ASSESSING THE QUALITY OF HUMANITARIAN EVALUATIONS

THE ALNAP QUALITY PROFORMA 2005 (v. 02/03/05)

1. Background

ALNAP developed this Quality Proforma in 2000/2001 as a way of assessing humanitarian evaluation reports drawing on current thinking and good practice in the evaluation of humanitarian action.[1]

The overall aim of the Quality Proforma is to improve the quality of humanitarian evaluation practice. It does this by:

1. Providing an assessment tool for ALNAP's annual meta-evaluation of humanitarian evaluation reports as part of its *Review of Humanitarian Action*[2] series. The meta-evaluation seeks to identify trends in the quality of humanitarian evaluations, identifying both good and weak practices.[3]

2. Providing a checklist for evaluation managers and evaluators.

The Quality Proforma has undergone refinements during its application in four ALNAP *Reviews* between 2001 and 2003/4, in order to strengthen consistency in interpretation and usage and reflect developments in current thinking in the evaluation of humanitarian action. This version of the Proforma has undergone a process of simplification and reordering for the *Review of Humanitarian Action in 2004* in order to make it more accessible.

3. Meta-evaluation process

Each evaluation report included in ALNAP's meta-evaluation is rated against the Quality Proforma by two assessors working independently. For each report, every area of the criteria is given a comment and a rating. The ratings are then used to assess strengths and weaknesses of the set as a whole.

Since 2003/4, the draft findings of the Quality Proforma assessments have been discussed with a selection of the commissioning agencies in order to better understand the background to the evaluation process, gather information that may not show up in the written report and stimulate agency involvement and interest. The outcome of these discussions may lead to revisions of the final assessments. In 2005 for the first time, a selection of evaluators will also be consulted on the evaluation processes.

2. Using the ALNAP Quality Proforma

The development of the Proforma is linked to ALNAP's definition of the Evaluation of Humanitarian Action (EHA) given in the box below.

The Proforma is intended to be used for reports dealing with natural disasters and complex political emergencies. It should also be of value for other types of evaluative exercises in the humanitarian context. Although originally designed with programme evaluations in mind, the Proforma can also be used to review evaluations of such activities as humanitarian management processes, funding partnerships and sectoral approaches. In these cases, some questions in the Proforma may be noted as not relevant.

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[1] Sources used in the development of the Proforma are listed at the end of this document.
[2] The *Annual Review* series was renamed *Review of Humanitarian Action* series in 2004.
[3] Two assessors are used for the meta-evaluation exercise to mitigate potential assessor bias

The Quality Proforma is divided into six sections:

1. Assessing the Terms of Reference;
2. Assessing Evaluation Methods, Practice and Constraints;
3. Assessing Contextual Analysis;
4. Assessing the Intervention;
5. Assessing the Report;
6. Overall Comments.

Each section has four column headings:

- **Area of Enquiry** (subject matter)
- **Guidance Notes** (guidance as to what is deemed 'satisfactory' to ensure a degree of consistency of interpretation)
- **Comments** (to include a brief reason for the rating given)
- The **Rating**.

The rating system used for the meta-evaluation is as follows:

A = Good
B = Satisfactory
C = Unsatisfactory
D = Poor
Z = Not applicable. (Where an area of enquiry is deemed not applicable, reasons should be given in the 'Comments' column. The proforma user's judgement remains a central factor in the rating exercise.)

Where the Guidance Note lists a number of areas that should be covered for an Area of Enquiry, a 'B' (Satisfactory) rating will normally only be given if the report is judged to be satisfactory in all those areas.

In some cases, the assessors may note in the Comments section that the rating is borderline, indicating that it is a matter of fine judgement as to whether the rating falls into one category or another. This most often happens when the assessors are deciding between B or C ratings.

The Glossary in Annex 1 defines many of the terms used in this Proforma.

