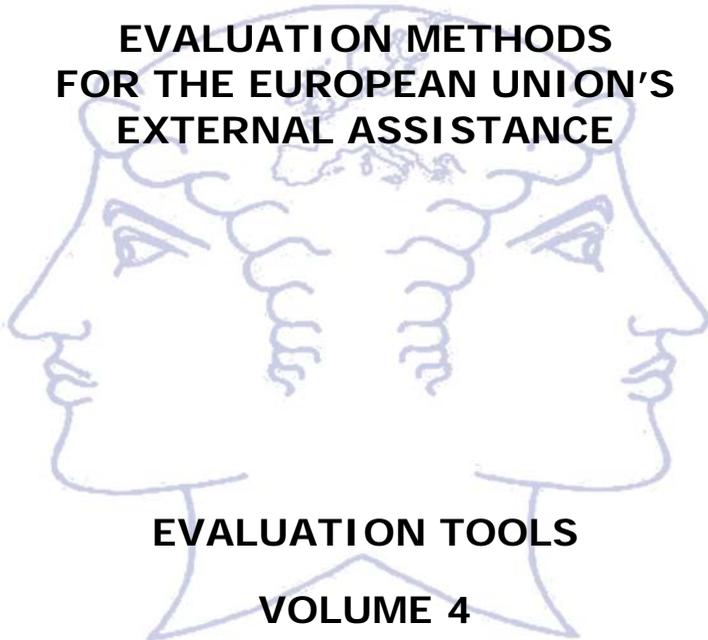**Directorate General External Relations**

Directorate General Development

EuropeAid Co-operation Office

Joint Evaluation Unit

EVALUATION METHODS
FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION'S
EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE

EVALUATION TOOLS

VOLUME 4

Neither the European Commission nor anybody acting in the name of the Commission is responsible for the use that could be made of the information given hereafter.

A great deal of additional information on the European Union's external assistance can be accessed through the Europa server: *http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/index_en.htm*

INTRODUCTION

Overview

The European Commission has developed and formalised a methodology for evaluating its external assistance, in which the priority is on results and impacts. The aim is thus to maintain the quality of its evaluations on a par with internationally recognised best practice.

In the past, the evaluation of European external assistance focused on projects and on certain programmes. The current methodological guidelines are designed to facilitate the move towards an evaluation practice focused more on programmes and strategies. It is intended mainly for:

- evaluation managers at European Commission headquarters and in the Delegations,
- external evaluation teams.

The methodology is also made available to all European external aid partners, as well as the professional evaluation community.

It is available in three languages (English, Spanish and French) and in two forms, optimised for reading and for navigation on the Internet, respectively.

The Internet version includes numerous examples and in-depth analyses. It is available on the European Commission website:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation/index.htm

The printed version consists of four volumes. The <u>first</u> volume "Methodological bases for evaluation" presents the basic concepts and their articulation. The <u>second</u> volume is a handbook for "Geographic and Thematic Evaluation". It pertains to the evaluation of the entire set of Community actions on the scale of a country or region, and the evaluation of all actions relative to a sector or a theme on a global scale. The <u>third</u> volume is a handbook for "Project and Programme Evaluation". It concerns large projects, pilot projects, multi-country programmes and any other project or programme for which an evaluation is required. This <u>fourth</u> volume presents the main techniques for structuring an evaluation, collecting and analysing data, and assistance in formulating judgements.

Evaluation tools

The summarised versions of twelve evaluation tools, generally familiar to evaluators, are proposed in this fourth volume.

A tool for cultural and social analysis was specially developed for the evaluation of European Commission external aid: this is not presented here. It is however detailed on the EC website mentioned above.

These tools have been tested in evaluations undertaken for the European Commission and for other institutions. Examples illustrating the trickiest aspects of their implementation are proposed on the EC website.

In the context of aid to third countries, raw data for statistics are usually difficult to collect. Available data are general and descriptive and require only relatively straightforward processing. The priority is thus on the development of tools based on data which are fairly easy to obtain. For this reason statistical tools are not proposed here.

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1 The combination of tools

1.1 Toolbox

The aim of an evaluation is to produce operational recommendations supported by solid conclusions which are based on clear judgement criteria, solid and concrete information and rational argumentation. The conclusions of the evaluation have to be based on a rigorous demonstration

This demonstration's essential means are the creation of an *ad hoc* method. Such a method has to allow, in the specific context of the evaluation to process, to reach the goals of the evaluation. It is based on the use of appropriate evaluation tools.

1.1.1 Rules for the methodology's application

Generally speaking, the feasibility of field work or the limitations of such a task should be checked. Indeed, specific contexts within the country where the study is to be carried out, such as logistical and implementation constraints, can limit the choice of tools.

Prior to the presentation of the selection criteria for the most appropriate tools for the methodology to be applied, rules for the methodology's application should be recalled:

- No tool can answer a question or fulfil one of the four stages of the evaluation by itself: generally, a combination of tools is needed
- Each of the tools is adapted to a specific stage, sometimes it can be used at several stages
- Several tools are used concurrently during the same stage with different approaches in order to facilitate a triangulation of information
- The selection of evaluation tools depends on the tasks to be achieved and the context: the degree of difficulty of the intervention, the quality of the available expertise, the nature of information to be collected, the multiplicity of the interlocutors, etc.
- Unless it is asked, the set of tools selected for the evaluation method has to be homogeneous enough regarding the precision of the collected information and the analysis level.

In short, the evaluation team should use several tools and choose the most efficient combination of tools for the specific context of the evaluation.

1.1.2   Development of a homogeneous methodology package

The methodology design should aim at an effective package of tools of a fairly homogeneous technical level. It is pointless to use sophisticated tools if the necessary information cannot be obtained with a satisfactory precision or if the tools used furtheron do not need this precision.

The data collection stage must be carefully managed because if it leads to incomplete findings, the organisation of a new information collection during the field stage is challenging. The same attention should be given to analysis and judgement tools to be implemented in the country under evaluation.

It is therefore useful to assess the risk of an unsuccessful implementation for each tool, and plan fall-back solutions in order to limit the impact of such a failure on the evaluation as a whole.

In essence, the methodology should be constructed with a range of available tools and take into account their advantages and limitations, the conditions for their implementation in the context of development assistance evaluations. The methodology also has to take into account the boundaries of the results that they allow to reach, particularly according to the context. The resources that are necessary to the set up of the elaborated method also have to be planned.

1.1.3   Seeking good combinations

Using certain tools requires the implementation of other tools. Among others when the information produced by a tool are used by another one. It is also the case when the conclusions issued by a tool can be qualified or confirmed by another one with a different analysis viewpoint. When it comes to relatively complex tools (such as judgement ones), before deciding on their use, it is important to look into the information requirements for better tool performance, and then find the tool that will be able to yield such information.

1.2 Importance of the documentary stage

Although this volume 4 does not present a dedicated tool for the documentary stage, the collection of information from the European Commission services and on-site, especially when using databases, is an important element of any evaluation.

The following indicative list sets out the main documentary sources (secondary data) to be consulted for a country evaluation:

- Overall agreements, bilateral/multilateral and sector-based/thematic agreements (trade, investment, science and technology, etc.), partnership and cooperation agreements, association-agreements, and conclusions of bilateral and multilateral conferences
- Country/Regional Strategy Papers (CSPs and RSPs) and National/Regional Indicative Papers (NIPs and RIPs)
- Annual reports and mid-term reviews
- The European Court of Auditors' reports
- Governmental strategy papers (such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) and available sector-based strategies) and papers produced by multilateral and bilateral co-operation agencies (strategy papers, project papers, etc.)
- Thematic or sector-based project and programme evaluations
- Result oriented monitoring reports (ROM) on projects and programmes in progress
- The European Commission's general regulations and all regulation documentation and political agreements covering the evaluation's period.

Concerning sectorial evaluations, the list of possible sources is as important, but more focused on the sector concerned. In the case of a project or programme evaluation, the list of sources is considerably less important.

1.3 The tools and the evaluation's four functions

A first selection can be made when the tools are classified within the four tasks of the evaluation.

The table below sets out the tasks for which each tool is normally used and other tasks where it could be usefully incorporated. Most tools have a main function and one or more secondary functions. This list is indicative only.

Box 1 - Evaluation stages and polyvalence of the tools

Tools	Organisa-tion	Observation / collection	Analysis	Judgement
Objectives diagram and impact diagram	Secondary			Main
Problem diagram	Secondary		Main	
Decision diagram	Secondary		Main	
Interview	Main	Secondary		
Focus group		Secondary	Main	
Survey		Secondary	Main	
Case study		Main	Secondary	
SWOT			Secondary	Main
Context indicators	Main		Secondary	Main
Expert panel			Secondary	Main
Cultural and social analysis		Main	Secondary	
Multicriteria analysis	Main		Main	Secondary
Cost-effectiveness analysis			Main	Secondary

Main function	
Secondary function	

1.3.1 Organisation tools

The organisation of the evaluation can usefully be supported by a series of tools called organisation tools. In homogeneous project or programme evaluations, the normal organisation tool is the logical framework which describes the objectives (overall and specific) of the intervention, the issues to which the evaluation is expected to seek an answer. A problem diagram can usefully complement the logical framework.

Evaluations where the scope includes a range of heterogeneous objectives and activities (such as geographic evaluations), theoretically require three tools, the objectives diagram and the impact diagram being the core organisation tools. In complex programmes or strategies, the problem diagram brings precision on the relevance of objectives, identifies the goals and issues of the interventions, as well as the problems neglected by the evaluation's objectives. The decision diagram complements the objectives diagram with information about the reasons for the programme's orientations, and especially the basis for the rejection and negotiation of options.

These tools are also usable in the stages of analysis and judgement formulation.

1.3.2 Collection, analysis and judgement tools

During these three evaluation stages, a large range of tools is available, complementary to each other and/or polyvalent. As a consequence, numerous factors are taken into account to make an efficient choice. Although no rule securing an optimal choice exists, a logical process can facilitate the development of a homogeneous methodology which will provide well-grounded answers to the evaluation questions.

1.3.3 Polyvalent nature of the tools

The resources allocated for an evaluation are not sufficient for the implementation of all the tools mentioned previously. Choices must be made with respect to the evaluation's priorities and the maximisation of the use of resources. The wider the scope and questioning, the greater the risk of dispersion, which means that the evaluation team must ensure that their observations and analyses provide answers to the most essential issues of the evaluation. The evaluation team should remember that several

tools are usually relevant for the same evaluation stage and can be used to confirm the information, and that the tools are often polyvalent and can answer several questions at the same time.

1.4   Selection criteria for the tools

Besides the tools' specific functions and their ability to be applied in one of the four stages of the evaluation, other selection criteria should be examined.

The selection criteria set out below should guide the evaluator through a series of choices needed for the development of the methodology.

- **Knowledge of the techniques.** All the tools suggested here have to be implemented by the evaluation teams. Concerning some tools, it is preferable that one member of the team already experienced it. It is the case of tools that require the knowledge of group moderation skills techniques. Complex tools such as multi-criterial analysis, cost-efficiency analysis and surveys are also concerned.

- **Need for specific data**. The implementation of some tools requires the collection of specific data without which their conclusions would be ill-founded. For example, the implementation of cost-effectiveness analysis is impossible without indicators of effectiveness measuring comparable projects. Their availability and reliability must therefore be checked before the cost-effectiveness analysis is used.

- **The prerequisites for the tool's usage**. This issue is particularly important for tools whose implementation takes place during the field stage in the partner country. As the implementation of such tools often generates high costs, their relevance within the overall methodology, cost-effectiveness and efficiency (particularly for the data collection) must be secured.

- **Implementation time**. Some tools, such as the surveys and some types of focus group investigations and expert panels, need a preparation stage before their implementation on-site.

- **The availability of qualified local experts**, capable of conducting specific tools in the local language. This issue is particularly crucial for tools requiring group moderating skills (focus groups, etc.) for which available and skillful experts are sometimes hard to find.

1.5 Check-list for the tool's implementation

Check-list for the evaluators

- Can each evaluation question be convincingly answered when using appropriate tools?

- Will the selection of tools help in formulating an overall assessment?

- Does the implementation of the tools selected provide relevant answers to the evaluation's objectives?

- Is each tool suited to the specific constraints and possibilities of the evaluation?

- Does the organisation of each of the tools take into account all the prerequisites for their implementation?

- Have the necessary resources for each tool (abilities, numbers of days, cost) been precisely estimated?

Check-list for managers

- Are the answers provided for each of the evaluation questions supported by the results of an effective combination of tools?

- Does the use of appropriate tools support the overall assessment?

- Is the choice of each tool and their combination clearly and convincingly explained?

- Are the available resources for the tool's implementation (experts, budget, time span) being effectively used?

2   Problem diagram

2.1   Why is this tool used in evaluation?

The analysis of problems is a means to test the validity of the objectives of a project, a programme or a strategy. As a programme aims at solving a range of problems, the evaluation should be concerned with the validity of its analysis. The evaluators should therefore check:

- The validity of the procedure: how have the problems been identified and classified?

- The apparent coherence of the problems' linkage: are their causal links relevant?

Box 2 - Analysis of the problems in the project cycle and in the strategy policy co-ordination cycle

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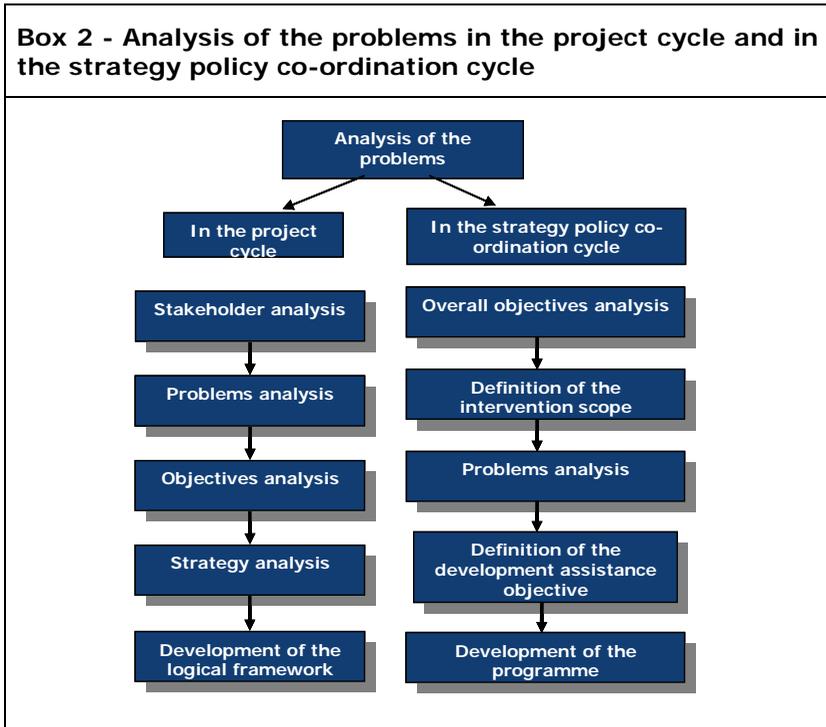
Programmes and strategies depend on the analysis of the situation when the strategy or the programme was conceived. The

evaluation team can be explicitly asked to issue a judgment on the quality of the analysis and the conformity between the analysis of the situation and the strategy or the programme. As a retrospective construction, the problems diagram allows to check whether the analysis is coherent and pertinent when it comes to main or contextual problems. It can validate the relevance of the strategy shown in the diagrams of the objectives and effects.

2.2 What are the possible uses of these diagrams?

When it is impossible to directly establish objectives diagrams, problem diagrams play an essential role in the organisation stage of the evaluation. Problem diagrams present a summarised vision of the situation to be improved, partially at least, by the strategy. The classified objectives included in the strategy should be deduced from the problems diagrams.

Box 3 — The links between causes, problems and goals.
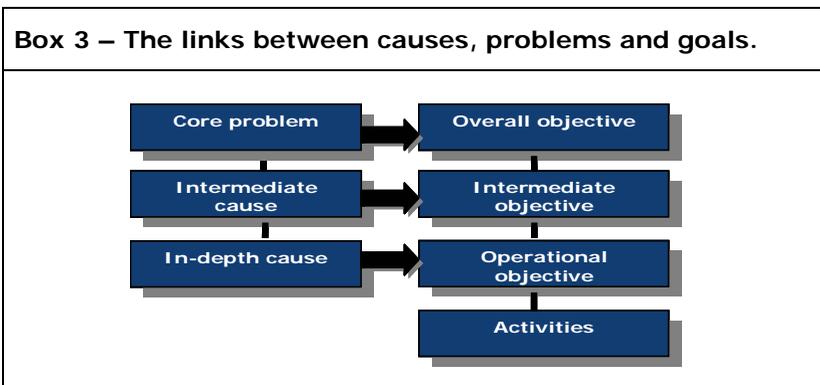
The reconstruction of the problem diagram includes a step which differentiates between context problems and intervention problems. As a consequence, the diagram resulting from this selection should be completely convertible into a logically reconstructed objectives diagram, i.e. the higher-order overall objective corresponds to the central problem and each row of subordinated objectives to its equivalent row of problems.

2.2.1 How is the problem diagram constructed?

Stage 1: How to identify the problems?

