CGIAR Evaluation Framework

February 2022

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Related Documents

- CGIAR Evaluation Policy 2022

- CGIAR Evaluation Guidelines

Key Abbreviations

|	
AR4D	Agricultural Research for Development
GDI	Gender, Diversity, and Inclusion
KM	Knowledge Management
MEL/IA	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning/Impact Assessment
PRMF	Performance and Results Management Framework
TOC	Theory of Change
QA	Quality Assurance
QoR4D	Quality of Research for Development

1 Introduction

The CGIAR Evaluation Framework (the Framework) establishes the overall approach to process and performance evaluations in CGIAR.[1] It positions CGIAR's evaluation practice within relevant global frameworks, and CGIAR's own internal governance and management frameworks. Setting out a theory of change (TOC) for the practice of evaluation in CGIAR and core standards and principles, this Framework also anchors CGIAR's Evaluation Policy, with respective pillars mandatory to the conduct and use of process and performance evaluations.[2]

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals ('SDGs') provide the global frame of reference for funding and evaluating development cooperation. Further, CGIAR has adopted a Quality of Research for Development (QoR4D) framework [frame of reference] as a guide to assess research and innovation for development outcomes, which complements this Evaluation Framework and underpins approach to evaluating science quality.

CGIAR is a global organization with an integrated governance, management, and operational structure. The CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy (the CGIAR Strategy) is operationalized through research-for-development programming, supported by a broad range of funders and investors, including investments in a prospectus of Initiative projects. The CGIAR Performance and Results Management Framework 2022-2030 (PRMF) measures the results of these efforts.[3] The CGIAR Strategy and PRMF embrace TOC use and systems-thinking towards delivery of CGIAR's mission.

Figure 1: Evaluation within a performance framework
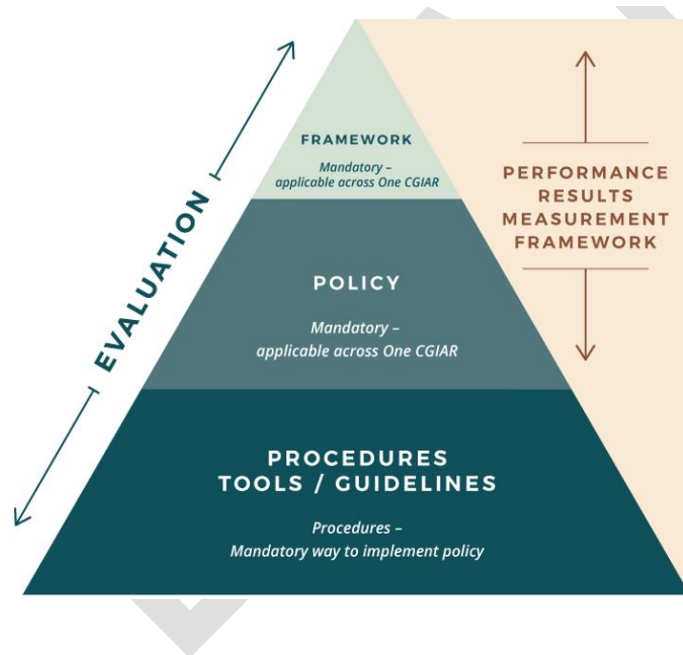
The Evaluation Framework cross-references and assumes the execution of responsibilities pertaining to evaluation by the governance, management, operational units and independent assurance, as detailed in current governance frameworks, charters, and similar documents[4]. It similarly assumes the execution of established terms of reference for relevant, responsible governance bodies and committees, independent advisory and evaluation services, as well as of units within the operational structure[5] that pertain to Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) across CGIAR.