EVALUATION TITLE	
COMMISSIONING AGENCY	
DATE OF REPORT	
NAME AND POSITION OF ASSESSOR	
REASON FOR ASSESSMENT	
DATE OF ASSESSMENT	
DATE OF AGENCY INTERVIEW (if held)	

Section 1. Assessing the Terms of Reference (ToR)

Area of enquiry	Guidance Notes	Comments	Rating
1.1 The Terms of Reference	The ToR should clearly describe: (a) The work to be evaluated including its objectives and key stakeholders. (b) The purpose, objectives and focus of the evaluation *(Purpose might be donor requirement, accountability, lesson learning, community empowerment. Focus might be on partner performance, programme, project, policy, institutional analysis, sector, coordination).* (c) The intended use and users of the evaluation outputs and the individual or department responsible for follow-up. (d) The desired report framework. (*A sample framework is outlined in Annex 2).* (e) The rationale for the timing of the evaluation. (f) The evaluator selection process (e.g., competitive bidding, standing offer).		
1.2 Expectation of good evaluation practice	The TOR should clarify the commissioning agency's expectation of good humanitarian evaluation practice. *(e.g., application of DAC criteria;[4] reference to international standards including international law; multi-method approach i.e., quantitative and qualitative; consultation with key stakeholders to inform findings, conclusions and recommendations; and gender analysis).*		

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[4] See Section 5.3 below for criteria definitions drawn from OECD/DAC (1999) *Guidance for Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance in Complex Emergencies*, Paris.

Section 2. Assessing Evaluation Methods, Practice and Constraints

Area of enquiry	Guidance Notes	Comments	Rating
2.1 Nature, make up and appropriateness and biases of the evaluation team	a) The report should outline the nature (e.g., external or mixed) and make up of the team (e.g., sectoral expertise, local knowledge, gender balance) and its appropriateness for the evaluation. b) The evaluation report should outline the evaluator(s)' biases that might have affected the evaluation and how these have been counteracted.		
2.2 Clarification process	The evaluation report should outline any clarification process between the commissioning agency and the evaluation team about the scope and methods of the evaluation that resulted in modifications to the ToR.		
2.3 Appropriateness of the overall evaluation methods	The evaluation methods should be clearly outlined in the report and their appropriateness, relative to the evaluation's primary purpose, focus and users, should be explained pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of the methods.		
2.4 Consultation with and participation by primary stakeholders	(a) The evaluation report should outline the nature and scope of consultation with, and participation by, beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries within the affected population in the evaluation process. (A satisfactory or higher rating should only be given where evidence is presented of adequate consultation and participation of primary stakeholders in the evaluation process, or where, in the assessor's view, it has been successfully argued as inappropriate due to security or other reasons.) (b) The evaluation report should outline the nature and scope of consultation with other key stakeholders in the evaluation process. The report should include a list of the other key stakeholders who were consulted or who participated in the evaluation process.		
2.5 The use of and adherence to international standards	The evaluation report should assess the intervention against appropriate international standards (e.g., international humanitarian and human rights law; the Red Cross/ NGO Code of Conduct, Sphere).		
2.6 Evaluation constraints	The evaluation report should outline key constraints to carrying out the evaluation (e.g., lack of time, difficult travelling conditions, lack of baseline data, poor agency monitoring systems, lack of access to key information sources, difficulties setting up control groups, use of translators), and the effect of these constraints.		

Section 3. Assessing Contextual Analysis

Area of enquiry	Guidance Notes	Comments	Rating
3.1 Analysis of context and of the crisis to which the intervention is responding	(a) The evaluation report should provide analysis of the affected area and population *(including relevant historical, social, economic, political and cultural factors)* to inform the evaluation and draw on this information in the text to support the analysis of the intervention. (b) The evaluation report should provide a clear analysis of the crisis, including key events (and a chronology where appropriate).		
3.2 Past involvement of the agency and its local partners	The evaluation report should provide analysis of the implementing agency's and its local partners' past involvement and main areas of work, so that the influence of the agency's past involvement on the intervention, including its geographical and sectoral focus, can be understood.		

