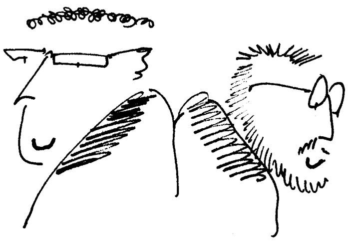
TEARFUND
CHRISTIAN ACTION WITH THE WORLD'S POOR

Steps in organising an Assessment

These notes are designed for people in churches, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or charities who are considering using external assessors or facilitators to assess their work. This might take the form, for example, of an organisational assessment or a project evaluation. It is hoped this guide will be useful in planning the main steps for preparing the assessment.

EDITED by Simon Larkin

CARTOONS by Bill Crooks



Steps in organising an Assessment

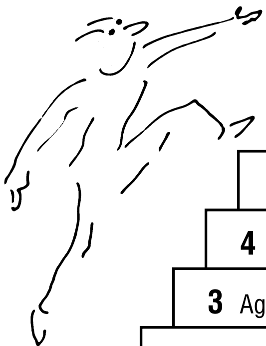
Contents

MAIN STEPS

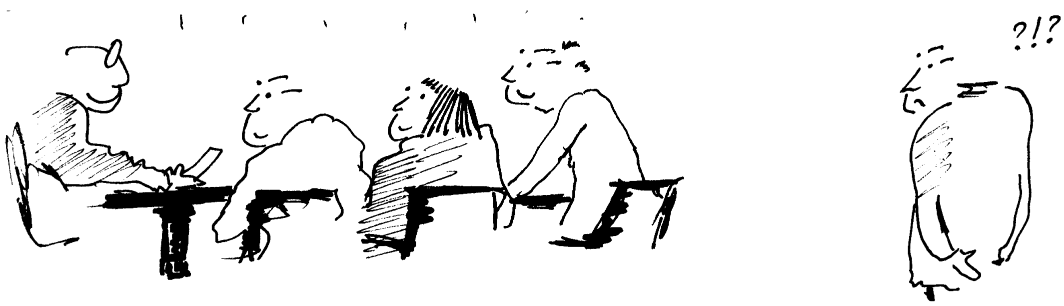
Below are the key tasks to think about when planning an assessment. Some of these topics are written about in more detail on the following pages.

Planning an assessment

21 Inform others about the learning
20 Make sure recommendations are followed up
19 Approve any payments to the assessment team
18 Send out feedback forms
17 Review the assessment
16 Receive and check the quality of the report
15 The assessment
14 Finalise ToR for the assessment
13 Brief the assessment team
12 Draw up any contracts needed (ie: for external consultants)
11 Make logistical arrangements (eg: travel, money)
10 Plan how the recommendations will be followed up
9 Develop the assessment programme and timetable
8 Finalise roles of the assessment team
7 Negotiate any fees
6 Select the team members
5 Finalise the assessment budget
4 Draft Terms of Reference (ToR)
3 Agree assessment stakeholders
2 Allow for cost in budget
1 Decide at the beginning of the project when there should be assessments



Make sure no-one is excluded from the planning stage of the assessment



AGREEING ON THE ASSESSMENT STAKEHOLDERS

Possible stakeholders

- local community (men, women, children, elderly, those from different social backgrounds, other excluded groups)
- project staff
- management
- churches
- donors
- policy makers
- other NGOs

Who are the people or groups with an interest in the assessment? These are called *stakeholders*. All stakeholders will have different ideas of what they want to be achieved by the assessment. Hopefully a balance can be gained which allows at least some of the interests of all of the stakeholder groups. By prioritising, it can be decided which interests will, and which will not, be met by the assessment.[1] Filling in a table like the one below can help make sure that no group is forgotten about when the decisions are made.[2]

Who has an interest in the assessment?	What would they want from the assessment?	How will they use the results?	Is this a low or high priority?

