



ActivityInfo

The use of OECD Criteria in Impact Evaluation

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ActivityInfo

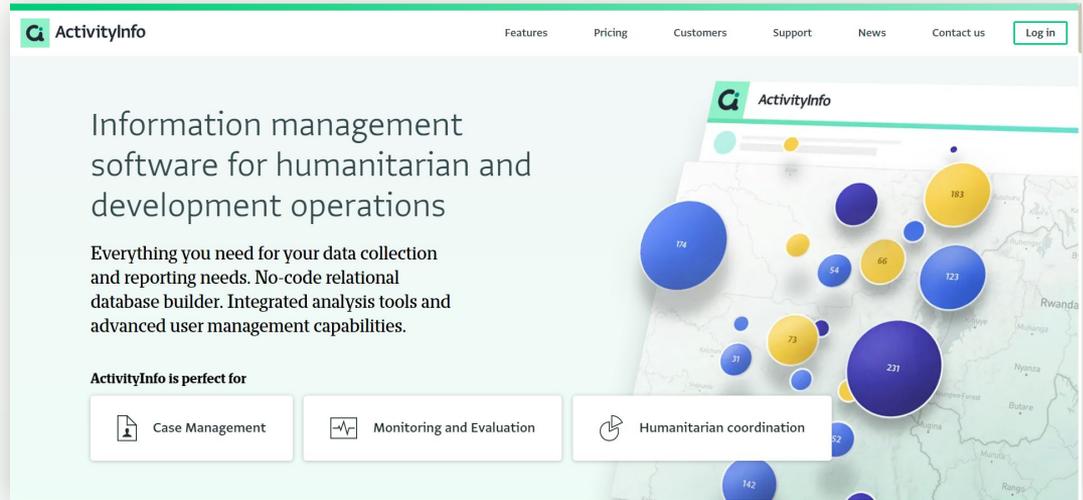


Introductions

Presented by the ActivityInfo Team

All in one information management software for humanitarian and development operations

- Track activities, outcomes
- Beneficiary management
- Surveys
- Work offline/online



The screenshot shows the ActivityInfo website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the ActivityInfo logo on the left and links for Features, Pricing, Customers, Support, News, Contact us, and a Log in button on the right. The main content area features a large heading: "Information management software for humanitarian and development operations". Below this heading is a sub-heading: "Everything you need for your data collection and reporting needs. No-code relational database builder. Integrated analysis tools and advanced user management capabilities." Underneath, there is a section titled "ActivityInfo is perfect for" with three icons and labels: "Case Management" (with a document icon), "Monitoring and Evaluation" (with a line graph icon), and "Humanitarian coordination" (with a globe icon). On the right side of the page, there is a map of Africa with several colored bubbles (blue, yellow, purple) of varying sizes, each containing a number, representing data points on a geographical map.

Poll

Do you use the OECD evaluation criteria in your work?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Do you utilize quantitative data to support your evaluation deployment?

- Yes, extensively
- Yes, to some extent
- No, I primarily rely on qualitative data
- Not sure/Not applicable

If you use quantitative data, are you seeking ICT tools to assist your evaluation?

- Yes, actively searching for ICT tools
- Yes, considering ICT tools as an option
- No, not currently seeking ICT tools
- Not applicable, I don't use quantitative data for evaluation

Outline

01

Impact evaluation key considerations

- Impact evaluation purpose
- What is different in the Evaluation of Humanitarian Action?
- Impact evaluation principles

02

Working with OECD-DAC Criteria

- Introduction and purpose of the OECD-DAC criteria
- Working with the 6 different criteria
- How can we use ICT4D to facilitate evaluation?

01

Impact evaluation key considerations

How OECD - DAC criteria are associated to impact evaluation?

How did it start?

In 1991 the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD set out broad principles for the evaluation process for DAC members.

These principles were refined into five criteria that have been widely used in the evaluation of development initiatives. Subsequently the criteria were adapted for evaluation of complex emergencies (OECD-DAC, 1999), becoming a set of six criteria.

What happened next?

The OECD DAC evaluation criteria are widely applied – even more so than originally expected (Lundgren 2017).

