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Quality Review of the African Evaluation Database (AfrED) Reports

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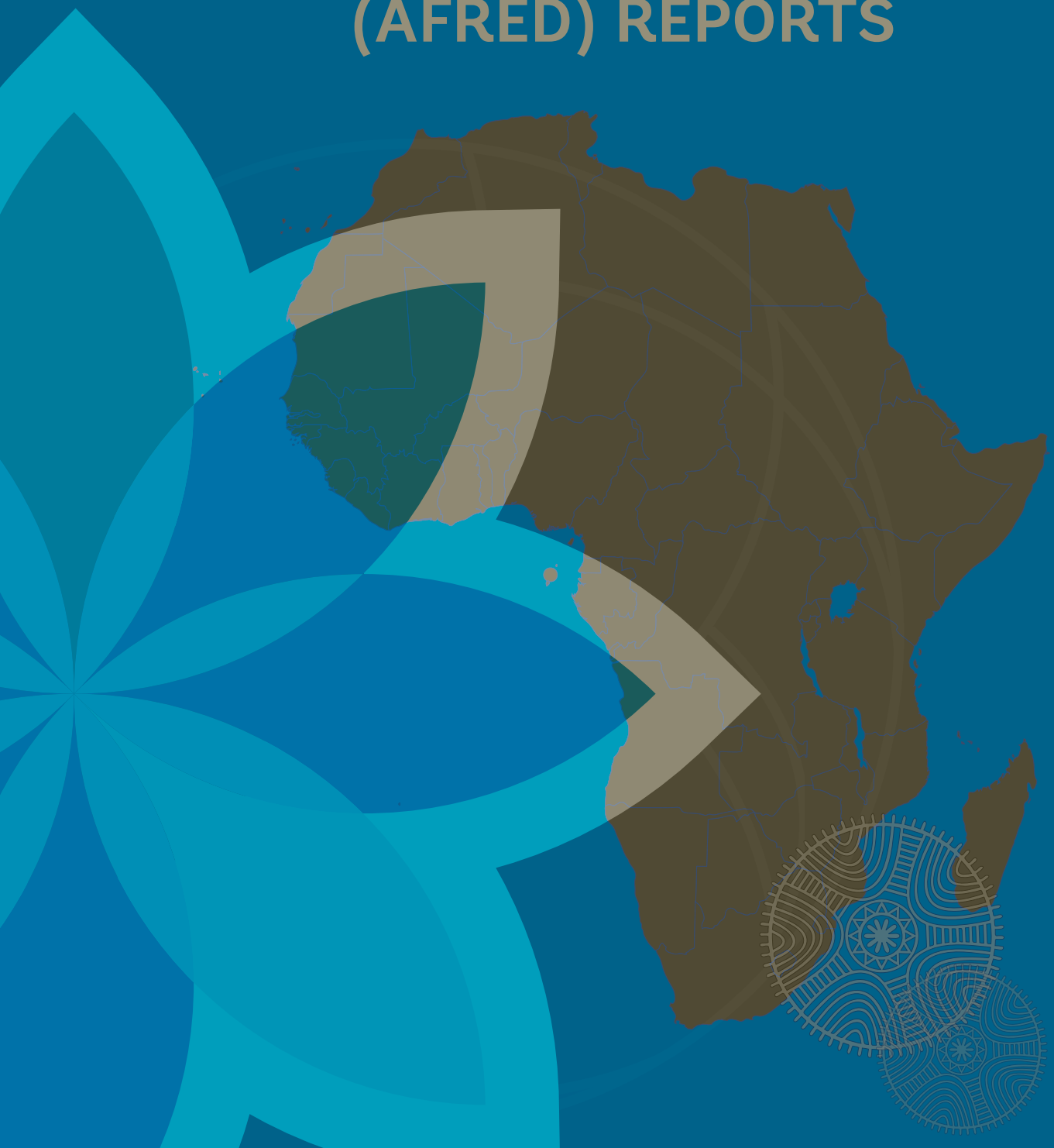
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Centers for Learning on Evaluation and Results
ANGLOPHONE AFRICA

QUALITY REVIEW OF THE AFRICAN EVALUATION DATABASE (AFRED) REPORTS







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AfrED
AFRICAN EVALUATION DATABASE

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AfrED	African Evaluation Database
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
CA	Commissioning Agent
CDC	Centre for Disease Control
CLEARAA	Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results: Anglophone Africa
CREST	Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The advent of programme evaluation as a distinct scientific discipline dates back to the eighteenth century and uses social research methods to assess interventions with the ultimate aim of making value judgements and improving social interventions (Rossi & Freeman, 2004). Over the years, evaluation networks and evaluation commissioners have developed approaches, policies and guidelines to ensure that evaluation reports provide adequate information to fulfil the objective of the evaluation and to meet the expectations of the relevant audience.

The aim of this study was to review and assess the quality of health evaluation reports in the AfrED database. The specific research objectives were to review evaluation reporting standards, to develop an evaluation reporting quality assessment framework, and to assess the quality of health evaluation reports. The research followed a systematic secondary document review to develop an evaluation reporting quality assessment framework for the standardised assessment of the quality of the 21 selected health evaluation reports.

The key findings and conclusions of the research established that there are limited African developed evaluation reporting standards and guidelines making it difficult to determine the quality of evaluation reporting relevant in the African context; the information gaps that exist on specific elements of the evaluation reports reviewed raises the questions of what evaluators consider vital to report on and how this is reported; there is a lack of consistency in the way quality is maintained from a commissioner's perspective; and there is a visibility gap on African evaluators leading and participating in donor-commissioned evaluations.

The research recommends further qualitative and quantitative research on the development of an evaluation reporting quality assessment framework to review the quality of evaluation reporting in terms of commissioners, evaluators, sectors, time frames and regions.

1. BACKGROUND

CLEAR-AA, in collaboration with CREST, has developed a fully searchable database called the African Evaluation Database (AfrED) of more than 3500 reports and articles relating to Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) from 19 English speaking African countries (Botswana, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe). The purpose of the AfrED resource is that of a knowledge base providing valuable information to policymakers on specific content areas as well as to those who are involved in evaluation and M&E capacity-strengthening initiatives. The database captures basic bibliographic and other related metadata on selected country papers, terms of reference, presentations, journal articles, conference proceedings/papers/presentations and reports related to evaluations conducted during the period 2005 – 2020.

1.1 Introduction

The advent of programme evaluation as a distinct scientific discipline dates back to the eighteenth century as a discipline and uses social research methods to assess interventions with the ultimate aim of making value judgements and improving social interventions (Rossi & Freeman, 2004). Over the years, evaluation networks and evaluation commissioners have developed approaches, policies and guidelines to ensure that evaluation reports provide adequate information to fulfil the objective of the evaluation and to meet the expectations of the relevant audience. The standards which have been established guide multilateral and bilateral donors, evaluation networks, evaluation associations and evaluation committees to develop evaluation reporting guidelines to be utilised by each group. However, for evaluators to propose future improvements and basic universal reporting guidelines, there is a need to analyse one key source of data – evaluation reports.

It is against this background that this study aims to contribute to the understanding of the quality of evaluation reports in the AfrED database. The specific research objectives include:

- To review evaluation reporting standards;
- To develop an evaluation reporting quality assessment framework; and
- To assess the quality of evaluation reports.

1.2 Literature review

1.2.1 Quality evaluation reporting

Evaluation reports are a key source of data to assess how evaluations have been designed and conducted and therefore the content of and information obtained from evaluation reports needs to be given much attention and emphasis (Patton, 2008). These reports convey valuable evaluation information from the evaluator to audiences which include programme staff, funders and beneficiaries (Harris, 2016 CDC, 2013). Evaluation reports should therefore provide credible and useful evidence-based information that enables timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organisations and stakeholders (UNFPA, 2017).

According to Torres, Preskill and Piontek (2005), the accurate reporting of evaluation results is vitally important because it demonstrates results, ensures accountability, facilitates growth and improvement, builds awareness and/or support, and provides the basis for asking questions. Most importantly, quality evaluation reporting is essential as these evaluation results are utilised for evidence-based policy and decision-making in Africa (Chirau, Tirivanhu & Ramasobana, 2019). It is further important to note that:

- Evaluation reports should provide credible and useful evidence to strengthen accountability for development results or contribute to learning processes, or both (OECD, 2010; Montrosse-Moorhead & Griffith, 2017).

- Consistent, complete and transparent production of quality evaluation reports enhances the credibility of the evidence produced (Wong et al, 2016; Montrosse-Moorhead & Griffith, 2017).
- The quality of an evaluation is measured explicitly on the information outlined in the evaluation report (Rebien, 1997).
- Both the process of the evaluation and the final evaluation report influence the quality of the evidence produced. The manner in which the evaluation is designed, planned, conducted and managed by the evaluator is important and the evaluation report bears witness to these processes (Sandison, 2006; Harris, 2010).

In essence, if a report does not outline all the important details then it is difficult to assess the relevance of the evaluation.

It is also important to highlight that evaluation reports differ in terms of the needs of the client and the commissioner's Terms of Reference (TOR). Funders and commissioners of evaluations tend to focus on different aspects of the evaluation process and structure or on the presentational format of reporting results and the preferred contents of evaluation reports (Wong et al, 2016). While these differences in focus may influence the various evaluation domains reported on, there are common and generally important details that should be included in any evaluation report.

Principal amongst these factors is the importance of well-defined evaluation reporting guidelines

1.2.2 Evaluation reporting guidelines and standards

According to Picciotto (2011), the advent and existence of donors has expanded the development assistance constituency, and this growing number includes a significant number of agencies each stipulating different evaluation reporting standards. Podems and Cloete (2014:315) state that evaluation standards are "generally agreed upon criteria with which evaluation practices must comply in order to be accepted as valid and credible … whilst evaluation standards describe what comprises a quality evaluation there are no universally agreed upon criteria for evaluation standards".