DRAFTING TERMS OF REFERENCE

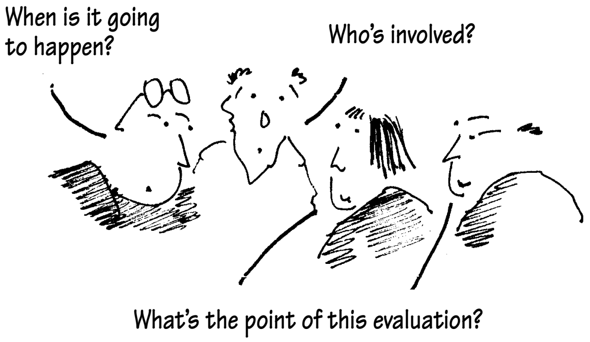
Terms of Reference help everyone to agree on what will happen

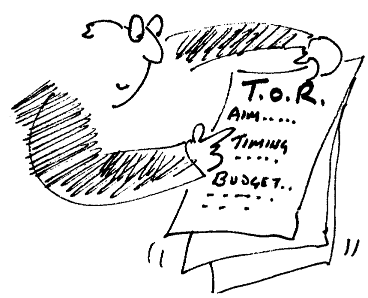
Clear ToR are very important if the assessment is going to produce useful information. It is worth spending time on the detail of the ToR so that everyone is agreed about what is expected to happen. Some of the main areas for discussion are listed below:

Purpose Why is the assessment happening? What are the questions which will be answered by the assessment?

Timing When is the assessment expected to take place?

Methodology How will the information be gathered?





1 Oxfam UK, *Programme and Project Management and Support Guidelines* – draft

2 Table adapted from Aaker J and Shumaker J (1994) *Looking Back and Looking Forward, A Participatory Approach to Evaluation,* Heifer Project International

Budget How much will it cost, and who will pay?

Management Who will be the main person responsible for managing the assessment?

It is useful to include a rough draft of the ToR in the original project plans. When the time for the assessment approaches, the ToR should then be discussed by the relevant stakeholders. This usually takes a long time, and **should start at least six months before the assessment is due to take place**. See page 11 for the main headings that can be used to set out a ToR.

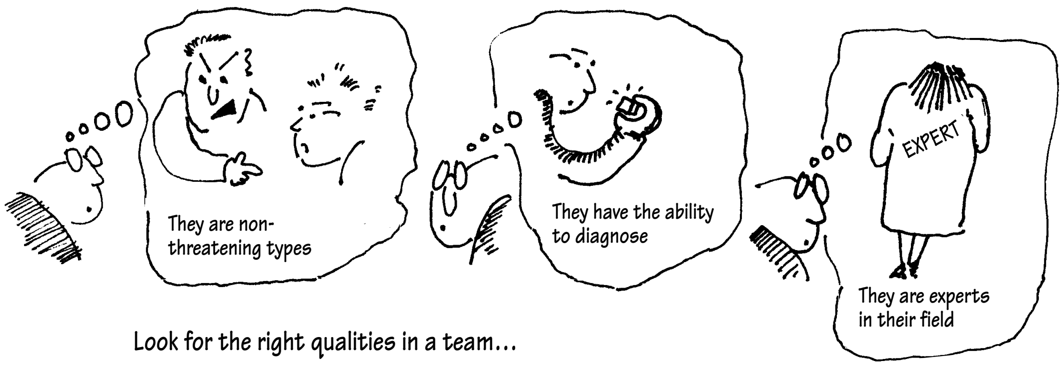
SELECTING THE TEAM MEMBERS

Make a list of all the most important qualities needed by those on the assessment team

It is important to think carefully about who has the skills, experience and attitudes needed for the assessment. Do the proposed people have participatory skills? Are they good at listening? Are there both men and women on the team? It may be a good idea to interview the proposed people in order to assess their ability to carry out this particular piece of work. Interviewers should think through the particular skills needed for the assignment and make a list of five or six main skills and types of experience. The following qualities are essential for anyone involved in an assessment:

- ability to relate well to people from different backgrounds
- non-threatening personal style
- ability to analyse and diagnose situations
- relevant technical experience and skills.[3]

If the team leader of an assessment is to write a report, then it is also essential that he or she possesses **very good summarising and writing skills**. If consultants are used, then also think about how important it is for the consultant to share the same values and beliefs as others involved in the assessment. Ask yourself whether the consultant might make comments which would offend anyone.



