World Vision

Learning from experience:
World Vision Australia
Annual Evaluation Review 2013

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Summary

Each year World Vision Australia reviews the evaluation reports from projects it funded which were completed and evaluated in the previous financial year; the Annual Evaluation Review.

In the 2012 financial year, 215 projects ended and 74 reports were available to be reviewed. In 30 (42 percent) of the evaluated projects, the highest level of changes were observed in social, economic, environmental and physical conditions in the target communities. This continues the trend of improvement seen for the last four years.

Indicators of evaluation quality fell slightly, likely reflecting the smaller number of AusAID Non-Government Organisation Cooperation Program (ANCP) projects being evaluated compared to the prior year.

Thirty-one (42 percent) evaluations reported on one or more of the World Vision "standard" or "highly recommended" indicators of Child Wellbeing Outcomes. This is an encouraging finding given the recent introduction of these indicators.

Several particularly successful projects were identified, along with key lessons for project design; monitoring, evaluation and reporting; sustainability and efficiency; partnering; and participation.

Introduction

The Annual Evaluation Review aims to investigate the results of evaluated World Vision Australia–funded projects and the quality of those evaluations, and to explore learning from the evaluations worth sharing across World Vision Australia and beyond.

Evaluations of World Vision projects require substantial time, skill and resources. They also result in valuable information which, if used, can play an important part in improving our programs and help us achieve the World Vision partnership's aim to "contribute to the sustained wellbeing of 150 million children by 2016".

What we found in the 2012 financial year

Included projects

In the 2012 financial year, 215 projects ended or changed phase and 74 (34 percent) had evaluation reports available to be reviewed and were included (see Figure 1). This is a slightly lower number of projects ending and a higher proportion of reports available than in 2011. Twenty-eight of the included reports (38 percent) were from Area Development Programs.

Figure 1–Projects included

Outcomes for children and communities

Financial year	Projects ending	Evaluation reports available to be reviewed	
	N	n	%
2012	215	74	34
2011	300	95	32
2010	211	58	27
2009	222	46	21

Cover photo: Bisrat's family has been able to increase food production through a World Vision Australia-funded agriculture project in Ethiopia. Photo: Ilana Rose/World Vision

In 30 (42 percent) of the evaluated projects, changes were observed in social, economic, environmental and physical conditions in the target communities. The proportion of projects contributing to this highest level of change is higher than for projects ending in 2011 (36 percent), continuing the trend of improvement seen for the last four years. However it falls slightly short of our target (50 percent). See Figure 2.

Figure 2–Levels of change observed
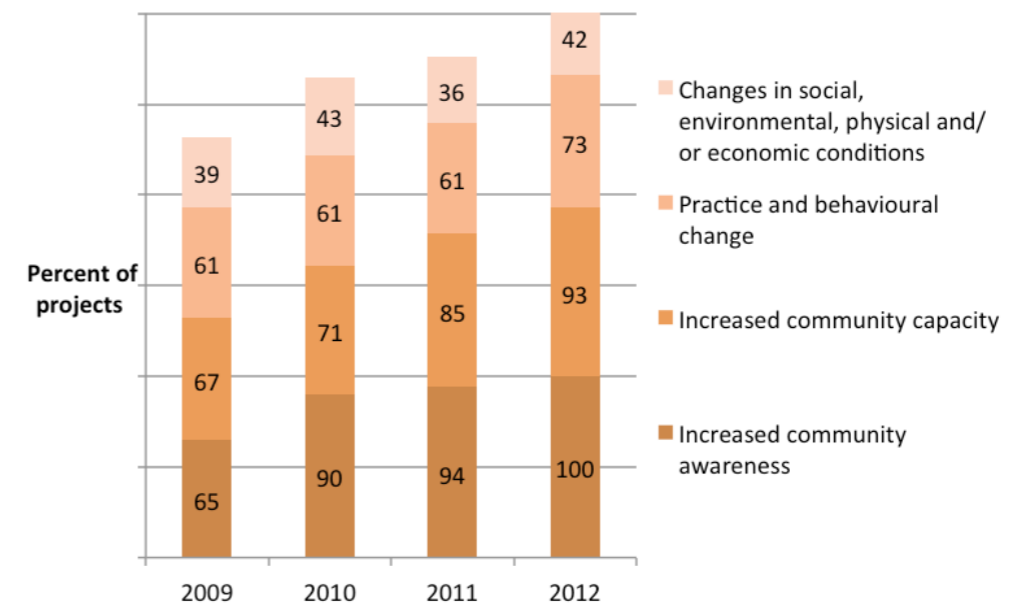
This level of systemic change requires substantial investment of time, effort and skill. It is only possible in the presence of changes in practice and behaviour (52 projects, 73 percent); which are in turn dependent on improved capacity (66 projects, 93 percent); and increased awareness (71 projects, 100 percent). [Percentages are of 71 projects as for three projects the schema was not applicable.] See Figure 3.