This has important advantages. It makes evaluation synthesis easier, helps to capture common weaknesses in humanitarian action, and makes it easier for evaluators across the globe to work with each other (ALNAP 2016)

Let's take a step back... what is impact evaluation?

"Impact evaluation is the methodological assessment of the changes in outcomes that can be directly attributed to a specific intervention, such as a program, project, or policy. Its significance lies in providing empirical data on whether the intervention has achieved its intended outcomes, thereby offering insights into its effectiveness and efficiency" (Gertler et al., 2016).

"Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended." (OECD-DAC 2010)

Let's take a step back... what is impact evaluation?

A systematic and impartial examination of humanitarian action intended to draw lessons to improve policy and practice and enhance accountability and It has the following characteristics:

- It is commissioned by or in cooperation with the organisation(s) whose performance is being evaluated.
- It is undertaken either by a team of non- employees (external) or by a mixed team of non-employees (external) and employees (internal) from the commissioning organisation and/or the organisation being evaluated.
- It assesses policy and/or practice against recognised criteria (eg, the DAC criteria).
- It articulates findings, draws conclusions and makes recommendations.
- It goes beyond describing or measuring impacts that have occurred to seeking to understand the role of the intervention in producing these (causal attribution)
- It encompassed a broad range of methods for causal attribution; and, includes examining unintended impacts.

What is different in the evaluation of humanitarian Action?

“The role of impact evaluation in humanitarian interventions is crucial as it assesses the effectiveness of actions aimed at relieving suffering, maintaining human dignity, and preserving life during crises. By determining the outcomes and impacts of these interventions, organizations can ensure that the assistance provided meets the needs of affected populations and contributes to recovery and development”

(ALNAP, 2006).

Does the definition have characteristics specific to humanitarian nature of programming?

What is different in the evaluation of humanitarian Action?

Unique context and challenges of humanitarian crises

Humanitarian evaluations are often undertaken during periods of severe disruption, which in the case of complex emergencies can be prolonged, thus...

- Getting access to key informants can be challenging (ALNAP, 2006)
- The quick project set-up leads to partially set up MEAL systems (ALNAP, 2006)
- Increased importance of Accountability to Affected Populations (ALNAP, 2006)
- Credibility can be impacted by attempts to maintain impartiality and independence (IFRC, 2011)
- Adherence to humanitarian principles and ethical considerations have implications in impact evaluation design (ICRC, 2015) and implementation (Sphere Project, 2011)
- Complex and dynamic environments require flexible adaptations (ALNAP, 2006).
- Urgency requires swift evaluation to inform rapidly decision making (Harvey et al., 2010).

Let's take a step back... Why impact evaluation is important?

Impact evaluations play a pivotal role in informing decision-making processes, guiding the strategic direction of programs, and fostering improvements based on empirical evidence. They are essential for learning and accountability, enabling organizations to adapt and refine their interventions to better serve affected communities (White, 2009).

Principles of Impact Evaluation

- **Relevance and Appropriateness:** The evaluation should be tailored to the context and needs of the affected population, considering the nature of the humanitarian crisis and the operational environment (ALNAP, 2006).
- **Rigour and Credibility:** Employing robust methodologies that yield reliable and valid results which can be trusted by all stakeholders (OECD-DAC, 1991).
- **Feasibility:** Conducting evaluations that are practical and realistic in terms of the available resources and the situation on the ground (Bamberger et al., 2010).

Principles of Impact Evaluation

- **Ethics and Equity:** Ensuring the evaluation process respects the dignity and rights of participants, particularly vulnerable groups, and is inclusive of all relevant perspectives (Sphere Project, 2011).
- **Transparency and Participation:** Engaging stakeholders throughout the evaluation process and maintaining openness about methodologies and findings (IFRC, 2011).
- **Usefulness and Learning:** Providing actionable recommendations that contribute to the improvement of humanitarian practice and policy (Harvey et al., 2010).
- **Accountability:** Holding humanitarian actors accountable for their actions and decisions to both donors and the affected populations (ALNAP, 2006).