Section 4. Assessing the Intervention

4.1 Institutional Considerations			
Area of enquiry	**Guidance Notes**	**Comments**	**Rating**
4.1.i The agency's guiding policies and principles	The evaluation report should provide an analysis of the extent to which agency policies and principles were applied, and their relevance to and effect on the intervention.		
4.1.ii The agency's management and human resources	The evaluation report should provide an analysis of the agency's management and human resource procedures and practices as applied and their effect on the intervention. *(This might include: level of experience/expertise of field staff; use of national and expatriate staff; staff turnover; field/HQ communications & relations; briefing and debriefing procedures; training and learning practices; security)*		

4.2 Needs Assessment, Objectives, Planning and Implementation			
Area of enquiry	**Guidance Notes**	**Comments**	**Rating**
4.2.i The needs and livelihoods assessments that informed the intervention	The evaluation report should provide analysis of the needs and livelihoods assessment practices that informed the intervention and their effect on the intervention.		
4.2.ii Intervention objectives	The evaluation report should assess the relevance of the intervention objectives to the contextual analysis and needs/livelihoods assessments assessed in 3.1 and 4.2.i above.		

| 4.2.iii Programme cycle processes. | The evaluation report should provide analysis of the following processes and their effect on the intervention:
(a) planning
(b) implementation
(c) monitoring and/or real-time evaluative mechanisms
(d) intervention expenditure.

(Consideration in this analysis should be given to local capacities; primary stakeholder consultation and participation; local and national partnerships) | | |

4.3 Application of EHA Criteria			
Area of enquiry	**Guidance Notes**	**Comments**	**Rating**
	The evaluation report should provide evidence of an adequate application of standard evaluation of humanitarian action criteria as per the OECD/DAC definitions given below:[5]		
4.3.i Efficiency (including cost-effectiveness)	Efficiency measures the outputs - qualitative and quantitative - in relation to the inputs. This generally requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving the same outputs, to see whether the most efficient process has been used. Cost-effectiveness looks beyond how inputs were converted into outputs, to whether different outputs could have been produced that would have had a greater impact in achieving the project purpose.		
4.3.ii Effectiveness (including timeliness)	Effectiveness measures the extent to which the activity achieves its purpose, or whether this can be expected to happen on the basis of the outputs. Implicit within the criteria of effectiveness is **timeliness** of the response. (*Although **coordination** is not a formal criterion, the OECD/DAC Guidance suggests that given its importance, it should be considered under this criterion*).		

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[5] from OECD/DAC (1999) *Guidance for Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance in Complex Emergencies*. Paris, pp 30-32.

4.3.iii Impact	Impact looks at the wider effects of the project - social, economic, technical, environmental - on individuals, gender, age-groups, communities, and institutions.		
4.3.iv Relevance/ appropriateness	Relevance is concerned with assessing whether the project is in line with local needs and priorities (as well as donor policy). It refers to the overall goal and purpose of a programme. Appropriateness - the need to tailor humanitarian activities to local needs, increasing ownership, accountability, and cost-effectiveness accordingly … is more focused on the activities and inputs.[6]		
4.3.v Sustainability/ connectedness	Sustainability is concerned with measuring whether an activity or an impact is likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn. … many humanitarian interventions, in contrast to development projects, are not designed to be sustainable. They still need assessing, however, in regard to whether, in responding to acute and immediate needs, they take the longer-term into account. (*Minear has referred to this as Connectedness, the need... to assure that activities of a short-term emergency nature are carried out in a context which takes longer-term and inter-connected problems into account.*[7])		
4.3.vi Coverage	The need to reach major population groups facing life-threatening suffering wherever they are, providing them with assistance and protection proportionate to their need and devoid of extraneous political agendas.		
4.3.vii Coherence	Coherence refers to policy coherence, and the need to assess security, developmental, trade and military policies as well as humanitarian policies, to ensure that there is consistency and, in particular, that all policies take into account humanitarian and human rights considerations.		