Figure 3–Hierarchy of levels of change
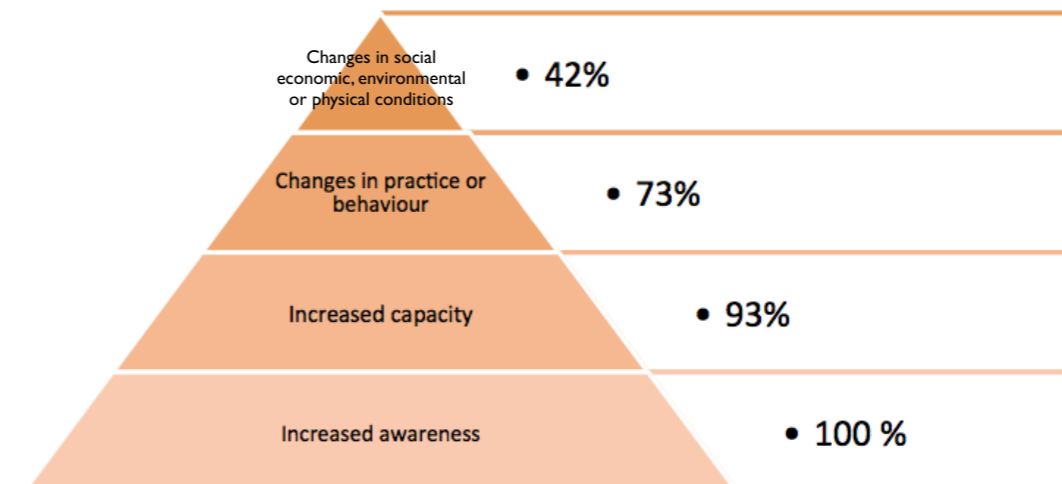
Changes in social, economic, environmental and physical conditions were more frequently observed in Area Development Programs than other projects (14 of 28 (50 percent) versus 16 of 43 (37 percent)). See Figure 4. This likely reflects the broad sustained investment in a community which is possible in an Area Development Program, as compared to the more focused nature and often shorter duration of other projects.

Area Development Programs typically run for 10-15 years an d are evaluated every five years to enable the design to be reviewed and revised. These programs are designed to support the sustainable development of a community, and are tailored to meet the key needs of the community; often integrating projects in several areas such as health, education and agriculture. Other development projects are usually shorter in duration and may address specific, narrow issues; for example increasing awareness of HIV and AIDS prevention measures. Changes in social, economic, environmental and physical conditions would not necessarily be expected in these types of focused projects.