Record the references to the problems found in the documentation: quotations from the evaluation's baseline documents are used to identify problems which may not be systematically depicted as such in the texts. Sometimes, problems are identified as assistance objectives or impacts targeted by these objectives. Problems are thus expressed as:

- Problems (presented as such)
- Objectives, whose goal is to resolve explicitly or implicitly a problem
- Expected impacts of the CSP assistance.

The problems directly targeted by the intervention may not be explicitly identified. Central problems and context problems can be intermingled, which complicates the construction of the diagram. The evaluator will only be able to differentiate the two types of problems after the completion of the diagram.

The crucial stage of the process is the identification of the central problem among the variety of the selected problems. Three situations can be encountered:

- The central problem is mentioned in the documentation
- The central problem is not clearly mentioned, whereas the overall objective is. In this case, the evaluator can deduce the central problem from the higher-order objective
- Neither the central problem, nor the overall objective is explicitly mentioned.

In the last situation, the evaluator plays the role of the planning manager, and decides which of the problems will be the central problem. He may:

- Take the decision, on the basis of his/her rationale
- Benefit from the assistance of specialists during interviews or working sessions.

The selection of the central problem should be conducted concurrently with the classification of the problems into levels. Indeed, the selection of the central problem should be supported and justified by the coherence of the whole diagram.

Stage 2: How to construct a problem diagram?

Box 4 - Stages involved in drafting a temporary diagram

First classification of the problems by levels

Establishment of the first problem diagram

Inconsistencies and missing elements may appear: the modifications result from the evaluator's interpretations and must be presented as such
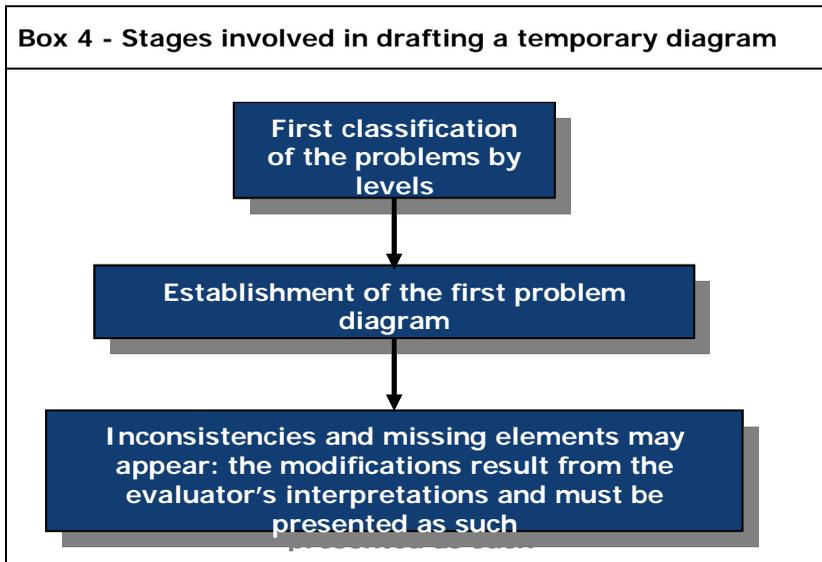
Usage highlights the fact that these two types of problems/causes are the easiest to identify, whereas intermediary causes are the hardest to determine and classify. Thus, it is recommended that the development of the diagram starts with its extremities at the same time.

Stage 3: Test the temporary diagram

Where possible, the authors of the documentation referred to above should test the diagram in order to validate the classification of the problems by rows and links. The aim is to check that the evaluator's interpretation reflects the authors' intention correctly. If the authors are not available or, in order to complement their original contribution, the evaluator should consider asking for the participation of other actors responsible for the drafting process.

Contacting the authors is usually possible when the documentation is recent and the authors are still in their position or contactable in one of the services. This task is challenging when the documentation is old and its authors are not easily identifiable or contactable.

Box 5 - Problem diagram in the transport sector

Stage 4: Develop the final version of the problem diagram

The final version takes into account the opinions collected during the testing of the temporary diagram. It is an accurate account of the initial intentions logically reconstructed of the European Commission, taken from official documentation.

2.3   What resources are required?

Most of the graphical problems can be solved with the software Microsoft® Office PowerPoint®. Softwares designed to help people to take decisions such as Microsoft® Visio®, TeamUP-PCM for Windows, Palisade PrecisionTree can also be tested.

Box 6 - The resource requirements	
The time span	Collecting data: 5 to 10 working days
	Data analysis: 5 to 10 working days
	Test: 0,5 to 5 working days
Human resources	Multidisciplinary team of experienced evaluators, whose specialities should cover the thematic evaluation scope. Knowledge of the European Commission's strategies and programmes development procedures.
	Knowledge of computer tools. Experience in the fields covered by the strategies and programmes
	Specific knowledge of the country, sector and theme under consideration
Financial resources	A budget less than €5,000 should be fixed for the problem diagram, objective diagram and decision diagram.

2.4 What are the advantages and limitations of the tool?

Box 7 - The advantages and limitations of the tool

Advantages	**Presentation of the problems** The diagram presents the various problems and their relationship with the central problem through a system of rows. It displays the causal logical links between them or, conversely, the poor logic of these links. **central problems and contextual problems** In the analysis of the situation, the diagram distinguishes the problems relating to the activity's context from the problems to be solved by the strategy and the planning. As a consequence, its construction requires the highlighting of priorities of the development assistance, and explains why certain problems are considered as important features of the strategy while others are not. **Definition of the objectives** The problem diagram enables the evaluator to: • Reveal the implicit objectives of the strategy (or the programme) • Check the validity of the objectives presented in the strategy and programming documentation. It contributes to the organisation of the evaluation around a crucial question, which should be systematically answered: To what extent have the objectives been achieved?

Limitations	**Quality of the analysis**
	The methodology for the analysis does not guarantee high quality of the data, for neither the methodology, nor the sources of information are usually mentioned in the strategic, political and programming papers. The evaluator must therefore systematically enlarge the assessment to include the sources of the analysis displayed in these documents. The methodology used, the nature of the main sources of information and the identity of the authors should also be noted.
	Selection of the central problem
	The selection of the **central** problem, which is crucial for the construction of the diagram, is particularly challenging when the objectives of the activities are general and the whole range of the country's problems (or the region's) are to be considered. The documentation may show two **central** problems which lack links between them, or may appear insufficient for the determination of a single **central** problem.
	Tree-like illustration
	The standard setting of the challenges into a tree diagram illustrates a straightforward classification, which does not always highlight the complexity of the situation and the interactions between issues. Indeed, the construction of diagrams depends on graphical conventions, such as:
	• There should be no illustration of interactions between problems of the same row
	• There should be no illustration of feedback links (effects become causes and vice versa)
	• Several boxes can illustrate several problems' single cause
	More sophisticated representations should therefore be tried.
	Knowledge of the situation in the country or the region
	The evaluation team may lack a sufficient understanding of the country or the region under consideration to assess the relevance of the analysis undertaken, the determination and the logical setting of the central problem.

2.5   Check-lists

Check-list for evaluators

- Has a clear agreement from the evaluation reference group been obtained on the period concerned and on the relevant documentation?

- Has the date of the documentation been confirmed by their authors or contributors?

- In case of inaccessibility or uncertainty about the relevance of the collected documentation, has the risk encountered been indicated?

- Are assumptions, underpinning the classification of problems, formulated in the report?

- Have all assumptions and doubts about positioning been clarified into the hierarchical organization of problems?

- Have the wording and classification of problems been checked during a new reading of the documentation?

- Has the temporary diagram been tested with the authors of the documentation, or in case of unavailability of the authors, has the testing been enlarged to competent managers? If not, is this situation clearly stated in the report?

- During the establishment of the logically reconstructed diagram, has the baseline documentation been consulted to support hypotheses?

- Have the opinions of the authors and other managers been compared to the documents and was there a triangulation of the perspectives?

- Are the documentary references and quotations presented in the report? Are the specialists who have been consulted quoted in the report?

- Has the problem diagram been compared to the effects diagram?

Check-list for managers

- Has the temporary diagram been tested?

- Have the opinions of the authors and other managers been compared to the documents and was there a triangulation of the perspectives?

- Are the documentary references and quotations presented in the report? Are the specialists who have been consulted quoted in the report? Have the specialists consulted been quoted in the report?

- Was the problem diagram compared with the objectives diagram and the effects diagram?

3   Objectives diagram and impact diagram

3.1   Why are these tools used in evaluation?

These diagrams are usually used as organisation tools. They provide a framework for the information collection and the undertaking of in-depth interviews during the assessment of the programme or strategy. They relate direct outcomes and field impacts with the expected objectives and impacts of the programme. The construction of the diagrams should therefore constitute one of the first tasks of the evaluation.

The objectives diagram illustrates the objectives classification, from the global objective to detailed operational objectives.

The impact diagram displays the classification of the results, outcomes and impacts of what is intended from the implementation of the objectives system.

Box 8 - Rationale of the objectives diagram and the impact diagram

| Objectives expressed in strategy and planning papers | → | Objectives diagram | → | Impact diagram |
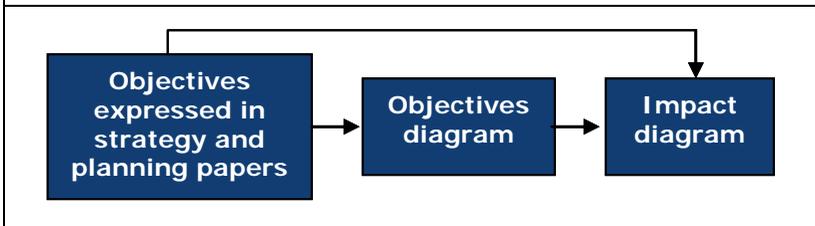
3.2   What are the possible uses of these diagrams?

In the evaluation context, diagrams are used to reconstruct the intervention logic of the European Commission's support to the country. This reconstructed logic will be shaped into one or more logical diagrams of effect. Prior to the preparation of effect diagram(s), the team will have to prioritise the stated cooperation objectives and translate these into intended effects. These intended effects will form the "boxes" of the diagram(s). Possible "holes" in the intervention logic will be indicated and filled on the

basis of assumptions to be validated by the reference group. The impact diagram(s) will help to identify the main evaluation questions.

Box 9 - Example of an objectives diagram
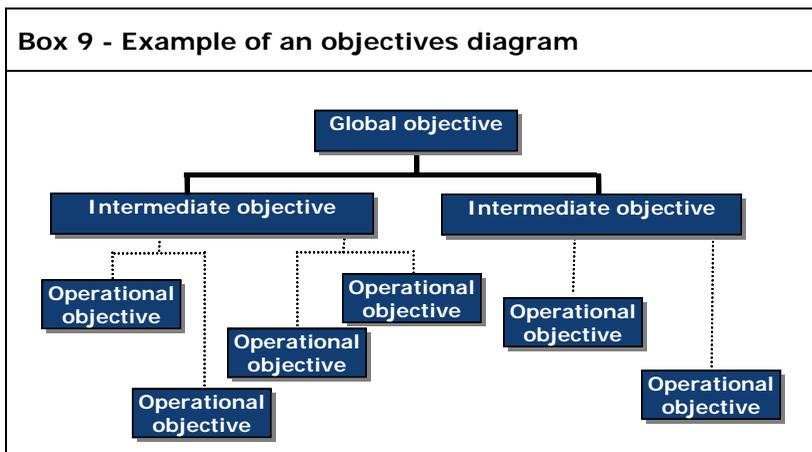
The faithfully reconstructed objectives diagram displays the objectives system and provides the evaluator with a first approach to the strategy and policies inner quality. Indeed, an unclear, incomplete or incoherent diagram means a lack of relevance in the resulting planning or a lack of faithfulness to the initial objectives system.

During the implementation of the strategy or programme, external events, such as the evolution of the world commodities market price, elections, political changes, or the conclusion of international agreements can influence the achievement of the objectives and expected outcomes. Comments dealing with the discrepancies between the expected and the observed outcomes should take these events into account.

A would-be coherence

Diagrams establish logical links between objectives or impacts. Each objective or impact is presented as logically dependent on a higher row objective or impact. The outputs of the activities implemented or scheduled by the programme appear as a contributions to the overall objective/impact and support the coherence of the objectives and impact system.

A strategy or a programme hardly completes the full scope of its overall objective. The objectives and effect diagrams do not

display the choices made to reach each objective or to obtain each effect. Unless the evaluation can find an explicit explanation of the choices made in strategic documentation, it must provide an answer to series of questions:

- Do these choices represent the only possibilities?
- Are the objectives the most relevant ones for the row 'x'?
- What external factors have led to this selection?
- What reasons have led to the elimination of certain objectives?

3.3   How are they constructed?

After determining the evaluation scope, the evaluators should construct a diagram illustrating the objectives presented in the strategy and planning documents. The objectives diagram is drawn from this diagram.

When the evaluation scope covers one or more strategy papers (geographical) or strategic policies (sector-based, thematic), it is recommended that one diagram per document is created (unless there is a logical continuity in the strategy or the policy).

When a logical framework has supported the drafting of a programme, it clearly states the various levels of objectives targeted by the programme. The logical framework is consequently a reference point for the evaluation, as a consequence of the presentation of the objectives diagram's basic constituents. Although the establishment of result-based logical frameworks has not yet been generalised, the impact diagram can usually be deduced from the logical framework of the intervention's objectives.

The objectives diagram and impact diagram can also be used in evaluations for projects and programmes whose rationale is not explicit in the logical framework. In practice, the objectives and intended impacts of complex policies and strategies often lack explicit presentation and logical structure, whereas the justification for an evaluation is to be able to answer the following question: Have the objectives or intended impacts of the policy or the strategy under assessment been achieved?

3.3.1 What are the preparation stages for the construction of the diagrams?

Stage 1: Delimit the evaluation scope

The terms of reference include information about the timeframe and the financial tools to be assessed. Note that projects and programmes originating from previous documentation can also be implemented during this timeframe.

Stage 2: Identify the objectives and impacts

Collect the documentation required for the establishment of the diagrams. It should comprise:

- Policies, strategies and programmes baseline documentation
- Complementary official documentation.

An overall analysis of the break points in the global strategy should be undertaken, without including the objectives of the projects and programmes in progress and scheduled for a different timeframe from the one assessed.

Establish a list of the objectives recorded in this documentation.

Stage 3: Construct a faithfully reconstructed objectives diagram

A provisional classification could be carried out on the basis of the distinction between three levels of objectives:

- Higher-order objectives (goals)
- Intermediate objectives
- Operational objectives.

The definition of the logical relationship is paramount in the classification. This task is a question of experience, because the decision of the evaluation team that two events are logically connected depends on the judgement of experts in the field under study, and managers responsible for the implementation of the strategy and policies.

Stage 4: Convert the faithfully reconstructed objectives diagram into a logically reconstructed objectives diagram

Some faithfully reconstructed objectives diagrams may reveal logical defects in strategy or political papers, such as:

- Strategy or political papers involving a range of objectives without sufficient details to classify them
- No definition of the higher-order objective (goals)
- Weak relevance of the causal links between objectives
- The objectives of a given row do not result in any objectives.

In order to prepare a comprehensive and coherent objectives diagram, the evaluation team will need all available documentation, its own expertise and, if required, that of experts.

Each of these rationalisation operations should be explained in a technical note.

Stage 5: Construct the impact diagram

Objectives diagrams and intended impact diagrams share the same rules of construction. The impact diagram is constructed from the conversion of each of the objectives into the corresponding intended impact:

- The higher-order objective corresponds to the higher-order impact
- Intermediate objectives correspond to intermediate impacts or outcomes
- Operational objectives correspond to results.

Computer devices

Most of the graphical issues can be solved by using the software Microsoft® Office PowerPoint®.

3.3.2 How are the findings presented?

Objectives diagrams are established during the organisation stage, where reports and notes should be provided. At this stage, the diagram's construction must be precisely described.

For the faithfully reconstructed objectives diagram, the sources of the objectives/effects (quotations, references to the original documentation) must be provided. References to documentation, interviews and expertise must support the objectives' location in the diagram, and the assumptions developed during the construction of the diagram must be explained.

