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# **RNGOF on HIV/**AIDS** & HP: MONITORING & EVALUATION (M&E) POLICY**

**2011**

## 1. Context, Purpose and Scope of this Policy

This monitoring and evaluation (M&E) policy paper outlines the parameters and approach of Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP)'s programme monitoring and evaluation activities as key components of the broader organisational Project Cycle Management (PCM) system. The policy covers all programming interventions, including organizational programmes implemented by member NGOs at field level. As Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) takes a rights based approach to its work, the M&E approach covers both capacity building, advocacy and coordination work and initiatives.

The policy is guided by and implemented in coherence with the following key organisational documents and policies:

- The Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) Strategic Plan as the ultimate guiding document for all organisational interventions;
- The organisational Theory of Change (as defined in the Strategic Plan);

Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) has developed a **results based management (RBM) system** to monitor and assess the performance of its work. The monitoring and evaluation processes are an integral part of the RBM system, and are the key mechanisms through which the tracking, assessment and analysis of results is recorded.

## 2. Definitions of Monitoring and Evaluation

For the purpose of this policy, monitoring is defined as the *continuous and systematic assessment of the implementation and performance of a project or programme over the course of its implementation cycle*. The process involves ongoing collection and review of information to measure progress against programme plans and objectives. The monitoring process usually includes a number of specific monitoring interventions at prescribed intervals (e.g. six-monthly field monitoring visits or quarterly monitoring reports).

Similarly, an evaluation is defined as a *rigorous and in-depth assessment of the progress of all aspects of a project or programme against its initial plan and objectives at a key point during its life cycle*. Evaluations are typically undertaken at or near the mid-point of the project (a mid-term evaluation) and at the end of the project cycle (a final evaluation), and may be undertaken as internal or external exercises.

### 3. Purpose of Monitoring and Evaluation

The purpose of monitoring and evaluation activities within the organisation is two-fold:

- To ensure that Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) is fully **accountable** for the delivery of all of its programme and project activities;
- To ensure that Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) and its member organizations **learn lessons** from the implementation of projects or programmes, and utilise that learning in seeking to improve or enhance the implementation of programmes on an ongoing basis.

#### 3.1 Accountability

Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) sees its accountability as having four dimensions:

- a) **Primary ('downward') accountability** is to the intended member organizations of Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP). Downward accountability also includes transparency and openness in dealing with Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP)'s member organizations that directly implement the projects for these beneficiaries.
- b) **Internal accountability**: Within the organisation itself, the management and board of Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) need to assure themselves that the organisation is delivering to the best of its ability on its planned programming objectives and activities, in line with the organisational strategic plan.
- c) **Donor accountability**: Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) is obliged to meet the commitments it makes to its donors and Partners. This includes the provision of adequate and timely information in relation to the use of funds raised from partners. It also includes delivery on specific commitments made to institutional donors that fund particular programmes or aspects of Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP)'s work.
- d) **Accountability to other stakeholders** to which Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) is accountable may include government institutions in Rwanda ; other local agencies or institutions that are not directly involved in the projects; and other (non-donor, non-partner) agencies that Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) may be collaborating with in the implementation of programmes. All Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) programmes and their related M&E processes are designed to address all of these dimensions of accountability.

### 3.2 Learning

Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP)'s approach to monitoring and evaluation includes a specific focus on learning, and applying the lessons from its experience in relation to the following areas:

- The design of the project or programme, with particular reference to its relevance, appropriateness and cost-effectiveness;
- The delivery of the programme or project, with specific reference to activities, outputs, outcomes, (both expected and actual) and objectives;
- The local environment and context in which member organizations' projects or programmes are operating;
- The programming approaches or methodologies being used (e.g. advocacy, capacity building, monitoring and coordination) to deliver programmes;
- The capacity of Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) and its member organizations to deliver the programmes, and
- The relationships with various parties involved - including both member organizations, and external stakeholders.

A key aspect of the learning process is that lessons are **formally and systematically documented** during monitoring visits and evaluation processes, and that this documentation is utilised to adapt or modify existing approaches and programmes, and in the development of new programmes or approaches.

### 3.3 Balancing Accountability and Learning

Within the NGO sector, monitoring or evaluation processes can sometimes place a heavy emphasis on either the accountability or the learning dimension, while downgrading or even excluding the other dimension entirely. As outlined above, both accountability and learning are integral dimensions of Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP)'s approach to monitoring and evaluation. Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) is committed to ensuring that, in undertaking monitoring exercises and designing evaluation processes, a balanced approach is applied, so that both of these dimensions are fully considered and explored, and that reports fully reflect both the accountability and learning objectives.