Figure 4–Levels of change in Area Development Programs and other projects
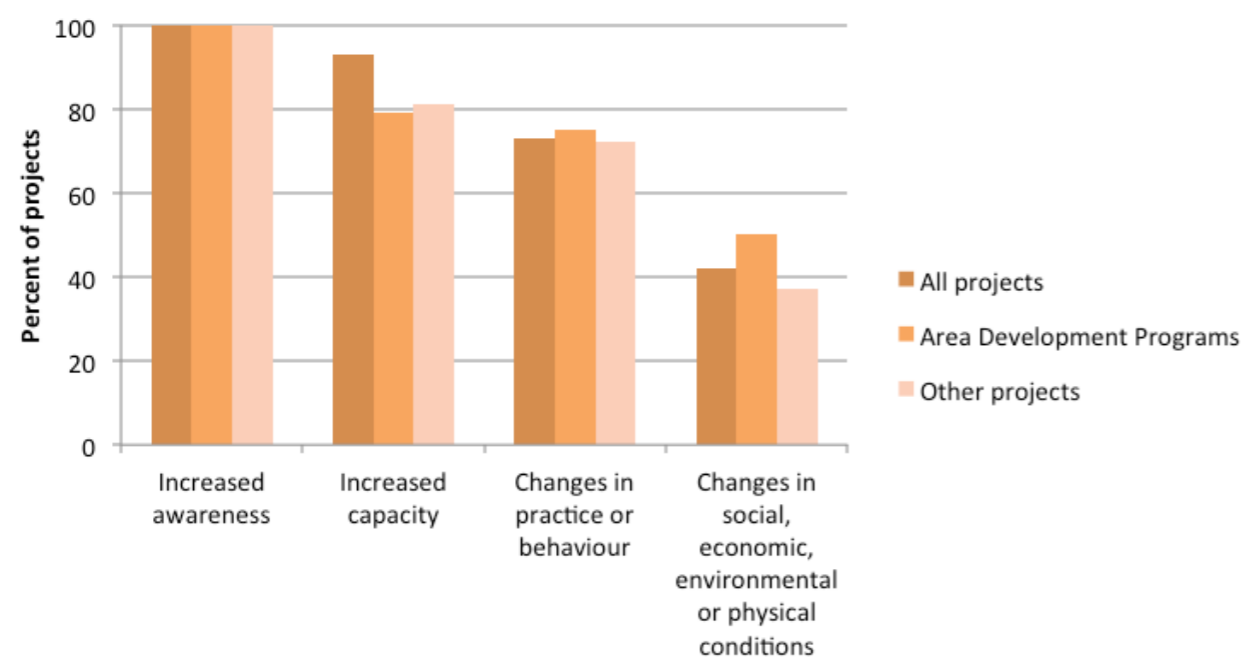

Indicators of evaluation quality

Indicators of evaluation quality fell slightly this year with 56 (76 percent) evaluations using both qualitative and quantitative methods (down from 84 percent in 2011), and 42 (57 percent) evaluations incorporating comparison to baseline data (down from 63 percent in 2011). See Figure 5.

Evaluations of Area Development Programs achieved these indicators of evaluation quality more often, with 26 (93 percent) using both qualitative and quantitative methods, and 20 (72 percent) comparing to baseline data.

It is likely that the decrease in indicators of evaluation quality is due to the smaller number of ANCP projects being evaluated compared to 2011. ANCP projects require a rigorous evaluation approach that includes using both qualitative and quantitative methods and comparison to baseline data. The 2012 results are a substantial increase over both 2009 and 2010 data.