When examining evaluation guidelines or standards, it is evident that there are four disparate groups developing guidelines for evaluators (and commissioners): voluntary organisations for professional evaluation (VOPEs), international development agencies, government departments, and evaluation scholars and practitioners themselves (Ngwabi & Wildschut, 2019). Although the importance of quality evaluation reports has been strongly emphasised by these four groups, certain challenges in current donor evaluation reporting have also been identified, especially the lack of standardised reporting criteria (Montrosse-Moorhead & Griffith, 2017; Ngwabi & Wildschut, 2019). The most commonly used evaluation reporting standards are the OECD/DAC quality standards and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for evaluation. Most standards and guidelines used in evaluation reporting were founded on or adapted from the DAC quality standards (AfrEA, 2006; DPME, 2014; Buchanan-Smith, Cosgrave & Warner, 2016), and the UNEG standards are the basis for all United Nations evaluations (UNEG, 2016).

AfrEA is currently reviewing and updating their evaluation standards and this will contribute to the standardisation of evaluations and evaluation reports in Africa (SAMEA, 2018). A study which reviewed evaluation reporting standards and evaluation reports recommended that there is a need for African stakeholders to develop contextually relevant evaluation reporting standards in order to judge the quality of evaluation practice and reporting of evaluators commissioned by international development agencies and the quality of evaluation practice and reporting conducted locally (Ngwabi & Wildschut, 2019). Thus, in a bid to understand and determine the degree of structure and standards (or guidance) provided to evaluators on information regarded as vital for evaluation reports, the research reviewed ten selected evaluation reporting standards and guidelines. These included two VOPEs, one evaluation network, three donors, one international organisation, one government department, and two evaluation publications. This review led to the development of an evaluation reporting quality assessment framework which was utilised to review 21 evaluation reports.

2. METHODOLOGY

The main method of data collection for this research was the use of secondary data. Two main data collection procedures were followed: a) the procedure for the development of the ***evaluation reporting quality assessment framework***, and b) the procedure for ***reviewing 21 health evaluation reports***.

2.1 Procedure for the development of the evaluation reporting quality assessment framework

In a bid to understand and determine the degree of structure and standards (or guidance) provided to evaluators on how to write evaluation reports, the researcher reviewed ten evaluation reporting standards and guidelines. These included two VOPEs, one network, three donors, one international organisation, one government department, and two evaluation publications.

The documents reviewed were purposively selected on the basis of a) their titles included the descriptors 'guidelines', 'standards', 'checklist' and, b) they indicated a range of purposes that included improving the quality and credibility of evaluations, supporting partnerships, fostering dialogue for accountability, for improving effectiveness of projects, and for the purpose of learning.

The ten selected documents included the African Evaluation Association Guidelines (2006), American Evaluation Association Guiding Principles (2018), Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide (2015), United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) quality checklists for evaluation reports (2010), PEPFAR Evaluation Standards of Practice (2015), OECD/DAC's Quality Standards for Development Evaluation (2010), South African Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation's standards for evaluation in government (2014), Stufflebeam's meta evaluation checklist (used for quality assurance in evaluation reports)(1999), USAID evaluation report checklist and the Montrosse-Moorhead and Griffith Checklist for Evaluation-Specific Standards (CHESS) (2017). The selected documents are illustrated in the figure below:

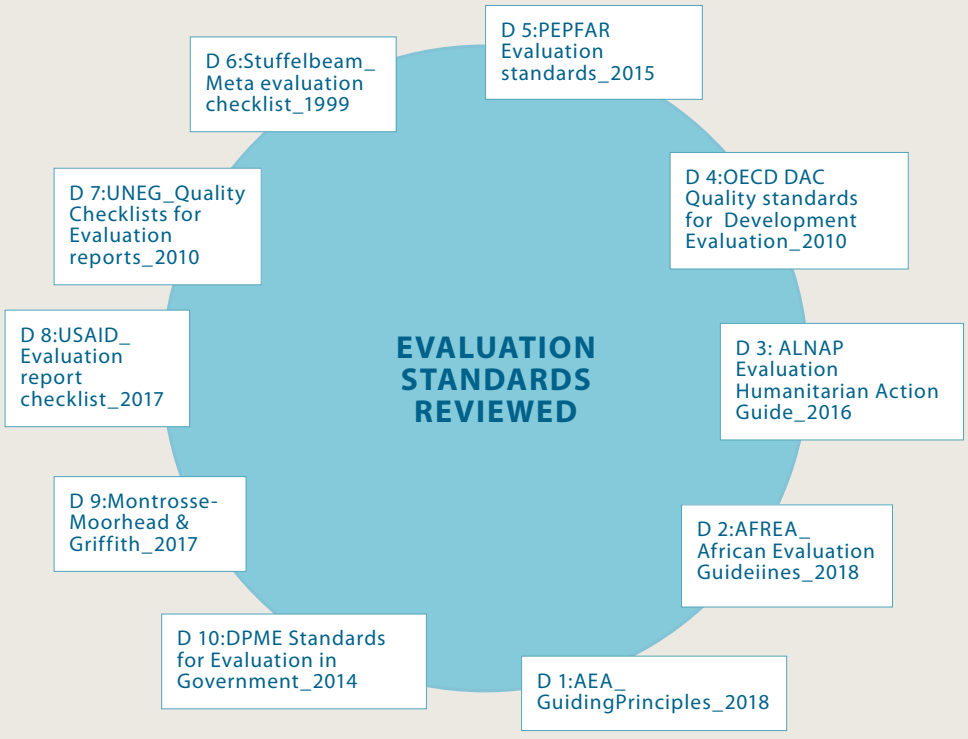


Figure 1 Evaluation reporting standards reviewed

2.1.2 Data analysis

The research used the ATLAS.ti software program for data coding and analysis and also used Microsoft Excel for quantitative analysis and data visualisation. ATLAS.ti is a qualitative analysis software package for data management (Lehner & Kansikas, 2012). This Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) is useful for data management and supporting the coding process. The software was selected because it allows for extraction, categorising, and interlinking data segments from a large variety and volume of documents (Wickham & Woods, 2005; ATLAS.ti, 2015).

The data analysis process is illustrated in Figure 2 below:

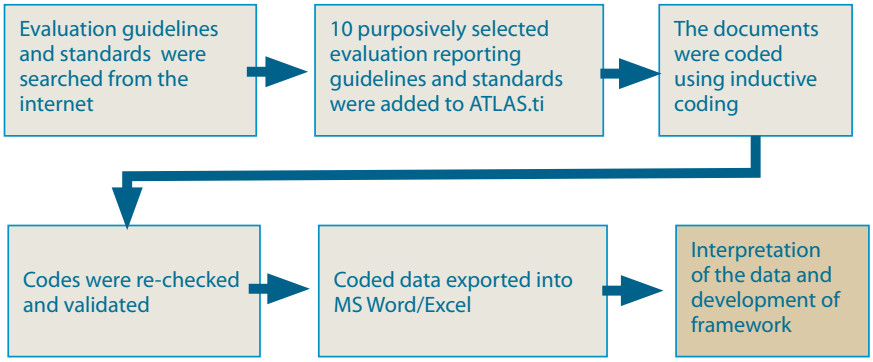


Figure 2 Review of evaluation reporting standards and guidelines process

The ten coded documents identified 45 evaluation reporting elements, 25 of which were determined to be common evaluation reporting elements. These 25 common reporting elements led to the final development of an Evaluation reporting quality assessment framework with 9 domains and 51 quality indicators. The process is illustrated in Figure 3 below:

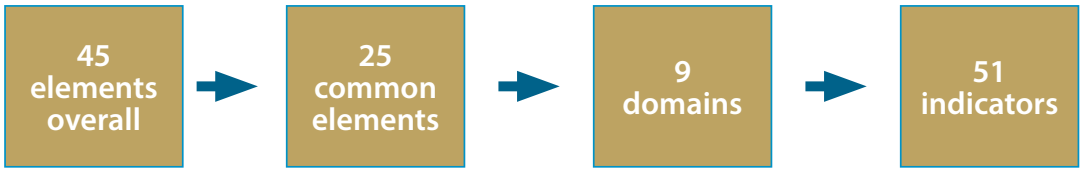


Figure 3 Process followed in the development of the framework domains and quality indicators

2.2 Content of the evaluation reporting quality assessment framework

Based on the reviewed evaluation reporting guidelines and standards, an ***evaluation reporting quality assessment framework was developed (see Annexure 1).*** The checklist comprises nine domains (Report structure, Evaluand, General evaluation information, Evaluation methodology, Data analysis, Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations, and Gender and human rights). The domains collated indicate that there is common understanding and knowledge from VOPEs, donors, commissioners and academia on what evaluation reports should include to be accepted as valid and credible.