02

Working with OECD-DAC Criteria

Purpose of the OECD-DAC Criteria

- The purpose of evaluation criteria is to determine the merit, worth, or significance of an intervention.
- Evaluation criteria provide different perspectives or lenses through which the intervention can be viewed.
- Together, the criteria offer a comprehensive picture of the intervention, its implementation process, and results.
- The criteria have a normative role, describing the desired attributes of interventions such as relevance, coherence, achievement of objectives, efficiency, and lasting positive impacts.

- The criteria serve the purposes of accountability by providing information to the public and supporting learning through findings and lessons.
- The criteria are also used beyond evaluation for monitoring, results management, strategic planning, and intervention design.
- They can be applied to assess processes and results at any stage of the intervention (before, during, or after).

OECD-DAC Criteria principles

The OECD-DAC criteria should be understood within a broader context and work in conjunction with evaluation principles

Principle One

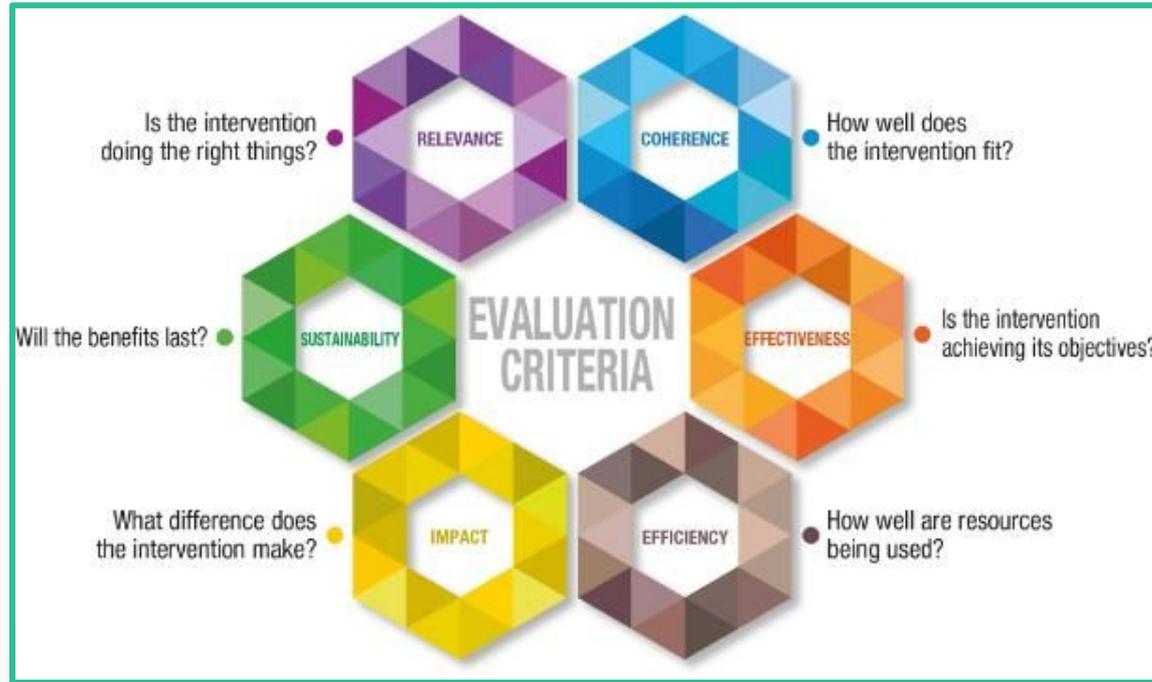
The criteria should be applied thoughtfully to support high quality, useful evaluation.

Principle Two

The use of the criteria depends on the purpose of the evaluation. The criteria should not be applied mechanistically.

Efficiently Working with OECD-DAC Criteria

Working with the different OECD-DAC criteria



Efficiently Working with OECD-DAC Criteria

Criteria- Effectiveness

Is the intervention achieving its objectives?

- Effectiveness measures the extent to which an 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.
- Issues of preparedness should also be addressed under this criteria.
- Assessing effectiveness involves an analysis of the extent to which stated intervention objectives are met.