## 4. Adherence to International Standards and Best Practice

Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP)'s overall approach to monitoring and evaluation is guided by a number of key organizational standards and best practice approaches:

### 4.1 ToR Criteria:

In developing Terms of Reference plans for evaluations and also for monitoring visits, Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) makes specific reference to the following:

- **Relevance:** The extent to which the activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor;
- **Effectiveness:** A measure of the extent to which and aid / development activity attains its objectives;
- **Efficiency:** A measurement of the programme outputs in relation to the inputs (including the cost-effectiveness, timing and efficiency of process);
- **Impact:** The positive and negative changes produced by the intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended;
- **Sustainability:** Establishing whether the benefits of the activity are likely to continue after funding has been withdrawn or the programme has been completed (including both financial and environmental sustainability).

Evaluation questions and processes are specifically formulated with a view to assessing progress against each of these criteria, and evaluation reports are required to address each of these criteria.

#### 4.1.1 Contribution and Attribution

In assessing progress, the degree to which progress (or lack of it) can be specifically attributed to the interventions of Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) and its member organizations may not be always clear, particularly where the interventions of a range of actors may be influencing the change processes in a particular area, or for a particular target group. Notwithstanding the complexities involved, **Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) evaluation processes attempt to look at both contribution and attribution aspects** of progress, as follows:

- The degree to which some or all of the changes (good or bad) may be **directly attributed** to Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP)'s interventions, and / or
- The degree to which Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP)'s actions **may have contributed** towards some or all of the changes, even if not wholly responsible for them.

## 4.2 The International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness

Given that effectiveness is one of the Criteria that Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) utilises to assess its work, the ongoing evolution of the organizational development effectiveness agenda is of particular relevance to all of Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP)'s work, and to its monitoring and evaluation approach in particular. The Istanbul Principles<sup>8</sup> for CSO Development Effectiveness form a key reference point for the evaluation of its development work:

1. Respect and promote human rights and justice
2. Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women and girls' rights
3. Practice transparency and accountability
4. Create and share knowledge and commit to mutual learning
5. Commit to realizing positive sustainable change.

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## 4.3 Evaluation Tools and Methodologies

In addition the organisation also keeps abreast of the latest organizational developments in relation to monitoring and evaluation methodologies and tools. Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) does not prescribe a particular methodology to be used for all of its evaluations. Rather (and usually in consultation with the consultant or agency conducting the evaluation on its behalf), it seeks to **identify a process and methodology that is appropriate to each individual evaluation situation and context.**

### 4.3.1 Rainbow Framework Planning Tool

Given the wide array of evaluation methodologies and processes that currently exist, Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) will seek to use the recently developed **Rainbow Framework Planning Tool** produced by Better Evaluation as a guide in designing and managing its evaluation processes according to the following stages outlined under that tool:

1. Managing the evaluation
  2. Defining what is to be evaluated
  3. Framing the boundaries of an evaluation
  4. Describing activities, outcomes, impacts and context
  5. Understanding causes of outcomes and impact
  6. Synthesising data from one or more evaluations
  7. Reporting and supporting the use of findings.
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## 5. Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP)'s organizational Theory of Change and its Results Based Management (RBM) system provide the overarching framework for its monitoring and evaluation processes. The monitoring and evaluation system operates at three levels: member organizations, programmes and organisational.

### 5.1 Theory of Change

Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP)'s Theory of Change (ToC) provides the initial reference point in seeking to determine the degree to which its programmes and projects are delivering on the expectations of its intended beneficiaries, of the organisation itself, and of its donors and partners.

The current Theory of Change expresses the ultimate aim of ensuring that Individual projects and programmes are based on more specific change theories, as expressed through their specific programming activities, outputs, outcomes and objectives. Under the existing ToC, there is a specific focus on ultimately **achieving active participation in self and wider development on both an individual and collective basis**. All evaluation processes seek to establish the degree to which these aims are being achieved within the relevant project or programme.

### 5.2 Results Based Management System

The organisational results based management system provides the basis for all monitoring and evaluation activities. Within the RBM system, progress is measured at three levels: in relation to project outputs, outcomes and objectives.

**Project Outputs** are defined as the direct result of the basic project activities that are to be implemented. While some **risks and assumptions** have to be allowed for in the project design, and are identified in advance, the successful delivery of the stated activities should lead to the achievement of the outputs.