The evaluation reporting domains are each defined as follows:

1. ***Report Structure.*** The report should be logically structured with clarity and coherence. It is recommended that the report should include a title page and opening pages, it should provide key basic information and an executive summary as a standalone section of 2-3 pages, and annexes (Stufflebeam, 1999; OECD, 2010; UNEG, 2010; DPME, 2014; PEPFAR, 2015; USAID, 2017).
2. ***Evaluand.*** The report should present a clear and full description of the 'evaluand' (the object being evaluated), and a clear and full description of the 'stakeholders' of the evaluation (Stufflebeam, 1999; AfrEA, 2006; OECD, 2010; UNEG, 2010; DPME, 2014; ALNAP 2015; PEPFAR, 2015; Montrosse-Moorhead & Griffith, 2017; USAID, 2017).
3. ***General evaluation information.*** The report should present a clear and full description of the evaluation questions, ethics, evaluation type and evaluation criteria (Stufflebeam, 1999; AfrEA, 2006; OECD, 2010; UNEG, 2010; DPME, 2014; ALNAP 2015; PEPFAR, 2015; Montrosse-Moorhead & Griffith, 2017; USAID, 2017).
4. ***Evaluation methodology.*** The report should present a transparent description of the evaluation methodology. This includes a clear description of the evaluation design, sampling and sources of information used, and an acknowledgement of the limitations of the evaluation (Stufflebeam, 1999; AfrEA, 2006; OECD, 2010; UNEG, 2010; DPME, 2014; ALNAP 2015; PEPFAR, 2015; Montrosse-Moorhead & Griffith, 2017; USAID, 2017).
5. ***Data analysis.*** The report should present transparent data analysis, describe the limitations of each analytic procedure and appropriate visualisation should be used in the presentation of data (i.e. use of appropriate statistical language and diagrams for quantitative analysis, and use of appropriate qualitative techniques for qualitative analysis (AfrEA, 2006; ALNAP 2015; DPME, 2014; Montrosse-Moorhead & Griffith, 2017; OECD,2010; PEPFAR, 2015; Stufflebeam, 1999; UNEG, 2010; USAID, 2017) .
6. ***Findings.*** The report should present transparent and logical description of the evaluation findings. The evaluation report should answer all the questions detailed in the TOR for the evaluation, and the findings should be based on evidence derived from data collection and analysis methods described in the methodology section of the report (AfrEA, 2006; ALNAP 2015; DPME, 2014; Montrosse-Moorhead & Griffith, 2017; OECD,2010; PEPFAR, 2015; Stufflebeam, 1999; UNEG, 2010; USAID, 2017).
7. ***Conclusions.*** The report should present a transparent and logical description of the evaluation conclusions. The report should reflect reasonable evaluative judgments aligned to the key evaluation questions and should convey the strengths and weaknesses of the object (policy, programme, project or other intervention) being evaluated, based on the evidence presented and taking due account of the views of a diverse cross-section of stakeholders (AfrEA, 2006; ALNAP 2015; DPME, 2014; Montrosse-Moorhead & Griffith, 2017; OECD,2010; PEPFAR, 2015; Stufflebeam, 1999; UNEG, 2010; USAID, 2017).
8. ***Recommendations.*** The report should present a transparent and logic description of the evaluation recommendations. Furthermore, the report should describe the process followed in developing the recommendations, including consultation with stakeholders, and should highlight actionable recommendations which reflect an understanding of the commissioning organisation and any potential constraints (AfrEA, 2006; ALNAP 2015; DPME, 2014; Montrosse-Moorhead & Griffith, 2017; OECD,2010; PEPFAR, 2015; Stufflebeam, 1999; UNEG, 2010; USAID, 2017).
9. ***Gender and human rights.*** The report should focus the evaluation approach and data collection and analysis methods on the issues of gender equality and human rights. The approach should also be appropriate for analysing the gender equality and human rights issues identified in the scope (Stufflebeam, 1999; UNEG, 2010; PEPFAR, 2015).

The nine domains each have quality indicators (with a total of 51 quality indicators). The framework provides a column for scoring that allows the assessor to rank the quality indicators of the evaluation reports on a scale of zero, one or two, (0 = when the element is not mentioned at all; 1 = when the element is mentioned but with missing information as per quality indicator expectation; and 2 = when the element is mentioned with detailed information (as per quality indicator expectation

2.3 Procedure for reviewing health evaluation reports

In a bid to understand the quality of the health evaluation reports in the database, the research used the ***evaluation reporting quality assessment framework*** developed to review the quality of 21 health evaluation reports.

2.3.1 Sampling process

Non-probability purposeful sampling was used to select the 21 health evaluation reports used for the research (see Annexure 2 for the selected evaluation reports). The reports were purposively sampled from the AfrED (which systematically retrieved the reports from various repositories). The final 21 reports were purposively selected based on the following criteria:

- Health evaluation reports because the highest number of evaluation reports in the AfrED are from the health sector;
- Health evaluation reports that were conducted between 2015 – 2019;
- Health evaluation reports from three health focus areas with the highest number of evaluation reports (HIV/AIDS, Maternal and child health, and Health systems strengthening);
- Mid-term and impact evaluation reports because the highest number of health evaluation reports in AfrED relate to mid-term and impact evaluation; and
- Mid-term and impact evaluation reports that provided sufficient reporting information on design and methodology.

The six-stage sampling process is detailed in Figure 4 below:

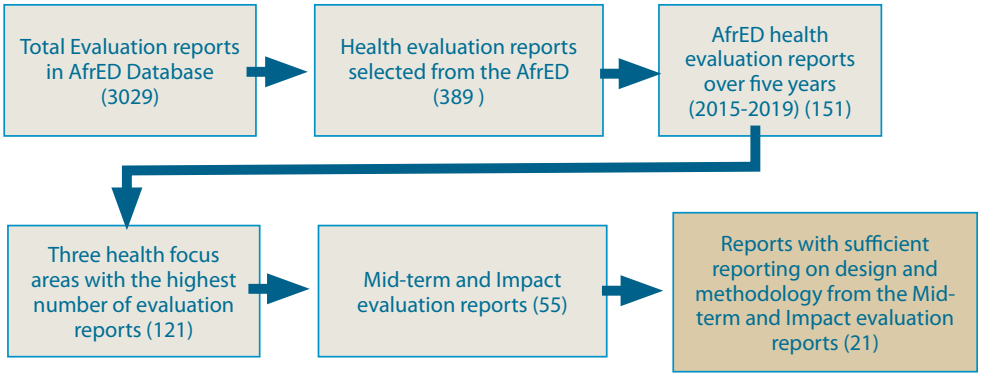


Figure 4 Evaluation reports selection process

2.4 Data analysis

The researcher used ATLAS.ti (a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis program) to code and analyse the 21 selected evaluation reports. Following the addition of evaluation reports to ATLAS.ti, data was coded deductively with predetermined categories and codes. The codebook used for the coding was developed from the ***evaluation reporting quality assessment framework*** which had been developed (see Annexure 3 for the codebook used). The accuracy of the coding was validated through repeatedly checking the coded documents, which were subsequently exported to Microsoft Excel for interpretation and the write-up of the findings.

2.5 Limitations of the study

The limitations of the study are:

- The possibility of selection bias as the AfrED which was used for the source of the reports had scope limitations. Thus, there is a possibility of an incomplete search of the evaluation reports;
- Due to the small number of reports analysed, the findings cannot be generalised; and
- Lastly, as only a review of secondary data was conducted, this restricts the methods used.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Overview of composition of evaluation reports

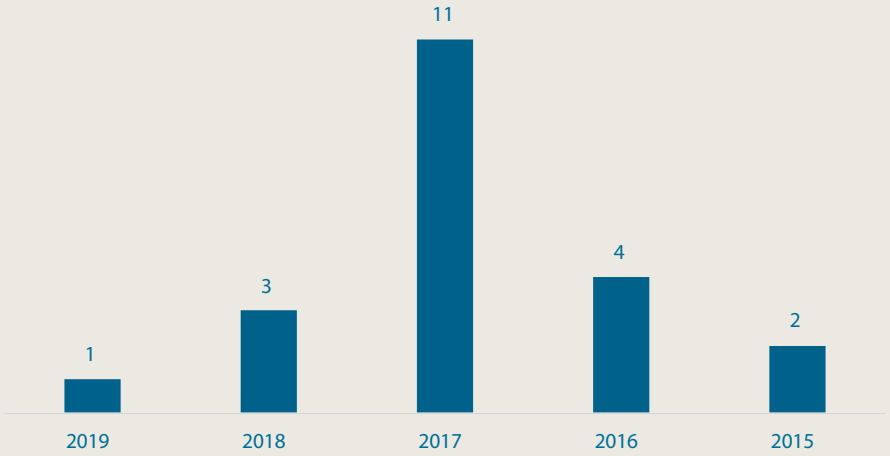


Figure 5 Evaluation reports distribution by year (N=21)

Figure 5 above shows the findings on the evaluation reports distribution by year for all 21 reports. The highest number of evaluation reports was published in 2017 (11), whilst the lowest number (1) was published in 2019.

3.2 Evaluation reports distribution by focus area

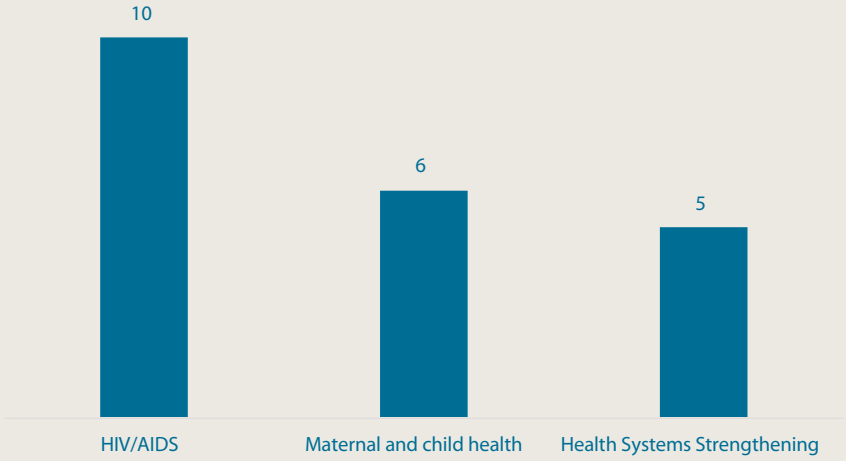


Figure 6 Evaluation reports distribution by focus area (N=21)

Figure 6 above shows the findings of the analysed evaluation reports. Of the 21 evaluation reports analysed, the highest number of reports were from the HIV/AIDS focus area.

