

# **DPME Evaluation Guideline No** 2.2.12

## Guideline on Implementation Evaluation

Created 20 March 2014

DEPARTMENT: PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Addressed to	Government departments who are undertaking evaluations (programme				
	managers and M&E staff) as well as evaluators of government				
	,				
	programmes and policies.				
Purpose	The purpose of this Guideline is to provide technical guidance on				
-	undertaking and managing Implementation Evaluation				
Policy	This guideline should be read in conjunction with the National Evaluation				
reference	Policy Framework approved by Cabinet on 23 November 2011 (available				
	on the DPME website).				
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#### 1 Introduction

This Guideline is designed to assist government departments to effectively plan and manage implementation evaluations. Implementation evaluation focuses on how a programme or policy is being implemented. The Guideline provides a definition and description of implementation evaluation, key questions that should be addressed, methodologies, and issues to be considered in managing implementation evaluations. This is a broad guideline that can be applied in different contexts. It is focused on providing an overview for government staff managing evaluations and is not targeted as a manual for an evaluator on how to undertake an implementation evaluation. Hence it does not go into detail into the different tools that are introduced. Note the word programme is used here but the evaluation could equally apply to a policy, or plan – we use intervention to cover any of these.

## 2 Definition of Implementation Evaluation

The National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF, 2011) describes this type of evaluation as an assessment of programme delivery, strategies, procedures and processes. An implementation evaluation can answer questions about what is happening in practice, how it is happening, and why it is happening.

Implementation evaluation can happen any time after the programme has been implemented, as a stand-alone evaluation, as part of a series of evaluations, or as one component of an impact or economic evaluation. The graphic below depicts where implementation evaluation is placed in the DPME framework.

Implementation evaluation is an essential part of effective programme management. Ongoing performance monitoring can provide some information about implementation, but implementation evaluation provides more in-depth and comprehensive information about the quality of service delivery. While an impact evaluation can provide information about whether or not a programme is working, it needs to include an implementation evaluation to provide an understanding of the processes happening in the theory of change. Hence typically implementation evaluations could be undertaken after 1-2 years, and could then be repeated at a similar cycle. The scale of the exercise will depend on the scale of the intervention, and

therefore how rigorous these regular reviews need to be. For example an Implementation Evaluation has been carried out on the Business Process Services Scheme which promotes outsourcing to South Africa. This was done 2 years after the scheme was revised, to inform how to strengthen it.

Implementation evaluation often has a strong formative element (learning how to improve) using process tools, but may well also involve quantitative elements, e.g. assessing uptake of services. It is likely to involve a review of the design, and so may use elements of a design evaluation.

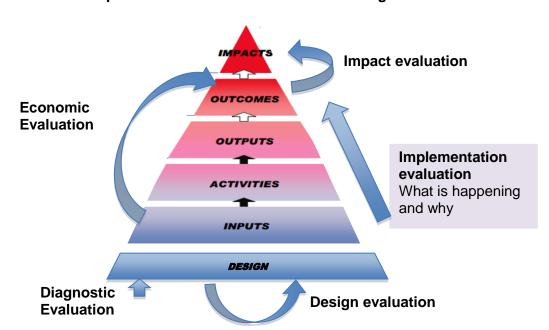


Figure 1: Relationship of evaluations to results-based management

## 3 Purpose of implementation evaluations

The purpose of an implementation evaluation is to understand how a policy, plan or programme is working, and how it can be strengthened.

An implementation evaluation typically focuses on the activities undertaken, how these are likely to contribute to the outputs, whether the assumptions and the theory of change seems to be working in practice, and may well suggest whether it is likely that the planned outcomes will be achieved.

Implementation evaluations will often infer the effectiveness of a policy (Does the policy seem to be working?), infer the efficiency of resources (value for money) and adaptability – suggesting when and how to modify the policy/programme. Impact evaluations can be much stronger on effectiveness as they measure results and attribution at outcome and impact levels.

The overall evaluation question that an implementation evaluation addresses is "What happens during implementation of the programme?" Sub-questions might include: "What does the programme consist of? What are the key characteristics? Who are the programme participants? What do staff members do? How are the different components of the programme internalised and incorporated into existing organisational systems? How do the service users/end-users experience the programme? Does the theory of change appear to be working and is it likely that the outcomes will be achieved? What needs to be done to

Strengthen the programme and to overcome blockages? The three different forms of implementation evaluation have additional specific evaluation questions.