Look for the right qualities in a team…

3 Lawry White S (1998), internal Tearfund document on *Recruitment and Management of Consultants*

NEGOTIATING ANY FEES

Typically, a consultant might charge for…

pre-reading:	1 day
briefing:	1 day
travel:	1 day
visit:	9 days
return travel:	1 day
report:	3 or 4 days
de-briefing:	1/2 day.

Consultants' fees often seem high compared to employees' wages because:

- their short term employment means a lack of economic security
- they take care of their own tax and insurance
- they do not receive other benefits given to employees.

Consultants should also be paid for time travelling and time spent briefing and de-briefing (see left). Fee rates should be comparable with those paid by similar agencies in the region. Part of the fee may need to be paid during the course of the assessment; however, final payment should only be paid when the client is satisfied with the quality of the final report.[4]

DEFINING ROLES OF THE ASSESSMENT TEAM

Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the assessment team members

To avoid unnecessary confusion, the roles and responsibilities of the assessment team and team leader should be stated clearly in the ToR. If a team approach is used, then one person should be appointed team leader. The role of the team leader should include:

- team building within the assessment team
- ensuring that marginalised groups are included in the assessment
- managing the schedule, workload and ways of collecting information whilst on the assessment
- communication with the client
- writing the assessment report.[5]

FINAL STAGES OF THE ASSESSMENT

Below are some issues to think about towards the end of the assessment:

- Holding a workshop at the end of the assessment will allow discussion on what should be done now, and create ownership of recommendations agreed upon.
- It is important that the findings are presented in a way that is understandable to all groups.
- Agreement should be reached as to what actions need to be taken and by whom. This may be agreed in the workshop, or at a meeting soon afterwards.

4 Lawry White S (1998), internal Tearfund document on *Recruitment and Management of Consultants*

5 Oxfam UK, *Programme and Project Management and Support Guidelines*

REVIEWING THE ASSESSMENT

Ask yourself what you would do differently next time you organise an assessment

There are a number of ways the assessment can be reviewed. Feedback forms (see page 18) can be sent to the people involved in the assessment in order to gain their views about how it went. Those organising an assessment can also meet together, and record why it went well (if it did), and what they would do differently next time. Questions which can be asked about the final report are also contained on page 13.

FOLLOWING UP ON RECOMMENDATIONS

Keep going back to the recommendations to check how many have been implemented

It is a good idea to discuss how the recommendations will be followed up before the assessment is undertaken. So much energy is put into the assessment itself that people often forget about the recommendations. Who will be responsible for making sure that the recommendations are acted upon? Arrange a meeting six months after the assessment to look again at the report's recommendations, and to think about how many of them have been implemented.

INFORMING OTHERS ABOUT THE LEARNING

Think about how the findings of the report can be shared with other people or groups

After the assessment, it is important that lessons learnt are not forgotten. Ask yourself:

- Is it possible to share the executive summary of the report more widely – for example, with churches, donors, other NGOs?
- Can the executive summary be translated into all relevant local languages?
- Can the report be stored in a place where people will look at it again?
- Are there other ways to publicise lessons from the assessment – by local theatre or posters, for example?

FURTHER READING

Brown S (1997) *Manual for a Workshop on Planning, Monitoring and Reporting*, Tearfund

Carter I, ed (1993) Organisational Assessment, *Footsteps 17*, Tearfund

Carter I, ed (1996) Participatory Learning and Action, *Footsteps 29*, Tearfund

Crooks B (1999) *Organisational Assessment Briefing Papers Nos 1–9*, Tearfund

Feuerstein M (1986) *Partners in Evaluation*, Macmillan Education Ltd

Fowler A (1995) *Participatory Self Assessment of NGO Capacity*, Occasional Paper Series No 7, INTRAC

James R (1998) *Demystifying Organisational Development*, INTRAC

Raistrick T (2000) *Church, Community and Change*, Tearfund

Rubin F (1995) *A Basic Guide to Evaluation for Development Workers*, Oxfam

Think how the findings will be presented so that everybody understands them!