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[6] Minear, L. (1994) The International Relief System: A critical review. Paper presented to the Parallel National Intelligence Estimate on Global National Emergencies, Meridian International Centre, Washington DC, September 2002.
[7] Minear, L. (1994) *ibid*.

4.4 Consideration given to Cross-cutting Issues			
Area of enquiry	**Guidance Notes**	**Comments**	**Rating**
4.4.i The use of and adherence to international standards	The evaluation report should assess the extent to which relevant international standards were used in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the intervention *(e.g., international humanitarian and human rights law; the Red Cross/ NGO Code of Conduct and developing standards - e.g., Sphere)*		
4.4.ii Gender Equality	The evaluation report should analyse consideration given to gender equality throughout the intervention and the effect on the intervention. *(i.e. was gender equality taken into consideration in all relevant areas? Did the intervention conform to the implementing organisation's gender equality policy? It should be noted if there is no gender equality policy).*		
4.4.iii Protection	The evaluation report should analyse the consideration given to protection throughout the intervention cycle and the effect on the intervention.		
4.4.iv Capacity building	The evaluation report should analyse the consideration given to the capacity building of key and primary stakeholders government and civil society institutions, and the effect of this on the intervention.		
4.4.v Advocacy	The evaluation report should analyse consideration given to advocacy and the effect on the intervention. *(e.g., attempts to influence donors, partners, government, concerning their policies or actions).*		
4.4.vi Vulnerable and marginalised groups	The evaluation report should provide an analysis of consideration given to vulnerable and marginalised groups (e.g., elderly, disabled, children, HIV/AIDS sufferers) and to other groups that suffer discrimination and disadvantage.		

Section 5. Assessing the Report

5.1 Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations			
Area of enquiry	**Guidance Notes**	**Comments**	**Rating**
5.1.i Secondary sources	The evaluation report should use and refer to relevant secondary sources to support its findings, conclusions and recommendations (*a satisfactory or higher rating should only be given where a reference list of secondary sources is included as part of the report*).		
5.1.ii Conclusions	The report's conclusions should flow logically from, and reflect, the report's central findings. The report should provide a clear and defensible basis for value judgements in each case.		
5.1.iii Recommendations	(a) Recommendations should be clear, relevant and implementable, reflecting any constraints to follow up. (b) Recommendations should follow on from the main conclusions and reflect consultation with key stakeholders. (c) The evaluation report should suggest a prioritisation of recommendations, timeframe for implementation and suggest where responsibility for follow-up should lie if that is not indicated in the ToR.		

5.2 Report Coverage, Legibility and Accessibility			
Area of enquiry	**Guidance Notes**	**Comments**	**Rating**
5.2.i Coverage of the evaluation report	The evaluation report should adequately cover all areas specified in the ToR and additional factors that affected the performance of the intervention.		
5.2.ii Format of the report	The evaluation report format should follow that outlined in the ToR (*if the ToR did not propose a format for the report, this area should be assessed on the basis of the good practice suggested in Annex 2*).		
5.2.iii Accessibility of the report	The evaluation report should cater for the intended readership and users (*In general reports should use language clearly; be succinct; be clearly laid out e.g. with different information levels and appropriate visual aids. Some organisations have their own style guides*).		
5.2.iv Executive Summary	The executive summary should reflect the format of the main text, and clearly outline key evaluation conclusions and recommendations.		

Section 6. Overall Comments *(for information purposes and not rated)*

Area of enquiry	Guidance Notes	Comments
6.i Comments on issues not covered above.	This is an opportunity for comment on any issues not covered by the areas of enquiry.	
6.ii Overall comments on the report.	This is an opportunity to make an overall comment on the report, including its strengths and weaknesses.	

Annex 1

GLOSSARY

Accountability
Accountability is the means by which individuals and organisations report to a recognised authority, or authorities, and are held responsible for their actions. (Edwards & Hulme, 1995).