Box 10 - Example of the EC strategy in Tanzania
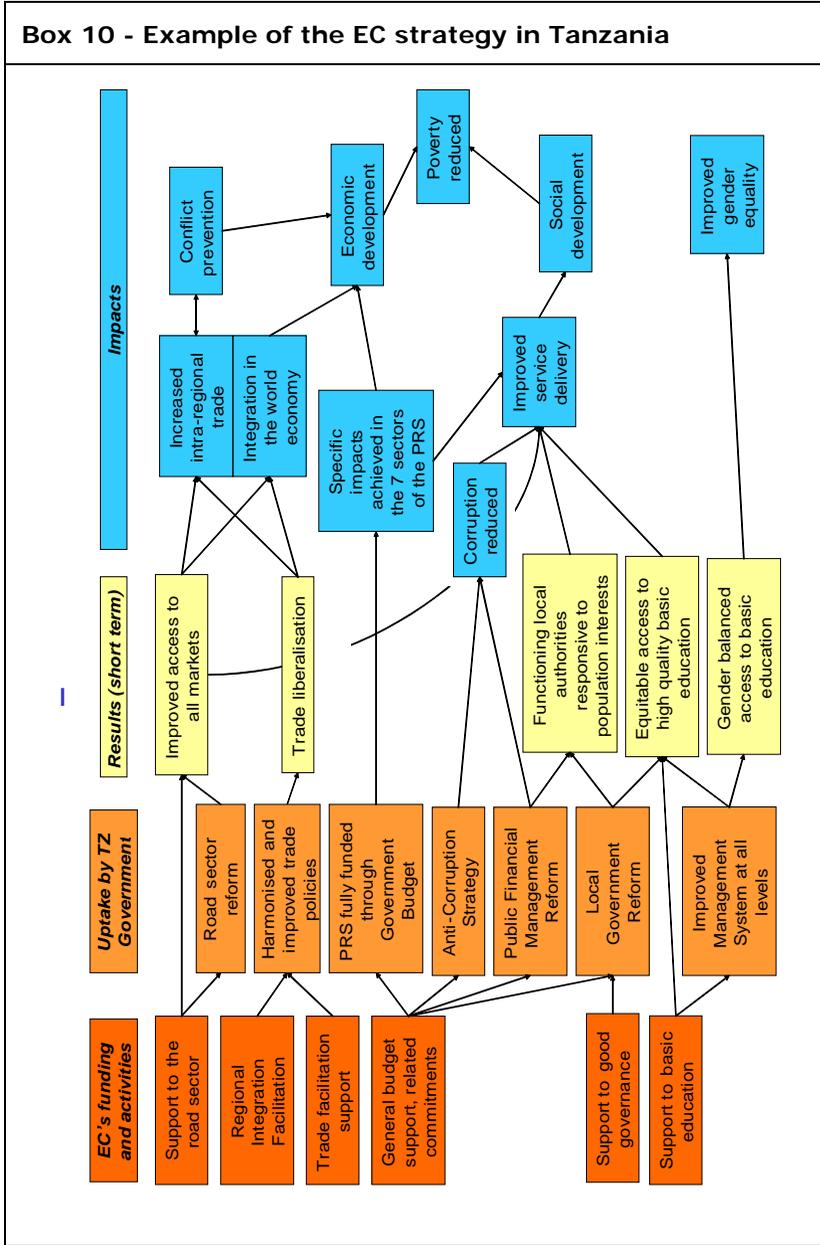
The process through which the logically reconstructed objectives diagram has been extracted from the faithfully reconstructed objectives diagram must also be clearly explained.

3.3.3 Verbal presentations

The evaluation team will need to present its work (methodology and findings) to different types of people (the evaluation reference group, participants in debriefing sessions). The objectives diagram and/or the effect diagram are very efficient tools for this purpose, providing that they are readable without being over-simplistic.

To do so, a main diagram, and several sub-diagrams developing fundamental sections of the main diagram, should be presented; each of them not exceeding 20 items (boxes).

3.4 What resources are required?

Box 11 - The resource requirements	
The time span	Collection of the documentation and identification of the objectives: 4 to 6 working days
	Analysis and construction of the diagrams: 5 to 10 working days
	Test of the diagrams: 1 to 4 working days
Human resources	Knowledge of the European Commission's development procedures for strategies and programmes
	Knowledge of strategies and programme documentation
	Knowledge of computer tools
	Logical process of thinking
	Experience in the fields covered by the strategies and programmes
	Specific knowledge of the country
Financial resources	A budget around €5,000 should be fixed for the problem diagram, objective diagram and decision diagram.

3.5 What are the advantages and limitations of the tool?

Box 12 - The advantages and limitations of the tool	
Advantages	Logical classification of the objectives and the impacts: the diagram explicitly illustrates the objectives/effects and their various rows, from the global objective (more or less long term), down to the range of activities that have already been implemented or are to be undertaken. It reveals the logical links between objectives/effects, or the lack of a linkage. Definition of the evaluation questions : the questions on which the evaluation should be focused on can be issued by the diagram in order to answer to the main interrogation : "To what extent have the stated objectives and the intended effects been achieved?" Presentation of the strategy: when the objectives diagram is well structured and clearly presented, it is a valuable educational tool which facilitates the understanding of the strategy.
Limitations	Replacing the objectives tree for the objectives diagram in the illustration of the objectives system avoids most of the construction constraints and their inherent limitations (with one exception: the representation of retroactive links). A simplified representation of reality: as a chart, the diagram is a simplified representation of reality, and its educational value depends on the selection of a sensible degree of simplification. In order to avoid an over-simplification of the facts, the evaluator can develop sub-diagrams focusing on specific parts of the main diagram.

3.6 Check-lists

Check-list for evaluators

- Has the preliminary analysis of the strategies under evaluation been undertaken?

- Has the opinion of the reference group been appealed to?

- Has the preliminary analysis of the institutions participating in the preparation and implementation of the strategy and/or the programmes been undertaken?

- Has the list of the relevant documents been established?

- Has the list been submitted to the group in charge of monitoring of evaluation (Reference group, generally)?

- Has the dating of the documents been confirmed by their authors or contributors?

- Has a cross-reading of the documentation been conducted? Has it clarified the problems analysis?

- Have the missing elements been sought (?) during the test?

- Are hypotheses and uncertainties about the objectives' links clearly stated?

- Have they been checked with authors/and or contributors during the test?

- Was the test extended to other persons in charge if the authors weren't reachable?

- Was what the authors or persons in charge said compared with the documents?

- Was there a triangulation of the perspectives?

- Have specialists been consulted by means of written exchanges, if necessary?

- Are the documentary and quote references issued?

- Are the consulted specialists credited?

Check-list for managers

- In order to back up the hypothesis, have the fundamental documents been consulted?

- Are the documentary and quote references issued?

- Have the hypothesis and uncertainties been clarified?

- Were the authors or persons in charge consulted confronted with the documents?

- Was there a triangulation of the perspectives?

4   Decision diagram

4.1   Why is this tool used in evaluation?

The decision diagram sketches the strategy drafting process, particularly for the selection of key information, the participation of stakeholders in the process, and the management of the implementation arrangements. It highlights the choices that have been made when the strategy was elaborated as well as the consequences of the selected objectives and their forecast impact. The decision diagram is a useful complement to the objectives diagram

The documents which present co-operation strategies usually display a range of objectives among which one or occasionally more global objectives, operational objectives relative to development assistance projects, and a range of intermediary objectives at various levels can be identified. The selection carried out by the authors of the strategic and programming documents depends on various sources:

- Recommendations of the European institutions (Council, Parliament, Commission)
- Analyses of the external events (major events, country situation)
- Intervention of non-European Commission actors (partner governments, Member States, other donors)
- Lessons learned in previous programmes or projects.

The aim of the decision diagram is to describe the impacts of such orientations, contextual data and analyses. Indeed, each box of the diagram's central column represents a choice (selected and rejected objectives), while the boxes on each side illustrate the flow of inputs which represents the external justification for these choices.

4.2 What are the possible uses of these diagrams?

The decision diagram highlights:

- The range of options for the establishment of the objectives system (overall objective, selected and rejected intermediary objectives, etc.)
- The external events influencing the decision-making.

The decision diagram facilitates the analysis of the strategy in terms of internal coherence (logical succession of the choices) and external relevance (contextual elements and position of the stakeholders).

When the terms of reference of an evaluation require an analysis of the partnership, the diagram is used to highlight the intervention of the main partners (governments, Member States and other donors) in the strategy design, the establishment of the programmes and the selection of the projects.

The diagram can perform the same role for the analysis of the 3 Cs (Co-ordination, Complementarity, Coherence).

4.3 How is the decision diagram constructed?

Box 13 – Steps involved in the decision diagram's construction

Determination of the points when the decision were made

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Drafting of questions

↓

Information collection

↓

Constructing the temporary diagram

↓

Testing of the temporary diagram

↓

Constructing the final diagram
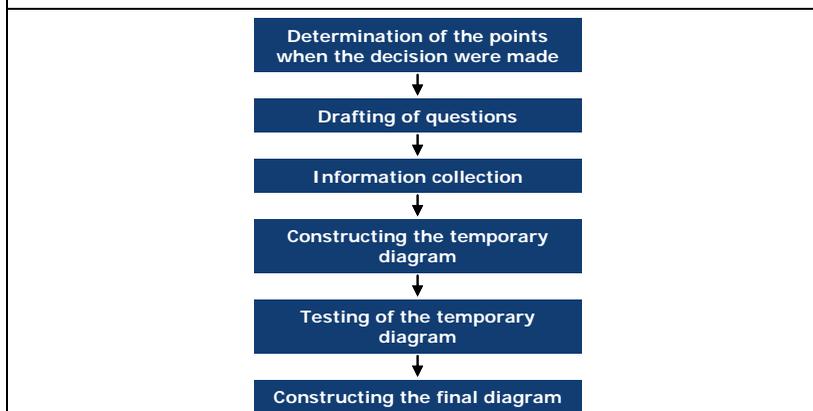
The drafting process of the decision diagram continues in two steps:

- Determination of the points at which the decision-making took place (selection of the objectives)
- Identifying, collecting and analysing of the relevant information.

4.3.1 What are the preparation stages for the construction of the diagrams?

Stage 1: Determination of the points when the decisions were made

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Box 14 – Sketch of the moment of the decision-making: example of first row intermediary objectives

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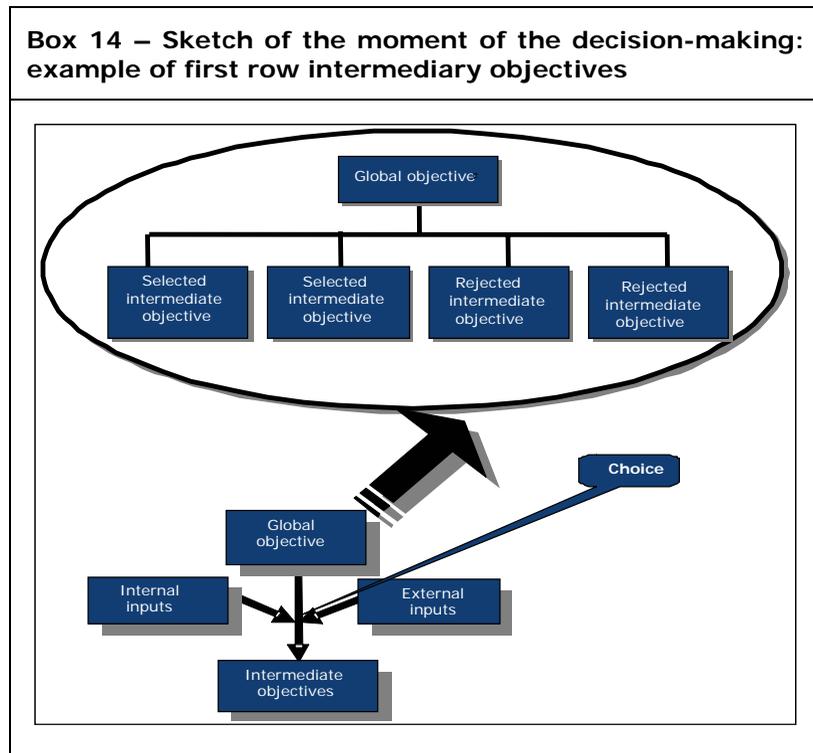
Usually, the establishment of the decision diagram follows the construction of the objectives diagram. The objectives diagram is the basic tool for identifying the points at which the decision-making takes place. Apart from the definition of the overall

objective, each intersection of the diagram represents a decision-making point. It stimulates the following questions: Why have these objectives been selected? Why have others been rejected?

Stage 2: Drafting of questions

The questions focus on the justification of the selection of objectives. The identification of the rejected objectives helps the accuracy of the wording of questions. How are these objectives identified? At each decision-making point, the evaluator may encounter four situations:

- Strategy and planning papers explain why certain objectives have been rejected and identify reasons to support the decision

- Working papers (interim versions, notes and various correspondences) provide elements to pinpoint rejected objectives and may justify the choices made (in principle, they always include the positions of Member States and the response of the European Commission)

- The documentation available does not explain the choices made, but interviews with the decision-makers provide relevant information

- The evaluators have not collected any written or verbal information relevant to the explanation of the choices made.

In the first three situations, the evaluators should investigate which of the objectives were planned but eventually rejected, and the reasons for rejection. In the last situation, would-be objectives should be identified.

Stage 3: Collection of useful information

Before the construction of the diagram, the quality of the sources of information should be checked. If this verification reveals insufficient sources, the construction of the diagram should be abandoned.

Usually, written information can be found in four types of documents:

- Strategy papers and programmes can provide information about the lessons learned from previous implementations, the political, economic and social context, and the interventions of Member States and the main donors

- The preparatory documentation (meeting reports, notes at the end of preparatory missions, correspondence, internal notes or notes between services) may provide explanations about the priorities chosen
- Evaluations can be valuable in terms of lessons learned
- The European Council and Commission's more general documents (conclusions, recommendations, reports), as well as the international treaties and agreements often display the contextual elements, lessons learned and priorities which are known to the designers of strategies and programmes.

The evaluation team should formulate its conclusions about the quality of the sources in terms of quantity, relevance, reliability and accessibility. This judgement is presented to the managers, who take the final decision.

Stage 4: Constructing the temporary diagram

Preliminary selection of the relevant information is carried out on the basis of the objectives diagram. It requires:

The establishment of one or more timelines, describing the successive events and/or information included in the drafting process of the strategy and the programme

The selection of texts from the documentation collected, relative to the choice of the objectives and the scheduled assistance process, or relative to the factors influencing such choices

The classification and the construction of an index for the texts

Provisional answers to the evaluation questions are formulated on the basis of the information collected. Some of the questions may not be answered at this stage.

The objectives diagram supports the decisions chain. It identifies four (sometimes five) decision-making points dealing with:

- The global objective
- The first row intermediary objectives
- The secondary row intermediary objectives
- Operational objectives.

The drafting of strategies and programmes is not strictly and exclusively driven by such a rationale. Implicitly or explicitly, the designers begin with an overall objective.

Box 15 - Decision diagram of the Commission's strategy drafting in Tanzania 2000-2007

Row of inputs from the European Union's institutions	Chain of décisions	Row of other inputs

Amsterdam treaty (1)

COM(2000) 212 (2)

Appraisal of previous programmes (4-10)

Cotonou Agreement (3)

Mid-Term Review (11-12)

Situation in Tanzania (13-16)

Internal coherence (18-20)

Donors matrix (17)

Selection of the intervention sectors

Strategy 2001-2007 (21-22)

Portfolio projects

Tanzania's specific demands

Programme 2001-2007 (23)

Internal coherence (18-21)

Coherence among EU's menber states (26-27)

CSP 2001-2007

No available documentation

Numbers referring to the texts in the annexes

Thereafter, they examine which means at the disposal of the European Commission are able to achieve this objective. The successive choices can be synthesised in two points:

- The choice of the global objective
- The choice of the fields and the intervention processes.

At the left of the sketch, a *magnifier* explains the decision's outcome:

- Selected objectives
- Rejected objectives
- A global fishbone shaped diagram is thus completed through detailed diagrams corresponding to each decision-making point.

Stage 5: Testing of the temporary diagram

The decisions and their explanation must be confirmed by the main actors responsible for the drafting of the strategy and the programming, including the European Commission's services (head office and delegations), the representatives of the other stakeholders (Member States, NGOs, etc.), the usual interlocutors in beneficiary countries and/or their government.

Stage 6: Constructing the final diagram

The process of testing of the temporary diagram may question some of its parts when the justifications do not illustrate the real strategic and programming drafting process.

In this case, the information should be reviewed and augmented by another consultation round. The final and temporary diagrams have the same shape (a main diagram and the sketch of the point of decision-making). The final diagram includes an explanatory table about the analysis of the information collected.

4.4   What resources are required?

Box 16 - The resource requirements	
The time span	Collection and preparation: 3 to 8 working days
	Data analysis: 3 to 8 working days
	Tests: 3 to 10 working days.
Human resources	Knowledge of the European Commission's strategies and development programme procedures
	Fair knowledge of computer tools
	Logical process of thinking
	Experience in the fields covered by the strategies and programmes
	Specific knowledge of the country, sector or theme under study
Financial resources	A budget of €5,000 to €10,000 should be planned for all the diagrams :problems diagram, objective and effects diagrams and decision diagram

4.5 What are the advantages and limitations of the tool?

Box 17 - The advantages and limitations of the tool	
Advantages	Clarification of the strategy The diagram highlights the range of options for the establishment of the objectives system (global objective, selected and rejected intermediary objectives, etc.) and the external events influencing the decision-making. It facilitates the analysis of the strategy in terms of internal coherence and external relevance. When the terms of reference of an evaluation require an analysis of the partnership, the diagram is used to highlight the intervention of the main partners (governments, Member States and other donors) in the strategy design, the establishment of the programmes and the selection of the projects. The diagram can perform the same role for the analysis of the 3 Cs (Co-ordination, Complementarity, Coherence).
Limitations	The major limitations in the use of the diagram are: • The availability of information • Uncertainties about causal links. Direct information about the factors influencing the strategic and programming drafting process is sometimes scarce in the official papers. The restricted documentation (studies, notes, and correspondences) is in principle more informative, but cannot be consulted, or its access is difficult. An interpretation is sometimes required, which can be the source of a risk of error, particularly in cases where several causes support the decision-making.