Examples of when these types of process-based evaluations are helpful include:

- Conducted at regular intervals to check that operation remains on track and follows established procedures, or at any time when there are stakeholders' complaints about service delivery.
- To obtain early warnings of operational difficulties in newly implemented programs or components, particularly among those involving complex procedures.
- To address fears of inefficiency in long-existing programmes.
- To enhance effectiveness of program implementation, and possibly efficiency (if the right decisions are taken afterwards), but also to help enhance accountability and transparency.

So, it is a learning instrument that helps the users internally but also helps them externally.

## 4 Typical questions and common methods

There are several main elements of an implementation evaluation, some or all of which may be present in a specific evaluation.

- 1. Documenting how implementation is happening in practice;
- 2. Comparing actual implementation to planned implementation, assessing quality of institutions, state of formal and informal networks that make programme run etc.;
- 3. Making recommendations for improving implementation (which may be about different processes, changes to design etc.);
- 4. Anticipating likely achievement of the outcomes, unpacking how the theory of change is working in practice (and in some cases it may be combined with an impact evaluation which would confirm the achievement of outcomes or impacts);
- 5. Considering whether a programme can be replicated.

Specific questions for these different elements are described in more detail below and common methods for each are described in Section 5.

#### 4.1 Documenting implementation: What is happening?

This element focuses on documenting the details of how a programme is being implemented. This is particularly important in cases where the actual design of the programme is poorly specified, there is no explicit theory of change, and therefore what the programme actually does is poorly defined. This is common at present in South Africa.

In addition to producing a detailed description of programme implementation, this type of evaluation would answer the following types of questions:

- Can the implementation of the programme be described in terms of a coherent model? What theory of change best describes how it appears to be intended to operate and how can that be documented, e.g. in a logical framework.
- Are there variations of implementation at different sites or by different service deliverers? Who is accountable for this? Are accountability mechanisms working?
- What have been the start-up and continuing costs of implementation?
- In terms of the results-based management pyramid, what activities are happening, what inputs are being used? What progress has been made, what outputs or if possible outcomes have been achieved?

- Are operational procedures appropriate to ensure the timely delivery of quality products or services?
- Are there adequate systems and resources (money, equipment, facilities, training, and so forth) to ensure the timely delivery of quality products or services?
- Are programme clients receiving quality products and services?
- Are there any operational bottlenecks?
- Is the program reaching the intended population?

#### 4.2 Assessing Implementation: Is it being implemented as planned?

This element focuses on whether a programme is being implemented as expected. It is particularly important for quality control and for improvement. This presumes that there is a coherent plan and theory of change.

All programmes experience some problems with the quality of implementation – such as delays and gaps in staffing, non-delivery of materials, and service delivery processes that do not follow agreed procedures. While some of these problems will be evident from ongoing performance monitoring, others will only be visible through a more comprehensive implementation evaluation. It is only by understanding these and addressing them appropriately that performance can be maximised. This means also establishing whether root causes and not just symptoms are being addressed.

In this case an implementation evaluation answers the following questions:

- Is the programme being implemented as planned? In what ways is it being done differently?
- How is the theory of change working in practice?
- What are the actual steps and activities involved in delivering the product/ service? How close are they to what was planned? Are they efficient?
- Are any differences due to a deliberate decision to implement the programme differently? Are they an improvement on the original plan?
- What factors influence the way the programme is implemented?
- In terms of the results-based management pyramid, are activities happening as planned, how is the use of inputs compared to the plan, and are the planned outputs being achieved, and are any unintended positive or negative outputs or outcomes?

#### 4.3 Improving implementation: How can implementation improve?

The third element of implementation evaluation focuses on ways of improving implementation. It involves identifying what is and is not working, suggesting and implementing changes, and then gathering evidence about the effect of these changes. This cycle can be undertaken several times. This type of evaluation can be done throughout the life of the programme, as needed.

Some typical questions include:

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the programme? (from the point of view of staff, clients, experts) Are there particularly successful service delivery providers or sites ("bright spots") that are using better practices?
- How can obstacles be overcome?
- Have these changes improved the programme?
- How might the programme be implemented differently? How could others learn from more successful sites? How could these changes be made?
- In terms of the results-based management pyramid, how could the achievement of outputs be maximized?
- Are there ways the efficiency and sustainability of the programme look likely to be maximised?