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[1] CGIAR is currently transitioning to One CGIAR. For consistency it is referred to as CGIAR throughout.
[2] The CGIAR Evaluation Framework and Evaluation Policy come into effect upon the decisions of the CGIAR System Board and CGIAR System Council and supersede the 2012 CGIAR Policy for Independent External Evaluation.
[3] The CGIAR Performance and Results Management Framework 2022-2030 built on CGIAR Strategy and Results Framework 2016-2030.
[4] See the accompanying Evaluation Policy (2022) for additional discussion.
[5] One CGIAR Operational Structure, 2021
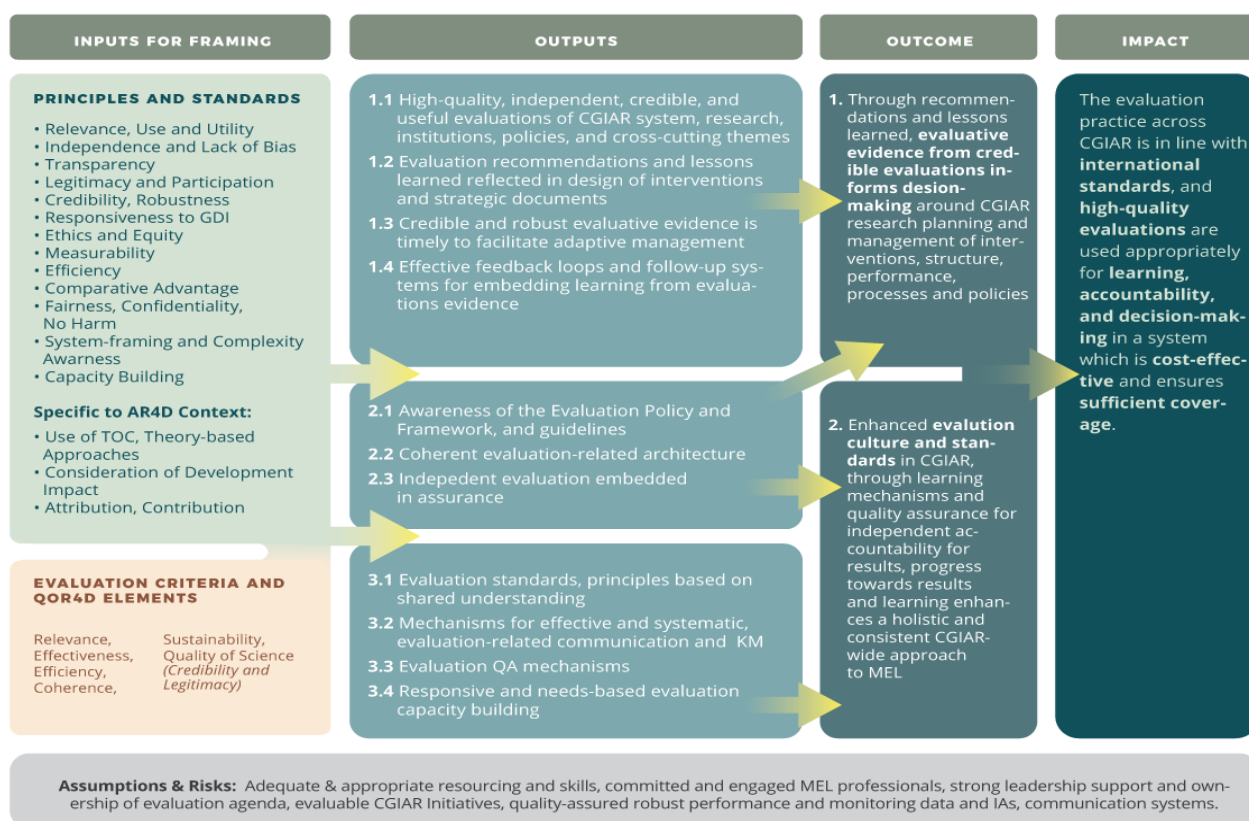
2 Key Concepts and Theory of Change

Evaluation is defined as the systematic and objective assessment of a process, an ongoing or completed project, program, initiative or policy, or operational modality in CGIAR, its design, implementation, and results.

The function of evaluation is to assist CGIAR and its stakeholders to measure and assess the process, results and consequences of CGIAR's work.

Used in the context of **agricultural research-for-development** (AR4D) **programming**, evaluation considers the pathways from research activities within the sphere of control to the contributions that outputs make to outcomes and impacts for end-users. In the context of evaluating **institutional and thematic phenomena**, evaluation similarly supports the understanding of processes of change and end results. Evaluation supports examination of why and how change occurs.

To describe the use of evaluation in CGIAR, this Framework adopts a generalized Theory of Change for process and performance evaluations conducted in CGIAR, illustrated below. The ToC is driven in part by a *vision* that CGIAR evaluation will be transformational, in that CGIAR evaluation practice will support transformational learning and change. [6]