4.6   Check-lists

Check-list for evaluators

- Has a preliminary assessment of the nature and quality of the information been carried out by the managers of the evaluation?

- If not, has the evaluation team carried out such an assessment, which has been approved by the managers?

- Have the choices of objectives been clearly identified in the objectives diagram?

- Is the decision-making process clearly established within the decision chain?

- Does the available documentation provide information about rejected objectives and the reasons for these rejections?

- Do the interviews with the authors of the documentation compensate the deficiencies of the written resources?

- Do the questions of interviews logically result from the identification of both the rejected and selected objectives?

- Does the temporary diagram explicitly present the results of choices (objectives selected and rejected)?

- Has the test of the temporary diagram been conducted with the main stakeholders (authors, operators, partners)?

- Have the findings of the test been impartially taken into account in the drawing up of the final diagram?

- Has the diagram been used to properly judge the relevance of the strategy and planning, the quality of the partnership, and the 3Cs?

- Has the reviewed judgement been validated by a panel composed of decisions-makers from the European Commission and independent experts? Are the panel's conclusions accurately taken into account?

Check-list for managers

- Are the selected decisions justified by the collected information material?

- Does the diagram describe the whole of the objectives and present in an explicit way the rationale of the choices carried out?

- Has the test of the temporary diagram been conducted with the main stakeholders (authors, operators, partners)?

- Has the diagram been used to properly judge the relevance of the strategy and planning, the quality of the partnership, and the 3Cs?

- Has the reviewed judgement been validated by a panel composed of decisions-makers from the European Commission and independent experts? Are the panel's conclusions accurately taken into account?
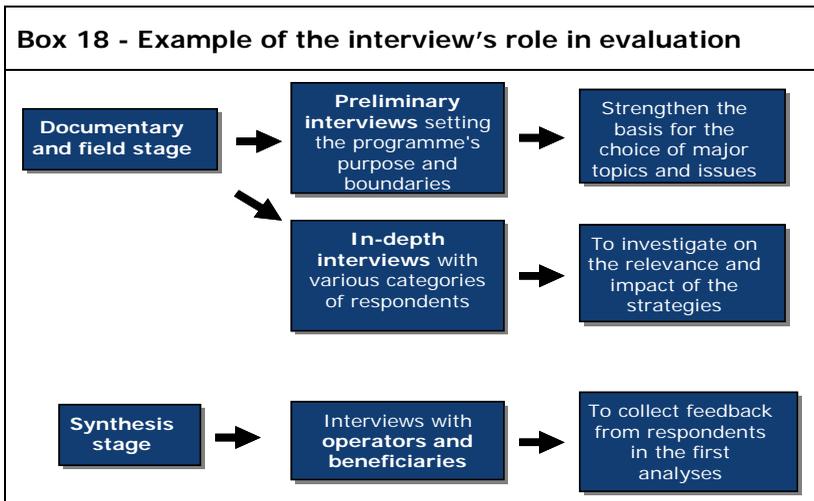
5 Interview

5.1 Why is this tool used in evaluation?

The interview is an information collection tool which usually takes the shape of a face-to-face discussion between the evaluator and the interviewee. In evaluation, the use of interviews is simple, quick, and affordable, which makes its use inevitable.

Box 18 - Example of the interview's role in evaluation

5.2 What use can be made of the interview?

In evaluation, the interview collects different kind of information:

- Facts and information for the verification of facts
- Opinions and perspectives
- Analyses
- Suggestions
- Reactions to the evaluator's hypotheses and conclusions.

The interview may be used as a quantitative collection tool; however, it is mostly a qualitative device. Information, including facts that can be checked, points of view, analyses and opinions should be clearly distinguished.

Three types of interviews can be carried out.

5.2.1   Unstructured interviews

The interviewee expresses himself/herself freely and can discuss unplanned topics, because there is no predetermined set of questions. The evaluator intervenes only to generate and develop questions relating to the interviewee's comments.

This type of interview is particularly interesting at the start of an evaluation, in order to get a global view of the subject, and identify the major topics and issues.

5.2.2   Semi-structured interviews

This type of interviews collects the respondents' testimonies using an interview guideline (flexible framework of topics derived from the evaluation questions). The evaluator modifies the interview guide's instructions with additional questions, in order to develop useful areas of inquiry during the interview.

This type of interview is the most frequently used, particularly when the evaluator knows sufficient about the aims and the main questions to pose during the evaluation.

5.2.3   Structured interviews

The evaluator follows strictly the interview guideline instructions. He asks different interviewees the same set of questions and the interviewee is not given the opportunity to express himself/herself freely. The evaluator avoids generating and developing additional questions. Answers to each question tend to be short.

This type of interview is useful when a large number of interviews must be carried out and when the evaluator wants to minimise the risk of bias from the interviewer.

Semi-structured interview is the most used method during evaluations. The following developments are almost totally dedicated to their setup.

5.3   How is the interview carried out?

5.3.1 How is the interview prepared?

The evaluator should first prepare the list of questions to be asked during the interviews.

The schedule of questions indicates the categories of respondent to be interviewed, within which the evaluator chooses those most capable of providing the information. The evaluator must determine:

- The real beneficiaries of the policy implemented
- The people who have played a strategic role
- The people concerned with programme implementation
- The people who might have been behind the programme's limitations or unscheduled impacts (such as actors with diverging interests, intervening during the programme's operation, or target groups of the policy or the programme).

Once the categories of respondent are defined, the evaluator can schedule the interviews and try to find a balance between the optimal use of his/her own time and the availability of the respondents.

Questionnaire grids (the evaluation's strategic questions), and interview guidelines derived from them (questions asked during the interview), vary with the categories of respondent, the latter's links with the evaluated issue and the type of interview (unstructured, semi-structured or structured interviews).

Grids should include all themes and questions which the evaluator wants to discuss with the respondents. The questionnaire grid is an intermediary between the evaluation study's design and its implementation

Interview guidelines provide the interview with a framework which is not binding on the evaluator.

5.3.2   How is the interview conducted?

Stage 1: Establish a rapport

- To be aware of and respect local habits and customs
- To anticipate any language difficulties
- To explain the purpose of the interview
- To establish the rules, such as the interview's length, the recording of the interview and anonymity.

Stage 2: Adjust the respondent's answers to the interview subject

- The evaluator must adjust to his interlocutor's role and hierarchical rank in the institution and be aware of the specificities of the respondent's answers
- The evaluator must be flexible while controlling the interview's progress.

Stage 3: follow the interview guide and deepen the questioning

- Show reactivity through the use of contradiction, notification, etc.
- Make direct observations during the interview, even when it is not planned in the interview guideline.

Stage 4: conclude the interview

- Keep track of all the information: the evaluator should read his notes shortly after the interview, structure them and add, if necessary, non-verbal details
- Protect the confidentiality of the interview
- If necessary, validate the content of the interview report with the respondent.

5.4   What resources are required?

Box 19 - The resource requirements	
The time span	The preparation for the interview does not take long.
	The number of interviews which can be carried out during the day is limited. In practice, at the interviewee's request, the expert may conduct an interview with several respondents at the same time. This particular use of the interview increases the opportunity of collecting the information required in a relatively short time.
Human resources	Interviews must be conducted by a trained professional. The necessary skills are:
	• Thorough knowledge of the major topics and issues addressed in the evaluation
	• Excellent interviewing skills (ability to listen and maintain the momentum of the interview, to be reactive and get to the point quickly, to control the course of the interview)
	• The ability to quickly understand the respondent's perspective in order to be interactive.
Financial resources	Possible transportation costs
	Costs depend on the number of interviews; however, the interview itself does not lead to substantial costs

5.5 What are the advantages and limitations of the tool?

Box 20 - The advantages and limitations of the tool	
Advantages	Quick and easy to use.
	Short delays and low costs.
	Appropriate tool to meet a limited number of key respondents.
	Essential tool to develop analyses and understand the stakeholders' perceptions of the programme.
Limitations	At a reasonable cost, only few people can be interviewed.
	Problems relating to the respondent's 'representativeness' particularly for social groups and beneficiaries.
	The information must be checked and interviews are generally combined with other analytical tools.

5.6   Check-lists

Check-list for evaluators

- Does the list of respondents meet the needs of the evaluation's methodology?

- Have alternatives been planned by the evaluators in case of cancellations of appointments with the actors?

- If any, has the issue of "representativeness" been solved?

- In interviews with representative stakeholders belonging to the evaluation's spotted category, has the respondent's "representativeness" been checked?

- Do the interview grids cover all the evaluation issues?

- Does the design of the interview guides vary sufficiently to meet the needs of different categories of stakeholders?

- Have the evaluators controlled and checked the information collected?

- Does the intended format designed for the debriefing highlight the differences between reliable information and opinions?

- Is the diversity of perspectives, expressed by the various categories of stakeholders, explicitly exposed?

Check-list for managers

- Does the list of respondents meet the needs of the evaluation's methodology?

- Does the design of the interview guides vary sufficiently to meet the needs of different categories of stakeholders?

- Does the intended format designed for the debriefing highlight the differences between reliable information and opinions?

- Is the diversity of perspectives, expressed by the various categories of stakeholders, explicitly exposed?
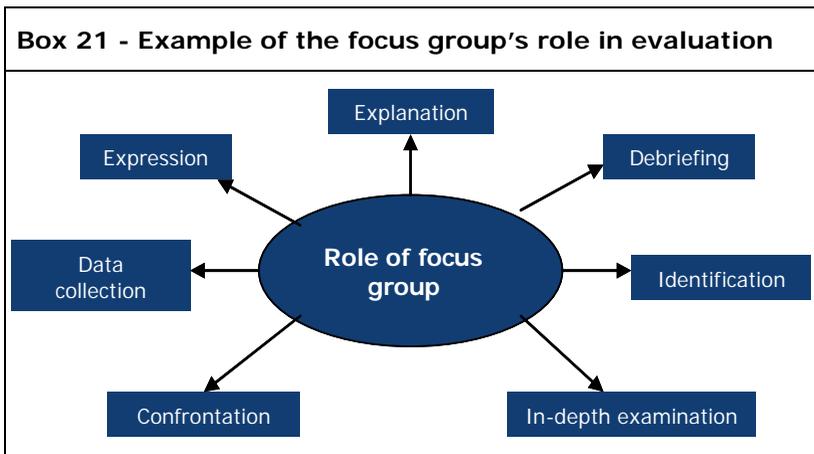
6   Focus group

6.1   Why is this tool used in evaluation?

A focus group is a form of group interviewing which comprises individuals involved in a development policy or intervention. It is set up to get information concerning the people's opinions, behaviours, or to explain their expectations from the said policy or intervention. In that sense, a focus group is a fast result-driven qualitative survey.

The focus group is useful to collect opinions and judgments of beneficiaries and intermediary stakeholders. When a focus group is organised after the implementation of a programme with a view to assess its impact, it helps understanding, analysing and identifying the reasons beneath the opinions expressed by the participants.

6.2   What use can be made of the focus group?

Box 21 - Example of the focus group's role in evaluation

The focus group is a mean to collect information and points of view quickly. When it involves stakeholders with different points of views, it eases the expression and explanation of the discrepancies within those points of view, as well as enabling an in-depth study of the stakeholders' opinions.

> Such is the case for a health sector focus group involving doctors from the private and public sectors.

Less frequently, the focus group can stand as a restitution tool at a local scale. In this case, the tool focuses on the observations and the field analyses' first conclusions.

> Through the presentation of the survey's first outcomes, this type of focus group collect**s** the reactions of the stakeholders targeted by the intervention.

In an impact analysis, the focus group can identify the various groups of stakeholders involved in the intervention, and check their reactions towards a given problem. The objective is to detect diverging opinions within a group composed of allegedly homogeneous opinions.

> Using a focus group in the impact analysis of the construction of a dam, regrouping people in favour of the project for economic reasons may reveal more precise diverging opinions within the group.

Regarding analysis and the comparison of information, the only tool the evaluator can rely on is the focus group. It helps grasping the participants' behaviours, their understanding and perception of an intervention, which would not be possible with an interview. Group interviewing can collect a variety of points of view and perceptions stimulated by the interaction between participants. Each of the focus group's members is permanently driven to prove one's statement.

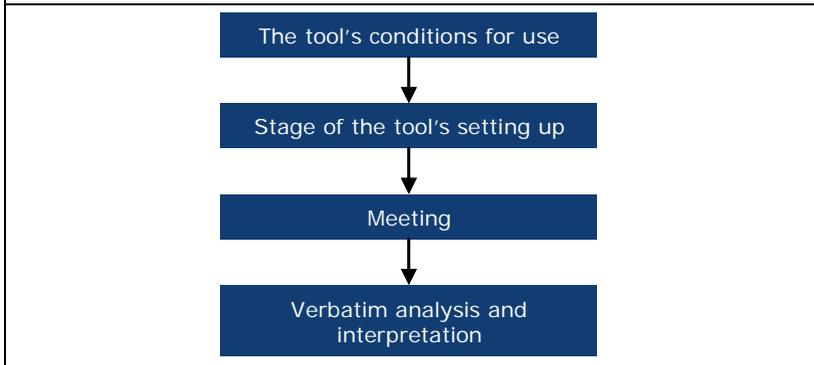## 6.3 How is a focus group investigation carried out?

6.3.1 What are the conditions for use of the tool?

Before organising a focus group, the evaluator should first define the stakes and goals of the evaluation, and determine a theme to which the tool will provide answers.

The resources allocated to this task indicate the number of focus groups that the evaluator can forecast.

The categories of stakeholders targeted by the evaluation are another component to have in mind while choosing the type of focus groups, knowing that its composition depends on the objectives: an in-depth objective requires a socially homogeneous group, whereas the testing of a theme can only be realised with a group of diverging points of view.

Box 22 - Steps involved in the use of focus group

The tool's conditions for use

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Stage of the tool's setting up

↓

Meeting

↓

Verbatim analysis and interpretation

Two types of focus groups can be organised to assess the impact of a policy on a new school course: a first one involving the course's teachers and a second one gathering inspectors, and the school's directors and teachers.

6.3.2 What are the stages for the setting up of the focus group?

- Choose the type(s) of focus group needed for the different steps of the evaluation
- Select one or more local moderator
- Identify the various interest groups among categories of the targeted stakeholders which are concerned by the assessed policy
- Select the participants
- Construct the moderator's guide
- Plan the focus group meeting(s).

6.3.3 How is the focus group implemented?

Who implements the focus group?

The **moderator** implements the focus group. He should be well informed of the evaluation's topics and goals, be familiar with all the techniques relating to group interaction and speak the language of the participants.

If the evaluator does not speak the language, He must be assisted by a local moderator. The latter would have been trained to the goals and the precise kind of animation required by the focus group.

Key informants are often helpful to the evaluator during the selection of participants and the identification of active participants who can foster the debate.

An **observer** can be invaluable to the evaluation by keeping track of the opinions expressed during the session.

How is the group interaction fostered?

Prior to the session, the moderator should meet the participants in order to motivate them in becoming actively involved in the focus group. The participants should understand the principles that underlie the session's process, and think about the topic before the session. This is particularly recommended for focus groups with users and beneficiaries.

> A focus group investigation is organised with countrywomen and the chief of the village has the responsibility to recruit them. In this context, the moderator should benefit from a quick meeting with the women to make himself/herself known, establish a relaxed atmosphere and suggest the first topics to reflect upon.

Focus groups are not just the sum of individual interviews. Thus, the moderator must always initiate and maintain a dynamic interaction between the participants.

A session can be organised in a reactive way, where participants react to the evaluator's analysis, information, etc. as well as in a pro-active way (the information and testimonies of the participants support the development of collective analyses and suggestions).

The moderator should organise the session into stages, including a mid-term debriefing to the group.

How to keep track of the information?

This stage should not be under-estimated for focus groups conducted in a local language. It consists of the transcription of a session verbatim from the notes which have been taken during the session and its recording (if it has been scheduled).

In the absence of recording, it can be interesting to organise a debriefing session, in order to validate the content of the focus group's transcription.

> **Example of the focus group investigation in a country evaluation: the Benin mission**
>
> Four focus groups were set up to bring elements of explanation to one of the evaluation questions (relative to the decrease of the number of patients going to the health centres which have benefited from the EC's assistance). The evaluation team decided to compose and conduct them differently, in order to check the conditions in which focus group investigations should be prepared and carried out in country evaluations.
>
> Two focus groups with beneficiaries were conducted by local moderators; 2 members of the evaluation team were responsible for the moderation of 2 focus groups: one involving doctors from the public and private sector of the Cotonou district, and another involving midwives and nurses from Cotonou.

Conclusions from the course of the focus groups and their outcomes can be drawn: the focus group is an efficient collection tool when it gathers socially homogeneous groups within the same socio-professional category. Yet, caution should be taken when participants share too close experiences about the questions under consideration. Their testimonies may turn out to be too identical (for that reason, the focus group with the doctors worked better than the one involving the midwives and the nurses).