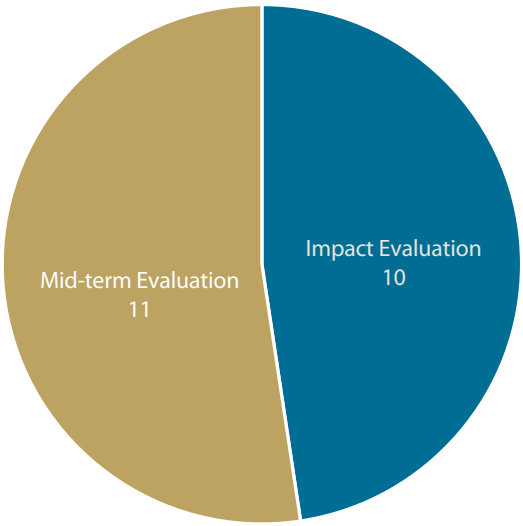


Figure 7 Evaluation reports distribution by type of evaluation (N=21)

Figure 7 above shows the findings of the analysed evaluation reports. Of the 21 evaluation reports analysed, 11 were mid-term evaluation reports whilst 10 of the reports were impact evaluation reports

Table 1: Evaluation report distribution by country

Country	Number of reports
More than 3 African countries	2
Burundi	1
Eswatini	1
Ethiopia	1
Kenya	3
Liberia	1
Malawi	1
Nigeria	2
New Guinea	1
Sierra Leone	1
South Africa	1
Tanzania	2
Uganda	1
Zambia	1
Zimbabwe	3

Table 1 above shows the findings of the analysed evaluation reports. Whilst most countries had between 1 and 2 reports, Zimbabwe and Kenya had 3 reports each.

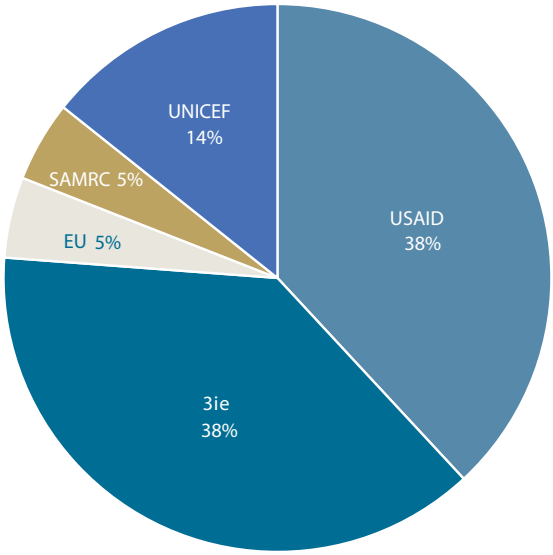


Figure 8 Evaluation reports distribution by commissioner (N=21)

Figure 8 above illustrates the distribution of evaluation reports by commissioner. From the 21 reports, most of the reports were commissioned by 3ie (8) and USAID (8), both of which are non-African donors.

3.3 Evaluator's origins by commissioner

Table 2 Evaluation report evaluators by origin of commissioner

Evaluators	3ie	EU	SAMRC	UNICEF	USAID	Totals
First author is an international consultant in a mixed team	6	1	0	0	4	**11**
First author is a local consultant in a mixed team	2	0	0	0	1	**3**
International consultants only	0	0	0	2	2	**4**
Local consultants only	0	0	1	1	1	**3**
Totals	**8**	**1**	**1**	**3**	**8**	**21**

Table 2 above shows findings of the origins of the evaluators who conducted the 21 evaluations. Most of the evaluations (11) were conducted by a mixture of international and local consultants with international consultants as the lead authors (the majority of these reports were commissioned by 3ie and USAID). Only 3 of the 21 reports were conducted by a mixture of international and local consultants with local consultants as the lead authors, and a further 3 reports were conducted by local consultants only. From the 4 reports that used international consultants only, it is interesting to note that two of the three evaluation reports commissioned by UNICEF used international consultants and made no use of local consultants. According to the 'evaluators' section of the DAC standards, members of the evaluation team should possess a mixture of evaluative skills and thematic knowledge and should include professionals from partner countries (OECD, 2010).

3.4 Domain 1: Report structure

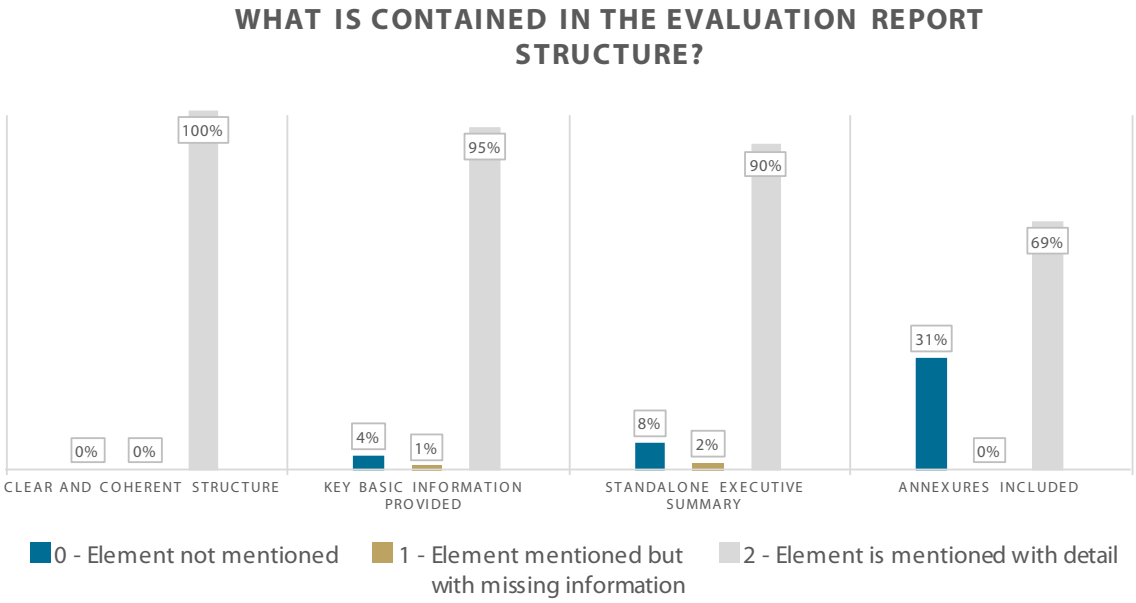


Figure 9 Report structure findings

Figure 9 above shows findings on the report structure information for all 21 reports. The majority of reports met the information criteria on *'clear coherence on structure'*, *'key basic information'* and the inclusion of an *'executive summary'*. Whilst the majority of the analysed reports included most of the annexures, it is important to note that some reports did not include annexures for *'list of documents consulted'* (8), *'list of persons interviewed and sites visited'* (7) and *ToR*s (9).

3.5 Domain 2 Evaluand

Figure 10 above shows the findings on information on the evaluation 'evaluands' for the 21 reports. Whilst the majority of reports provided information on the description of the evaluand, a number of reports did not include information on the description of the stakeholders. The omission related to information on the *'evaluation target audience'* (9) and information relating to that 'the *evaluation report gives a complete description of stakeholder's consultation process in the evaluation, including the rationale for selecting the particular level and activities for consultation'* (15). This does not comply with the majority of standards reviewed which emphasise a partnership approach with stakeholders (OECD, 2010).

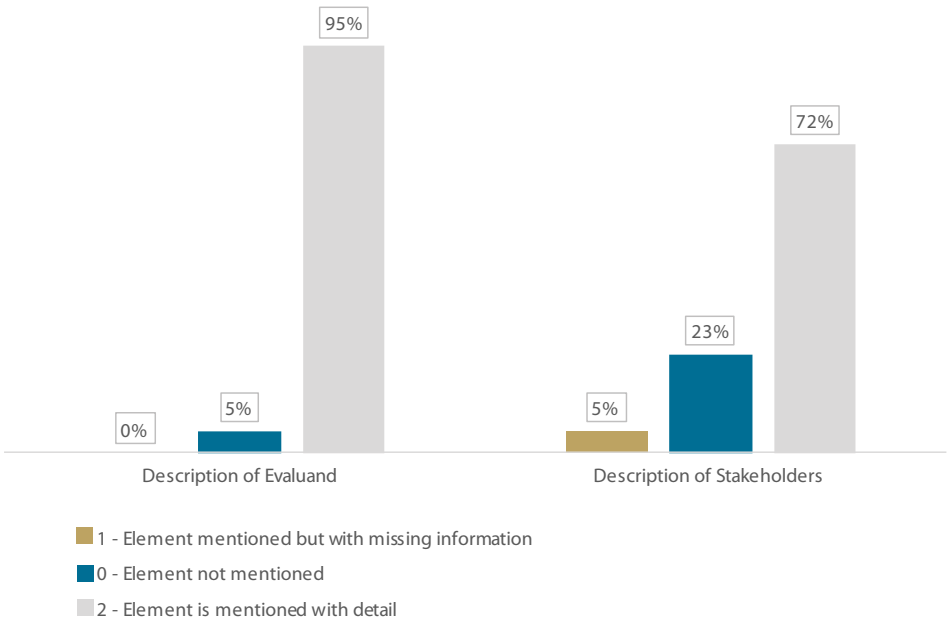


Figure 10 Evaluand findings

3.6 Domain 3: General evaluation information

Table 3 General evaluation information findings

Quality indicators	0 - Element not mentioned	1 - Element mentioned but with missing information	2 - Element is mentioned with detail
Evaluation criteria specified	11	0	10
Evaluation ethics upheld	7	1	13
Evaluation questions aligned to the purpose and objectives of the evaluation	5	2	14
Evaluation questions aligned to the type of evaluation	5	1	15
Evaluation purpose, objectives and scope	1	0	20
Evaluation type	0	0	21

Table 3 above shows the findings on general evaluation information. Whilst the majority of the reports were specific on the 'evaluation type', and 'evaluation questions aligned to the purpose and objectives of the evaluation', some reports did not contain information on 'Evaluation questions aligned to the type of evaluation' (5), 'Evaluation questions aligned to the purpose and objectives of the evaluation' (5), 'Evaluation ethics upheld' (7) and 'Evaluation criteria specified' (11). It is important to note that the reports which did not align the evaluation questions with the type of evaluation or the purpose and objectives of the evaluation were all ***3ie*** reports.