**Project Outcomes** are defined as the further results that will accrue (particularly for the target beneficiary) as a result of the basic outputs being achieved, and subject to further assumptions and risks being allowed for at outcome level

The **Project Objectives**, as defined in advance, will be achieved if the combination of project outcomes is achieved, and subject to further assumptions and risks at this level (e.g. the availability of a good clean water supply should result in a reduction of waterborne diseases in the target population). The **impact** of the project, as defined under the project objectives will be articulated clearly in terms of **clear and sustainable benefits for target beneficiary groups**.



A set of **indicators** is established for the measurement of progress at output, outcome and objective levels. Indicators may be both quantitative and qualitative in nature, and a mixture of both types is often used. In order to make meaningful assessments of progress, and to facilitate rigorous and accurate evaluation processes, all indicators are required to be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound)

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The establishment of formal **baselines** at the beginning of every project is mandatory. Baselines are developed in relation to each area of activity so that progress can be measured accurately later on. Key targets are set at output and outcome levels, with specific reference to the baselines, and to be achieved at specific time intervals within the project cycle. Timeframes for the achievement of targets may vary, so that all indicators do not necessarily have an annual target for each year. However, care is required in setting targets overall, in order to ensure that sufficient data is being assimilated for the production of meaningful annual reports, and for undertaking rigorous interim and final evaluations.

The **means of verification** for each indicator and target is also expected to be clearly elaborated at the design stage, so that progress can be accurately measured during M&E processes.

Specific consideration is given at the design stage to the development of indicators and targets in relation to **coordination, capacity building and advocacy work**, which may, in some cases, require more qualitative indicators than might be the case for direct service provision activities .

### **5.3 Three-Level Monitoring and Evaluation System**

The Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) Monitoring and Evaluation System operates on two levels:

Level 1: Monitoring and Evaluation of projects and programmes for **Member Organizations**.

Level 2: Monitoring and Evaluation at **Organisational Level** - including the oversight role of the Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) Board.

## **6. Monitoring and Evaluation by Partners (Level 1)**

As a partnership based agency, all of Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP)'s field programmes are implemented by member organizations. Hence, they organisations have the initial responsibility for monitoring and evaluation at field level as part of their own project cycle management systems. Member organization programmes generally operate to a **one year cycle**, but may have shorter or longer cycles in some cases.

### **6.1 Targeting**

The identification of the target beneficiary group for each project is a basic requirement at the initial stage of project design, and is an essential step in facilitating the development of a results framework. The target population is clearly defined both in terms of numbers and categories of people. A clear distinction is made also between the intended **direct beneficiaries** of projects, and other **indirect beneficiaries**. Specific baselines and targets for each category of beneficiaries are included in the results framework, with a particular emphasis on particularly marginalised or vulnerable groups that may have been identified in advance. The process for identification and targeting of beneficiaries is guided by Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP)

### **6.2. Baselines**

All member organizations are required to develop a results framework for each project at the beginning of the project cycle. Ideally, the baseline study should be conducted before the project begins, but in practice it may not be always feasible to do so. A maximum period of three months from the project start date is allowed at the beginning of a project for the completion of the baseline study and establishment of all target outputs and outcomes for the full project cycle. Member organizations are encouraged to utilize external expertise in the establishment of targets and baselines where necessary, with financial support for this being included in the project budget.

### **6.3 Monitoring by Partners**

RNGOF member organizations are expected to be visited in each project area on a quarterly basis at a minimum and to provide monitoring reports (to a standard format) to Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) on a quarterly basis. The project results framework is utilized as a guide for checking progress against each activity area. Member organizations are expected to include beneficiaries in the project monitoring activities and discussions. Apart from reporting on activities, outputs and outcomes (where possible), member organization monitoring reports will also include reference to specific accountability and learning issues. Additional funding is released by Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) donor to the member organization on receipt of satisfactory annual reports from member organizations.

#### **6.4 Role of RNGOF Member Organizations in Evaluation**

Mid-term and final evaluations will normally be conducted in the context of Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP)'s overall programme of work i.e. evaluation of several member organization projects may well be taking place as one part of one exercise. Hence, member organizations will have a key role to play in agreeing the Terms of Reference for the evaluation with Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP), facilitating the evaluation itself, and ensuring full and objective participation of beneficiaries in the evaluation process.

#### **6.5 Partner Capacity-Building for M&E**

Under the Partner Capacity Building Approach, Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) provides specific support to partners in relation to the development of their overall Project Cycle Management (PCM) capacity, including their ability to monitor and evaluate programming work. As for other aspects of capacity support, the specific PCM support to be provided to a partner is based on organisational needs and priorities, as identified under the Organisational Self-Assessment (OSA) process described in the CB approach document.