Principles of good practice in assessment[6]

- ✔ Assessments (evaluations, organisational assessments, impact assessments) should be built into the project or partnership design and discussed at its planning stage.
- ✔ All stakeholders should be identified at the initial planning stages of the assessment and their level of involvement decided.
- ✔ There should be a clear purpose to an assessment: why it is taking place, who will be using the findings and how the findings will be presented.
- ✔ All main stakeholders of the assessment should be involved in drawing up the Terms of Reference.
- ✔ The assessment should encourage learning by, and empowerment of, those involved in the assessment.
- ✔ All assessors should have the skills and attitudes needed to gain the views of the marginalised (eg: children, women, elderly, disabled).
- ✔ There should be a balance of men and women on an assessment team.
- ✔ All assessors should be fully briefed prior to the assessment.
- ✔ The findings of an assessment should be presented in a way that is accessible to all stakeholders.
- ✔ As soon as possible after the assessment there should be a formal meeting in order to discuss the findings and recommendations and to identify action points.
- ✔ After the assessment has been completed, all stakeholders should be asked what could be done to improve the assessment process next time.

6 adapted from Oxfam, (1997) *Oxfam UK Programme and Project Management and Support Guidelines*

TEMPLATE 1

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Give details on the following:

Background

- Project title and background information to the project.
- Summary of findings of previous reports and assessments.
- Short description of the organisation and its history.
- Current activities and how the need for the assignment arose.

Purpose

- The aim or goal of the assessment.
- The specific issues to be analysed.

Methodology

- Techniques to be used to gather information such as…
  a review of documents; cost benefit analysis; semi-structured interviews; direct observation; participatory exercises such as mapping, seasonal calendars, ranking and focus groups.

Scheduling

- Dates for briefing and de-briefing; travel dates; details of the visit (who, when and where).
- Date of the deadline for the final report.

Management

- The name of the main client who is requesting and approving the work.
- The name of the person(s) who should be contacted if any problems arise.
- The person who will be responsible for practical arrangements.

Expected outputs

- How feedback should be provided, to whom, and when.
- How the final report should be written and structured.

Required inputs

- People to be involved in the assessment (eg: community representatives, project staff, government officials, church members); vehicles; translators; any consultants.

Review of the assessment

- How the assessment will be reviewed (feedback forms to those involved, any review of the report that will take place).

Budget

- Overall budget, with budget code, breakdown of fees, travel and other expenses.

Authorisation

- The client signs and dates the final version of the ToR.

TEMPLATE 2 **GUIDELINES FOR REPORT WRITING**

Structure and contents

Title page The title page should give the title of the assignment, dates of visit and author of the report.

Contents page The contents page should list all the sections of the report, with page references.

Glossary The glossary should give, in full, all abbreviations used in the report.

Executive summary The executive summary should be no more than four pages long. It gives a brief summary of the full contents of the body of the report, including the recommendations.

Introduction The introduction should lead the reader into the report, explaining: the client requesting the assessment, the background to the study, the methodology and how the data is arranged in the findings. It should also state the objectives of the evaluation which are found in the ToR.

Findings The findings should specifically follow the ToR. They should make a balanced assessment of the current situation and take account of the views of local people and community representatives.

Conclusions Conclusions should be well supported by the evidence in the findings. There should be nothing new stated here.

Recommendations Recommendations should be realistic.

Appendix The appendices mainly provide a place for additional data – items which make the report clearer but are not directly relevant to the main part of the report (eg: questionnaires, maps). The report, however, should be complete without any appendices. Full ToR are included here.

Layout and style

Each page of the report should be numbered. The report should be concisely and clearly written with a maximum length of 25 sides, excluding the summary and appendix. Sub-headings are useful for making longer pieces of text more readable. The report should be written to help everyone make best use of its findings.