Figure 5–Evaluation reports meeting indicators of quality
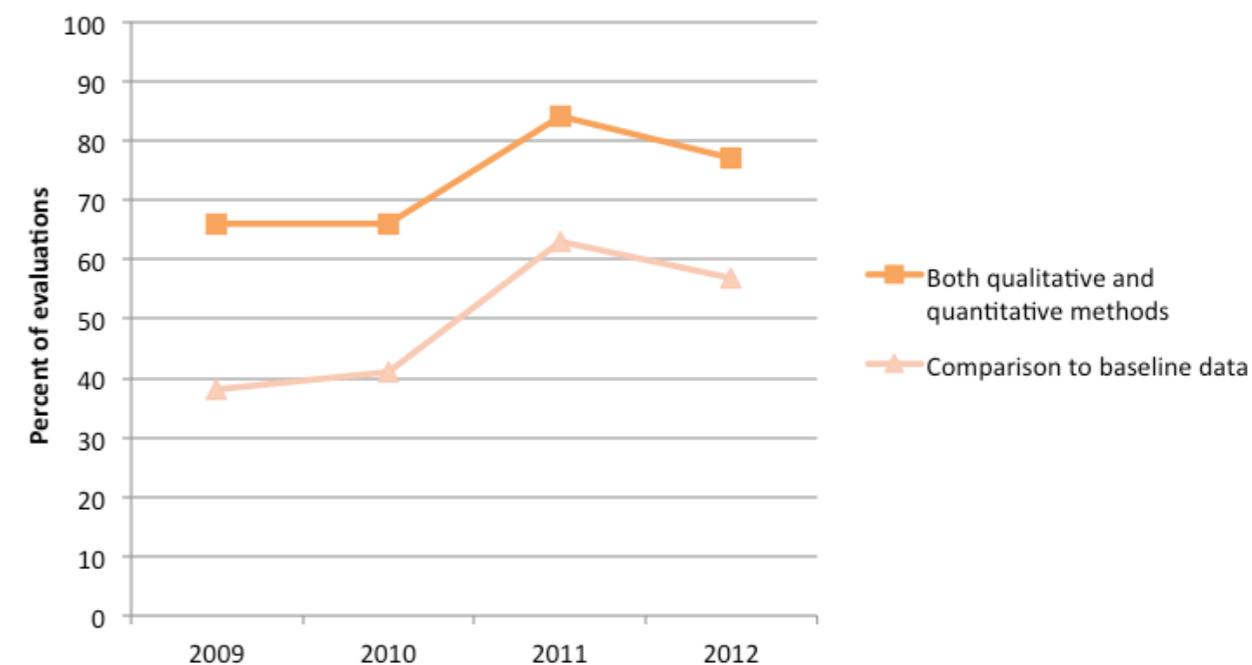
Five domains have been proposed for assessing the quality of evaluations:

- Voice and inclusion: the perspectives of people living in poverty, including the most marginalised, are included in the evidence, and a clear picture is provided of who is affected and how.

- Appropriateness: the evidence is generated through methods that are justifiable given the nature of the purpose of the assessment.

- Triangulation: the evidence has been generated using a mix of methods, data sources, and perspectives.

- Contribution: the evidence explores how change happens and the contribution of the intervention and factors outside the intervention in explaining change.

- Transparency: the evidence discloses the details of the data sources and methods used, the results achieved, and any limitations in the data or conclusions[1].

These domains are assessed at "weak", "minimum", "good" or "gold" standard of evidence.

Most evaluation reports did not address these domains to a "minimum" standard of evidence. Less than one in six evaluations were identified as being undertaken with rigour. These more rigorous evaluation reports usually addressed the appropriateness, triangulation and transparency domains to a "good" quality standard; and voice and inclusion was sometimes addressed to a "good" standard. The contribution domain was the most poorly addressed.

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[1]The NGO Evidence Principles, http://www.bond.org.uk/effectiveness/principles

Child wellbeing outcomes

Thirty-one (42 percent) evaluations reported on one or more of the World Vision "standard" or "highly recommended" indicators of Child Wellbeing Outcomes.

The Child Wellbeing Outcomes assess World Vision's contributions to the well-being of children in the communities where we work. The Compendium of Indicators for Child Wellbeing, developed by World Vision in 2012, provides a common set of indicators for measuring each of the Child Wellbeing Outcomes.

The indicators "Coverage of essential vaccines among children" and "Prevalence of stunting in children under five years of age" were the most frequently reported (19 projects and 11 projects respectively).

Evaluations of Area Development Programs were substantially more likely to report at least one of these indicators than evaluations of other projects (22 of 28 (79 percent) versus nine of 43 (20 percent)).

This is the first year that we have examined this data. The result is particularly encouraging given the recent introduction of these indicators, and is likely to increase over time as new projects which incorporate these indicators reach completion and are evaluated.