3.7 Domain 4: Evaluation methodology

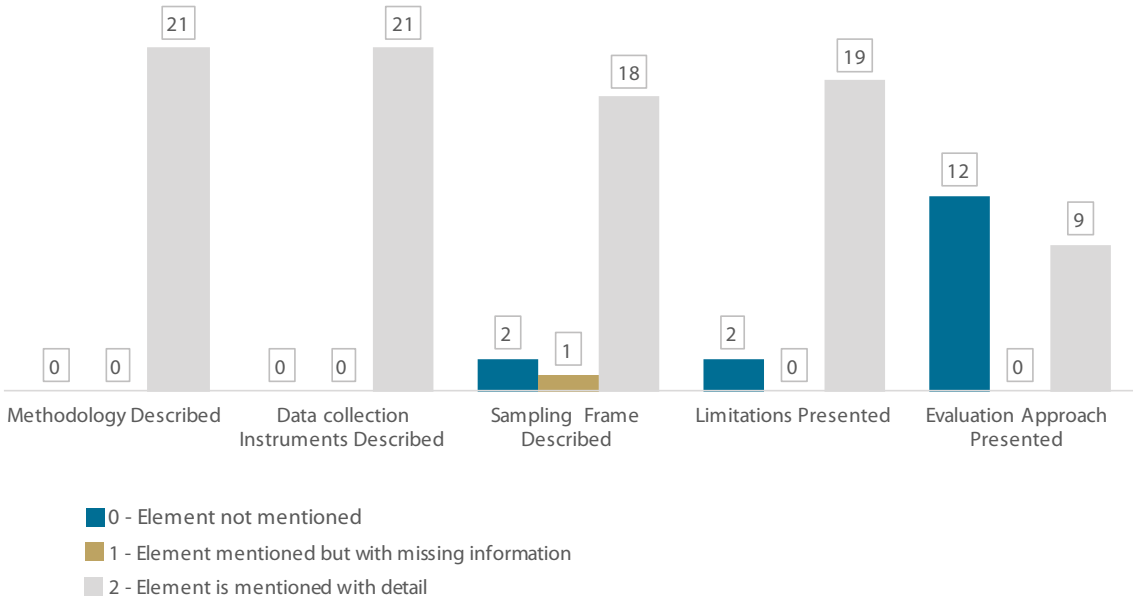


Figure 11 Evaluation methodology findings

Figure 11 above shows findings on the distribution of the evaluation reporting on methodology. The majority of the reports included information on ***Methodology, Data collection instruments, Sampling frame and Limitations***. However, most of the reports (12) did not include information on the Evaluation theory/ approach. According to Wong et al (2016), as is the case with the other aspects, the evaluation approach should be reported so that its relevance is transparent as different approaches are suitable for different contexts and types of evaluations.

3.8 Domain 5: Data analysis

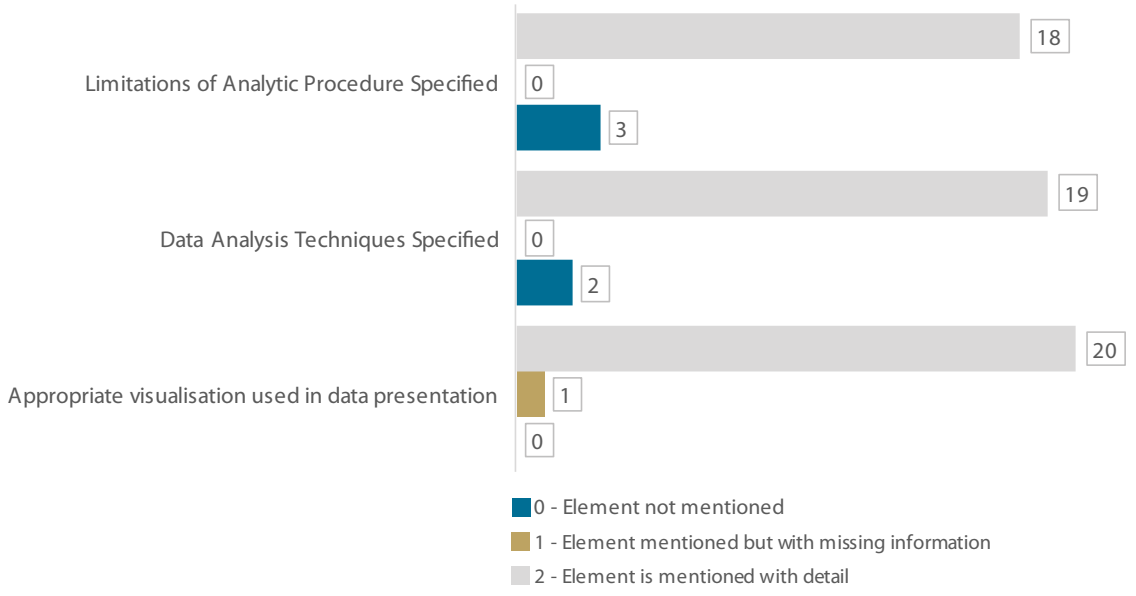


Figure 12 Data analysis findings

Figure 12 above shows that of the 21 reports analysed, the majority of reports included information on data analysis. Information was provided on 'the report details the limitations of each analytic procedure', 'the report details the techniques used for data analysis', 'the report details the techniques used for data analysis' and 'appropriate visualisation is used in the presentation of data'.

3.9 Domain 6: Findings

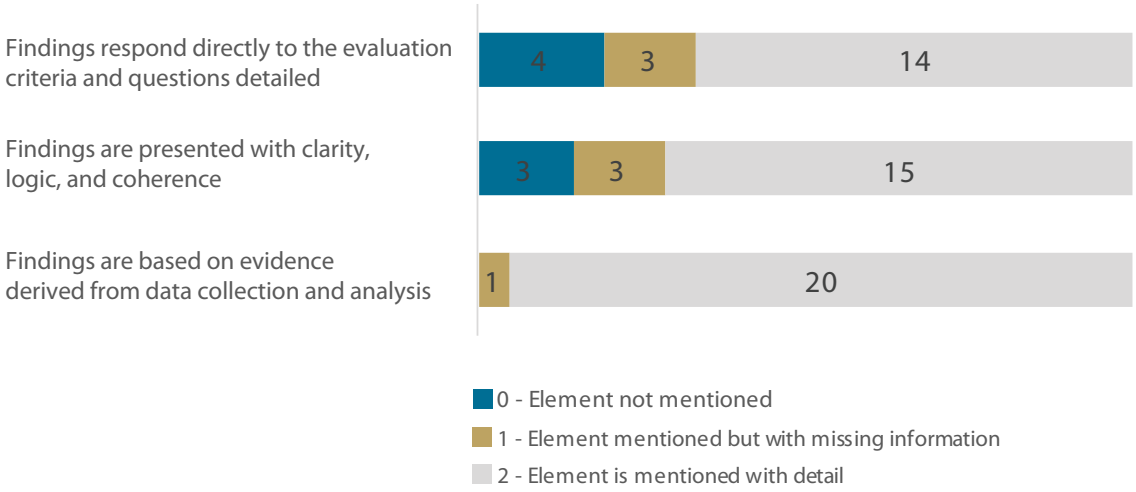


Figure 13 Evaluation findings

Figure 13 above provides details on the distribution of the evaluation reporting on findings. Whilst the majority of the reports presented findings 'based on evidence derived from data collection and analysis methods described in the methodology section of the report', some reports had limited or no information on findings that 'respond directly to the evaluation criteria and questions detailed in the scope and objectives section of the report' (7), or that 'findings are presented with clarity, logic, and coherence' (6). It is important to note that the largest number of reports that omitted this information were reports commissioned by 3ie.

3.10 Domain 7: Conclusions

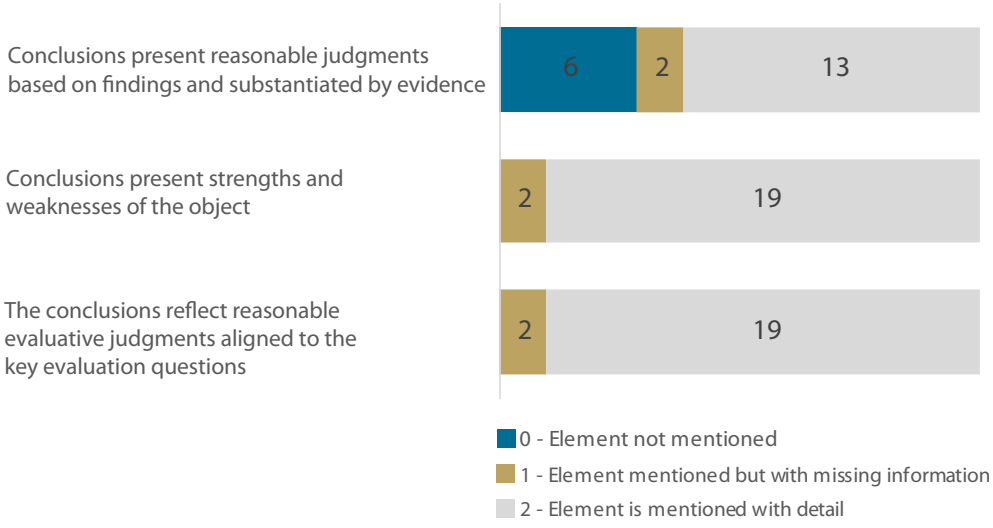


Figure 14 Evaluation conclusions

Figure 14 above shows findings on the distribution of the evaluation reporting on conclusions. The majority of the reports provide conclusions that 'present reasonable judgments based on findings and substantiated by evidence' and that 'present strengths and weaknesses of the object'. However, it is important to note that some of the reports provided limited or no information on conclusions that 'reflect reasonable evaluative judgments aligned to the key evaluation questions' (8)

