

# Terms of Reference

To undertake desk-based research into how harm has been defined and integrated into monitoring and evaluation cycles

June 2020

Background	<p>A group of senior M&amp;E practitioners has been reflecting on harm in M&amp;E for a period of two years.<sup>1</sup> The two years of work has produced enhanced orientation materials for M&amp;E professional discussions amongst foundations, collective reflection workshops, think pieces, reports on priority areas and presentations at the AfrEA and AEA conference. The group now looks to build these actions into a practitioner orientated publication. The research being commissioned aims to further map harms that arise within monitoring and evaluation practice.</p>
Introduction	<p>Professionals who work in monitoring and evaluation may have ways to address notions and conceptions of harms, but work remains either not well articulated or engagement across our practice is limited. Professionals working on monitoring and evaluation are often in a uniquely privileged position to listen and hear the voices and stories of the people we work with. These professionals often determine what gets counted and what counts. Yet, practical guidance for commissioners, managers and evaluators on managing harm is limited.</p> <p>With privileged position comes the responsibility to do no harm by identifying areas where evaluation can cause harm and develop mitigations. There has been patchy recognition about the variety of potential harms that can arise from both the actions and inaction of the evaluator and others involved in monitoring and evaluation processes. For example, the current <a href="#">American Evaluation Association Competencies</a>, <a href="#">African Evaluation Guidelines</a> highlight what the evaluator does during the evaluation process, but not how they should engage with harm more broadly. The <a href="#">evaluation standards for Aotearoa New Zealand</a> and <a href="#">ALNAPs Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide</a> develop the issue of harm and care in more detail. Monitoring and Evaluation professionals could benefit from additional guidance.</p>
Aim of this assignment	<p>The purpose of this assignment is to undertake research on how harm has been defined and integrated into M&amp;E cycles. The assignment is intended as a rapid exercise and would answer the following three questions, looking from the perspective of different actors in M&amp;E:</p>

<sup>1</sup> Stephen Porter, Evaluation Strategy Advisor – Independent Evaluation Group, World Bank; Veronica Olazabal, Senior Adviser and Director, Measurement, Evaluation and Organizational Performance – The Rockefeller Foundation; Prof. Rodney Hopson, Department of Educational Psychology - University of Illinois; Linda Raftree, Convener of MERL Tech; Adj. Prof Dugan Fraser, Director of the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results Anglophone Africa – University of the Witwatersrand.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) What definition, association, or conception (or definitions, associations, or conceptions) of harm emerge from M&amp;E literature and practice? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Are these definitions consistent in diverse cultural or/and sector contexts?</li> <li>b. Might these definitions be located in similar disciplines or sectors?</li> <li>c. What, if any, challenges occur with how M&amp;E professionals understand these definitions?</li> </ol> </li> <li>2) Who are the key social actors who interact in M&amp;E cycles? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What roles do these actors play in causing, distributing or ameliorating harm?</li> <li>b. Who is harmed? How? And according to whom?</li> <li>c. What good and bad practices emerge?</li> </ol> </li> <li>3) What strategies for addressing, preventing or reducing these harms have emerged and how successful have these been? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) What contexts have given rise to these strategies?</li> <li>b) How has their success been assessed?</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>(Note that these are intended as guiding questions. If key issues can be addressed better by asking similar but differently worded questions that approach should be followed.)</p>
<p>Activities to be undertaken</p>	<p>The service provider should undertake the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A kick-off discussion with the study steering group</li> <li>• Around 6 days of desk-based document reviews</li> <li>• Around 5 days consulting key informants and undertaking semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Around 4 days preparing a draft report, presenting it to the Steering Group and finalising it into final version.</li> </ul> <p>The users of the report will be the steering committee containing Senior M&amp;E practitioners who will use it as an input to development of a publication. It is also anticipated that the report will be made publicly available and could feed into discussions with M&amp;E practitioners at conferences and other fora.</p>
<p>Deliverables and timeframes</p>	<p>The final deliverable should be a document of no longer than 15 pages (with appendices as necessary) that answers the questions above (or revised versions of the questions agreed upon with the Steering Group). As a general guide, subject to change based on discussion, the report should cover the following sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Review of definitions of harm relevant to M&amp;E</li> <li>• Actors who have a role in causing and mitigating harm in M&amp;E</li> <li>• Mapping of the interaction of harm across the M&amp;E cycle</li> <li>• Overview of strategies used to reduce or prevent harm</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conclusion and areas for further research</li> <li>• Bibliography and notes.</li> </ul> <p>The draft of the report should be submitted by 31 August 2020, and the final report should be submitted by 30 September 2020.</p>
Contracting details:	<p>For this report the provider will be paid \$9,750 for approximately 15 days of work. Additional expenses will not be covered since it is assumed that all work will be undertaken remotely.</p> <p>Researchers interested in undertaking this assignment should submit their CVs to <a href="mailto:silvia.desousa@wits.ac.za">silvia.desousa@wits.ac.za</a> by close of business on Sunday 5 July 2020. The successful applicant will be notified on Friday 10 July 2020.</p> <p>Applications should comprise a summary CV of no more than 5 pages and a brief covering note or email. The applicant’s CV will be reviewed for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Experience in undertaking research on M&amp;E and in particular on evaluation and its effects;</li> <li>2. Experience that would give the researcher an understanding of the strategic and practical issues in implementing M&amp;E systems and</li> <li>3. An indication that the applicant has knowledge and an understanding of equity and justice issues as they relate to evaluation practices and how marginalised and underrepresented groups are affected</li> </ol>