Advocacy
Advocacy refers in a broad sense to efforts to promote, in the domain of humanitarian aid, respect for humanitarian principles and law with a view to influencing the relevant political authorities, whether recognised governments, insurgent groups or other non-state actors. (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, 2004).[8] One could add "international, national and local assistance agencies".

Appropriateness
The need to "tailor humanitarian activities to local needs, increasing ownership, accountability, and cost-effectiveness accordingly" (Minear 1994) … is more focused on the activities and inputs.[9] (ALNAP Annual Review Glossary 2003)

Coherence
Refers to the policy coherence and the need to assess security, developmental, trade and military policies to ensure that there is consistency and, in particular, that all policies take into account humanitarian and human rights considerations. (DAC Evaluation Criteria)

Complex political emergency
A situation with complex social, political and economic origins which involves the breakdown of state structures, the disputed legitimacy of host authorities, the abuse of human rights and possibly armed conflict, that creates humanitarian needs. The term is generally used to differentiate humanitarian needs arising from conflict and instability from those that arise from natural disasters. (ALNAP Annual Review Glossary 2003)

Conclusions
Conclusions point out the factors of success and failure of the evaluated intervention, with special attention paid to the intended and unintended results and impacts, and more generally to any other strength or weakness. A conclusion draws on data collection and analyses undertaken through a transparent chain of arguments. (OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management, 2002)

Context (of an evaluation)
The combination of factors accompanying the study that may have influenced its results, including geographic location, timing, political and social climate, economic conditions, and other relevant professional activities in progress at the same time. (Programme Policy and Procedures Manual, UNICEF, May 2003)

Cost Effectiveness Analysis (see also 4.3.i above)
Cost-effectiveness analysis entails comparing costs across different strategies for achieving a given outcome, with a view to determining the lowest cost approach. For example, cost-effectiveness analysis might explore three different approaches to getting girls working in the informal sector back into school. As compared to cost-efficiency analysis, it is wider in scope, looking beyond outputs to outcomes. (M&E Training Resources, UNICEF, 2004)

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[8] NB Definitions of advocacy within the humanitarian sector appear to be very limited. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. 2004. *Advocacy Guidelines: Humanitarian Aid of the Swiss Confederation.* Berne. March 2004.
[9] Minear, L. (1994) The International Relief System: A critical review. Paper presented to the Parallel National Intelligence Estimate on Global National Emergencies, Meridian International Centre, Washington DC, September 2002.

Coverage
The need to reach major population groups facing life-threatening suffering wherever they are, providing them with assistance and protection proportionate to their need and devoid of extraneous political agenda. (DAC Evaluation Criteria)

Effectiveness
Effectiveness measures the extent to which the activity achieves its purpose, or whether this can be expected to happen on the basis of the outputs. Implicit within the criteria of effectiveness is **timeliness** of the response. Although **coordination** is not a formal criterion, the OECD/DAC Guidance suggests that given its importance, it should be considered under this criterion. (DAC Evaluation Criteria)

Humanitarian action
Assistance, protection and advocacy actions undertaken on an impartial basis in
response to human needs resulting from complex political emergencies and natural hazards. (ALNAP Annual Review Glossary 2003)

Impact
Impact looks at the wider effects of the project - social, economic, technical, environmental - on individuals, gender, age-groups, communities, and institutions. (DAC Evaluation Criteria)

Impartiality
An approach to the provision of humanitarian assistance and services which is non-discriminatory, proportionate to needs and free of subjective distinction. A guiding principle of organisations claiming to be humanitarian. (ALNAP Annual Review Glossary 2003)

Input
The financial, human, material, technological and information resources used for the intervention. (OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management Proposed Harmonized Terminology, 2002)

Lesson learned
Conclusions that can be generalized beyond the specific case.   This could include lessons that are of relevance more broadly within the country situation or globally, to an organization or the broader international community. (Programme Policy and Procedures Manual, UNICEF, May 2003)

Lesson-learning study A study initiated by an organisation with the explicit objective of lesson-learning within that organisation, but that falls outside the full evaluation definition. A process that may be facilitated by external consultants but is generally an internal process.(ALNAP Annual Review Glossary 2003)