3.11 Domain 8: Recommendations

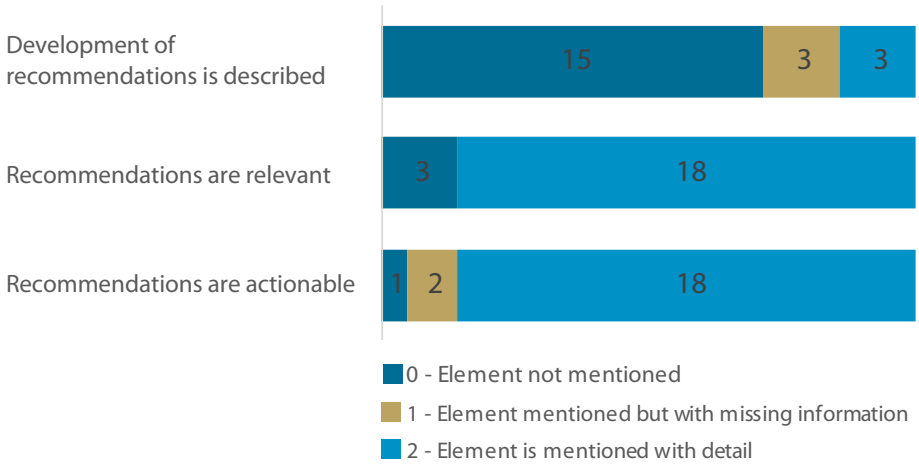


Figure 15 Evaluation recommendations findings

Figure 15 above shows findings on the evaluation reporting of recommendations. The majority of the reports provided recommendations which are 'actionable and reflect an understanding of the commissioning organisation and potential constraints' and recommendations that are 'relevant to the object and purposes of the evaluation, and are supported by evidence and conclusions'. However, the majority of the reports (15) did not provide information on 'the process followed in developing the recommendations including consultation with stakeholders'

3.12 Domain 9: Gender and human rights

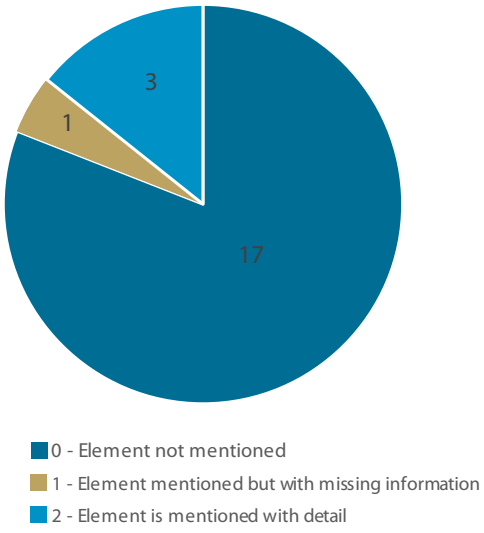


Figure 16 Responsiveness to issues of gender equality and human rights

Figure 16 above shows that the majority of the reports (17) did not include information that indicated that 'the evaluation approach and data collection and analysis methods are responsive to gender equality and human rights and are appropriate for analysing the gender equality and human rights issues identified in the scope'.

3.13 Summary of findings

A summary of the findings of this study is presented in Figure 17 below.

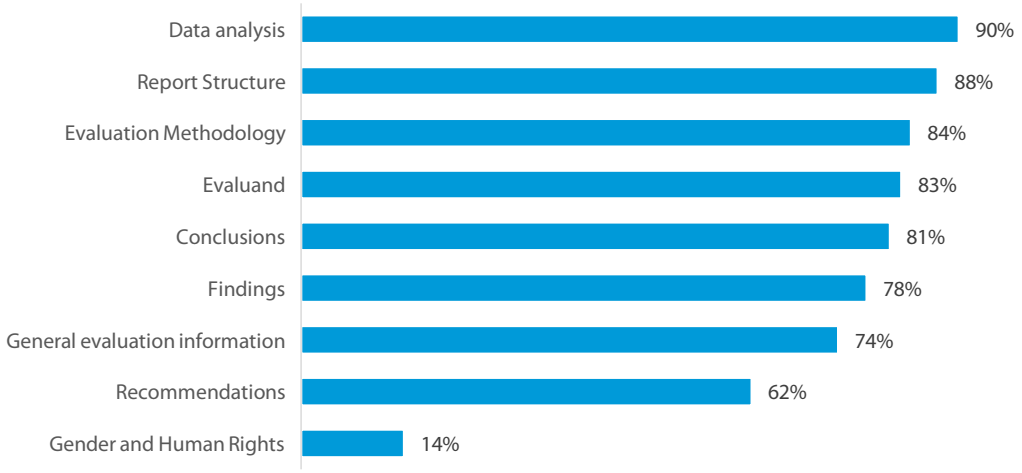


Figure 17 Summary of domain findings

Figure 17 above shows the percentage of quality indicators mentioned in sufficient detail per domain for all reports (scored 2). Most of the reports scored above 80% indicating that sufficient detail was provided on data analysis, report structure, evaluation methodology, evaluand and conclusions, however, reporting on the findings on general evaluation information and recommendations scored between 62% and 78%. Furthermore, most reports did not perform well for the domain of gender and human rights. The overall findings indicate that while most of the domains scored above 75 % there is still a gap in most reporting elements. The specific quality indicators which scored between 0 and 1 (with either no detail or limited detail) are show in Figure 18 below:

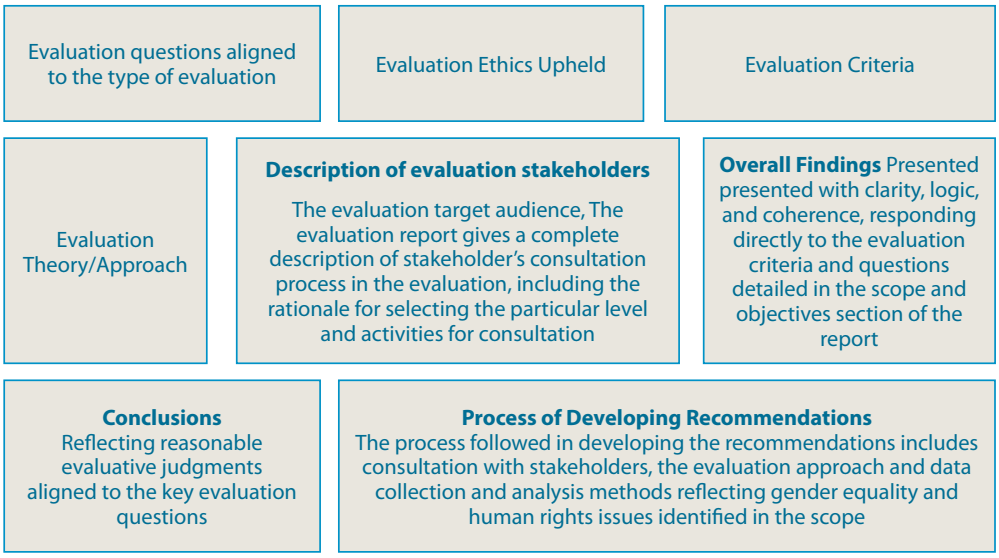


Figure 18 Quality indicators scoring between 0 and 1

4. DISCUSSION

This study sought to assess the quality of health evaluation reports by means of an evaluation reporting quality assessment framework which had been developed for the purpose. The discussion below highlights the implications of these findings to evaluation reporting in general.

4.1.1 Are existing evaluation reporting guidelines and standards standardised?

A review of evaluation reporting standards reveals the existence of significant variances amongst the documents used to guide evaluators on evaluation reporting. From a review of ten reporting standards, common evaluation reporting elements were identified and these were used to develop an ***Evaluation reporting quality assessment framework.*** According to Ngwabi and Wildschut (2019) and Montrosse-Moorhead and Griffith (2017), the principal challenge in current donor evaluation reporting is the lack of standardised reporting criteria. The review established that although no universal guidelines or standards exist on evaluation reporting, there are important common reporting elements that should be included in all evaluation reports.

4.1.2 What are reporting gaps found in the analysed reports?

The review of the 21 health evaluation reports reveals shortcomings in the following aspects of evaluation reporting:

- *Description of the stakeholders of the evaluation* (a failure to provide adequate information on the evaluation target audience and evaluation reports not giving a complete description of stakeholder's consultation process in the evaluation, including the rationale for selecting the particular level and activities for consultation);
- *Evaluation questions aligned to the type of evaluation;*
- *Evaluation ethics upheld;*
- *Evaluation criteria;*
- *Evaluation theory/approach; and*
- *Overall findings* (a failure to present information with clarity, logic, and coherence, responding directly to the evaluation criteria and questions detailed in the scope and objectives section of the report) and evident inadequacies in terms of the conclusions reflecting reasonable evaluative judgments aligned to the key evaluation questions, the process followed in developing the recommendations including consultation with stakeholders, the evaluation approach and data collection and analysis methods reflecting gender equality and human rights issues identified in the scope.

According to Sandison (2006) and Harris (2010), the manner in which an evaluation is designed, planned, conducted and managed by the client and evaluator is important, and the efficiency of these processes can be assessed by quality and comprehensiveness of the evaluation report. Furthermore, the quality, rigour and credibility of evaluations are substantiated in the evaluation report, and are explicitly measured on the information provided in the report (Rebien, 1997; Weiss, 1998, Sandison, 2006; Harris, 2010; Wong et al, 2016; Montrosse-Moorhead & Griffith, 2017). It can be concluded, therefore, that the gaps identified in the reviewed reports indicate shortcomings in evaluation reporting. This study does not question the credibility of the analysed reports, but it does raise critical and fundamental questions regarding the missing elements in the evaluation reports.

4.1.3 Who is conducting the evaluations?

From the reviewed reports, it is evident that commissioners of evaluations mainly use mixed teams of international and local consultants with the first authors of the evaluations being international consultants. In this regard, the use of African-based evaluation consultants is limited, and, in cases where there is a mixture of international and local consultants, the international consultants take the lead. Accordingly, the findings coincide with findings elsewhere that there is a problem of visibility of the profiles of African evaluators (Mouton, Rabie, De Coning & Cloete, 2014; Ngwabi & Wildschut, 2019).