TEMPLATE 3 **ASSESSMENT REPORTS** – questions to ask

		Reviewer's comment / score out of 5
Layout	Is it no more than 25 sides in length (excluding summary and appendices)?	*yes / no*
	Is the executive summary no more than four sides?	*yes / no*
	Are the pages numbered?	*yes / no*
Format	Does it follow the format as outlined in the Guidelines for Report Writing (eg: title page, contents page, summary)?	*yes / no*
	Does it include the relevant appendices?	*yes / no*
	Is it clearly laid out, and is it possible to find relevant sections?	*yes / no*
		Please comment and indicate score (5 is highest)
Style	Is the writing style clear and readable?	*1 2 3 4 5*
Content/analysis	Does the executive summary adequately summarise the report, so that a reader can find out the most important information without reading the whole report?	*1 2 3 4 5*
	How well does the report follow the ToR?	*1 2 3 4 5*
	If the report does add more information than is asked for in the ToR, how important is this additional information?	*1 2 3 4 5*
	Does the evidence support the conclusions?	*1 2 3 4 5*
	How realistic and clearly set out are the recommendations?	*1 2 3 4 5*
	How well are the recommendations supported by current good practice?	*1 2 3 4 5*
	Are there other recommendations you think should have been suggested?	*1 2 3 4 5*
	How well does the analysis take into account the views of different stakeholders?	*1 2 3 4 5*
	Was there adequate technical understanding displayed in the report?	*1 2 3 4 5*

TEMPLATE 4

AGREEMENT FOR CONSULTANCY SERVICES

PLEASE NOTE
This is a suggested format only for guidance and information. Please seek appropriate local legal advice before use.

[*Title for the Assignment*] *(not just the project title)*

Consultants are an important resource to [*name of organisation*]. We appreciate all that you are able to offer to [*name of organisation*] through your skills and experience. We hope your time with us will be both a fulfilling experience and effective in God's service.

This agreement is between [*name of organisation*] and [*name of consultant*], referred to as 'the consultant', who will carry out the assignment as specified by [*name of organisation*]. The assignment is entitled [*name of assignment*].

It is hereby agreed between the parties as follows:

1 Terms of Reference

The assignment will be carried out in accordance with the Terms of Reference attached.

2 Time scale

The assignment will be completed by the following dates:

Deadline for briefing: [*date*]

Deadline for fieldwork and travel: [*date*]

The consultant will produce and submit to [*name of client*] a final report by [*date*].

3 Accountability and Support

The consultant will be accountable and give reports to [*name of client*]. Additional information and support is available from [*name*].

The consultant's work will come within the policy of [*name of organisation*] and be in accordance with [*name of organisation*]'s guidelines for consultants. The consultant should make every effort to behave in a manner consistent with the standards and ethos of [*name of organisation*].

4 Ownership of findings

The reports produced will be the property of [*name of organisation*], who will use them in whatever way they wish. If a report includes sensitive matters, [*name of organisation*] reserves the right not to publicise the report or part of the report.

5 Fees

An overall fee of [*amount*] plus reasonable expenses has been agreed for this assignment. If the contract agreed between [*name of organisation*] and the consultant is extended, extra payment will be made at a rate of [*amount*] per day.

The consultant will send an invoice for fees and expenses within 30 days of completing the assignment. If no such invoice is received at that time, payment will be made on the information available to us and will be regarded as full and final payment. **All payments will be made on condition that the work in the opinion of [*name of organisation*] has been satisfactorily carried out along the lines set out in the Terms of Reference.**

A first payment of [*amount*] may be paid one week before the consultancy has taken place, if requested.

[*Name of organisation*] will provide the consultant's return ticket to [*place*] and will reimburse reasonable expenses necessary for preparing to work abroad (eg: travel, vaccinations etc). [*Name of organisation*] will also provide or reimburse expenses for reasonable accommodation, subsistence and travel whilst abroad. The consultant will provide receipts as evidence of expenses, and will produce a statement of expenses in [*type of currency*] or another single currency, specified clearly. Any expenses incurred by the consultant which [*name of organisation*] considers to be excessive or unrelated to the assignment, will not be reimbursed.

All costs of producing and distributing the report will be met by [*name of organisation*]

6 Confidentiality

Consultants shall treat as confidential all knowledge of [*name of organisation*]'s affairs of a sensitive nature to which they have access during the assignment.

7 Tax

There is no employment relationship between [*name of organisation*] and the consultant. This is an agreement for providing professional services. Consultants are responsible for making their own arrangements for payment of tax or other State contributions.

8 Signatures

Before signing please ensure that you have read and agree to the attachments, namely, the Terms of Reference and the Contract Conditions.