Meta-evaluation Simply stated, meta-evaluation is the evaluation of an evaluation, evaluation system or evaluation device (Hummel 2003). A process of delineating, obtaining, and applying descriptive information and judgmental information – about the utility, feasibility, propriety and accuracy of an evaluation and its systematic nature, competent conduct, integrity/honesty, respectfulness and social responsibility – to guide the evaluation and/or report its strengths and weaknesses (Stufflebeam)

Outcome
The intended or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs, usually requiring the collective effort of partners. Outcomes represent changes in conditions which occur between the completion of outputs and the achievement of impact. (OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management Proposed Harmonized Terminology, 2002)

Output
The products and services which result from the completion of activities within an intervention. (OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management Proposed Harmonized Terminology, 2002)

Protection
Activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. human rights, humanitarian and refugee law) which are conducted impartially and not on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, language or gender. (ALNAP Annual Review Glossary, 2003)

Relevance
Relevance is concerned with assessing whether the project is in line with local needs and priorities (as well as donor policy) … refers to the overall goal and purpose of a programme. (DAC Evaluation Criteria)

Retrospectively, the question of relevance often becomes a question as to whether the objectives of an intervention or its design are still appropriate given changed circumstances. (OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management, 2002)

Stakeholder
All those – from agencies to individuals – who have a direct or indirect interest in the humanitarian intervention, or who affect or are affected by the implementation and outcome of it. (ALNAP Annual Review Glossary 2003). Within the context of the Quality Proforma **'primary stakeholders'** refers to both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries within the affected population.

Sustainability
Sustainability 'is concerned with measuring whether an activity or an impact is likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn … many humanitarian interventions, in contrast to development projects, are not designed to be sustainable. They still need assessing, however, in regard to whether, in responding to acute and immediate needs, they take the longer term into account. (DAC Evaluation Criteria). Minear has referred to this as *Connectedness. Connectedness*, the need "to assure that activities of a short term emergency nature are carried out in a context which takes longer-term and inter-connected problems into account" (Minear, 1994).

Terms of Reference
Terms of reference define the requirements and paramters for conducting an evaluation. (ALNAP Annual Review Glossary 2003)

Annex 2

EVALUATION REPORT FORMAT - CHECK LIST

Preliminaries	
	Title page (should include date of report)
	List of contents with page numbers
	Acronyms
	Map(s)
	Executive Summary
Main text	
	Introduction (including motivation for commissioning evaluation, purpose of study, scope, approach, methods, composition of team, constraints)
	Context in which humanitarian action took place, humanitarian context and response
	Findings
	Conclusions
	Recommendations
Annexes	
	Sources/bibliography
	ToR
	Timetable
	Evaluation team profiles
	List of Interviewees
	Timeline
	Evaluation Material (questionnaires etc)
	Collated stakeholder feedback on findings, conclusions and recommendations
	Other appendices/annexes

References

Apthorpe, R. (2000) K*osovo Humanitarian Programme Evaluations: Towards Synthesis, Meta-Analysis and Sixteen Propositions for Discussion.* Background Paper for the ALNAP Symposium 'Learning from Evaluation: Humanitarian Assistance and Protection in Kosovo' 17th & 18th October 2000, Geneva (London:ALNAP)

Patton, M. (1997) *Utilization-Focused Evaluation: The New Century Text* (Thousand Oaks: Sage)

Raynard, P. (2000) *Mapping Accountability in Humanitarian Assistance* (London: ALNAP)

SPHERE (2000) *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response* (Geneva: The Sphere Project)

Valadez, J. and M. Bamberger (1994) *Monitoring and Evaluating Social Programs in Developing Countries: A Handbook for Policymakers, Managers and Researchers* (Washington DC: World Bank EDI Development Series)

Wood, A., Borton, J. and R. Apthorpe (eds.) (2001) *Evaluating International Humanitarian Action: Reflections from Practitioners* (London: Zed Press)