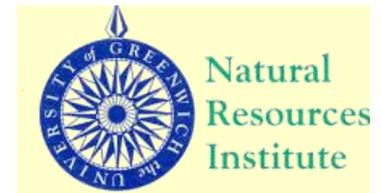


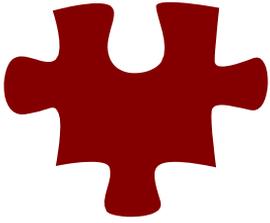
Guidance Kit for Evaluation of Rural Advisory Services

Barry Pound, Adrienne Martin and
Sabine Gündel



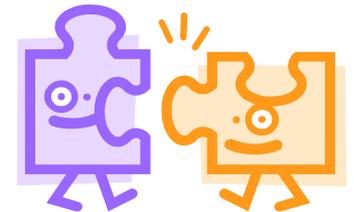
First Intercontinental Meeting of the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services, 3-5 November 2010.





CONTENTS

- **Background and development of the RAS Evaluation Guidance Kit**
- **Introduction to the Guidance Kit – Fact sheets and Process Sheets.**
- **Testing the Evaluation Guidance Kit**



Why the need for an Extension Evaluation Guidance Kit?

- **New challenges** - changes in global food systems, health, climate change etc. importance of rural advisory services (RAS) to meet these.
- **New roles** - strengthening capacities, empowering rural people, improving market access, dealing with risk, protecting the environment
- **New relationships** – pluralistic, demand-driven RAS, locally and regionally adapted; brokering interactions between farmers, the private sector, research, education, and government.

Evaluation of these complex processes is challenging!

- Need for analysis of the performance and impact of advisory services, to learn *what works, where, and why* and *what difference it makes to rural livelihoods?*
- Need to deliver and account for results to a wider range of stakeholders to provide evidence of benefit from investment in RAS
- Need to select from different evaluation methods and approaches, matching these to different evaluation objectives and requirements for evidence.

How were ideas and topics for the guidance kit developed?

- Current learning from extension evaluation approaches was analysed through a **meta evaluation** of 17 evaluation case studies selected from a total of 58 reports.
- **Literature review** of evaluation methods relevant to extension identified theory and methods relevant for evaluating initiatives in rural advisory services.
- Identified **good practice, gaps and challenges** in extension evaluation which could be addressed in the Guidance Kit.

Good practice, gaps and challenges 1

- **Analysis of local, national and international contexts** including the 'fit' of the programme with country policies and priorities
- **Clear objectives, users and uses:** guidance needed to help selection of evaluation approaches and methods for different objectives, situations and user groups.
- **Participation of stakeholders:** is a key element but guidance needed on the level of stakeholder participation in evaluations (participation - independence). Methods must be accessible
- **Understanding the logic of programme intervention** - how activities were intended to lead to certain results.

Good practice, gaps and challenges 2

- **Defining evaluation questions** and use of criteria, e.g. relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability
- **Rigour and attribution:** criteria for selection of areas included in the evaluation; what would have happened *without* the intervention? (counterfactual). For qualitative methods also.
- **Inclusive:** should embrace diversity, identifying impacts on different social groups – poverty level, gender, age, remoteness.
- **Targeting dissemination of evaluation findings** to participants, stakeholders, the extension community, policy makers etc.

GUIDANCE KIT

- **Purpose:** to guide practitioners to improve extension evaluation practice; to answer typical questions and provide links to theory and tools/frameworks that will assist them.
- Relating to 5 principles /challenges identified by GFRAS; focusing on best-fit approaches, addressing pluralism - co-existence of different delivery agents and sources, increasing accountability to rural clients , building evaluation capacity in RAS community and assessing sustainability.
- Written in simple language minimal use of jargon. Key terms will be explained.

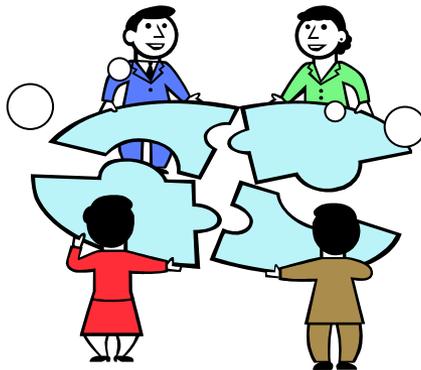
Identifying and agreeing 'Best-fit' approaches

Rigour...
Attribution....