## Appendix: Concept Note for Publication Doing No Harm in M&E

### Introduction

This concept note outlines a proposed publication on how monitoring and evaluation can cause, mitigate and prevent harm. Harm is not an issue that evaluators have engaged with deeply, very often. Professionals working on monitoring and evaluation are often in a uniquely privileged position to listen and hear the voices and stories of the people we work with. These professionals often determine what gets counted and what counts. We have or influence interactions with vulnerable adults and children when assessing progress. The very purpose of our work is to learn about the impact of interventions on lives. We are trusted with the data of those we work with.<sup>2</sup>

With our privileged position comes the responsibility to do no harm by identifying areas where we can cause harm and develop mitigations. Little has been published about the

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Oxfam Doing No Harm in Monitoring and Evaluation: A safeguarding perspective Tool 2: Roles and Responsibilities of MEL staff

variety of potential harms that can arise from both the actions and inaction of the evaluator and others involved in monitoring and evaluation processes. For example, the current [American Evaluation Association Competencies](#) highlight what the evaluator does during the evaluation process, but not how they should respond to harm and protection issues more broadly.

The proposed publication represents the next stage in a process of a group of senior practitioners.<sup>3</sup> The group initially came together to reflect when organizations that were meant to protect rights but caused harm were exposed. Over a period of two years the group have convened dialogs, presented at conferences and produced conceptual and practical guidance. The group has identified that evaluation can cause harm through its: handling of allegations of sexual exploitation; inaccurate findings; privileging of voices; myopically focusing on the values of elites; careless storing of data; cultural insensitivity; and not evaluating harm. Unpacking these harms forms the basis of the proposed publication.

### The Publication

The publication will outline practically what harm can be caused by monitoring and evaluation practice and how harm can be mitigated and prevented.

The questions that will form the basis of the publication are:

- a. How has harm been understood in monitoring and evaluation?
- b. What harm are we doing through monitoring and evaluation?
- c. How do we mitigate the harm?

The publication will contribute to professionals conducting monitoring and evaluation to identify the harmful effects that their work can have on people's lives and when it is appropriate to reduce that harm.

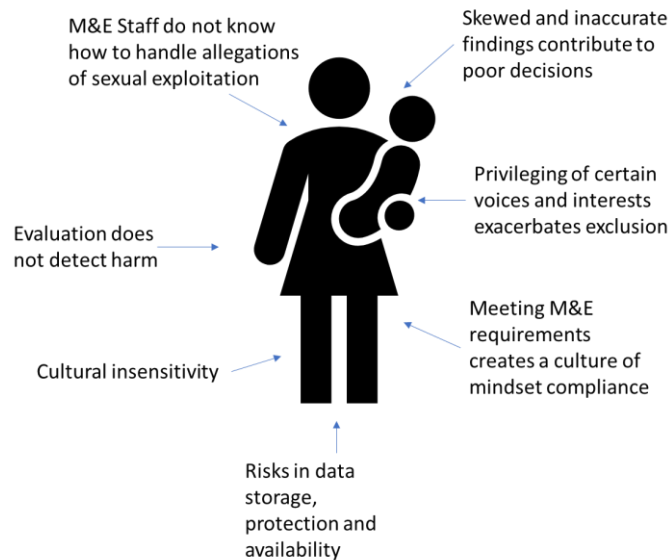
### Content

The diagram and discussion below represent a people-centered perspective for some of the actions of monitoring and evaluation that can harm people. The actions form a starting content for the publication that will be refined through a focused process of dialog.