Figure 2: Theory of Change for evaluation practice in CGIAR

INPUTS FOR FRAMING	OUTPUTS	OUTCOME	IMPACT
PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS • Relevance, Use and Utility • Independence and Lack of Bias • Transparency • Legitimacy and Participation • Credibility, Robustness • Responsiveness to GDI • Ethics and Equity • Measurability • Efficiency • Comparative Advantage • Fairness, Confidentiality, No Harm • System-framing and Complexity Awarness • Capacity Building **Specific to AR4D Context:** • Use of TOC, Theory-based Approaches • Consideration of Development Impact • Attribution, Contribution	**1.1** High-quality, independent, credible, and useful evaluations of CGIAR system, research, institutions, policies, and cross-cutting themes **1.2** Evaluation recommendations and lessons learned reflected in design of interventions and strategic documents **1.3** Credible and robust evaluative evidence is timely to facilitate adaptive management **1.4** Effective feedback loops and follow-up systems for embedding learning from evaluations evidence	**1.** Through recommendations and lessons learned, **evaluative evidence from credible evaluations informs desion-making** around CGIAR research planning and management of interventions, structure, performance, processes and policies	The evaluation practice across CGIAR is in line with **international standards**, and **high-quality evaluations** are used appropriately for **learning, accountability, and decision-making** in a system which is **cost-effective** and ensures **sufficient coverage**.
	2.1 Awareness of the Evaluation Policy and Framework, and guidelines **2.2** Coherent evaluation-related architecture **2.3** Indepedent evaluation embedded in assurance	**2.** Enhanced **evaluation culture and standards** in CGIAR, through learning mechanisms and quality assurance for independent accountability for results, progress towards results and learning enhances a holistic and consistent CGIAR-wide approach to MEL	
EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QOR4D ELEMENTS Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Coherence, Sustainability, Quality of Science *(Credibility and Legitimacy)*	**3.1** Evaluation standards, principles based on shared understanding **3.2** Mechanisms for effective and systematic, evaluation-related communication and KM **3.3** Evaluation QA mechanisms **3.4** Responsive and needs-based evaluation capacity building		

Assumptions & Risks: Adequate & appropriate resourcing and skills, committed and engaged MEL professionals, strong leadership support and ownership of evaluation agenda, evaluable CGIAR Initiatives, quality-assured robust performance and monitoring data and IAs, communication systems.

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[6] The TOC depicted in Figure 1 is subject to iterative co-development with the community of the CGIAR MEL practitioners [Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Community of Practitioners (MELCOP) at the time of development of this document] and evaluation users- it will evolve as part of the One CGIAR transition.

Within CGIAR, evaluation is either an external, completely independent (commissioned by System Council and conducted through the CGIAR Advisory Service/Evaluation function) or largely independent (commissioned by an initiative, project) study of an in-depth nature that uses evaluation criteria in line with the CGIAR Evaluation Policy.[7] Together, these create a CGIAR-wide evaluation practice.

The aim of the CGIAR-wide evaluation practice is to produce evaluations that provide **accountability, support decision-making, and learning,** and furnish lessons for improved and more cost- and time-effective benefits in three interconnected ways:

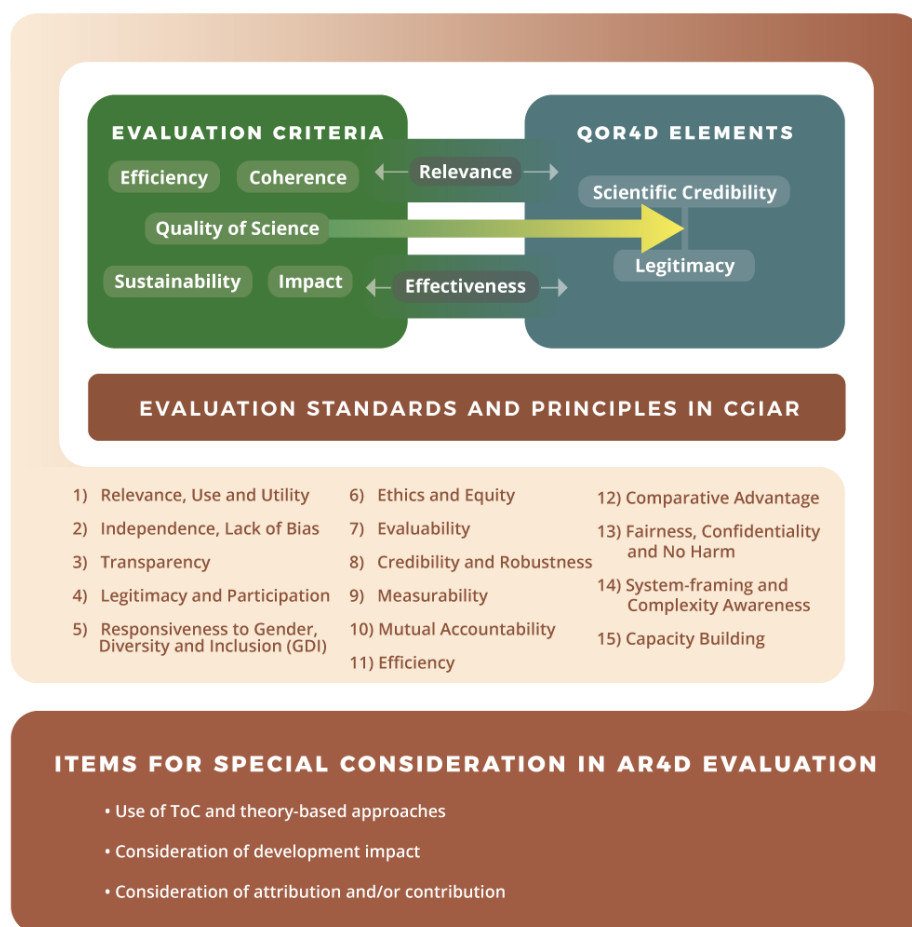| *1. Accountability and communication:* Evaluations give account of the use of funds and the related achievements. The account is conveyed via reporting and communicating the findings.	*2. Learning*: Evaluations support institutional learning and contribute to the ongoing improvement of the quality and effectiveness of CGIAR delivery of its mandate.	*3. Steering:* Evaluations supply reliable findings that contribute to the evidence-based planning of AR4D objectives and underpin strategic and operational decision-making.