#### 4.4 Anticipating achievement of outcomes (or enriching impact evaluation)

Implementation evaluations focus particularly on inputs, activities and outputs. However by looking at the theory of change and whether it is working, it is often possible to make an informed judgment of whether the outcomes look likely to be achieved. This is important in making judgments of any changes needed to the programme. Therefore an implementation evaluation can identify whether the programme is not working and should be discontinued. If carried out at an early stage, it can correct any shortcoming before scaling up, before further funds are spent.

Impact evaluations also usually need to include an implementation evaluation in order to make the findings most useful. If an impact evaluation finds that a programme has <u>not</u> achieved its intended impacts, it is important to know whether or not it has been implemented properly, and how the theory of change if working in practice. For example, if a new reading programme does not produce better learning outcomes, is it because the programme doesn't work – or because it was not implemented properly? On the other hand, if an impact evaluation finds that a programme <u>has</u> been effective, an implementation evaluation can indicate how it has worked (which may not be as expected), how the theory of change can be improved, and produce a description of the activities and theory of change of the programme so it can be replicated or scaled up. (see Guideline 2.2.13 on Impact Evaluations).

Similarly an implementation evaluation will usually involve design elements, is the envisaged design working as expected. Many tools from the design evaluation can then be used (see Guideline 2.2.11 on Design Evaluations).

#### 4.5 Considering possible replication

A specific use of evaluation is not for the specific intervention itself, but for upscaling or replicating it. This is particularly important for evaluating *innovative* programmes where implementation is not yet well documented. Some questions could be: what demonstration effects have been achieved, what multiplier effects can be used, what are the demand and supply factors regarding scaling-up, what necessary adjustments need to be made to tailor it to different situations? How likely is it that the programme could be implemented in this way elsewhere? What aspects have been developed in response to particular contextual factors that might not be present in other sites?

Table 1: Questions and methodology for Implementation evaluation

Purposes	Common implementation evaluation questions	Methodology	Common evaluation methods and approaches
Element 1: Document what is happening	Can the implementation of the programme be described in terms of a coherent model? What theory of change best describes how it appears to be intended to operate – and how can that be documented, e.g. in a logical framework.	Theory of Change Logframe	Workshopping/interviews with stakeholders     Draw from documents     Logframe
	Are there variations of implementation at different sites or by different service deliverers?	Review of implementation	Review reports     Field work at different sites – range of methodology possible including qualitative and quantitative research     Interviews with stakeholders     Review of Theory of

Purposes	Common implementation evaluation questions	Methodology	Common evaluation methods and approaches
			Change
	What have been the start-up and continuing costs of implementation?	Expenditure review	<ul> <li>Review budget and expenditure data</li> </ul>
	In terms of the results-based management pyramid, what activities are happening, what inputs are being used.	Summary of the above	Summary of the above
Element 2: Comparing Implementat ion: Is it being implemente d as planned?	Is the programme being implemented as planned? In what ways is it being done differently?  How is the theory of change working in practice?  Are any differences due to a deliberate decision to implement the programme differently? Are they an improvement on the original plan?  What factors influence the way the programmes is implemented?	Review of implementation	Review reports Field work at different sites – range of methodology possible including qualitative and quantitative research Interviews with stakeholders Review of Theory of Change
Element 3: Improving Implementation	What are the strengths and weaknesses of the programme (from the point of view of staff, clients, experts)? Are there particularly successful service delivery providers or sites ("bright spots") that are using better practices? Have these changes improved the programme? How might the programme be implemented differently? How could others learn from more successful sites? How could these changes be made? In terms of the results-based management pyramid, how could the achievement of outputs be maximized?		
Element 4: Enriching impact evaluation	Has the programme been implemented properly, and how is the theory of change if working in practice		
Element 5: Consider replication	How likely is it that the programme could be implemented in this way elsewhere? What aspects have been developed in response to particular contextual factors that might not be present in other sites? What elements of the intervention could be upscaled/replicated?	Planning for upscaling	Upscaling models

## 5 Methodology

#### 5.1 Theory of Change/Logframe

The Theory of Change (ToC) or programme theory describes the causal mechanism of how activities and outputs (such as meals delivered to needy school children) will result in the anticipated outcomes (e.g. improved concentration in school), and impacts (e.g. improved grades) and the assumptions involved. There can be multiple ToCs that describe the programme. For example different theories can show how the intervention works in different contexts or at different stages of the intervention, or even for different intended impacts (Interaction: 6-7). The ToC should be established during the early planning stages of a policy or programme.