The different course taken by the two focus groups with beneficiaries points out that a particular care should be taken for the selection (when recruiting the) of participants. For example, the moderator should ensure the presence of active participants

within the group, in order to foster participation (the moderator should also check that leaders do not impose their points of view on the rest of the group). The moderator should also motivate the participants by meeting them a day before the meeting.

6.4   What resources are required?

Box 23 - The resource requirements	
The time span	If focus groups must be conducted by local moderators, their selection must be organised before the arrival of the evaluation team on site. Schedule a presentation of the moderator's guide to the moderator. Meet the participants a day before the focus group's session. The session usually last from two to four hours. Plan for a day dedicated to the transcription of the session's verbatim in case of a focus group conducted in case the focus group was conducted in local language.
Human resources	Recruit local moderators in the case of several focus group investigations on a large scale territory or conducted in the local language. Select key informants for the selection of participants.
Financial resources	Remuneration of the moderators and the possible interpreters. Possible per diem to the participants. Costs relative to the catering and logistical expenses

6.5 What are the advantages and limitations of the tool?

Box 24 - The advantages and limitations of the tool	
Advantages	It enlarges the reference sample
	It is useful in order to collect data from a group of beneficiaries and especially to analyse the effect on them.
	Group interaction fosters the participants' explanation, specification and justification of their testimonies
	It has limited implementation costs
	It is time-saving
Limitations	The collected information are qualitative
	In certain contexts, organising focus groups may prove to be difficult, because of the determination of the beneficiaries groups, far-reaching locations, and the finding of national and local competences
	Public expression could be limited by political and social weights, or impaired by the participant's position within the group

6.6   Check-lists

Check-list for evaluators

- Have the topics under study been clearly determined before setting up the focus group?

- Has reference documentation been at the disposal of participants?

- Have local speaker animators experienced in techniques relating to group interaction been selected?

- Were participants informed prior to the focus group of the objectives and the topics under study?

- Were the animators informed of the context in which the focus group is organised and were they trained about its stakes and topic?

- Has the neutrality of the animators concerning the issues of the focus group's topics been checked?

- Has the verbatim of the participants been collected?

- Does the debriefing clearly distinguish the factual information from opinions?

- Is the presentation of the various stakeholders' points of view thorough and explicit?

Check-list for managers

- Was the use of the focus group fully justified?

- Have the topics under study been clearly determined before the setting of the focus group?

- Does the debriefing clearly distinguish the factual information from opinions?

- Does the debriefing accurately describe the diversity of points of view and opinions developed by the various stakeholders?

- Is the presentation of the various stakeholders' points of view thorough and explicit?

7 Survey

7.1 Why is this tool used in evaluation?

A survey is an observation tool which quantifies and compares information. Data are collected from a sample of the population targeted by the evaluation.

A survey questionnaire is a schedule of questions collecting information needed for the evaluation. Respondents are not supposed to answer the essential issue under investigation: in a good questionnaire, questions derive from the evaluation questions and are sufficiently basic for the respondent to answer them.

Questionnaires often combine both types, with a preference for structured items and a few open-ended questions (yielding information which is more diverse and/or precise, but less amenable to statistical analysis).

7.1.1 Structured questionnaires

Structured items are questions which respondents must answer in a specific way by choosing from a limited and predetermined set of answers. The questionnaire format is designed to obtain information about facts, to find out whether respondents agree to a suggestion, to record their opinions on a set of assertions, etc.
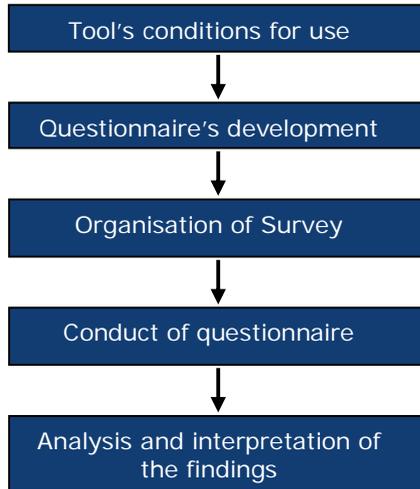
7.1.2 Open-ended questionnaires

In open-ended questionnaires, respondents answer a precise question and interviewers take notes. Thus, open-ended questionnaires are similar to structured interviews, as open-ended items allow a variety of approaches and depth in response.

7.1.3 What use can be made out of surveys?

To collect information from the population and be able to quantify the importance of each opinion, the tool to use is the survey. It allows then to check whether the population agrees or not with these opinions and in what proportions. It is particularly suited to analyse the final beneficiaries' degree of satisfaction concerning a policy. A structured questionnaire gives the opportunity to make statistics out of data.

7.2   How is a survey carried out?

Box 25 - Steps involved in the use of survey

Tool's conditions for use

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Questionnaire's development

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Organisation of Survey

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Conduct of questionnaire

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Analysis and interpretation of the findings

Box 26 - What are the conditions for use of the tool in country evaluation?	
Concerning the question wording	Be familiar with the context and the programme's stakes for the beneficiaries prior to the evaluation. Be provided with any relevant information to cover the survey's scope.
Concerning the sample design	Be provided with the minimum statistical data. Be sure of the physical and logistical access of respondents.
Concerning the survey's organisation	Identify a solid local partner, able to provide for human and logistical resources. Spend enough time to carry out all the preliminary stages dedicated to the questionnaire and sample design without which the findings may be disappointing.

An efficient time management is a prerequisite for the survey. During the tool's testing mission in Benin, the local partner was identified a month and a half prior to the field mission; the sample and questionnaire design, and interviewers training were organised on-site 2 weeks before the arrival of the testing team.

7.2.1 How is the questionnaire developed?

Relevant questions for the evaluators

- What is required?
- Is each question strictly necessary?
- Will a single question be sufficient to obtain this information?
- Is the respondent in a position to answer the question?

- Will the respondent provide the evaluator with accurate information?

Structuration of the questionnaire

- Define the investigation's topic and design the questionnaire precisely
- Ask overlapping questions in order to check the relevance and coherence of the answers
- Formulate clear and short questions for the respondents; incite them to take sides.

7.2.2 How is the survey carried out?

Design the samples

The methodology selected depends on the determination of the population that constitutes the target group of the survey. This determination is linked to:

- The purpose of the survey
- The working hypotheses selected
- The nature of the available documentation
- The evaluation constraints
- The degree of homogeneity of the population
- The scope of the area to be surveyed.

Various types of sampling can be developed: simple (random sampling), stratified, cluster sampling, probability proportional sampling, progressive, etc.

> **Following is the type of sampling used to conduct the questionnaires among households during the testing mission in Benin:**
>
> «The method to collect data is the itinerary method with which the interviewer can identify the survey's targets by counting the households while covering each street of the scoped area, register them in a household counting slip, proceed to the selection of the household samples and interview the head of family an/or his wife.
>
> The counting should start from the chief of the village's house and progress clockwise, segment after segment, so as to cover the whole village and reach the number of

> households to be surveyed.
>
> The number determining the first household to be surveyed is random and given by the survey's centre. The numbers of the other households to survey will be determined by the drawing number established by the survey's centre.
>
> For example: if the first number is 3 and the drawing number is 5, the first household to be interviewed will be the third of the survey's list. The other households will therefore have the number 8, 13, 18, 23, etc. »

Conduct a pilot questionnaire

A good quality survey relies on the clarity of the question wording, the ease of response, the questionnaire's length and flow, problems encountered by the interviewers, etc.

7.2.3 How is the questionnaire conducted?

The choice of a specific type of survey depends mainly on the context:

- **In developed countries**, questionnaires by telephone, email or Internet are increasingly conducted

- **In developing countries**, face-to-face questionnaires remain the surest tool to obtain the information required. However, other types of questionnaire or tools may be used, dependant on the stakeholders' categories (for example, local agents for development).

The evaluator should keep in mind that, because of linguistic reasons (mostly with final beneficiaries) and time spent in the preparation of the survey, a local partner is strongly advised. The latter should be able to provide the evaluator with human resources – interviewers, statisticians, demographists, etc. – and material resources – transportation, IT, demographic data, etc. – all of which the evaluator may not have available on-site.

7.2.4 How are the findings analysed and treated?

Coding questionnaires: each answer will have a code attributed in order to transfer the data onto computers. They will be grouped into meaningful categories.

Counting and correlation analysis: always refer to the frame setup by the working hypotheses.

Analysing results: Most of the time, simple treatments such as sorting the questions (production of the numbers and percentages for each possible answer to a question) and a few crossed sorting allows to figure out what are the main tendencies and points of discord among the population according to the evaluation. In some cases, the calculation of correlations between elements can add value to the analysis.

7.3   What resources are required?

Box 27 - The resource requirements	
The time span	Carrying out a survey requires great care at the preparation stage, and an allocation of time in proportion to the importance of the survey, the extent of sampling and field difficulties. The elaboration of the questionnaire dedicated to specific groups requires sufficient data and hypotheses, which means that the survey cannot take place at the start of the evaluation.
Human resources	Where cultural and linguistic specificities are important, it is better to have locally recruited interviewers. Specialist organisations may sometimes be able to support the evaluator's recruitment process. The evaluator should organise one or more training/debriefing days for the interviewers.
Financial resources	Remuneration of the interviewers. Transportation expenses.

7.4   What are the advantages and limitations of the tool?

Box 28 - The advantages and limitations of the tool	
Advantages	Yields quantified and reliable data
	Useful to identify changes and make comparisons between opinions
	Enables the evaluator to survey a large number of final beneficiaries
	Enables the evaluator to work on a target population and on a limited scale
	Identifies the outcomes of programmes and policies
Limitations	Requires implementation delays exceeding the average time scale of an evaluation mission
	Requires important resources and logistics provided by a reliable local partner
	Requires pre-existing data on the initial situation
	Requires a large number of staff to conduct the survey and analyse the findings
	May present difficulties during the development of representative sampling

7.5 Check-lists

Check-list for evaluators

- Is the implementation of a structured questionnaire with a representative sample justified by the need of statistical indicators?

- Is the survey carried out with a representative sample?

- Were the questions asked and the answers collected understandable and straightforward?

- Were the lengths of the questionnaire appropriate?

- Does the questionnaire have check questions?

- Has the questionnaire been checked?

- Were the techniques used to conduct the questionnaire with the various categories of respondents (face-to-face questionnaire, by telephone, etc.) coherent?

- Has a monitoring and control process been organised for the interviewers?

- Have training or guidance sessions been set up?

- Were the interviewers independent from the policy / programme under evaluation?

- Was the number of respondents high enough to be representative?

- Is the degree of accuracy required for quantitative data related to the purpose of the evaluation?

- Were the findings proposed and explained to the various categories of stakeholders and beneficiaries?

- Were the findings combined with other tools of information and analyses used by the evaluators?

Check-list for managers

- Is the implementation of a questionnaire with a representative sample justified by the need of statistical indicators?

- Is the survey carried out with a representative sample?

- Has the questionnaire been checked?

- Is the degree of accuracy required for quantitative data related to the purpose of the evaluation?

- Were the findings combined with other tools of information and analyses used by the evaluators?

8   Expert panel

8.1   Why is this tool used in evaluation?

An expert panel usually comprises independent specialists, recognised in at least one of the fields addressed by the programme under evaluation. The panel specialists arrive at conclusions and recommendations through consensus. Depending on the project proposal, these recommendations deal with the implementation or the impact of a programme, or part of it.

The expert panel is specifically appointed for the evaluation, and in conformity with standard procedures. The panel holds meetings and provides conclusions and recommendations in accordance with a precise and replicable working plan.

The use of an expert panel in country/region evaluations can be helpful in several situations, such as:

- Studying very specific fields requiring a high level of competence (such as research support and assistance for high technologies)
- Studying subjects for which other tools are difficult to implement at a reasonable cost
- Carrying out limited-scope evaluations (such as assistance to small countries)
- Assisting the evaluators in their conclusions on a subject in complex evaluations
- Providing assistance in the drafting of final conclusions relating to the possible impacts of a programme in *ex ante* evaluations.

## 8.2   How is an expert panel carried out?

8.2.1 What criteria should be used to appoint the panel?

The pre-requisite for the expert's selection is his/her **professional experience**. He should have specialised in the field under evaluation, and be recognised and respected by his/her peers.

Experts must be **independent** of the programme under evaluation, because they should not be judge and judged.

Independence regarding the programme under evaluation is very important since the expert cannot be the judge and the judged.

Box 29 - Core criteria of the expert panel's composition
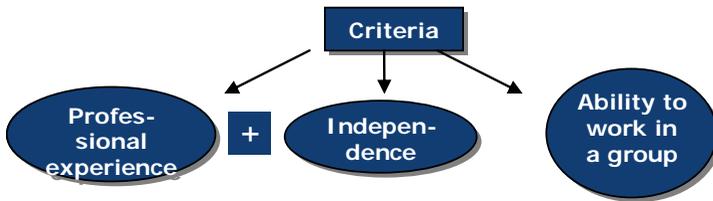
The **ability to work in a group**, listen to other experts and be open-minded is an essential criterion. Otherwise, working conditions may quickly turn out to be unmanageable, which would impede the panel process.

8.2.2 How are experts selected?

In a straightforward selection, the evaluation managers have access to a list of acknowledged experts in specific fields, and limit their selection process to ensuring the expert's independence regarding the programme under evaluation.

In gradual selections, preferred profiles of experts are developed with respect to the topics under scrutiny in the evaluation.

Elements to be taken into account in developing the panel profile are as follows:

- Project scope
- Degree of controversy (do the problems to be addressed have alternative resolutions which are controversial?)
- Available data
- Uncertainties (will the panel's conclusions discuss the uncertainties?)
- Number of required disciplines.

8.2.3 What are the procedures for the management of the panel?

There is no unique working process, and the expert panel should be encouraged to plan and implement its own workplan. Experts can focus their work on documentation and sessions, or broaden it to include meetings with project managers, field visits, implementation of surveys, etc.

The first panel session must result in the experts having a full understanding of their role in the evaluation.

During this session, the applicable methodology for the management of the panel's work must be discussed and validated. The discussion usually focuses on:

- The panel's organisation and the role of each member
- The type of investigation, the data collection methodology, and details of each panellist's task (such as field visits)
- The intervention work programme, the organisation of future sessions and their contents.

The next sessions (ranging from 3 to 5) will be directly linked to the panel's work. They will systematically deal with:

- The work carried out since the previous session
- Findings from investigations which are completed or in process
- Problems encountered
- Progress in editing the various documents, the review process, and quality control over these documents
- The tasks to be achieved before the next session and its envisaged content
- Confidentiality of the panel's debates and intermediate findings is another rule impacting on the panel's working arrangements.

8.2.4 What is the role of the panel chairman?

The panel chairman plays a crucial role. He guides the study panel, proposes the working arrangements, records findings, encourages contributions, facilitates debates and is the chief spokesperson for the panel. The quality of the working arrangements often depends on the chairman's leadership.

Box 30 - The various roles of the panel chairman

Project Manager

Integrator

Panel chairman

Facilitator

Spokesperson
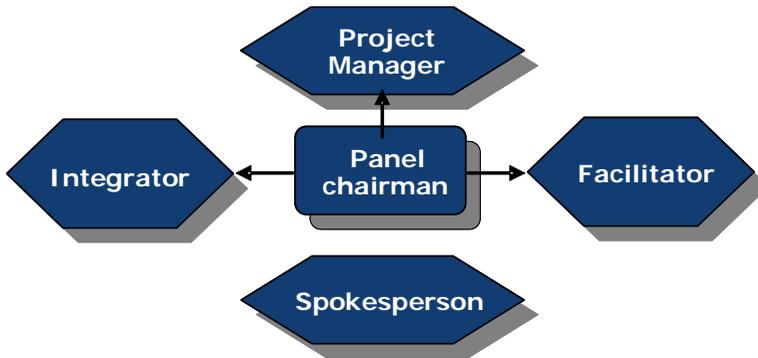
The chairman as Panel facilitator schedules the work of the panel and its production, and steers the panel's progress toward consensus.

The chairman as Report Architect and Integrator ensures a critical overview to the panellists' outputs, so as to improve the debate.

The chairman as Project Manager ensures that the available resources are sufficient and properly employed throughout the study. He ensures that the panel's sessions have been properly prepared by the technical writer.

The chairman as Spokesperson represents the panel in various bodies (such as monitoring committee and meetings with the commissioning agency and the press).

8.2.5 How does the expert panel report on its work?

The report, which supports the experts' contribution to the evaluation, is the only output from the panel which is made available to the commissioning agency. The report's structure should include: an executive summary, the mission's terms of reference, the composition of the panel, the evidence gathered and reviewed, the analyses carried out, The conclusion of the experts in the context of the report's consensus findings.