Efficiently Working with OECD-DAC Criteria

Effectiveness - Considerations

- **Understanding Intervention Outcomes:** It's essential to recognize not just if an intervention succeeded but also the reasons behind its success or failure.
- **Crafting Measurable Results Statements:** Often, results statements lack clarity and measurability, with objectives framed as activities rather than outcomes.
- **Analyzing Objective Formulation:** Evaluators should examine how objectives were set, who was involved in the process, and the extent of primary stakeholder involvement in designing the intervention.
- **Assessing Effectiveness with Logical Framework Approach (LFA):** Utilizing LFA simplifies the evaluation of effectiveness by analyzing specific objective statements.
- **Evaluating Resource Utilization and Benefits:** Beyond activity assessment, evaluations should investigate who utilizes and benefits from the provided resources, ideally with data segmented by gender, socio-economic status, and ethnicity to connect effectiveness with impact.
- **Importance of Timeliness in Effectiveness:** Timeliness is crucial for effectiveness. Evaluations must consider if interventions were phased appropriately to support the affected population through different crisis stages, including the prompt delivery of support based on stakeholder perceptions.

Efficiently Working with OECD-DAC Criteria

Criteria - Impact - What difference does the intervention make?

What difference does the intervention make?

- 'Impact looks at the wider effects of the project – social, economic, technical, environmental – on individuals, gender and age-groups, communities, and institutions. Impacts can be immediate and long-range, intended and unintended, positive and negative, macro (sector) and micro (household).'
- Whereas assessment of effectiveness examines whether intervention outputs have been met and objectives achieved, assessment of impact usually examines the longer term consequences of achieving or not achieving those objectives and the issue of wider social change.

Efficiently Working with OECD-DAC Criteria

Impact - Considerations

- **Relevance of Impact Evaluation:** Assessing impact may not always be pertinent, especially for evaluations conducted during or immediately after an intervention. Socio-economic and political changes often take considerable time to manifest, and the necessary resources and expertise for impact evaluation are not always available. An impact evaluation is advisable only with a longitudinal approach, sufficient data for long-term analysis, a team with specialized expertise, and a commitment from the commissioning body to a more in-depth evaluation.
- **Addressing Attribution Challenges:** In evaluating long-term change, pinpointing the direct effects of an intervention becomes more complex over time due to potential influences from other projects or broader socio-economic and political dynamics. Interviewing 'informal' control groups not receiving assistance can help address this issue.
- **Articulating Results and Using the LFA:** Impact, as a higher-order measure, is linked to the goal and purpose sections of the LFA, allowing for the evaluation of long-term objectives like human rights support or socio-political changes.
- **Considering Livelihoods:** Evaluations should consistently take into account the support provided to the livelihoods of primary stakeholders, focusing on long-term adaptive strategies.

Efficiently Working with OECD-DAC Criteria

Criteria 3 - Efficiency

How well are resources being used?

- Efficiency measures the outputs — qualitative and quantitative — in relation to the inputs. This generally requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving the same output, 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.'

Efficiently Working with OECD-DAC Criteria

Efficiency - Considerations

- **Influence of Political Factors:** Political agendas of governments and agencies can lead to inefficient interventions. For instance, a government might oppose providing permanent infrastructure to refugees to discourage long-term settlement, or a donor might prefer high-visibility aid delivery methods. Evaluators need to consider these political elements.
- **Origin of Inputs:** Evaluating efficiency includes examining the sourcing of goods and inputs. A critical aspect is determining whether inputs were procured locally or imported, which can significantly affect efficiency. An example is the procurement of supplies for an intervention in Nairobi, Kenya from Geneva instead of the closer and more efficient location. The use of local tenders is also a factor to consider.
- **Financial Aspects for Efficiency Evaluation:** To assess efficiency, consider the total cost of the intervention by sector, the costs of local and international inputs, transportation expenses by sector and type, staff costs for local and expatriate personnel, and the proportion of administrative costs to overall intervention expenses. Evaluating efficiency might necessitate an evaluator with expertise in economics or accounting.
- **LFA and Efficiency:** Efficiency assessment is typically associated with the input and output sections of the LFA. When financial details are provided at the input level in some LFAs, it directly facilitates the efficiency evaluation process.

Efficiently Working with OECD-DAC Criteria

Criteria - Relevance

Is the intervention doing the right things?