A ToC can help to identify which impacts are likely to be achieved during the timeline of an evaluation, and what else should be examined in the evaluation – activities, context, and intermediate outcomes. Also the ToC helps to identify what needs to be in place – people, agencies, activities, mechanisms, and resources for the impact to be achieved. It can also be used to analyse the evaluation results. If a programme has not worked, the ToC can help to identify whether this is due to failures in implementation or because the Theory of Change does not work. If a programme has worked, the ToC can help to identify what is needed to repeat this success at another time or another site.

Developing a ToC is best done through a combination of a desk review of existing documentation, a literature review of research and evaluations of similar programmes including systematic reviews, observing the programme (if it is already running) or similar programmes, and talking with stakeholders about how they think it works. It often involves an iterative, participatory process with programme developers and/or staff and other relevant stakeholders.

The Theory of Change can be represented in the form of a logframe, a results chain or an outcomes hierarchy.

**Outcome Mapping** is a particular approach to developing a Theory of Change which is particularly suitable when a programme does not directly produce the intended results but works through influencing the behaviour of people in another organisation<sup>1</sup>.

#### **Useful Tip**

For more information on different approaches for developing a ToC, check out <a href="http://betterevaluation.org/plan/define/develop\_logic\_model">http://betterevaluation.org/plan/define/develop\_logic\_model</a>

For evaluations under the National Evaluation Plan, the theory of change should also be expressed in the form of a **logframe**. Annex 1 of Guideline 2.2.3 on Planning Implementation Programmes provides an example of a theory of change for the National School Nutrition Programme, as well as a model of a logframe. The logframe should include:

- i. Indicators at different levels, baselines and SMART targets, where appropriate, as part of the logical framework;
- ii. The key assumptions and risks which underlie the results chain;
- iii. Key outputs and related activities required to achieve the desired outcomes:
- iv. A summary of the human and financial resources (inputs) needed to achieve the outcomes and impacts.

If a Theory of Change and logframe does not exist, then one of the first activities in the implementation evaluation should be to derive one, based on the understanding of how the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> For further information go to http://www.outcomemapping.ca/

programme or policy was established. As part of the evaluation, changes to the ToC and logframe may be recommended.

#### 5.2 Review of implementation

A wide range of methods may be used for this process, including quantitative and qualitative data. Some tools could include:

- Document review, e.g. of plans and monitoring reports, policies etc.;
- · Review of monitoring data, its availability and quality;
- Quantitative survey of extent to which services are being received by users, and quality of the services;
- Interviews/workshops with service users, front-line service providers, service managers, other stakeholders;
- Using participatory tools with service users (e.g. mapping, seasonality diagrams, focus groups, direct observation etc.). A rich source of tools for participatory methodologies is the Facilitators Guide for Community Based Planning (Khanyaaicdd, 2005).

The exact evaluation questions will define which methodology needs to be used. The methods need to look at how implementation is happening, where and for whom, and also which elements of the theory of change are working or not working. A relatively small-scale implementation evaluation could be handled in-house with some reasonable facilitation skills, building in particular on workshops with key stakeholders to review implementation. At the other extreme there may need to be surveys of users which would need to be done by external service providers.

#### 5.3 Expenditure review

The budgets of implementation programmes may well be difficult to isolate. In many cases there may be a national budget, direct costs such as workshops, training, costs of all or part of particular staff etc. There may well also be expenditure at provincial level, which may also be difficult to isolate. National Treasury is experimenting with a methodology for analysing expenditure of programmes. In addition the Guideline on Economic Evaluation talks about specific methodologies including public expenditure tracking, cost-benefit analysis etc.

#### 5.4 Planning for upscaling

In many cases government is unable to rollout an intervention across the whole country, and it is better to pilot it in one area and then develop an upscaling plan. If this is the case it is important to check if they have created demonstration effects, if multiplier effects are available, what if any financial, technical, institutional scalability and sustainability would look like, what management capacity, what funding is available, and how the scaling up could be done, what lessons learned are there, and how can a learning process be designed to build on these?