4.1.4 What do these findings imply on the evaluation reporting in Africa?

- There are limited African-developed evaluation reporting standards and guidelines mak it difficult to determine quality evaluation reporting relevant in the African context.
- The identified gaps on specific elements of evaluation reports raise the questions of what evaluators regard as vital information to be included in the reports and how that information is reported.
- There is a lack of consistency in the way quality is maintained from a commissioner's perspective.
- There is a visibility gap on African evaluators leading and participating in donor-commissioned evaluations.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and discussions of this study the following interventions are recommended:

- African VOPEs and relevant stakeholders should lead in the development and updating of evaluation reporting standards that are contextually responsive and include the nine domains developed in this study.
- International donors and commissioners should ensure that African evaluators lead and participate more in African evaluations.

4.3 CONCLUSION

The quality, validity and credibility of evaluations is principally assessed according to the evaluation reports produced at the conclusion of an evaluation. Whilst donors remain the biggest drivers in development aid evaluations, there are inconsistencies in the various documents providing guidance for evaluators in their production of evaluation reports. This problematic situation necessitated the review and development of an '*Evaluation reporting quality assessment framework' which* was used to review 21 health evaluation reports. Based on the reviewed reports, it is clear that gaps exist in certain reporting elements. It is important to highlight that the quality of evaluation reporting should be investigated further to identify differences in reporting amongst commissioners as this issue was not addressed during this study. For that reason, though valid at the level of abstraction at which they are pitched, the broad claims made in this study should be qualified as they apply to the various different reporting systems.

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ANNEXURE 1: EVALUATION REPORTING QUALITY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

This checklist is intended to help ensure the final product of the evaluation - evaluation report - meets the expected quality. The checklist has 9 domains with a column for comments for the purpose of detailing non-clear elements.

Scoring:

2 = The element is mentioned with detailed information (as per quality indicator expectation)

1 = The element is mentioned but with missing information as per quality indicator expectation (use the comments section to detail)

0= The element is not mentioned at all

Reporting elements	Quality indicators	Score	Comment
The report structure			
1.0 Report is logically structured with clarity and coherence	Background and objectives are presented before findings, and findings are presented before conclusions and recommendations		
2 = The element is mentioned with detailed information (as per quality indicator expectation) 1 = The element is mentioned but with missing information as per quality indicator expectation (use the comments section to detail) 0= The element is not mentioned at all			
1.1 The title page and opening pages provide key basic information	Name of the evaluation		
	Timeframe of the evaluation		
	Report publication date		
	Locations (country, region, etc.) of the evaluation object		
	Names and organizations of evaluators		
	Name of the organisation commissioning the evaluation		
	Table of contents which also lists Tables, Graphs, Figures and Annexes		
	List of acronyms		
2 = The element is mentioned with detailed information (as per quality indicator expectation) 1 = The element is mentioned but with missing information as per quality indicator expectation (use the comments section to detail) 0= The element is not mentioned at all			
1.2 The Executive Summary is a stand-alone section of 2-3 pages	Overview of the evaluand		
	Evaluation objectives and intended audience		
	Evaluation methodology		
	Main findings and conclusions		
	Main recommendations		
2 = The element is mentioned with detailed information (as per quality indicator expectation) 1 = The element is mentioned but with missing information as per quality indicator expectation (use the comments section to detail) 0= The element is not mentioned at all			

Reporting elements	Quality indicators	Score	Comment
1.3 The report includes annexures	ToR		
	List of persons interviewed and sites visited		
	List of documents consulted		
	More details on the methodology, such as data collection instruments		
2 = The element is mentioned with detailed information (as per quality indicator expectation) 1 = The element is mentioned but with missing information as per quality indicator expectation (use the comments section to detail) 0= The element is not mentioned at all			
Evaluand			
2.1 The report presents a clear and full description of the 'Evaluand'	Intervention background and description		
	Intervention Country		
	Intervention Timeframe		
	Intervention logic/theory		
2 = The element is mentioned with detailed information (as per quality indicator expectation) 1 = The element is mentioned but with missing information as per quality indicator expectation (use the comments section to detail) 0= The element is not mentioned at all			
2.2 The report presents a clear and full description of the 'stakeholders' of the evaluation	Intervention funder		
	Intervention implementing agency(s) and partners		
	Intervention beneficiaries		
	Evaluation target audience		
	The evaluation report gives a complete description of stakeholder's consultation process in the evaluation, including the rationale for selecting the particular level and activities for consultation		
2 = The element is mentioned with detailed information (as per quality indicator expectation) 1 = The element is mentioned but with missing information as per quality indicator expectation (use the comments section to detail) 0= The element is not mentioned at all			
General evaluation information			
The report presents a clear and full description of the 'general evaluation Information'	Evaluation purpose, objectives and scope		
	Evaluation type (The report is specific on the type of evaluation)		
	Evaluation questions (The questions are clearly aligned to the type of evaluation)		
	Evaluation questions (The evaluation questions are aligned to the purpose and objectives of the evaluation)		
	Evaluation criteria (The report describes and provides an explanation of the chosen evaluation criteria, performance standards, or other criteria used by the evaluators)		
	Evaluation ethics (The report describes the ethics upheld and where relevant- highlights the ethical clearance obtained for the evaluation)		
2 = The element is mentioned with detailed information (as per quality indicator expectation) 1 = The element is mentioned but with missing information as per quality indicator expectation (use the comments section to detail) 0= The element is not mentioned at all			

Reporting elements	Quality indicators	Score	Comment
Evaluation methodology			
The report presents transparent description of the evaluation methodology	Evaluation theory/approach (The report presents the evaluation theory/ approach used)		
	Methodology (The report presents a transparent description of the methodology applied to the evaluation i.e. Qualitative, Quantitative, Mixed methods)		
	Data collection instruments (The report describes the data collection methods and analysis, the rationale for selecting them, and their limitations)		
	Sampling frame (The report describes the area and population to be represented, rationale for selection, mechanics of selection, numbers selected out of potential subjects, and limitations of the sample)		
	Limitations (the report presents gaps and limitations in the data and/or unanticipated findings)		
2 = The element is mentioned with detailed information (as per quality indicator expectation) 1 = The element is mentioned but with missing information as per quality indicator expectation (use the comments section to detail) 0= The element is not mentioned at all			
Data analysis			
	The report details the techniques used for data analysis		
	The report details the limitations of each analytic procedure		
	Appropriate visualisation is used in the presentation of data (i.e. use of appropriate statistical language and diagrams for Quantitative analysis; use of appropriate qualitative techniques for Quantitative analysis)		
2 = The element is mentioned with detailed information (as per quality indicator expectation) 1 = The element is mentioned but with missing information as per quality indicator expectation (use the comments section to detail) 0= The element is not mentioned at all			
Findings			
The report presents transparent and logical description of the evaluation findings	Findings respond directly to the evaluation criteria and questions detailed in the scope and objectives section of the report		
	Findings are based on evidence derived from data collection and analysis methods described in the methodology section of the report		
	Overall findings are presented with clarity, logic, and coherence		
2 = The element is mentioned with detailed information (as per quality indicator expectation) 1 = The element is mentioned but with missing information as per quality indicator expectation (use the comments section to detail) 0= The element is not mentioned at all			

Reporting elements	Quality indicators	Score	Comment
Conclusions			
The report presents transparent and logical description of the evaluation conclusions	Conclusions present reasonable judgments based on findings and substantiated by evidence		
	The conclusions reflect reasonable evaluative judgments aligned to the key evaluation questions		
	Conclusions present strengths and weaknesses of the object (policy, programmes, project's or other intervention) being evaluated, based on the evidence presented and taking due account of the views of a diverse cross-section of stakeholders)		
2 = The element is mentioned with detailed information (as per quality indicator expectation) 1 = The element is mentioned but with missing information as per quality indicator expectation (use the comments section to detail) 0= The element is not mentioned at all			
Recommendations			
The report presents transparent and logic description of the evaluation recommendations	Recommendations are relevant to the object and purposes of the evaluation, and are supported by evidence and conclusions		
	The report describes the process followed in developing the recommendations including consultation with stakeholders		
	Recommendations are actionable and reflect an understanding of the commissioning organization and potential constraints		
2 = The element is mentioned with detailed information (as per quality indicator expectation) 1 = The element is mentioned but with missing information as per quality indicator expectation (use the comments section to detail) 0= The element is not mentioned at all			
Gender and human rights			
The report presents gender and human rights consideration	The evaluation approach and data collection and analysis methods are gender equality and human rights responsive and appropriate for analysing the gender equality and human rights issues identified in the scope		
2 = The element is mentioned with detailed information (as per quality indicator expectation) 1 = The element is mentioned but with missing information as per quality indicator expectation (use the comments section to detail) 0= The element is not mentioned at all			

ANNEXURE 2: 21 SELECTED EVALUATION REPORTS

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ANNEXURE 3: EVALUATION REPORTS CODEBOOK

Reporting element	Quality indicators
Logically structured with clarity and coherence	• Background and objectives are presented before findings, and findings are presented before conclusions and recommendations_2 • Background and objectives are presented before findings, and findings are presented before conclusions and recommendations_1 • Background and objectives are presented before findings, and findings are presented before conclusions and recommendations_0
Title page and opening pages provide key basic information	• Name of the evaluation_2 • Name of the evaluation_1 • Name of the evaluation_0 • Timeframe of the evaluation_2 • Timeframe of the evaluation_1 • Timeframe of the evaluation_0 • Report publication date_2 • Report publication date_1 • Report publication date_0 • Locations (country, region, etc.) of the evaluation object_2 • Locations (country, region, etc.) of the evaluation object_1 • Locations (country, region, etc.) of the evaluation object_0 • Names and organizations of evaluators_2 • Names and organizations of evaluators_1 • Names and organizations of evaluators_0 • Name of the organization commissioning the evaluation_2 • Name of the organization commissioning the evaluation_1 • Name of the organization commissioning the evaluation_0 • Table of contents which also lists Tables, Graphs, Figures and Annexes_2 • Table of contents which also lists Tables, Graphs, Figures and Annexes_1 • Table of contents which also lists Tables, Graphs, Figures and Annexes_0 • List of acronyms_2 • List of acronyms_1 • List of acronyms_0
The Executive Summary is a stand-alone section of 2-3 pages	• Overview of the evaluand_2 • Overview of the evaluand_1 • Overview of the evaluand_0 • Evaluation objectives and intended audience _2 • Evaluation objectives and intended audience _1 • Evaluation objectives and intended audience _0 • Evaluation methodology _2 • Evaluation methodology _1 • Evaluation methodology _0 • Main findings and conclusions_2 • Main findings and conclusions_1 • Main findings and conclusions_0 • Main recommendations_2 • Main recommendations_1 • 0Main recommendations_4