- 'Relevance is concerned with assessing whether the project is in line with local needs and priorities (as well as donor policy).'
- Relevance and appropriateness serve as interrelated criteria applicable at various stages of assessment.
- Relevance is suitable for examining broader aspects of the intervention, including its overarching objectives, whereas appropriateness is more suited for assessing the specific inputs and actions involved.

Efficiently Working with OECD-DAC Criteria

Relevance - Considerations

- **Importance of Contextual Analysis:** Thoroughly understanding the local context and conducting a proper needs assessment are crucial for fostering relevant and appropriate interventions. Evaluators should scrutinize how well the planning, design, and execution of interventions have considered local factors. The likelihood of interventions being relevant and appropriate increases when they are based on comprehensive needs assessments and when they support the livelihoods and abilities of the affected communities.
- **Adequacy of Needs Assessment:** A needs assessment is deemed adequate when it participatively pinpoints the varied needs of the affected population and how external aid could bolster livelihood strategies. Cultural suitability is also vital, as evidenced by post-flood evaluations in Bangladesh indicating the need for shelters with private spaces for women and girls.

Efficiently Working with OECD-DAC Criteria

Criteria - Coherence

How well does the intervention fit?

- Compatibility with other interventions in the country, sector, or institution -
- Internal coherence: Synergies and interlinkages with other interventions by the same institution/government
- Consistency with relevant international norms and standards
- External coherence: Consistency with interventions by other actors in the same context
- Complementarity, harmonization, and coordination with other interventions
- Adding value while avoiding duplication of effort

Efficiently Working with OECD-DAC Criteria

Criteria - Sustainability

Will the benefits last?

- Continuation of net benefits over time
- Examination of financial, economic, social, environmental, and institutional capacities for sustaining net benefits
- Analysis of resilience, risks, and potential trade-offs
- Evaluation of actual flow of net benefits or estimation of likelihood of net benefits continuing over the medium and long-term

Working with OECD-DAC Criteria and Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA)

Relevance:

Indicator: Number of Registrations per Identification Modality

Indicator: Percentage of Registrations per Camp

Indicator: Number of Registrations per Partner Organization

Effectiveness:

Indicator: Percentage of Households Verified for Cash Assistance

Indicator: Number of Beneficiary Registrations per Month

Indicator: % of Households with Verification Record

Efficiency

Indicator: Amount to be Reimbursed (Efficiency in Financial Management)

Indicator: Number of Monthly Verifications Conducted

Indicator: Time taken to Close Feedback and Complaint Cases)

Sustainability:

Indicator: Number of Prepaid Cards Issued per Beneficiary

Indicator: Household Total Vulnerability Score (Impact on Vulnerability Reduction)

Indicator: Integration of Vulnerability Assessment into Routine Activities

Impact:

Indicator: Percentage of Households Satisfied with Cash Distribution

Indicator: Disaggregation of Satisfaction Rate by Gender and Country

Indicator: Number of Dissatisfaction Cases and Reasons

Coherence:

Indicator: Percentage of Alignment with Institutional Policies

Indicator: Coordination Effectiveness Index

Indicator: Integration Index of Vulnerability Assessments



How can we use ICT4D to facilitate evaluations?

Case Study

Emergency Initiatives in favour of most vulnerable people in Iraq

Scope: The evaluation aims at assessing according to the DAC/OECD criteria the impact of two Emergency Initiatives funded by the DGCS, held in Iraq between 2017 and 2020.

Final outcome: Based on the results of the analysis, Lessons Learned, Conclusions and Recommendations have been then identified and elaborated, organizing them according to the evaluation criteria.