This process has certain requirements in its own right. It is often thought that this can be planned in a casual way, but in fact the whole process of piloting and scaling up needs to be carefully thought through to include issues such as:

- The piloting must be on terms that are scaleable. For example if the pilot requires too much investment of time or money it is probably not replicable;
- What lessons have been learned on upscaling issues, and how can a learning process be designed to build on these?
- What if any financial, technical, management capacity would be needed for, institutional scalability and sustainability, what funding is available, and how could the scaling-up be done?

The upscaling process needs to include the capacity to support the upscaling.
 Therefore if this is a priority in the evaluation there may need to be specific questions on how capacity is to be upscaled, what standard operating procedures and manuals may be needed, institutional issues such as who will manage the process etc.

Binswanger discusses how to conceptualise an upscaling process, including elements such as (Binswanger, 2003),:

- Providing incentives compatible with objectives;
- · Adapting to the local context;
- Field testing manuals, toolkits and scaling up logistics;
- Sequencing (Initiation stage, Scaling up stage, Consolidation stage);
- Sector-specific and technical tools;
- Different kinds of partnerships needed.

## 6 Evaluation process

#### 6.1 Who undertakes the evaluation

An implementation evaluation of some type should be undertaken for all programmes in government. If this involves field research, this is likely to need to be undertaken by a service provider who specialises in research and evaluation. If a simpler process is undertaken it could be carried out using departmental resources. However in the latter case it would be good to have the service provider help to facilitate the evaluation, rather than undertake all of the work. In evaluations under the National Evaluation Plan, these are all likely to need to be carried out by external providers to ensure credibility.

#### 6.2 How long should the implementation evaluation take

If an participatory process is carried out with stakeholders, this could be several weeks including meetings and writing up the results. If a full survey is carried out this could take 6-12 months.

#### 6.3 Result of the implementation evaluation

The process of the implementation evaluation is very important as it builds understanding amongst stakeholders on why a problem is occurring and commit to changes to the intervention to maximise the likelihood of impact.

At the end of the evaluation some decisions are needed. These are:

- 1. Does it look like the intervention is on course to achieve its outcomes if not what needs to be done?
- 2. How should implementation be strengthened?

## 7 Critical issues when planning and managing implementation evaluations

This section covers particular challenges that may be encountered in relation to implementation evaluations. It draws on the quality criteria set out in the NEPF, specifically: relevance and timeliness, legitimacy, credibility, ethics and trade-offs.

#### 7.1 Relevance and timeliness

Documenting implementation should be planned from the beginning if possible, and completed in time to inform decisions about scaling-up of innovations. Comparing planned to actual implementation, and improving implementation, can be done at any point during the

Programme cycle, but will be more useful if done earlier when there is time to use the information. The selection of when to evaluate should be guided by an understanding of the likely impact trajectory of the initiative. The ToC guiding the initiative should therefore be clear on when particular impacts are expected in order to guide the timing and focus of the evaluation. See DFID Evaluation Policy (see weblink).

If a programme manager has limited evaluation resources and needs to choose between implementation evaluation and impact or economic evaluation, there are many reasons for choosing implementation evaluation. For example, unless one knows that the programme is being implemented according to design, there may be little reason to expect it to produce the desired outcomes. Or, often results identified without understanding how they were achieved is of very little management use to a programme manager. In addition in some cases there are obvious reasons blocking impact and it is not worth the investment in an impact evaluation.

#### 7.2 Legitimacy

The legitimacy of an implementation evaluation can be improved by ensuring that it considers the perspectives of different stakeholders in terms of what would be successful implementation. This might include involving key stakeholders in the development of evaluation questions and the evaluation design, or involving the programme management team in interpreting observation and interview data. This can include beneficiaries. This could be involving them in the process of sharing their experiences of service delivery, through interviews or surveys, or involving them in the process of collecting data, through community score cards, or participatory mapping processes.

In evaluations there is always a trade-off between independence (and so perceived credibility) and being done internally (and so having wider ownership). If there is some internal evaluation capacity and maximum learning and ownership is required it may be appropriate to handle the implementation evaluations internally, and to use an evaluator more as a facilitator to support the evaluation process, and to facilitate an internal team. This is discussed in the National Evaluation Policy Framework p11. However if a wide range of data must be collected, and it is important to have an independent external view, then it should be done externally. For those within the National Evaluation Plan where the evaluations are submitted to Cabinet and they must be credible, the latter will be needed.