### **7. Monitoring and Evaluation at Organizational Level (Level 2)**

Building on the monitoring and evaluation work that takes place at member organization and programme levels, Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) also conducts a number of M&E exercises at organizational level to obtain a macro-level overview of programming progress both on an annual and long-term basis. These processes include the following:

- An annual field review of member organization capacity-building and programming work
- An annual internal review of all programming work

#### **7.1. Annual Field Review of Partner CB and Programme Work**

An annual general assembly with the 127 Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) member organization takes place at national level each year following the individual meetings and project visits with member organizations carried out by district coordinators from RNGOF. Provision is made for some Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) board members to participate in these meetings on occasion (and subject to budgetary constraints) in order to improve their overall understanding of Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP)'s field programming, thus enabling the board to improve its oversight function as the governing body of the

organisation. The one-day general assembly reviews progress in relation to two areas: programmes and Member Capacity Building.

## **7.2. Annual Internal Review of Programming Work**

The annual general assembly is followed by an annual internal review at head office level by the Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) board, Executive Secretary and staff. The purpose of the review meeting is to consider progress in relation to all aspects of relationships with member organizations, both organizational and programmatic. The review includes the following activities:

- Consideration of how issues arising during the previous year's annual review have been addressed in the interim period;
- A discussion of key issues arising from the annual general assembly with partners, both in relation to programming work and member organization capacity-building;
- A systematic review of recommendations from programme evaluations undertaken during the year, and the management responses to these recommendations, from both accountability and learning perspectives;
- A discussion of issues emerging from reviews or formal evaluations (where available) that have taken place during the year.

The annual programme review process is an important source of information and discussion for the Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) board, in enabling it to address key aspects of its oversight function in relation to organizational governance and strategy.

## **7.3. Long-term (longitudinal) Programme Reviews:**

In recognition of the long-term nature of the development process, Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) is also committed to conducting 5 year reviews of all of its work so that it can make longer-term assessments of its overall effectiveness and impact. 5 year reviews will be conducted across the entire range Programming, member organization Capacity-Building Programme and the field development programmes. As for annual reviews, the long-term reviews will be used to inform organizational strategic planning and review processes.

## **8. Oversight and Resourcing of Monitoring and Evaluation Work**

### **8.1. Responsibility for M&E:**

All member organizations have responsibility for ongoing monitoring and reporting on their own projects and programmes (Level 1 M&E) in line with approved protocols to Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS

(RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) and or other donors. They are also responsible for facilitating and managing the local aspects of evaluation processes in line with the requirements of Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) and donors, and for ensuring the full participation of beneficiaries in M&E exercises.

The relevant Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) Monitoring and Evaluation Officer (M&E) is responsible for overseeing field monitoring activities and the commissioning and management of evaluations (Level 2 M&E), in consultation with the Program Manager, and the development of reports for donors.

The Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) Program Manager will take responsibility for organizing the annual field-level review workshop with member organizations, in consultation with the Executive Secretary.

The Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) Program Manager has overall responsibility for ensuring that all monitoring and evaluation initiatives are delivered in line with this policy. The Executive Secretary is specifically responsible for organizing the annual internal review process conducted by the board in conjunction with the Chairperson of the Board, who will chair the review workshop.

## **8.2. Staffing Capacity**

Steps are currently being taken to develop Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP)'s own internal capacity in relation to M&E through increased staffing and training, and with one Program Manager to have a specific focus on RBM. Further training and development in relation to the RBM system will continue over time.

## **8.3. Budgeting for M&E**

Given the critical importance of M&E activities to overall programme quality, Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) will ensure that adequate provision is made in all programme budgets for monitoring and evaluation activities, including the cost of monitoring visits by Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP) staff, and specific budgets for mid-term and final evaluations. A sum in the range of 7% to 10% of the overall budget will be included for this purpose. The percentage of the programme budget to be allocated may vary by project as, for example, an advocacy based project might have a much smaller budget than a service related project but might well require a similar level of resourcing for M&E activities.

## **9 . Updating and Review of the Monitoring and Evaluation Policy.**

This Monitoring and Evaluation Policy is operational from April 2011, and will be updated on an ongoing basis as required to incorporate new developments or changes in other policies, strategies or processes within the organization. A full review of the policy will take place after four years, in April 2015.



**Annex 1: Figure 1 - Rwanda NGOs Forum on HIV/AIDS (RNGOF on HIV/AIDS & HP)'s Three-Level Monitoring & Evaluation System**