Case Study

Methodology

Methodology

- Desk Analysis: Carried out on three main levels:
 - Desk Review of Project and Planning Documents
 - Review of internal reports
 - Review of the sector literature, including the guidelines recommended by the reference Clusters.
- Key Informant Interview, in the form of a guided conversation starting from the evaluation questions
- Focus Group Discussions, in groups of 8-10 participants, mainly used during meetings with local stakeholders
- Physical inspections at implementation sites, accompanied, when possible, by project managers or thematic experts who followed the implementation

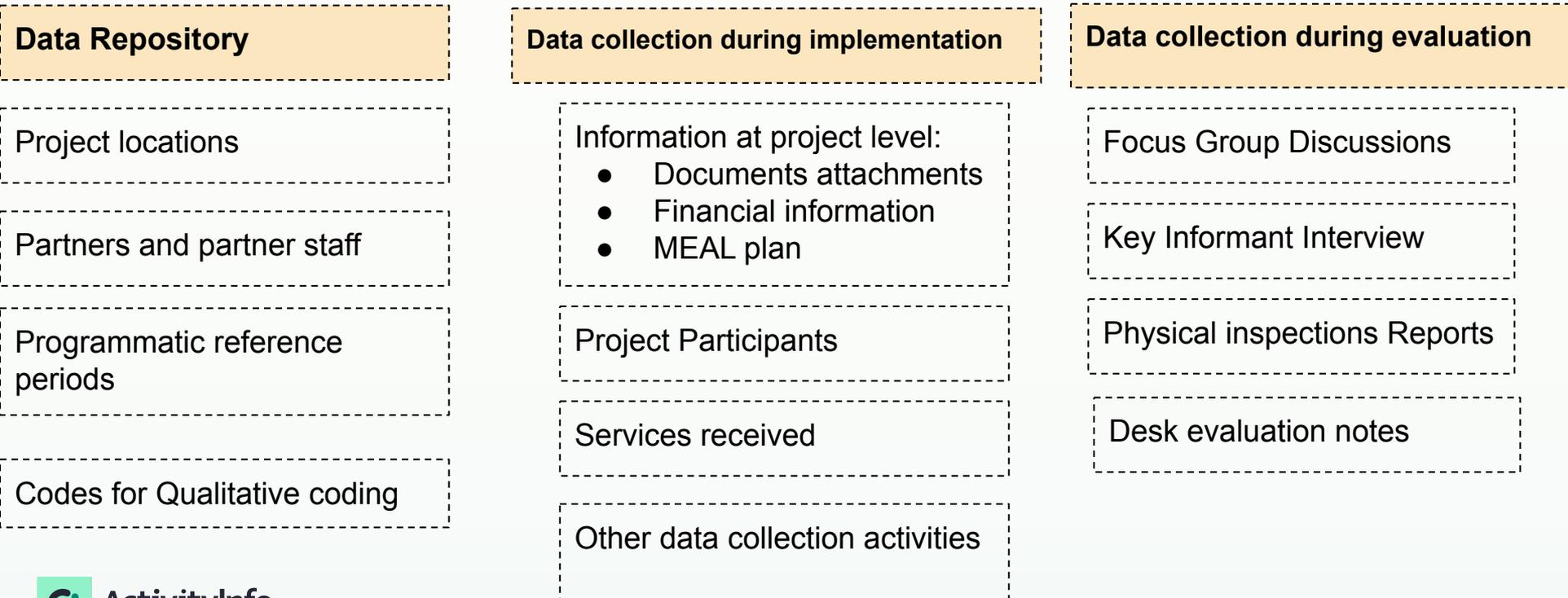
Example of use of OECD-DAC Criteria

Criteria	Results
Relevance	Needs Assessment: What emerged in the survey phase shows that the Agency has not systematically used all available means to participate in Assessment activities, in order to better assess the adequacy of the project proposals
Coherence and Complementarity	Connection with Development Cooperation Projects: Following the survey , a potential disconnection emerged between the multi-annual development strategy and emergency response
Effectiveness	Monitoring Systems: following the desk review : some of the implementing partners did not have an adequate internal monitoring system at the time of the implementation of the Projects

Motives for using ICT4D technology

- Acts a data repository for project implementation purposes. Attachment functionality enables the maintenance of documents online.
- Easy to share data with different stakeholders, especially for evaluation purposes when frequently external consultant perform the evaluation.
- Enables data collection during project implementation and evaluation, leading to streamline data collection.
- Enables us to avoid duplication of efforts, especially of data collection and in terms of information that we have already collected in the past.
- Enables easy analysis within the same platform or via the integration options.