Ethiopia: Improving access to quality education.
Photo: Ilana Rose/World Vision

Sri Lanka: New farming methods help to increase household incomes. Photo: Hasanthi Jayamaha/World Vision

Examples of successful projects

Food for families

Food Security in Sri Lanka (1LKA059)

All parents share the fundamental desire to provide enough food for their family's needs. A World Vision project has helped hundreds of parents in low income areas of rural Sri Lanka to do just that.

The World Vision team promoted a system of home gardening using permaculture methods; incorporating intensive mixed cropping and raising animals – chickens, cows and goats. The project provided:

- extensive training in organic farming techniques, environment management and crop diversification and other skills; and
- support in the form of seeds and animals, resources to establish a water pump or to build animal enclosures.

Successful participants were encouraged to support and mentor others in the community.

The farmers involved in the project worked together to share and increase their effectiveness. They formed groups to establish and manage seed and animal banks and to develop leadership, communication and marketing skills for leader farmers.

As a result of this work, and in a very short time (evaluation was after just 18 months), over 600 Sri Lankan families improved their ability to grow their own food. Many families were producing all the vegetables they needed and were able to generate income from selling the surplus.

The permaculture gardens established through the project are highly productive, resilient and environmentally sustainable. The gardens are not dependant on financial subsidies or fossil fuels for farm machinery or distribution systems.

The results of the project are also sustainable, with 93 percent of families reporting that they had produced more food as a result of the project and almost all were continuing with the activities after the projects completion.

Though the first phase of the project closed in 2012, its impact continues; forming the basis of ongoing work in family agriculture and continuing to benefit children and communities in Sri Lanka and beyond.

Supporting communities in Uganda

Arapai Area Development Program (01476)

The Arapai Area Development Program was designed to support transformational development in the Arapai sub-county of Uganda. The program was established as a pilot in 1995 to address the disastrous combined impact of poverty, war and HIV and AIDS, and subsequently implemented as an Area Development Program. Over 15 years, it has undertaken projects addressing education; HIV and AIDS; livelihoods; health, water and sanitation.

The goals of the education project were increased literacy and vocational skills. Activities focused on improving education infrastructure through construction of classroom blocks, teacher's houses and toilets; provision of desks and chairs; and distribution of learning materials to orphans and vulnerable children. At the conclusion of the project levels of school attendance had reached 91 percent; and 85 percent of children aged 13-17 were literate; well above the national average.

The HIV and AIDS project aimed to increase awareness and reduce prevalence, stigma and discrimination. Despite a period of armed conflict during the program leading to increased spread of HIV and AIDS; knowledge about HIV prevention and rates of HIV testing have increased. World Vision Uganda also worked to support the local government health structures and services and there is a sense of increased community ownership and potential sustainability of HIV and AIDS activities.

To improve livelihoods and food security, World Vision Uganda provided training and oxen to open up agricultural fields. It also established infrastructure to enable farmers to add value to agricultural produce including cassava and groundnuts. The proportion of households consuming three meals per day increased from 19 percent in 2007 to 30 percent in 2012. Levels of stunting in children fell from 27 percent in 2007 to 10 percent in 2010.

The goals of the health, water and sanitation project were to reduce vulnerability to preventable diseases; increase access to safe water sources; and improve hygiene practices. In 2001, immunisation coverage was at 38 percent; by 2012 coverage had reached 92 percent. In 2002, 48 percent of the population were accessing safe water; by 2012 this had increased to 90 percent. Latrine coverage also rose from 27 percent in 2006 to 73 percent by 2012.

The results of the Arapai Area Development Program demonstrate the community-wide benefits of a long-term, integrated approach to development. Participants in the project evaluation noted that the program in Arapai "empowered the people and they can now make better choices".

Uganda: Provision of fruit tree seedlings for food security.
Photo: Simon Peter Esaku/World Vision

Vietnam: Supporting households to build hygienic toilets.
Photo: Le Thiem Xuan/World Vision

Key lessons from evaluation reports

Several common themes associated with project outcomes emerged from the evaluations.
These are summarised below.