Learning and
capacity
development

Participation

Value for
money



Intended users:

Those commissioning, designing and conducting evaluations and using evaluation findings:

- People who commission and manage evaluations
- extension specialists and practitioners in the rural development sector
- professional evaluators
- those involved in knowledge management and dissemination
- policy makers (a separate brief for policy makers will be produced)

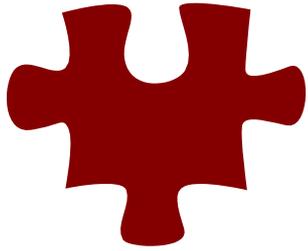
Some will have experience in evaluation but not extension;

Some will have experience in extension but not evaluation

Elements of the Guidance Kit

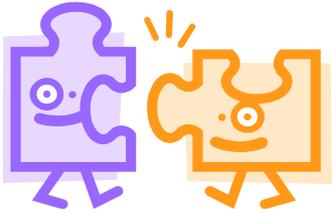
- **Introduction:** purpose, intended users, structure
- **Key principles and concepts** (*Fact Sheets*)
- **Putting principles into practice** (*Process sheets*)
- **Further information sources:** toolboxes, manuals, etc.

The kit is meant to be used in a flexible way for different evaluation circumstances.



Fact Sheets

- Provide an overview of a particular aspect of extension evaluation, drawing on the case study analysis and literature review
- Include short case study examples to show practical evidence on the relevance of the topics.
- Contain a list of *Key Points* summarising the information covered.



Process Sheets

Process Sheets will accompany each of the Fact Sheets and address practical questions:

- help the evaluation team ‘get started’ in planning and conducting an evaluation process.
- provide guidance on possible approaches and methods, encouraging a ‘best-fit’ approach rather than providing ‘blueprint’ instructions
- adaptable to each unique situation and to the information needs of different stakeholders
- will include examples and links to existing relevant online tools or guidelines

Planned topics for Guidance sheets

- 1. Understanding context**
- 2. Defining purpose, users and uses of evaluation**
3. Extension evaluation approaches
4. Extension evaluation criteria
5. Learning from process evaluation
6.

1. Understanding context

FACT SHEET:

Covers the reasons behind the need to analyse the context in which extension is being conducted, and the main elements of context .

- Why is context important to the evaluation of agricultural advisory services?
- What are the main contextual issues to be considered in an evaluation?
- What direction are the most significant aspects of context moving

PROCESS SHEET:

- **Skills and tools** for understanding the issues, circumstances and actors that can affect the system, programme, project or intervention being evaluated
- An inventory and ranking of the **relative importance** of different contextual factors to the success of the extension intervention
- An identification of key contextual issues to consider in the evaluation process

2. Defining purpose, users and uses of evaluation

FACT SHEET

Recognising ***diversity*** of purposes, users and uses in complex RAS evaluations:

- **What is the purpose?** e.g. provide evidence of achievements at end of project; learn about successful/less successful approaches and adapt; to design a new phase; to build capacity etc.
- **Who are the users:** identifying the stakeholders and defining the users of the evaluation at the *outset* (stakeholder analysis) Specify the role of different stakeholders in the evaluation process.
- **How purpose, users and uses, influence the evaluation design** – e.g. team, participation, management, methodology and relative emphasis on assessing results and lesson learning.
- **Importance of clear Terms of Reference** for extension evaluation for different purposes/ contexts .

2. Defining purpose, users and uses of evaluation

PROCESS SHEET

- Skills and tools needed.
- Establishing clear objectives/purposes for the evaluation
- Stakeholder analysis to ensure those with influence or interest are included and their perspectives acknowledged
- Establish roles and responsibilities for the main actors involved
- Developing achievable and clear ToRs

Testing the Extension Evaluation Guidance Kit

- The draft Guidance Kit needs to be **field tested** by extension evaluation practitioners for relevance, practical utility, and effectiveness
- Purpose - to validate, modify and improve the Fact Sheets and Process Sheets, adjusting or adding to the format, content or level.
- Those participating in testing will use the principles and practical tools suggested in the Guidance Kit, but will apply them in their own circumstances.

Where and how will it be tested?

- Testing in different regions and in evaluations of different types of extension interventions (systems, programmes, projects, policies, networks, initiatives)
- Different organisational contexts, stakeholders and partnerships - Farmer / community, NGO, University, Private sector, Government etc.
- For different objectives e.g. input to planning / design; learning and re-adjustment; to assess change /effects brought about by a programme .
- Potential for testing the Guidance Kit within planned or ongoing evaluations?

Suggested process for testing

- Workshop for the participants where the full draft Guidance Kit will be introduced and the format and procedures for testing discussed
- Facilitation of the workshop participants to plan their extension evaluation for their objectives and context
- Development of a format for the groups testing the Guidance Kit to provide feedback.
- Participants to conduct their own evaluations, critically reflecting on the Guidance Kit materials.
- Process will be monitored and support and advice provided to the participating teams as needed.

Analyzing feedback and finalizing the Guidance Kit

- Testing teams report back on the Guidance Kit, using the format developed.
- How they interpreted and applied the guidance :
 - Was it workable and effective - strengths and weaknesses?
 - Suggestions for improvement of the Guidance Kit
- The feedback will be summarised and circulated to field testers and other stakeholders, before the finalisation of the Guidance Kit.
- Lessons and recommendations from the field testing and other feedback will be used to refine the Guidance Kit for publication.



Thank you

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