The Data model in a relational database





ActivityInfo Demo

Best practices on Information management for Evaluation purposes

- Identify all the information needs at the project implementation onset. This corresponds to information needed by all relevant stakeholder and frequently is encountered in the following documents
 - MEAL Plan
 - Project detailed implementation plan
 - Evaluations designed
- Streamline data collection needed via one integrated system in order to decrease relevant costs and avoid duplication of efforts in terms of data collection
- Information collected during project implementation is a great resource for any subsequent evaluation, thus ensure that this leaves in the same place as evaluation related data collection

Efficiently Working with OECD-DAC Criteria

Key Messages

- “Lack of access to key information may make it difficult to employ all of the DAC criteria”.
 - “When completing the evaluation report, evaluators should make clear the constraints they faced and how these constraints affected the evaluation process and findings”
- The DAC criteria facilitate a comprehensive evaluation of humanitarian action by ensuring all aspects of an intervention are reviewed, as the criteria are designed to be complementary.
- Utilizing the 'effectiveness' criterion alone may indicate objectives are met, but it doesn't assure that these objectives were appropriate or efficient for the entire affected population.
- Good coverage by a single agency's intervention doesn't necessarily imply coordination with other interventions, which is also crucial.
- Employing all DAC criteria together guarantees a holistic evaluation of the intervention's various dimensions.
- Evaluation managers must assess the applicability of DAC criteria in policy-based or institutional evaluations.



Efficiently Working with OECD-DAC Criteria

Key Messages

- Criteria such as impact, coherence, and sustainability/connectedness may be challenging to apply in evaluations of single agency or project interventions like a specific water or housing program.
- Maintaining transparency about the limitations of an evaluation and the approach taken enhances the evaluation's credibility.
- There may be overlaps in the areas covered by different criteria, like impact and effectiveness; the evaluator decides how to categorize such information.
- Preferably, evaluations against DAC criteria should be based on measurable objectives and data; if unavailable, evaluators might need to reconstruct these using evidence from interviews with key stakeholders or oral history techniques.
- Some themes crucial to understanding the success or failure of humanitarian action fall outside the direct scope of DAC criteria and should be reviewed both in the field and when documenting evaluation results.
- Not all themes need to be included in every evaluation, but any omissions should be clearly rationalized.
- Thorough analysis of these themes during the evaluation will aid in understanding the reasons behind the intervention's specific outcomes.



Q&A

Resources

- [Summary Brief: Review of the OECD DAC criteria for evaluating humanitarian action](#)
- [Impact evaluation](#)
- [OECD DAC Evaluation Criteria: Summary of consultation responses](#)
- [Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully](#)
- [“Emergency Initiatives in favour of most vulnerable people in Iraq](#)



Annex

Efficiently Working with OECD-DAC Criteria

Relevance -Considerations

- **Cultural Relativism in Evaluations:** Evaluators must address cultural relativism, questioning whether interventions should aim to restore affected individuals to their pre-crisis conditions or align with the support levels found in less affluent nations. While determining 'need' is complex, evaluators should keep this consideration in mind when assessing response relevance.
- **Housing Sector Challenges:** Housing frequently presents challenges in relevance and appropriateness within humanitarian action. Evaluations should consider if short-term relief should support housing reconstruction over shelter, given the extensive resources and expertise required. Evaluations of housing programs should particularly focus on the placement of new settlements, construction methods, and suitability of housing designs and materials.
- **Assessing Institutional Capacity:** Evaluators should also assess institutional capacity, ensuring that organizations have the necessary staffing, local knowledge, and experience to provide a response that is both relevant and appropriate to the context.



Efficiently Working with OECD-DAC Criteria

Working with the different OECD-DAC criteria

There are several questions to consider related to evaluation use and the DAC criteria:

- Consider the informational needs of evaluation users: Determine the quantity and types of information required by stakeholders.
- Prioritize DAC criteria based on utility: Assess whether equal emphasis is necessary for all criteria or if certain information is more valuable.
- Identify the timing for information relevance: Understand when insights on specific criteria such as effectiveness and efficiency will be most beneficial, particularly in active interventions.
- Leverage evaluation planning as a chance to enhance usage: Use discussions about the evaluation terms of reference and the DAC criteria to address how the evaluation findings will be utilized.