Reporting element	Quality indicators
The report includes annexes	• ToR_2 • ToR_1 • ToR_0 • List of persons interviewed and sites visited_2 • List of persons interviewed and sites visited_1 • List of persons interviewed and sites visited_0 • List of documents consulted_2 • List of documents consulted_1 • List of documents consulted_0 • More details on the methodology, such as data collection instruments_2 • More details on the methodology, such as data collection instruments_1 • More details on the methodology, such as data collection instruments_0
The report presents a clear and full description of the 'Evaluand'	• Intervention background and description_2 • Intervention background and description_1 • Intervention background and description_0 • Intervention Country_2 • Intervention Country_1 • Intervention Country_0 • Intervention Timeframe _2 • Intervention Timeframe _1 • Intervention Timeframe _0 • Intervention logic/theory_2 • Intervention logic/theory_1 • Intervention logic/theory_0
The report presents a clear and full description of the 'stakeholders' of the evaluation	• Intervention funder_2 • Intervention funder_1 • Intervention funder_0 • Intervention implementing agency(s) and partners_2 • Intervention implementing agency(s) and partners_1 • Intervention implementing agency(s) and partners_0 • Intervention beneficiaries_2 • Intervention beneficiaries_1 • Intervention beneficiaries_0 • Evaluation target audience_2 • Evaluation target audience_1 • Evaluation target audience_0 • The evaluation report gives a complete description of stakeholder's consultation process in the evaluation, including the rationale for selecting the particular level and activities for consultation_2 • The evaluation report gives a complete description of stakeholder's consultation process in the evaluation, including the rationale for selecting the particular level and activities for consultation_1 • The evaluation report gives a complete description of stakeholder's consultation process in the evaluation, including the rationale for selecting the particular level and activities for consultation_0

Reporting element	Quality indicators
The report presents a clear and full description of the 'general evaluation Information'	• Evaluation purpose, objectives and scope_2 • Evaluation purpose, objectives and scope_1 • Evaluation purpose, objectives and scope_0 • Evaluation type (The report is specific on the type of evaluation)_2 • Evaluation type (The report is specific on the type of evaluation)_1 • Evaluation type (The report is specific on the type of evaluation)_0 • Evaluation questions (The questions are clearly aligned to the type of evaluation)_2 • Evaluation questions (The questions are clearly aligned to the type of evaluation)_1 • Evaluation questions (The questions are clearly aligned to the type of evaluation)_0 • Evaluation questions (The evaluation questions are aligned to the purpose and objectives of the evaluation)_2 • Evaluation questions (The evaluation questions are aligned to the purpose and objectives of the evaluation)_1 • Evaluation questions (The evaluation questions are aligned to the purpose and objectives of the evaluation)_0 • Evaluation Criteria (The report describes and provides an explanation of the chosen evaluation criteria, performance standards, or other criteria used by the evaluators)_2 • Evaluation Criteria (The report describes and provides an explanation of the chosen evaluation criteria, performance standards, or other criteria used by the evaluators)_1 • Evaluation Criteria (The report describes and provides an explanation of the chosen evaluation criteria, performance standards, or other criteria used by the evaluators)_0 • Evaluation Ethics (The report describes the ethics upheld and where relevant-highlights the ethical clearance obtained for the evaluation)_2 • Evaluation Ethics (The report describes the ethics upheld and where relevant-highlights the ethical clearance obtained for the evaluation)_1 • Evaluation Ethics (The report describes the ethics upheld and where relevant-highlights the ethical clearance obtained for the evaluation)_0

Reporting element	Quality indicators
The report presents transparent description of the evaluation methodology	• Evaluation Theory/approach (The report presents the evaluation theory/ approach used)_2 • Evaluation Theory/approach (The report presents the evaluation theory/ approach used)_1 • Evaluation Theory/approach (The report presents the evaluation theory/ approach used)_0 • Methodology (The report presents a transparent description of the methodology applied to the evaluation i.e. Qualitative, Quantitative, Mixed Methods)_2 • Methodology (The report presents a transparent description of the methodology applied to the evaluation i.e. Qualitative, Quantitative, Mixed Methods)_1 • Methodology (The report presents a transparent description of the methodology applied to the evaluation i.e. Qualitative, Quantitative, Mixed Methods)_0 • Data collection Instruments (The report describes the data collection methods and analysis, the rationale for selecting them, and their limitations)_2 • Data collection Instruments (The report describes the data collection methods and analysis, the rationale for selecting them, and their limitations)_1 • Data collection Instruments (The report describes the data collection methods and analysis, the rationale for selecting them, and their limitations)_0 • Sampling frame (The report describes the area and population to be represented, rationale for selection, mechanics of selection, numbers selected out of potential subjects, and limitations of the sample)_2 • Sampling frame (The report describes the area and population to be represented, rationale for selection, mechanics of selection, numbers selected out of potential subjects, and limitations of the sample)_1 • Sampling frame (The report describes the area and population to be represented, rationale for selection, mechanics of selection, numbers selected out of potential subjects, and limitations of the sample)_0 • Limitations (the report presents gaps and limitations in the data and/or unanticipated findings)_2 • Limitations (the report presents gaps and limitations in the data and/or unanticipated findings)_1 • Limitations (the report presents gaps and limitations in the data and/or unanticipated findings)_0

Reporting element	Quality indicators
5. Data analysis	• The report details the techniques used for data analysis_2 • The report details the techniques used for data analysis_1 • The report details the techniques used for data analysis_0 • The report details the limitations of each analytic procedure_2 • The report details the limitations of each analytic procedure_1 • The report details the limitations of each analytic procedure_0 • Appropriate visualisation is used in the presentation of data (i.e. use of appropriate statistical language and diagrams for Quantitative analysis; use of appropriate qualitative techniques for Quantitative analysis)_2 • Appropriate visualisation is used in the presentation of data (i.e. use of appropriate statistical language and diagrams for Quantitative analysis; use of appropriate qualitative techniques for Quantitative analysis)_1 • Appropriate visualisation is used in the presentation of data (i.e. use of appropriate statistical language and diagrams for Quantitative analysis; use of appropriate qualitative techniques for Quantitative analysis)_0
The report presents transparent and logical description of the evaluation findings	• Findings respond directly to the evaluation criteria and questions detailed in the scope and objectives section of the report_2 • Findings respond directly to the evaluation criteria and questions detailed in the scope and objectives section of the report_1 • Findings respond directly to the evaluation criteria and questions detailed in the scope and objectives section of the report_0 • Findings are based on evidence derived from data collection and analysis methods described in the methodology section of the report_2 • Findings are based on evidence derived from data collection and analysis methods described in the methodology section of the report_1 • Findings are based on evidence derived from data collection and analysis methods described in the methodology section of the report_0 • Overall findings are presented with clarity, logic, and coherence_2 • Overall findings are presented with clarity, logic, and coherence_1 • Overall findings are presented with clarity, logic, and coherence_0
The report presents transparent and logical description of the evaluation conclusions	• Conclusions present reasonable judgments based on findings and substantiated by evidence_2 • Conclusions present reasonable judgments based on findings and substantiated by evidence_1 • Conclusions present reasonable judgments based on findings and substantiated by evidence_0 • The conclusions reflect reasonable evaluative judgments aligned to the key evaluation questions _2 • The conclusions reflect reasonable evaluative judgments aligned to the key evaluation questions _1 • The conclusions reflect reasonable evaluative judgments aligned to the key evaluation questions _0 • Conclusions present strengths and weaknesses of the object (policy, programmes, project's or other intervention) being evaluated, based on the evidence presented and taking due account of the views of a diverse cross-section of stakeholders)_2 • Conclusions present strengths and weaknesses of the object (policy, programmes, project's or other intervention) being evaluated, based on the evidence presented and taking due account of the views of a diverse cross-section of stakeholders)_1 • Conclusions present strengths and weaknesses of the object (policy, programmes, project's or other intervention) being evaluated, based on the evidence presented and taking due account of the views of a diverse cross-section of stakeholders)_0

Reporting element	Quality indicators
The report presents transparent and logic description of the evaluation recommendations	• Recommendations are relevant to the object and purposes of the evaluation, and are supported by evidence and conclusions_2 • Recommendations are relevant to the object and purposes of the evaluation, and are supported by evidence and conclusions_1 • Recommendations are relevant to the object and purposes of the evaluation, and are supported by evidence and conclusions_0 • The report describes the process followed in developing the recommendations including consultation with stakeholders_2 • The report describes the process followed in developing the recommendations including consultation with stakeholders_1 • The report describes the process followed in developing the recommendations including consultation with stakeholders_0 • Recommendations are actionable and reflect an understanding of the commissioning organization and potential constraints_2 • Recommendations are actionable and reflect an understanding of the commissioning organization and potential constraints_1 • Recommendations are actionable and reflect an understanding of the commissioning organization and potential constraints_0
The report presents gender and human rights consideration	• The evaluation approach and data collection and analysis methods are gender equality and human rights responsive and appropriate for analysing the gender equality and human rights issues identified in the scope_2 • The evaluation approach and data collection and analysis methods are gender equality and human rights responsive and appropriate for analysing the gender equality and human rights issues identified in the scope_1 • The evaluation approach and data collection and analysis methods are gender equality and human rights responsive and appropriate for analysing the gender equality and human rights issues identified in the scope_0



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