3 Standards, Principles, and QoR4D

This Evaluation Framework and the aligned Policy draw on the quality standards and principles for evaluation specified by 2019 OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) evaluation criteria, the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) as well as the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) of the International Financial Institutions. Elements of the Quality of Research for Development (QoR4D) framework further guide assessing quality of science considering CGIAR's positioning in the research for development space. The standards and principles provide a point of reference for the professionalism of research-for-development evaluation and dictate *how* evaluation is conducted in CGIAR. The Evaluation Policy furnishes a detailed description of evaluation criteria (CGIAR Evaluation Policy, Section 5), which align with OECD-DAC 2019 criteria and QoR4D and describe the areas under review.

3.1 Standards and Principles

- *Relevance, use, and utility:* All evaluations are applicable to the question(s) at hand and designed in a responsive and timely manner for use in and aid decision-making, accountability, and learning processes.

- *Independence and lack of bias:* Evaluations instill confidence among all users that the evaluation is as objective as possible with the highest ethical standards and codes of conduct, impartial with a system in place against conflict of interests, and unbiased operationally and analytically.

- *Transparency:* Processes, including methods, and results are transparently disclosed, traceable, and accessible to the public.

- *Legitimacy and Participation:* Evaluations include relevant informants and use consultative processes to prepare terms of reference and the evaluation matrix, and quality assure the process, including, where appropriate and feasible, representatives of end and intermediate users of evaluation outputs.

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[7] Adapted to CGIAR from the Glossary of the OECD- Development Assistance Committee Evaluation Network and the Norms for Evaluation in the UN System, United Nations Evaluation Group, 2009. For a full spectrum of evaluation-related definitions is available in the most recent CGIAR MELIA/PRMF Glossary.

Figure 3: Evaluation Standards & Principles and Evaluation Criteria with QoR4D Elements

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Efficiency   Coherence   ← Relevance →

Quality of Science

Sustainability   Impact   ← Effectiveness →

QOR4D ELEMENTS

Scientific Credibility

Legitimacy

EVALUATION STANDARDS AND PRINCIPLES IN CGIAR

1) Relevance, Use and Utility
2) Independence, Lack of Bias
3) Transparency
4) Legitimacy and Participation
5) Responsiveness to Gender, Diversity and Inclusion (GDI)

6) Ethics and Equity
7) Evaluability
8) Credibility and Robustness
9) Measurability
10) Mutual Accountability
11) Efficiency

12) Comparative Advantage
13) Fairness, Confidentiality and No Harm
14) System-framing and Complexity Awareness
15) Capacity Building

ITEMS FOR SPECIAL CONSIDERATION IN AR4D EVALUATION

• Use of ToC and theory-based approaches

• Consideration of development impact

• Consideration of attribution and/or contribution

- _Responsiveness to Gender, Diversity, and Inclusion (GDI)_: Evaluation design, conduct, commissioning of teams, and reporting strive to fully address GDI parameters. Evaluations will question on who is engaged in, and who benefits from this work.

- _Ethics and equity:_ Evaluations consider questions of ethics in research and outcomes and integrate ethical and equity considerations in the evaluation design and implementation.