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<sup>3</sup> Stephen Porter, Evaluation Strategy Advisor - IEG; Veronica Olazabal, Director, Measurement, Evaluation and Organizational Performance – The Rockefeller Foundation; Prof. Rodney Hopson, Department of Educational Psychology - University of Illinois; Linda Raftree, Convener of MERL Tech; Adj. Prof Dugan Fraser, Director of the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results Anglophone Africa – University of the Witwatersrand.

## What people face from monitoring and evaluation practice



### Skewed and inaccurate findings contribute to poor decisions

Monitoring and evaluation processes should deliver evidence that is used to support and improve decision making. There is a real danger that the results of these processes create inaccurate and misleading perceptions of what is needed or being achieved, and these can result in problematic or even bad decisions being made that worsen the situation and reduce the effectiveness of existing and proposed interventions.

### Privileging of certain voices and interests exacerbates exclusion

Monitoring and evaluation require the careful and thoughtful selection of certain kinds of information to create meaning and understanding against evaluation questions. If care is not taken around who the contributors to those processes are, it is likely that people who are often being excluded and marginalized could continue to be shut out and their voices not heard.

### Meeting Monitoring and Evaluation requirements creates a culture of mindless compliance

In many instances monitoring and evaluation requirements are onerous and taxing, especially for fragile institutions with limited capacity receiving donor support. In these contexts, allocating precious time and resources to meeting reporting and reflection processes needs to deliver a commensurate return but often doesn't. Instead, institutions are left depleted and reduced and their ability to deliver on their mandate is reduced. Monitoring and evaluation in these contexts becomes a performative ritual that doesn't add value.

### Monitoring and Evaluation staff do not know how to handle allegations in the field

Whether in the field collecting data, training or supporting a partner, monitoring and evaluation staff can be brought into contact with issues related to harm. Situations have occurred, for example, where monitoring and evaluation staff, have been alerted to exploitation and abuse in programs. To respond appropriately staff members need to know the appropriate referral procedures, when they do not they increase the risk of harm.

Monitoring and evaluation data is stored, protected and made available in a manner that increases risk

Evaluations increasingly capture a vast amount of data electronically that can be linked back to people's specific context. This data, unless treated correctly can make people more vulnerable. For example, project websites set-up to provide a donor online reporting material have contained open, non-password-protected personal information on participants. The information could have been used at any point to target harm towards the people who are mentioned. This point of harm is linked to the earlier point about compliance. Donor demand for more and more data can lead to increased risk for the most vulnerable, and there is often insufficient questioning, risk assessment, and pushback by institutions on this trend.

#### Culturally Insensitive Evaluation Techniques

Community interventions take place often in a context where people with limited power can be exploited. During an evaluation process in a public setting there is a risk that questions asked, or references made could put a person at risk. For example, a focus group held in a refugee camp asks about who benefits from food distribution: A woman answers and starts to talk about practices between different ethnic groups and issues of corruption. A discussion the facilitator does not contain. The responses to the question could inadvertently put the woman at risk and stoke tensions.

#### Evaluation Practice that does not detect Harm

Although it can be challenging for evaluation to identify and discuss harm, it is also appropriate that on occasions evaluation should seek to understand the harm that an intervention does. A case that starkly illustrates potential under-reporting of harm is that of the UN Military Operation in Liberia (UNMIL). The operation consistently had low levels of reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse, for example, 14 from 2007 – 2008 and 6 in 2015. In contrast, a study by [Beber, Gilligan, Guardado and Karim](#) estimated that more than half of eighteen-to-thirty-year-old women in greater Monrovia have engaged in transactional sex, through representative randomized survey. Of these women more than three-quarters, or about 58,000 women have done so with UN personnel, typically in exchange for money. Without an evaluation that asked questions the issue institutionalized harm that would not have been detected.

Each of these scenarios provide real examples of where monitoring and evaluation professionals have encountered harm. Whether rare or regular M&E professionals should be prepared and able to respond to these issues correctly.