievement of stated objectives. It deals essentially with the day-to-day management issues. Outcome or impact related findings are structured around the achievements. Depending upon the nature of the study, this may be focused on the completion of activities and the resulting intermediate outcomes. It is important to mention not only about the unexpected findings but also about missing, incomplete and vague data and its impact on the findings. Expected length is 10-15 pages.

11. **Reflections and conclusions:** Findings are is like symptoms and this section is like diagnosis. Reflection is thinking outside the box. It involves stepping back from a narrow focus on the program's objectives; placing the intervention in the broader socio-political context; examining its strengths, weaknesses and outcomes as well as its effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability etc., in a narrative account; comparing the results of similar interventions in other states and countries; and explaining how and why they succeeded or failed. The sole objective is to gain an insight into the design of the intervention. Here it may be useful to bring in errors in the logical frames, incorrect assumptions made in the design of the intervention etc. Reflection section should be presented clearly and carefully. Flaws in conceptualizing the intervention should be brought out honestly.

    Conclusions are judgements made by the evaluators based on evidence and analysis. It should not repeat the findings but address the key issues that can be abstracted from them. Discussion should focus on which intervention objectives which were met and which were not, and why; comment on the reasons for the variance observed within the operational area; discuss if there are any unexpected findings; and compare the present results with the findings of previous studies if any. Evaluator should also explain what the citizens/community want and what they actually got; comment upon the changes the intervention actually brought about vis-a-vis the intension; whether it is desirable to stay with them in the long run; and if not what the options are. Towards the end, conclusion should also mention the limitations of the study. Expected length of this section is about 7-8 pages.

12. **Recommendations:** Evaluation report should provide a few but significant, evidence based and 'actionable' recommendations to the intended users of the report to improve the quality and content of the intervention. They should focus on the objectives that could not be met till now or could only be met partially. They should emerge logically from findings and conclusions of the study and should address the scale and sustainability related issues also. Recommendations should not be too many or be superficial and petty. They should be formulated in a clear and concise manner and be prioritized. It is necessary to explain the basis for each recommendation, identify who should implement it and in what time frame. As far as possible, recommendations should be within the management authority of the Client Department. Evaluators should refrain from making any recommendation which is not based on the study or whose implications are uncertain or unknown. In the concluding paragraph, future evaluation studies which might help in further improving the program could also be suggested. Expected length of this important section is about 2-3 pages.

V. **The back matter or the annexures:** Any important material which distracts the reader from the flow of the narrative or may not fit because more space is needed than is allowed in the main body of the report is placed in the back matter. This is a useful place to put relevant material that can be helpful to the reader who wants to know more. Back matter is not to be written as standalone pieces, since readers often turn to them selectively based on the body of the main report. Following documents are the most suited content for the back matter:

1. List of references cited in the report,
2. Terms of Reference for the evaluation study,
3. Inception report of the study along with the data collection instruments,
4. A more complete description of the methods and methodologies used,
5. List of individuals or groups interviewed / consulted and sites visited,
6. Dissenting views by evaluation team member or client if any, and
7. Short biographies of the principal investigators.

Ordinarily the total length of the front and back matter should not exceed that of main report. Ideally it should be much shorter. Evaluation report should be printed and bound in book form. Evaluators may choose appropriate photographs for the front and back covers. Printing should be done on good quality 80 GSM A4 size paper, bound neatly and submitted in the required numbers to the sponsors. Evaluation clients also may be supplied as many copies as they need to take follow up action. Plagiarism in any form is prohibited.

VI. **Procedure for approving the draft evaluation report:** Copies of the draft report should be placed in a joint meeting of the Client Department(s) and KEA for acceptance. A few district officers may be invited to this meeting in case of internal evaluations to check the feasibility of implementing the recommendations. Opinion leaders in the government should be invited to the meeting in case of external evaluations for taking the recommendations forward. If the draft report is accepted with or without amendments, final report should be submitted accordingly within a month simultaneously to the Client Department and to the KEA. Further action will be taken by KEA for grading the output and by the Client for scrutinizing the recommendations and taking follow up action.

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