8.3   What resources are required?

Box 31 - The resource requirements	
The time span	One of the advantages of an expert panel is in its speedy assembly process. For an evaluation, only 3 to 6 months work needs to be scheduled, and even less time for panel advice on a technical field within an evaluation.
Human resources	Experts must have recognised expertise in the field under evaluation, be independent of the programme being assessed, be able to work in a group and be available for a continuous work throughout the evaluation.
Financial resources	Budget line items normally taken into account while preparing estimates are as follows: • Salaries for the experts and the technical writer. If necessary, estimates may include salaries for subcontractors in charge of the panel's external studies • Communication and travel costs, publication, and dissemination costs related to the reports • Translation costs, if required

8.4   What are the advantages and limitations of the tool?

Box 32 - The advantages and limitations of the tool	
Advantages	The experts' knowledge of the subjects under evaluation is the principal advantage of this tool. It fosters: • Significant reductions in time allocations • Cost effectiveness • Credibility of the conclusions • Adaptability to a variety of situations encountered in evaluation.
Limitations	The tool's limitations which should be minimised essentially derive from a series of risks: Because the panel must come up with consensus-based conclusions, its organisation tends to eliminate minority points of view and tone down conclusions The point of view of a 'dominant' expert can be over-influential within the panel Experts have a tendency to go beyond their field of competence

8.5   Check-lists

Check-list for evaluators

- Was the use of an expert panel fully justified by the impossibility of obtaining judgements in any other way?

- Has the possibility of conflicts of interest with the programme under evaluation been addressed?

- If experts with conflicts of interest remained on the panel, were the reasons for this exposed (such as a lack of available experts for the topic, a balance of points of view within the panel)?

- Did competences of the panel members allow for the coverage of all the topics to be studied? Did the skills of the panel member enable the coverage of all the topics to be studied?

- Did the global balance of the panel composition favour a balanced approach to the topic under evaluation?

- Is the time allocated for the study sufficient to cover all the issues?

- Were the experts properly informed about their assignments and the panel's working procedures?

- Were the experts provided with sufficient interview guides, procedures, etc., to enable them to produce work which is homogeneous with the work of other expert panels?

- Were the possibility of empathic bias been taken into consideration?

- Was each expert effectively involved in the panel's work, throughout his membership?

- Has confidentiality of the study panel been achieved throughout the contract (for example, with systematic information about the need for confidentiality, systematic destruction of intermediary documents)?

- Does the report elaborate on the analyses carried out?

- Does the report shed lights on elements of consensus?

- Are reasons for dissenting views explained?

Check-list for managers

- Was the use of an expert panel fully justified?
- Is the choice of the experts justified and relevant?
- Does the report elaborate on the analyses carried out?
- Are the elements of consensus clarified in the report?
- Are reasons for dissenting views explained and analysed?

9 Case study

9.1 Why is this tool used in evaluation?

The implementation of case study reviews of one or more actual examples, in order to gain an in-depth knowledge of the topic and, if possible, to learn about the entire evaluation programme.

In complex situations, case studies are the preferred evaluation tool when "how" and "why" questions are being posed. They allow a detailed examination of the actual elements in line with the evaluation goals. The purpose of the case study is to provide a picture, which is often more reliable than the outputs from other tools in context of the scarcity of basic data (which is often the case in country evaluations).

Box 33 — Case study's components
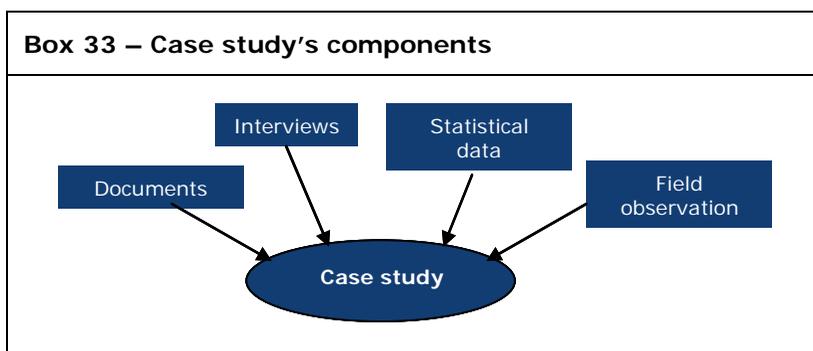
If case studies include the analysis of documents, statistical and implementing data, they are mostly known as a field observation tool and a means to interview people directly involved in the programme, such as the officials and stakeholders.

9.2 How is a case study carried out?

9.2.1 What are the conditions for the use of this tool?

To ensure that a case study is credible and yields satisfactory results the geographic evaluations specific context needs to:

- Find an effective local partner, who should be neutral to the topic under evaluation and competent both in the theme to be studied and in evaluation techniques
- Plan for supervision procedures of the international and local working teams
- Keep control of the selection of participants
- Have a fair distribution between interviews with officials and beneficiary representatives.

Box 34 - Steps involved in case study implementation
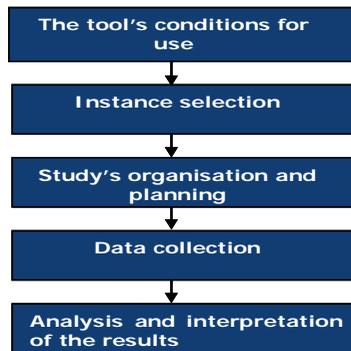
9.2.2 How is the instance selection undertaken?

This selection is crucial because an incorrect basis for selecting an instance can lead to a flawed evaluation outcome and can jeopardise its generalisation.

The United States General Accounting Office suggests 3 possible keys for instance selection:

- Convenience
- Purposive samples
- Probability.

> **Example of country selection criteria for the evaluation of European assistance in the water sector:**
>
> - To be among the main beneficiary countries of European assistance in the water sector
>
> - To represent all geographic regions covered by EC assistance
>
> - To have water as a focal sector of EC intervention
>
> - Not been covered by the Evaluation Unit's recent evaluation studies.

9.2.3   How to carry out a pilot case study?

To conduct a pilot case study allows to test and to set up the *modus operandi* of the cases studies, particularly it allows to:

- Validate the way to conduct the studies by testing them on field.
- Thin out the list of categories of people to meet and the basic bibliography.
- Finalise the interview guides and the survey's questionnaires.
- Double check the questions submitted to the evaluators, the criteria and the indicators, according to what is really available on field.
- Produce a standard report that would be a model for the other evaluators.

Setting up a pilot case study allows creating a *modus operandi*.

Box 35 - A modus operandi defining how to carry out one or more case studies is always useful.
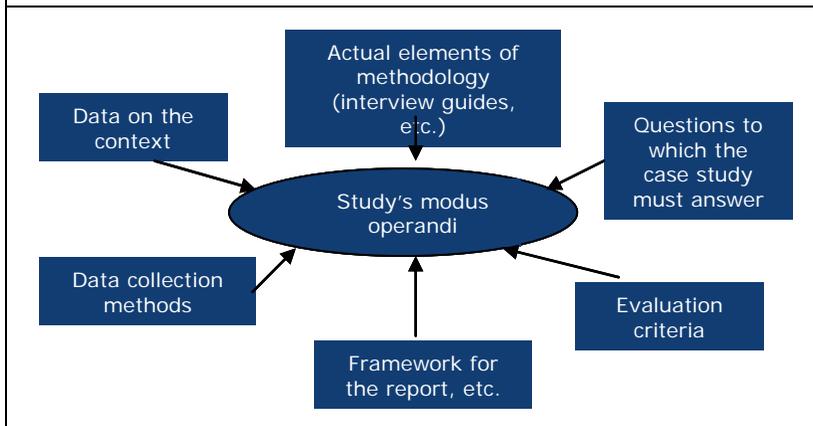
9.2.4 How are the data collected?

To ensure that the case study findings are reliable, a number of fundamental elements should be carefully taken into account:

- The data collection should include adequate data from a period of time sufficiently wide in order to avoid to set a momentary situation as a reference point

- The data collection should be based on a principle systematically adopted in the evaluation: information verification through triangulation

- The evaluator must ensure that the information collected is thoroughly used, and that nothing important has been overlooked. It is essential to obtain as much information as possible, especially when opinions differ among the people interviewed

- By definition, the case study is open to any possible discoveries throughout the course of its implementation. Thus, the evaluator must know how to identify key features during the case study implementation and focus on them, even if they were not expected or scheduled in advance

- The field stage leads to first-hand observations of what is occurring. The evaluator must also note them down carefully.

9.2.5 How are the results analysed and interpreted?

This is the most challenging stage of the case study. Its goal is to analyse the data that have been collected during the fieldwork and to link as far as possible the effects of the observed facts to their causes. This analysis is difficult to conduct because it is less structured than at the conception and the collection stages.

The analysis overlaps with the data collection stage, and this is particularly true for case studies in which:

- The data collection stage includes a pre-established hypothesis test that may partly modify the study content during its implementation
- The study is large enough to allow the evaluator to review and refine his criteria for the next data collection as a result of the initial findings.

9.3   What resources are required?

Box 36 - The resource requirements	
The time span	Preparation: 15 to 20 working days
	Field mission: 3 to 10 working days
	Data analysis: 3 to 10 working days
	Evaluators' training (in case of multiple sites case studies): 2/3 working days
	Analysis and conclusions from multiple sites case studies: 10 to 30 working days.
Human resources	Qualified people who fully understand the problems associated with the evaluation, have sufficient experience of interview techniques and speak the language of the people interviewed.
Financial resources	A minimum budget of €15,000 should be fixed and allocated to the multiple case studies preparation stage.
	A budget of at least €5,000 to €7,000 should be planned for each case study, not including long-distance transportation.

9.4 What are the advantages and limitations of the tool?

Box 37 - The advantages and limitations of the tool	
Advantages	Its richness, made possible by detailed qualitative information and the context of implementation precisely described. Its relatively straightforward use. Its flexibility, making continuous adaptation to various situations possible. Its implementation stage is compatible with that of a country evaluation. The opportunity to obtain and understand information at a sufficiently deep level. This tool allows evaluators to become familiar with the logic of action of the various actors.
Limitations	The difficulty of identifying the appropriate targets. The difficulty of identifying cases, setting boundaries and linking them to problems as broad as those commonly addressed in a country evaluation. The difficulty arising from generalisation to a global level (for example, a country) of themes that were studied at a local level. The tool's cost. The fact that this tool rarely allows statistical interpretation of data. The fact that this tool relies on the judgement of one or more evaluators can lead to partiality, even with the most careful use of case study methods.

9.5   Check-lists

Check-list for evaluators

- Is the use of the case study tool in the evaluation backed up by adequate argumentation?

- Is the choice of the case study application well-argued?

- In the context of multiple sites, is the number of case studies justified?

- Has a pilot case study been scheduled?

- Has the *modus operandi* been issued?

- Is the use of triangulation clarified in the methodology and included in the mission reports?

- Have the sources of information (documentation, interview, monitoring data, direct observation) been included in the mission reports?

- Do the methodology and reports distinguish facts from opinions?

- Is the plan for the development of a chain of evidence well-argued in the mission report?

- Does the iterative process, initiated at the collection stage, carry on to the analysis stage, and support the chain of evidence?

- Were alternative explanations studied and rejected after a full review of the evidence?

- Are the facts supporting the argumentation strong enough to guarantee systematic replication elsewhere?

- Does the analysis include research into causality?

- Are the techniques used for the analysis of multiple sites data set out and argued?

- Is the case study report sufficiently understandable and explicit?

- Has the report of the case study been read by the main persons who were met?

- Are the limitations of the impact of the study findings sufficiently well explained?

Check-list for managers

- Is the use of the case study tool in the evaluation backed up by adequate argumentation?
- Do the methodology and reports distinguish facts from opinions?
- Are the techniques used for the analysis of multiple sites data exposed and argued?
- Is the case study report sufficiently understandable and explicit?
- Are limitations of the study findings sufficiently well explained?

10   Context indicators

10.1 Definition

A context indicator is a datum which provides simple and reliable information describing a variable relative to the context. It gives information about a situation and its evolution in a country, or an area relevant to the assistance policy.

Other types of indicators:

- **Programme indicators**, which detail the resources, implementation, results, and, if possible, the impacts of an ongoing activity

- **Evaluation indicators**, which, in addition to the judgement criteria, enable the evaluator to judge the programme's relevance, coherence, efficiency and effectiveness, and support answers to evaluation questions.

Indicators are designed by national statistical services and in the context of specific programmes. National statistical services, many donors and international organisations have co-operated to establish standard indicators, to ease comparisons over time and between geographical areas.

The European Commission's use of context indicators in country evaluations:

- **Economic indicators**: GDP, growth, balance of payments

- **Social indicators**: population, unemployment, educational level, health

- **Indicators of services provided to the population**: education, health, drinking water, electrification

- **Others**: indicators for the analysis of poverty in ACP countries.

These indicators are often designed to highlight the specificities of a local context without, however, enabling the evaluator to make a

comparison between countries (for example, information by comparison of the level of the indicator in another country) or get a global and normative view of the country's situation.

10.2 What use can be made of context indicators?

10.2.1 To present the country

Context indicators are usually displayed in the introductory chapter of the evaluation. They deal with:

- Economic and financial fields (GDP, trade flows, debt)
- Social fields (demography, occupation, gender)
- Specific important sectors (education, health, environment).

In certain cases and countries, the emphasis may be put on particular sectors or issues (for example, poverty analysis, conflict analysis).

10.2.2 To portray the country's level of assistance

Context indicators also describe the nature of the assistance provided to the country. They should indicate the type of assistance, the amounts disbursed, the sector-based allocation of assistance and the European Commission's activity, compared with that of other donors.

10.2.3 To answer evaluation questions

Context indicators can also be used to answer evaluation questions which need a preliminary presentation. They facilitate the understanding of the country's situation for the readers.

The following table shows a selection of indicators which are internationally comparable. Tanzania's situation is compared with the situation of a group of 7 African countries considered to be similar: Burkina Faso, Gambia, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali, Nigeria and Zambia.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="6">Box 38 – Example: Governance Research Indicator Country Snapshot (GRICS) in 2004</td></tr>
</table>

Governance Research Indicator Country Snapshot (GRICS) en 2004					
Indicators	*Tanzania*		*7 similar countries*		
	Indicators	**Progress**	**Average**	**Progress**	**Rank**
Human, civil and political rights	-0.35	+	0.05	-	- 0.59... 0.39
Political stability	-0.38	-	-0.10	-	- 0.56... 0.38
Control over corruption	-0.57	+	-0.49	-	- 0.15... 0.89

Source: World Bank

10.3 How are context indicators selected, collected and used during an evaluation?

A good indicator should:

- Be relevant: it should correspond to an interest, an objective or a need
- Be sensitive: the quantity of measurement must reflect, to a sufficient degree, a change that has occurred in the variable to be measured
- Be achievable: the indicator should be realizable on the grounds of a rigorous processing of the data. The latter should be acquired at the right time at a reduced cost
- Be easy to interpret and use: the concrete, visual and intellectual use of the indicator should be straightforward for the user.

10.3.1 European Commission indicators

DG Dev indicators for the appraisal of country assistance performance

The indicators used for the appraisal of country assistance performance by the European Commission's DG Dev have been constructed with the assistance of various donors, including the European Union Member States, the World Bank, the UNDP and the OECD/DAC).

Their construction is mostly based on the following typology, and particularly on impact indicators.

Box 39 - Typology of indicators

Input	Outputs	Outcome	Impact
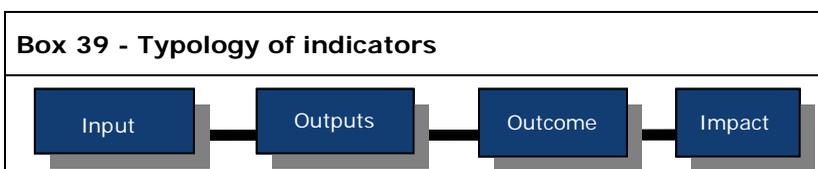
The construction and implementation of such indicators target two goals and require the monitoring of two distinct series of indicators, in order to:

- Measure the results of the country's policies in terms of poverty alleviation and improvement of living standards
- Detail the outcomes of sector-based policies which are targeted by the Commission's assistance.

EUROSTAT data

EUROSTAT provides Member States with numerous data on several topics which are partly expressed by indicators and ranked into short-term (balance of payments, consumer prices, etc.), long-term (economy and ecology, the business structures, etc.) and structural factors (employment, general economic background, environment, etc.). Moreover, EUROSTAT holds data on trade flows between European Union Members and the rest of the world.

To find out more:

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1090,3007 0682,1090_33076576&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

10.3.2 United Nations indicators

Indicators related to the Millennium Development Goals

For the Millennium Goals, the levels to be targeted and 48 Indicators Development Goals have been identified. They are available on the websites of the United Nations and the World Bank. They deal with more than 200 countries, and their methodologies and their precise definitions are presented to ease their understanding and use. These indicators focus more on outcomes than inputs.

To find out more:
http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/goals/goals03.htm

> **For example**, the progress accomplished in the implementation of a programme aiming at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment is measured with 4 indicators:
>
> - Girls' primary, secondary and higher education enrolment ratios in relation to boys
> - Literacy rate of women aged 15-24 in relation to men
> - Share of women in non-agricultural wage employment
> - Share of women in single or lower houses of parliament.

These indicators assess the progress of a country in the achievement of an objective year after year. They can also facilitate comparisons between countries.

Common Country Assessment indicators

In 1997, the United Nations decided to create a system of Common Country Assessment (CCA). In this system, the CCA is used as a tool for analysing the country's development situation and identifying the main development challenges.

To find out more: *http://www.undg.org/content.cfm?id=830*

Development index

The United Nations database is one of the most developed in the world. Approximately 200 indicators have been developed.