#### 7.3 Ethical Issues

DPME guidelines on ethics clearance and other ethics procedures for evaluation should be followed at all times. Special ethical considerations should be considered for evaluations conducted by internal team members. For example when choosing team members and assigning tasks, power relationships should be considered. Having junior team members interviewing their supervisor or analysing their mentor's programme is loaded with ethical challenges. These same ethical challenges do not exist when hiring an external evaluator or evaluation facilitator. For any evaluation team, careful attention should be given to the evaluation process, in particular data collection, analyses, and interpretation of the data.

DPME is developing guidance on ethical issues with regards to the requirement of an institutional review board (IRB) or other ethical processes. Any processes regarding minors or other special needs groups may have specific ethical consideration that must be adhered to. A Guideline will be developed in 2014.

#### 7.4 Trade-offs

There can be critical trade-offs for different types of implementation evaluation designs. A longer intensive design that collects data from all sites may provide answers to every single evaluation question yet it may have high costs and take too long. On the other hand a short,

internal evaluation may be cost effective and provide answers to all posed evaluation questions yet lack credibility because it did not have an external evaluator.

## 8. Typical costs

This section provides some basic guidance for helping to determine the size of an evaluation budget. However each context will be unique and require specific budgeting discussions and decisions.

The programme manager has a key role in ensuring that the scope of what is promised by evaluators, or expected by the programme manager, is realistic for the amount budgeted; as over ambitious and under budgeted scope of work is likely to yield a weak base of evidence and an unused report.

Budgeting for an evaluation is dependent on numerous factors. A general 'rule of thumb' is that an evaluation should be between 0.1% to 5% of an intervention's budget. However this depends on many variables, such as the size of budget, with large programmes needing proportionally less, the amount of credible data already collected, the timeline to collect data, the amount of field work that needs to be done, and other contributing cost factors. Another common guidance is that 5% and 15% of total programme budget should be set aside for monitoring and evaluation (M&E), or 3-10% of annual budget. However this refers to M&E rather than evaluation specifically; and it is likely in many programmes that routine monitoring will consume most of the M&E budget.

Broadly speaking, the following factors weigh heavily on cost:

- The scope of the information requirement and field work required, e.g. number of questions and size of sample, number of rounds of field work;
- The degree of credibility required of the information results (which influences sample size, and the methodological effort needed).
- The expertise required from the external resources e.g. complex modelling skills or legal expertise may require senior specialists on the team.

If departments know that they require a implementation evaluation that has a significant fieldwork component that covers all provinces, then they must factor up these costs accordingly.

Signed

Dr Sean Phillips Director-General

The Presidency: Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

Date: 31 March 2014

## **Annex 1: Glossary**

Effectiveness: The extent to which operation's objectives were achieved or

expected to be achieved taking in to account their relative

importance.

Efficiency: A measure of how economical inputs are converted to outputs.

Expenditure Review: Each Department prepared a Comprehensive Expenditure

Report in respect of the Department and its associated

agencies, to identify expenditure programme

Implementation Evaluation: Is a type of evaluation that looks at activities, output, outcomes

and use of resources and the casual links. It builds on existing monitoring system and is applied during programme operations to improve the efficiency and efficacy of operational

processes.

Log-frame: A tool for improving the planning, implementation,

management, monitoring and evaluation of projects. The log frame is a way of structuring the main elements in a project

and highlighting the logical linkages between them.

Performance: The degree to which an operations or organization operates

according to specific criteria/standards/guidelines or achieve

results in accordance with stated goals or plans.

Result Based Management: A management strategy focusing on performance and

achievement of outputs, outcomes and impacts.

Review: An assessment of the performance of an operation periodically

or on an ad hoc basis.

Theory of change: An explicit presentation of the assumption about how changes

are expected to happen within any particular context and in

relation to a particular intervention.

Trade-offs: Refers to a situation that involves losing one quality or aspect

of something in return for gaining another quality or aspect

#### Annex 2: Useful web resources

DFID Evaluation Policy - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfid-evaluation-policy-2013

Outcome Mapping - http://www.outcomemapping.ca/

Research Methods Knowledge - http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/relandval.php Facilitators guide for Community - Based Planning - www.khanya.org

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