Signed in agreement: . . . .(Consultant) Date: . . . .

Signed in agreement: . . . .(on behalf of [*name of organisation*]) Date: . . . .

Signed in agreement . . . .(Line Manager) Date: . . . .

TEMPLATE 5

CONTRACT CONDITIONS

PLEASE NOTE
This is a suggested format only for guidance and information. Please seek appropriate local legal advice before use.

Expenses

Start up costs for [*name of organisation*] consultancy work are usually low, so there is normally no need for a start up fee. Air tickets and visas should normally be purchased by [*name of organisation*] for the consultant before the visit.

Reasonable expenses will only be paid if [*name of organisation*] receives a clear and justified statement of expenditure supported by receipts, with equivalent costs in [*relevant currency*]. It is recognised that receipts will not be available in every circumstance for small expenditures, (eg: taxis). [*Name of organisation*] does not refund the cost of any alcoholic drinks.

[*Name of organisation*] will cover all travel expenses directly related to the assignment. This includes:

- travel to and from airports in the consultant's country of origin
- all work-related travel expenses in other countries
- travel costs to and from interview and briefings.

Car mileage rates are [*amount*] per mile.

If frequent long distance travel is required, [*name of organisation*] will negotiate in advance reduced rates for reimbursement of travel costs.

Where a consultant has paid relevant expenses on behalf of others, for example, taking a business contact to lunch, this can be claimed but must be explained when receipts are returned.

Cash advances

It is the consultant's responsibility to make sure that they have enough currency (cash, travellers cheques, Visa etc) to cover their expenses during their trip. [*Name of organisation*] may decide to advance cash to the consultant.

Equipment

Any expensive equipment needed for the assignment should be purchased by [*name of organisation*] and will then remain [*name of organisation*]'s property. Consultants can only charge for equipment bought for the assignment, if it has been agreed with [*name of organisation*] beforehand. Consultants are expected to take good care of any [*name of organisation*] equipment. Where the consultant needs a laptop computer for their assignment, this may be provided by [*name of organisation*] by agreement, but the consultant should generally expect to provide their own.

Accommodation

Consultants should use reasonably priced accommodation. This does not include international standard hotels, unless there is no suitable alternative. The consultant should have accommodation which is reasonably clean, quiet, with cooling fans or air conditioning for hot or humid weather, reliable water supply, and easy access to a telephone, though this need not necessarily be in their room.

Where possible, [*name of organisation*] will assist by making hotel and travel bookings etc in advance.

Insurance and sickness

INSURANCE *Explain any organisational insurance which covers consultants.*

SICKNESS If a consultant becomes ill whilst working away from their home country, [*name of organisation*] will continue to pay them at the agreed rate per day up to the date they were due to return but not beyond that date. Consultants are not eligible for [*name of organisation*]'s Sick Pay.

TEMPLATE 6

FEEDBACK FORM – for use after an assignment

Your feedback is very important to us. Please complete this form and return it to [*name of client*] by [*date*]. It will help us to review and, where necessary, improve the effectiveness of future assignments.

Assignment details

Organisation name: ....

Title of assignment: ....

Date of assignment: ....Place: ....

	Please tick the appropriate box for each statement		1	2	3	4	5	
Consultant 1	Ability to relate to people	(LOW)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	(HIGH)
	Relevance of knowledge and skills	(LOW)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	(HIGH)
	Understanding of the situation	(LOW)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	(HIGH)
	Quality of analysis	(LOW)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	(HIGH)
Consultant 2	Ability to relate to people	(LOW)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	(HIGH)
	Relevance of knowledge and skills	(LOW)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	(HIGH)
	Understanding of the situation	(LOW)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	(HIGH)
	Quality of analysis	(LOW)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	(HIGH)
Assignment in general	Objectives of the ToR fulfilled	(LOW)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	(HIGH)
	The assignment will help our work	(LOW)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	(HIGH)
	Usefulness of recommendations	(LOW)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	(HIGH)
	Quality of final report	(LOW)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	(HIGH)

What was most helpful to you about the assignment, and why?

What was least helpful to you about the assignment, and why?

Any other comments?

Person completing this feedback form

Name: ....

Position within organisation: .... Date: ....