This database is less beneficiary country-oriented than other databases; yet it presents indicators and development indices, which are designed by the United Nations.

To find out more: *http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/*

Human Development Report

Each year, the UNDP publishes its Human Development Report, which includes a large proportion of the United Nations indicators.

To find out more: *http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2004/*

10.3.3 World Bank indicators

International Development Association indicators

The International Development Association has recently presented in "IDA Results Measurements System: Progress and Proposal, April 2003" a series of indicators aiming at improving the monitoring of the countries' development outcomes, and particularly for countries benefiting from a Poverty Reduction Strategic Programme.

IDA indicators cover the following fields: income and poverty, malnutrition, maternal and child health, HIV, gender, primary education, drinking water, infrastructure, private sector development, public sector management, and economic growth.

To find out more: *http://web.worldbank.org/*

International Comparison Program

Founded in 1968, the International Comparison Program is a statistical system used to produce data by country. These data facilitate international comparisons based on prices, expenses value and purchasing power parities.

Because of the information about the purchasing power, this statistical system provides the evaluators with comparable data that are valuable for economic and social topics.

To find out more:
http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS/ICPEXT/0,,contentMDK:20127681~menuPK:299201~pagePK:60002244~piPK:62002388~theSitePK:270065,00.html

> **Purchasing Power Parities** (PPP) are monetary conversion rates which express the purchasing powers of various currencies in a common unit. In other words, PPPs can determine how much national currency is needed to buy the same amount of goods and services in any countries. In that sense, PPPs are monetary conversion rates which erase price differences between countries.

10.3.4 OECD indicators

In its statistic portal, OECD offers a range of precise and updated information about its member countries, from which indicators can be constructed. This descriptive information covers sector-based, social and economic fields.

Precise data (geographical, such as country-, regional-, or sector-based) dealing with non-member economies and their development are available on the OECD website. They describe the context in which assistance to a country is carried out.

To find out more: *http://www.oecd.org/*

The OECD series of thematic and environmental indicators may be usefully consulted.

10.3.5 Other sources

Transparency International indicators

Transparency International seeks to provide reliable quantitative diagnostic tools regarding levels of transparency and corruption, both at global and local levels.

The best known of Transparency International tools is the annual Corruption Perceptions Index. It ranks more than 150 countries in terms of perceived levels of corruption, as determined by expert assessments and opinion surveys. The Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) and the Bribe Payers' Index (BPI) complete the CPI.

To find out more:
http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/about

NGOs such as Human Rights Watch *http://www.hrw.org/* and Amnesty International *http://www.amnesty.org/* publish reports on a large number of countries dealing with human rights and other important issues.

10.4 What resources are required?

Box 40 - The resource requirements	
The time span	The time span is the time dedicated to finding available indicators. The evaluator can quickly complete this task using the Internet.
Human resources	The human resources required for the collection and selection of indicators differ largely with the themes under study. The selection of an appropriate indicator, such as maternal health progress, may require the advice of a health expert.
Financial resources	The financial resources required for data collection are very limited because indicators are available on Internet, where access is free most of the time.

10.5 What are the advantages and limitations of the tool?

Box 41 - The advantages and limitations of the tool	
Advantages	A way to quantify information, preferably in a standardised form, in order to make comparisons in time and space.
	A way to simplify situations in order to understand them better.
	Elements that can be used as evidence for presentation.
Limitations	A simplistic explanation of the situation, which, in turn, becomes exaggerated.
	Errors of measurement.
	Difficulty in developing indicators which are sensitive to slight changes in the context at the macro-economic level.
	Problems with the availability of reliable and standardised data over a long period of time.
	Differences in the understanding of the meaning of an indicator between various users, and particularly between the donor and the beneficiary country.

10.6 Check-lists

Check-list for evaluators

- Do these indicators yield relevant information about the context of the area under study (for example, the list of the Millennium Goals for an ACP country)?

- Does the documentation provided by the evaluators display a precise definition of the indicators, as well as their possible limitations?

- Does the evaluator explain the absence in his/her study of context indicators in a key area?

- Is the period covered by similar series of indicators relevant to highlight the evolutions of the context over time?

- Are the selected indicators sufficiently sensitive to show the evolutions in the areas concerned by the evaluation?

- Is it possible to draw comparisons in space (countries and regions) and time thanks to these indicators?

Check-list for managers

- Is the precise definition of the indicators provided?

- Does the evaluator explain the absence in his/her study of context indicators in a key area?

- Is the degree of reliability of the indicators explained?

- Does the choice of the countries under comparison allow an appreciation of the evolutions of the country, the region or the sector studied?

11   SWOT

11.1 Why is this tool used in evaluation?

SWOT analysis (Strengths - Weaknesses - Opportunities - Threats) is a strategy analysis tool. It combines the study of the strengths and weaknesses of an organisation, a geographical area, or a sector, with the study of the opportunities and threats to their environment. As such, it is instrumental in development strategy formulation.

Box 42 - Rationale of SWOT analysis		
	Positive aspect	*Negative aspect*
Internal factors	Strengths	Weaknesses
External factors	Opportunities	Threats

The aim of the analysis is to take into account internal and external factors, maximising the potential of strengths and opportunities, while minimising the impact of weaknesses and threats.

SWOT analysis is usually prepared through meetings with the stakeholders or experts concerned with the strategy.
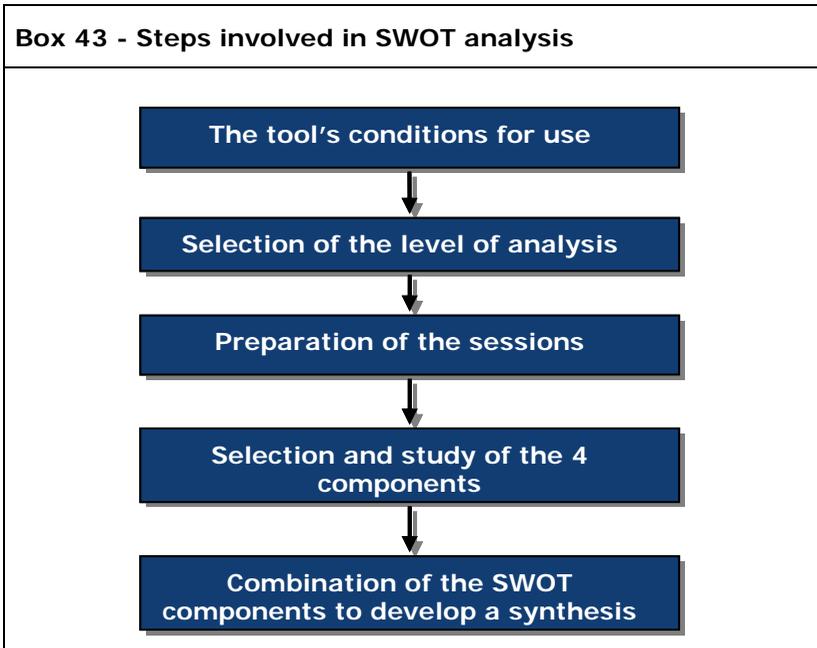
11.2 What use can be made of SWOT analysis?

SWOT analysis can be used to identify possible strategic approaches. Although originally designed for planning, this tool is used in evaluation to ensure that the implemented strategy is appropriate to the situation described in the analysis. Thus, it may either be used for:

- *Ex ante* evaluations, in order to determine or check strategic approaches (such as in the drafting or evaluation of Country Strategy Programmes)
- Intermediary evaluations, in order to check the relevance of the programmes under evaluation, and if required, their coherence

- *Ex post* evaluations, in order to check the relevance and coherence of the strategy or the programme. Especially if this task was not undertaken during the development of the strategy or the programme
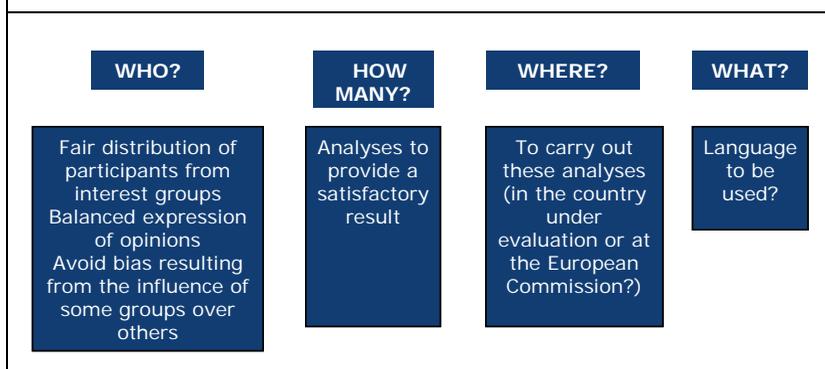
11.3 How is a swot analysis carried out?

Box 43 - Steps involved in SWOT analysis

The tool's conditions for use

↓

Selection of the level of analysis

↓

Preparation of the sessions

↓

Selection and study of the 4 components

↓

Combination of the SWOT components to develop a synthesis

11.3.1 What are the tool's conditions for use?

The prerequisites for its use in country evaluations almost exclusively relate to the selection of the participants.

Box 44 - Issues to address during the selection of the participants

WHO?	HOW MANY?	WHERE?	WHAT?
Fair distribution of participants from interest groups Balanced expression of opinions Avoid bias resulting from the influence of some groups over others	Analyses to provide a satisfactory result	To carry out these analyses (in the country under evaluation or at the European Commission?)	Language to be used?

11.3.2 How is the level of analysis chosen?

- If the focus of the analysis is the agency (for example, the European Commission), the object of the internal analysis is the agency, while the object of the external analysis is the country

- If the main object of the analysis is the country, the internal analysis focuses on the country while the external analysis focuses on neighbouring countries and the rest of the world

- If the object of the analysis is a sector, every action carried out in this sector constitutes an internal factor, and the rest represent external factors.

11.3.3 How should the sessions be prepared?

Whatever the methodology, the preparation of meetings should include, as a minimum, documentary analysis and interviews with key resource people.

Planning how to select the group, its size and its possible division into subgroups (thematic, regional, types of actors, etc.) are also crucial at this stage.

11.3.4 How are the 4 components selected and studied?

The sequence, and the way to determine and study the 4 components (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats), may greatly differ.

Study of the strengths

Strengths are positive internal factors that are controlled by the organisation, or the country, and which provide foundations for the future.

Study of the weaknesses

In contrast to the strengths, weaknesses are negative internal elements, which are controlled by the organisation, and for which key improvements can be made.

As SWOT analysis is based on the participants' judgements, it is subjective and qualitative by nature. If the study of the strengths and weaknesses needs to be developed, 2 complementary tools can be used: resources audit and analysis of best practice (comparison within a country between what works and what is lacking, with respect to specific indicators).

Study of the opportunities

Opportunities are the external positive possibilities which can be taken advantage of in the context of contemporary strengths and weaknesses. They are often beyond the influence of a country, or at the margins (for example, the evolution of international consumers' taste concerning one of the country's commodities, the improvement of the economy in a "client" country, the increase of Internet trade).

Study of the threats

Threats are difficulties, impediments, or external limitations which can prevent or impede the development of a country, or a sector (for example, the industry). Threats are often beyond the influence of a country, or at its margin (for example, consumers avoiding national products which are economically important for the

country, large increases in energy prices, general decrease in the development assistance).

Box 45 - Example of the EuropeAid evaluation in Tanzania in 2005. SWOT table designed with the European Commission's strategic documents, 2002. Politics and civil society

Strengths
Stable political power which protects Tanzania from the numerous conflicts of its neighbour countries. Tanzania plays a leading role in conflict prevention and regional co-operation.
Ratification of the main Human Rights international agreements.
Numerous trade unions, cooperatives, women and youth associations, ethnic assistance associations and religious organisations.

Weaknesses
Recent transition towards a multi party, democratic and decentralised political system after 30 years of a socialist, single party and very centralised system.
Irregularities during the local elections in Zanzibar in 2000.
Widespread corruption.
NGOs weaknesses in their legal, financial and human resources.

Opportunities
Partnership with the African East Community in various fields.

Threats
Meeting point of one of the largest refugee population of Africa (more than 500 000), which constitutes a threat to the local population.

11.3.5 How can the SWOT components be combined to develop a synthesis?

This stage focuses on strategies to maximise the use of information.

During this stage, the evaluator should systematically study all 10 possibilities presented in this chart, from information provided by the SWOT analysis. This task should ideally be carried out with groups during the sessions.

			Internal approach		
			List of the strength	**List of the weak-nesses**	A study of the reasons why strengths overcome weak-nesses
			How can strengths be maximised?	How can weaknesses be minimised?	
External approach	**List of the opportu-nities**	How can opportunities be maxi-mised?	How can strengths be used to take advantage of opportu-nities?	How can weaknesses be corrected to take advantage of opportu-nities?	
	List of the threats	How can threats be minimised?	How can strengths be used to reduce threats?	How can weaknesses and threats be minimised?	
	A study of the reasons why opportunities minimise threats				

Box 46 - Connection between SWOT's components

11.4 What resources are required?

Box 47 - The resource requirements	
The time span	A few days' preparation, one day to gather participants and one day to complete the analysis when the analysis is conducted with a limited number of participants. Its time span may increase significantly if the analysis has to be more detailed.
Human resources	The participants A group moderator or a skilled moderator
Financial resources	A straightforward analysis is cost-effective. A specific study during an *ex ante* evaluation, carried out to support the determination of strategic decisions, is expensive, especially if it includes travel to the country and several sessions.

11.5 What are the advantages and limitations of the tool?

Box 48 - The advantages and limitations of the tool	
Advantages	It quickly underlines the adequacy (or inadequacy) of a strategy, in relation to the problems and issues under consideration. In evaluation *ex ante*, it supports decision-making and the incorporation of the strategic approaches within the evaluation.
Limitations	Even when the tool is well conceived, it remains subjective. Consensus should be found prior to the analysis completion. Distinguishing between internal and external factors may sometimes be challenging. Similar to all tools that result in a matrix, SWOT analysis is reputed to be simplistic in approach.

11.6 Check-lists

Check-list for evaluators

- Was the SWOT analysis conceived to answer to one precise question of the evaluation?

- Was the analysis scope clearly focused on a level (i.e a country, region, sector(s), etc.)?

- Did the method specify the frequency and location of the meetings? Were these choices explained?

- Was a selection grid of the participants provided in the presentation of the method?

- Did the grid guarantee an equal participation of the various groups (i.e. strategy designers, managers, beneficiaries) that could express an opinion on the study subject?

- Was the group moderating method defined in the evaluation method's package?

- Has it allowed to fully proceed the analysis and to obtain viable results?

- Did the participants constitute a representative group of the various points of view encountered in the study topic?

- Was the animator competent enough to moderate the reunion(s)?

- Did the various groups have the same amount of time to express themselves?

- Can the collected information be considered as sufficiently exhaustive?

- Is the collected information biased (due for example, to the influence of a group over another, thus restraining the freedom of speech)?

- Did some participants complain? If so, are their complaints listed in the report?

- Was the information ranked and synthesised in the presence of the participants?

- Does the report give details about the implementation and limitations of the methodology?

- Is the reading of the SWOT grid straightforward?

- Is the distinction between internal and external factors clearly drawn?

- Did the SWOT analysis enable to answer the evaluation questions?

- Is the information collected during the analysis similar to that collected by other means?

Check-list for managers

- Was the SWOT analysis fully justified?

- Was the information collected thoroughly?

- Does the report give details about the implementation and limitations of the methodology?

- Is the SWOT grid clear enough?

- Are the distinctions between internal and external factors clearly drawn

- Does SWOT analysis enable the evaluator to answer the evaluation questions?

- Is the information collected in agreement with that collected by other means?

12   Multi-criteria analysis

12.1 Why is this tool used in evaluation?

12.1.1 Objectives

Multi-criteria analysis is undertaken to make a comparative assessment between projects or heterogeneous measures.

In the evaluation field, multi-criteria analysis is usually an *ex ante* evaluation tool, and is particularly used for the examination of the intervention's strategic choices.

In *ex post* evaluations, multi-criteria analysis can contribute to the evaluation of a programme or a policy through the appraisal of its impacts with regards to several criteria.

12.1.2 When to use multi-criteria analysis

In *ex ante* or intermediary evaluations

Multi-criteria analysis can be useful:

- To evaluate the ability of various activities of a programme to fulfil a given objective. This assessment can take place to collect the opinions of decision-makers and beneficiaries about the effectiveness of the activities
- To structure the views of project or programme managers about on-going activities
- To discuss the content of the programmes, and the funding of various activities during the drafting of strategies and programmes.

In *ex post* evaluations

In beneficiary countries, interventions in fields such as poverty alleviation, maintaining security, immigration control, or trade development can benefit from this type of analysis which formulates judgements on these complex strategies.

12.2 How is a multi-criteria analysis carried out?

12.2.1 What are the prerequisites for the tool's usage?

The time span and the cost of such a high level of analysis may be unsuitable to the timescales and budgets usually agreed for an evaluation.

Thus, in country evaluations where situations are often challenging, multi-criteria analyses should use simple methodologies. The analyses should be limited to the comparison of straightforward activities, and conducted with a limited number of criteria.