- _Evaluability:_ Evaluability refers to the extent to which an intervention can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion; the concept is central to a culture of results. A strong focus on evaluability at the design stage facilitates overall measurability, monitoring and subsequent evaluation.

- _Credibility and robustness:_ Methods employed are credible and replicable. The quality of an evaluation depends on the professional and methodological competency of the evaluators and the use of reliable, triangulated data.

- _Measurability:_ Sound methods underpin measurability and replicability. To the extent possible, evaluations measure, using quantitative and/or qualitative methods, the performance of CGIAR. Measurability provides comparability between time frames, groups, or alternative theories.

- _Mutual accountability:_ In CGIAR, expectations for evaluation are matched with adequate investments in requisite financial and human resources. The capacity and systems for data collection and real-time information underpin mutual accountability.

- *Efficiency:* Evaluation avoids unnecessary duplications, costs, or redundancy to other evaluative assessments.

- *Comparative advantage:* Evaluation gives due consideration to exploring the comparative advantage of CGIAR in contributing to the achievement of quality research-for-development results.

- *Fairness, confidentiality, and no harm*: The evaluators and commissioning office(s) are responsible to ensure and protect the confidentiality and anonymity of information, as required. In line with a 'do no harm' approach, evaluators attend to actions, omissions, and unconscious choices throughout the evaluation design and implementation.

- *System-framing and complexity awareness:* Evaluations consider the contextual realities in terms of boundaries, interrelationships, dynamics, and perspectives that delineate the systems that CGIAR aspires to improve incrementally, or to transform. Evaluation attends to nonlinearities, emergence, uncertainties, turbulence, and adaptive capacity, in line with complexity awareness.

- *Capacity building:* Learning and evaluation-related capacity building will be embedded into evaluation practice, towards coherent monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL).

3.2 Items for Special Consideration in AR4D Evaluation

- *Use of theories of change and theory-based approaches:* Theories of change (ToC) set out the complexity of multiple, intersecting, and often non-linear pathways to impact under the discipline of social sciences including economy and international relations theory. When theory-driven interventions are evaluated, the analysis of assumptions and risks behind ToCs addresses the probabilities of the partnerships and conditions for achieving outcomes and ultimate impact.

- *Consideration of development impact:* Evaluations consider the potential and actual sustainable development impact as appropriate. Impact Assessments, including studies sponsored by the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA), will be integrated into evaluation data sources.

- *Consideration of attribution and/or contribution:* Evaluations will propose and use methods that seek to describe CGIAR attribution and contribution vis-à-vis specific outcomes; that is to delineate and estimate CGIAR's particular contribution (attribution) or describe the part played by an intervention in bringing about a result where full causality cannot be established (contribution).

3.3 Quality of Research for Development (QoR4D)

CGIAR has adopted the [Quality of Research for Development (QoR4D) framework](#). The QoR4D framework guides and enhances the quality of R4D at all levels, from strategy to research activities. It expresses CGIAR System-wide agreement on the nature and assessment of the quality of science, the likelihood of achieving development outcomes. QoR4D was established through a consultative process involving representatives from entities across CGIAR involved in managing or assessing science quality. QoR4D design principles and assessment criteria, integrated with evaluation criteria to reflect the CGIAR context (see Figure 3).

4 Leadership Commitment

Successful implementation of CGIAR's Evaluation Framework and Policy relies on alignment across CGIAR, among assurance functions, including performance monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL). This implies appropriate and resourced MEL structures, systems and culture, adaptively managed in response to evolving needs of internal and external stakeholders. The Evaluation Policy details the roles

and responsibilities of CGIAR governance entities, management, MEL practitioners, including the independent evaluation function; it also explains management response.[8]

Integration of evaluation in a common assurance framework allows governance and management to leverage the utility of the Evaluation Framework and Policy for the purposes of securing third line, independent assurance. Thus, as applicable, this Framework cross-references joint assurance approaches and frameworks of CGIAR.

Investment in the training and development of MEL practitioners improves evaluation capability, communications, and quality. Enhancing and building evaluative capacity assists CGIAR to embed evidence-based, evaluative thinking in its ways of working, including processes of prioritization and decision-making. Over time, training and capacity enhancement and development help shift the perception of evaluation as a compliance exercise to it being an integral part of decision-making during the design of interventions, strategies, and operational set-ups.

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[8] A co-designed guideline supporting Management Engagement and Response establishes a clear road map to operationalize sections 6 and 7 of the CGIAR Evaluation Policy.