Box 49 - Steps involved in multi-criteria analysis

Select the field of application and determine the intervention rationale

↓

Choose the negociation/judgement group

↓

Choose the technical team responsible for supporting the judgement team group

↓

Establish the list of competing activities to be included in the analysis

↓

Determine judgement criteria

↓

Determine each criterion's relative weight

↓

Formulate a judgement per criterion

↓

Aggregate judgements

12.2.2 Stage 1: Select the field of application and determine the intervention rationale

In evaluations, multi-criteria analysis is seldom used for the whole range of the topics under study.

Once the evaluation team has defined the field of application, the logical framework of the intervention should be identified or reconstructed if missing

12.2.3 Stage 2: Choose the negotiation/judgement group

Multi-criteria analysis is based on the rating and preference of members of the judgement group. In order to constitute that group, some stakeholders concerned by the programme or some of their representatives can be chosen by the evaluation team. The representatives tend to be chosen in order to restrict the incompetence risk and ease the identification process.

12.2.4 Stage 3: Choose the technical team

The technical team is responsible for supporting the judgement team group. It comprises:

- The mediator
- The technical assistant. He must have a full knowledge of the software required for the undertaking of specific multi-criteria analyses
- The experts are responsible for providing additional data for the negotiation group, in order to complete the information progressively.

12.2.5 Stage 4: Establish the list of competing activities

Depending of the objectives, multi-criteria analysis helps comparison of:

- Scenarios or potential solutions in a planning or *ex ante* evaluation
- The various options of a project
- Activities implemented in a programme.

At the end of stage 4, a list of activities, scenarios and choices relevant to the analysis should be produced.

12.2.6 Stage 5: Determine judgement criteria

This is the core stage of multi-criteria analysis. Basic rules apply to the definition of criteria:

- Criteria should be defined by rules recognised and accepted by all, prior to the undertaking of the analysis
- They should integrate all the points of view expressed by the members of the group
- They should be unique
- They should constitute a coherent whole, resulting in plausible and non-disputable findings.

When an enterprise needs to recruit an employee of a given skills level, the head office publishes an advertisement and uses the following criteria:

- Minimum grades in key subjects in examinations
- Motivation and experience to be evaluated during a professional interview
- Level of salary expected by the candidate.

Criteria should be unique, although the criteria for the expected salary and the level of experience are likely to be related. They should be coherent: if two candidates obtain the same rating in two criteria out of three, the third criterion should distinguish them without giving rise to complaint.

12.2.7 Stage 6: Determine each criterion's relative weight

Methodology for the weighing of criteria

One of the rules in multi-criteria analysis is to weight these criteria, in order to measure their relative importance for the members.

> In secondary school, the coefficient allocated to each subject during the evaluation of the students' work is an example of weighting of criteria.

Various methods have been developed to improve the organisation of the weighing (such as weighing coefficients method or "playing cards" method).

Establishment of veto, indifference and preference thresholds

Some criteria may have such importance that they have to be singled out. This is the case for criteria determined by a veto threshold (some of them can be imposed by the regulation).

Preference and indifference thresholds also need to be defined, especially for long and complex analyses. Indeed, two members with very similar opinions may rank two activities differently: one may put them at the same level, and the other at different levels, because preference and indifference thresholds had not been sufficiently defined.

Sensitivity analysis

This test examines the impact of modifications to the parameters selected by the group on the findings of the analysis.

12.2.8 Stage 7: Formulate a judgement per criterion

Study of the impacts of the activities based on criteria

At this stage, values based on criteria are given to each activity's impact. This evaluation can be quantitative, as well as qualitative.

Box 50 - The findings of the impact study on the activities measured with different type of criteria

Criteria	Activity A	Activity B
Number of direct employements created	120	220
Impact on the employment market	Strong	Weak
Risk of opposition from the population	Stronger than for B	Less strong than for A

Activities' rating and judgement per criterion

The group has responsibility for the judgement, whereas the technical assistants are in charge of the study of the impacts, prior to the group's task.

This stage aims at providing each activity with a rating for each criterion. Comparisons between activities and between the opinions of stakeholders for the same activity can be made using this rating.

12.2.9 Stage 8: Aggregate judgements

This crucial component of the analysis is also the most challenging. Evaluators should first ensure that all the data are understood the same way in terms of preference by the members of the group (for example, the surface area occupied by a building is preferable when it is small). However, the risk of getting unsatisfactory findings is still great. At this stage, it is important to check whether several ways to carry out the operation yield similar or inconsistent findings (such as the difference on the scoring scale of an activity ranking first in a grid and ranking last in another because a parameter has been changed).

Several methods for the aggregation of judgements can be developed: the weighed sum method, the weighted sum product, the outranking method, etc. Whatever the methods selected to undertake the calculations and the aggregations, multi-criteria

analysis should yield one (or more) performance table(s) summarising the findings per activity in each criterion (and possibly for each stakeholder).

If the study to be undertaken happens in a consensus group working with criteria of identical weight (such as for the professor grading his/her students), the performance table represents the findings of the multi-criteria analysis.

12.3 What resources are required?

Box 51 - The resource requirements	
The time span	The analysis usually takes time, except for very simple situations or when the goal is to collect opinions retrospectively. In *ex ante* decision-making assistance, multi-criteria analyses usually last several months.
Human resources	Multi-criteria analysis requires the participation of several categories of stakeholders: the negotiation (or judgement) group, the mediator, the technical assistant and the experts.
Financial resources	In *ex ante* evaluations, the undertaking of multi-criteria analysis can become as difficult as its use in urban development programmes which include planning assistance.

12.4 What are the advantages and limitations of the tool?

Box 52 - The advantages and limitation of the tool	
Advantages	Capacity to simplify complex situations.
	The bases on which they choose criteria and rate performance are straightforward, understandable, and drafted by the group in charge of the analysis.
	The tool rationalises the decision process.
	It is a useful negotiation tool for debates among users.
Limitations	Practical difficulties of choosing the activities or the variants to be studied, to determine comparison criteria, and to produce grading grids.
	Lack of reliable data over a period of time sufficient to organise and validate the methodologies.
	Multi-criteria analyses are often based on slow and iterative processes, which may include protracted periods of negotiation.
	Evaluators should have skills in mathematical concepts and data aggregation methodologies.
	Multi-criteria analysis can be considered a subjective tool.

12.5 Check-lists

Check-list for evaluators

- Have the essential competences to deal with the subject been gathered in the group?

- Was the group representative of all the stakeholders concerned by the project?

- Was the group representative of the sensibilities of the studied subject?

- Was the place of the different points of view equally attributed?

- Was the facilitator skilled enough on the subject and on the development aid context?

- Was the group assisted by a technician fully competent with multi-criteria analysis software when needed?

- Did the group establish the list of activities to compare with the multi-criteria analysis?

- Has the content of each activity been clearly explained to group members?

- Have the rules for setting up the list of evaluation criteria been clearly explained to the members of the group?

- Were the usual types of criteria (economic, environmental, social and political) all represented in the issued list?

- Was an efficiency table set up?

- Was each group member able to express his judgement independently

Check-list for managers

- Is the use of the multicriteria analysis justified by an evaluation question?

- Was the group representative of all the stakeholders concerned by the project?

- Has the sensitivity test for the whole criteria system yielded satisfactory results?

- Has a performance table been established?

- Has result of the analysis been obtained in a sufficiently reliable way to be useful for the evaluation?

13 Cost-effectiveness analysis

13.1 Why is this tool used in evaluation?

Cost-effectiveness analysis is a decision-making assistance tool. It identifies the economically most efficient way to fulfil an objective. In evaluation, the tool can be used to discuss the economic efficiency of a programme or a project.

> Focused on the targeted major result of the activity – the number of jobs created – the tool estimates the cost of each job generated by a specific measure. The comparison of various programmes with similar impacts enables the comparison of the costs generated by each job created and provides useful quantitative indicators for the selection of comparative methodologies.

The tool compares policies, programmes or projects. It presents alternatives in order to identify the most appropriate one to achieve a result at least cost.

Cost-effectiveness analysis may contribute to answer the following questions:

- How much a programme or a measure costs does compared with the cost of a particular component of its objective?
- Is it preferable to invest resources in an intervention, to the detriment of another, to achieve the target?
- What kind of intervention or group of interventions yields the best outcomes regarding the final objectives and available resources?
- How can the use of the resources be optimised, given competing needs between programmes?
- At what level of additional investment will the chosen intervention clearly give an improved outcome?

13.2 What are the possible uses of cost-effectiveness analysis?

Specificities of the cost-effectiveness analysis:

- Effectiveness is **measured with a single outcome** which stands as the main expected impact of the intervention.
- It is an **economic analysis methodology** which assesses the effectiveness of indicators highlighting results and outcomes. It does not evaluate the monetary value of the outcomes.

Box 53 - The uses of cost-effectiveness analysis

Ex post evaluation → Compare the resources allocation strategies → To assess the choices in the allocation of resources

Cost-effectiveness analysis → Enable the decision-maker to determine priorities in relation to the costs and consequences → To determine strategy planning priorities

Ex ante evaluation → Highlight qantifiable and measurable priority results → To conduct a complex debate

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Cost effectiveness analysis is an efficient way to evaluate projects, programs or sectors evaluation when the main objective of the policy can be reduced to a single result. This tool is designed for the economic analysis of the operational objectives at different levels.

Cost-effectiveness analysis can be used in:

- *Ex ante* **evaluations** to support decision-making and guide the choices to be made. Depending on the cases, it

can be used: (i) To foster the debate among decision-makers prior to the decision; (ii) To highlight the preferences of the groups representing different categories of stakeholders or actors involved in the sectors where the intervention is planned.

- **Intermediary evaluation** to update the *ex ante* outcomes and choose which options should be selected to continue the intervention.

- *Ex post* **evaluations** to measure the economic efficiency of an intervention already carried out.

13.3 How is a cost-effectiveness analysis undertaken?

Box 54 - Steps involved in cost-effectiveness analysis

Define the conditions for its use

⬇

Evaluate the total cost of the programme

⬇

Measure the impact of the programme

⬇

Establish a costs-to-effectiveness ratio
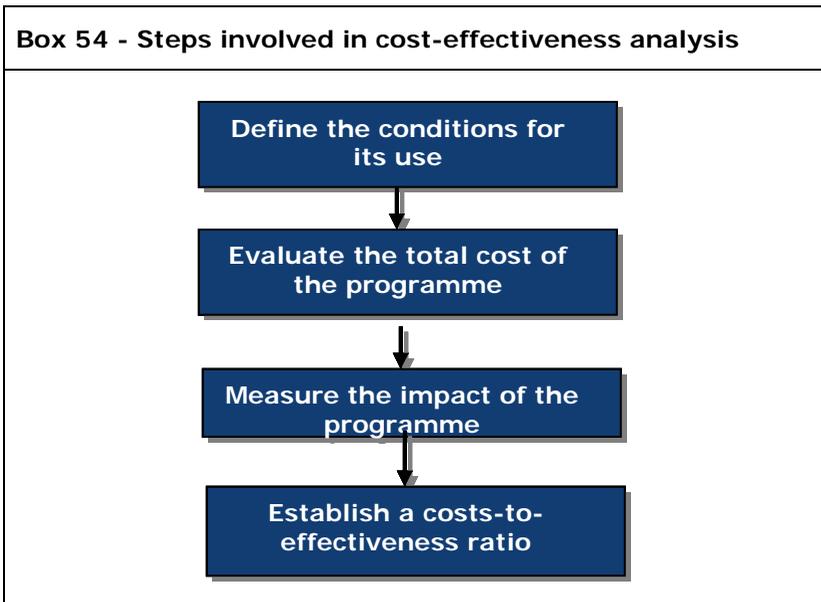
13.3.1 Check the relevance of the analysis to the objectives of the programme

If the outcome of a programme cannot be defined as a priority outcome, or if homogeneous and quantifiable units cannot be determined, the use of cost-effectiveness analysis should be avoided.

The method is adapted for actions in which expected outcomes are clearly identified and whose direct and indirect costs are easily measurable.

13.3.2 Identify the availability and reliability of the data

The analysis requires reliable data, i.e.:

- In *ex post* evaluations, a quantification of the outcomes
- In *ex ante* evaluations, a rigorous modelling of the most probable results.

13.3.3 Determine the effectiveness criteria and develop the relevant indicator

The choice of the effectiveness criteria depends on the main objective of the intervention.

- In an intervention where the objective is clearly determined, the identification of the effectiveness criteria is straightforward
- Conversely, when the intervention's objective is broad, the identification of the intervention's main objective should be discussed.

> **For example**, when an intervention aims at improving the effectiveness of the provision of basic education, the effectiveness criteria could be the increase in the average level of primary school's basic knowledge. Other criteria may be more relevant depending on the context in which the intervention is implemented.
>
> This increase can be measured through the evolution of the grades obtained in all the courses followed by the students, or in the two courses deemed as the most important, or through the organisation of a single examination for all primary school students.

13.3.4 How is the total cost of the programme evaluated?

Add direct costs

In this type of calculation, only the direct costs invested in the intervention are considered. In the context of development assistance intervention, these costs are often financial: grant, financial transfers, decreases in taxes, financing of projects and activities, etc.

Examine indirect costs

Indirect costs indicate the value of civil servants' work in charge of monitoring the programme or intervention.

> **Example of indirect costs in the context of a health programme:**
>
> **Production losses** due to working hours lost against the benefit of a vaccination
>
> **Social costs**: adjustments to the timetable of working conditions of a pregnant woman in the context of premature birth alleviation programme.

Examine other types of costs

An additional level of complexity within cost calculations is required when other important costs are generated by the project's implementation. For example, cost calculations can include the loss of earnings and benefits due to the fact that public financing have been attributed to a specific objective (this is called the loss opportunity cost).

13.3.5 How is the impact of the programme measured?

***Ex ante* evaluations**

The evaluator must forecast the quantitative results of the programme. Depending on the complexity of the intervention, the use of simulation techniques may be required.

Ex post evaluations

The evaluator can use empirical techniques if the primary data at his/her disposal are sufficiently numerous and reliable. If not, the evaluator needs to estimate the actual quantitative results from secondary data.

13.3.6 How is a costs-to-effectiveness ratio established?

The analysis requires stable elements to support the comparison between:

- Interventions of different nature, but similar objectives, occurring in the same country
- Similar interventions occurring in similar contexts
- The results and what would happen without the intervention, etc.

Comparison of programmes

When the analysis compares different programmes with identical outcomes, the chosen parameter is the cost comparison criteria.

When, for the same objective, the analysis compares different types of interventions with identical costs, it is supported by qualitative elements.

13.4 What resources are required?

Box 55 - The resource requirements	
The time span	The required time span for the analysis part depends on the availability of technical and financial data. When available, it can be conducted within a few days. If not, the data collection can take a long time.
Human resources	The analysis can be undertaken by evaluators, the more so when one of them has already participated in such an analysis. The evaluators should ensure the collaboration of experts in the country under review, so as to check the relevance of the criteria chosen.
Financial resources	Significant resources may be required for the data collection and reconstitution, depending on the availability of the data. Do not forget to take into account the experts' cost.

13.5 What are the advantages and limitations of the tool?

Box 56 - The advantages and limitations of the tool	
Advantages	A simple and effective *ex ante* evaluation tool which compares different measures or programmes with identical objectives. An educational and communicational tool which summarises the outcomes using a single quantifiable indicator. Visibility of the intervention's effectiveness.
Limitations	Cost-effectiveness analysis focuses on the main direct outcome of the intervention. The measure of the effectiveness of the intervention's expected results is therefore simplified. When an intervention generates secondary and/or indirect results, the use of cost-effectiveness analysis may be irrelevant or counter-productive. Analysis of the effectiveness, not the relevance. Whatever the case, *ex post* situations are more challenging than *ex ante* situations because the implementation of the intervention generates unexpected costs and impacts. The data collection for these costs and impacts is difficult.

13.6 Check-lists

Check-list for evaluators

- Has the choice of the criteria of comparison been discussed and debated with the managers and partners of the policy evaluated (or the sector analysed)?

- Have the evaluators clearly set out underlying hypotheses which lead to the use of cost-effectiveness analysis?

- Does the indicator chosen inform thoroughly the criteria?

- Has the selection of this indicator been discussed with the managers and partners of the sector?

- Is it possible to give a precise and rigorous description of what the situation would be without the intervention, intended or actual?

- Have resources from other donors and beneficiaries been taken into account?

- Have the costs of the intervention been estimated precisely enough?

- Have the evaluators considered uncertainties and error margins in their estimation of the costs and results?

- Has the estimation of the costs and results been adjusted over time?

- Have all the effects been taken into account?

- Have qualitative effects been quantified?

- Could errors or omissions in the estimation of the costs or effects have invalidated the results?

- Are the differences between alternatives sufficient to explain the decision making?

Check-list for managers

- Has the judgment resulting from the cost-effectiveness analysis been useful for the evaluation?

- Has the choice of this question been discussed and debated with the managers and partners of the policy being evaluated (or the sector analysed)?

- Have the evaluators considered uncertainties and error margins in their estimation of the costs and results?

- Has the estimation of the costs and results been adjusted over time?

- Are the differences between alternatives sufficient to explain the decision making?

List of boxes