	Projects were more likely to have strong positive outcomes when...	Projects were less likely to have strong positive outcomes when…
Design	The objectives and timeframe for the project were achievable given the available funding.	Objectives were too optimistic to be achieved in the required timeframe or within the available funding. Multiple redesigns and funding changes reduced the time and energy available to focus on implementation.
	Resources were focused on a small number of key objectives, a small geographical area or a well-defined group of the most vulnerable people in a community.	Limited resources were spread thinly and broadly (thematically or geographically).
	The focus was on building capacity within the communities to address their needs and on effective support for behaviour change.	The focus was on providing resources or resources were provided without adequate consideration of the implications (eg. decisions to introduce exotic animal breeds didn't consider the additional burden of caring for these animals).
	Training was provided in the context of ongoing supervision, support and regular follow-up.	One–off training (of farmers, community health workers, etc) was provided without ongoing follow-up and support.
Monitoring, evaluation and reporting	Monitoring and evaluation frameworks were simple, achievable and focused on a small number of indicators that were clearly aligned with the activities and intended outcomes of the project. Reporting processes were streamlined and the results of reports were useful for improving project implementation.	Monitoring and evaluation processes were overly complicated, used multiple tools, and/or indicators which it was not feasible to measure or which were not likely to be affected by the project. Reporting processes were time-consuming and took resources away from project implementation.
Sustainability and efficiency	New projects built on existing work and maintained the strategic directions that had been previously established. Teams from projects with similar objectives and approaches had opportunities to interact, share materials and learn from each other.	Timeframes were short or changes in project direction occurred frequently.

	Projects were more likely to have strong positive outcomes when…	Projects were less likely to have strong positive outcomes when…
Partnering	Partners actively contributed to all aspects of the project and developed a sense of joint ownership of the project objectives and activities.	Partners were in name only and were not actively involved in planning, coordination or monitoring of activities.
	Strong links were made with government and relevant government agencies. Government participated in all aspects of the project, understood the need and supported the activities. Communication with communities was intentional, continuous and responsive to their needs. Mass media and social media were used creatively, appropriately and thoughtfully to raise awareness and shape conversations.	Links with government and relevant government agencies were weak or missing. Communication with communities was ill-managed leading to: • needless concern (eg. spurious water quality reports); • resources not meeting needs; • missed opportunities to advocate for change; and • misunderstanding of project objectives or the relationship between sponsored children and their sponsors.
	All World Vision offices were clear about the aims and scope of the project; their own role in the project; and the roles of staff from other offices. Processes for providing feedback and advice were simple, transparent and well managed.	The roles of contributing World Vision offices were unclear. Regional or support offices gave contradictory advice to national offices. There was disagreement on the key purpose, objectives or scope of the project within or between offices.
Participation	Women, men, girls and boys were actively engaged to achieve the project outcomes. The roles of women, men and children as decision-makers, influencers and advocates for change were actively considered and understood.	Women, men, girls or boys were not involved where they were not the main target group but played a vital gate-keeping or enabling role (eg. excluding women in agriculture projects despite their centrality to wood collection and field preparation; or excluding men where their support is vital to allow the participation of women). Children were not involved in projects that impacted on the livelihoods of their communities into the future.

Implications for conducting evaluations

Our review of the evaluation reports also identified several issues to consider when deciding whether and how to conduct an evaluation.

The first of these was that the timing of an evaluation should be determined according to the likely timeframe required to see the outcomes of the project. Consideration should also be given to having the evaluation 6-12 months or longer after project completion to examine the sustainability of the project results.

Secondly, evaluations that demonstrate particularly successful or unsuccessful project outcomes should attempt to determine why these outcomes came about. This information is vital to ensuring that future projects build on effective approaches and avoid repeating mistakes. This means evaluations should not only seek to determine the results of a project, but also seek to understand the factors that led to those results; ideally linking to the underlying theory of change.

Finally, we would advocate for conducting a smaller number of higher quality evaluations where they serve a clear purpose. Evaluations are time consuming and resource intensive. Our limited evaluation resources would be best directed where the results of an evaluation are likely to influence future programming. This might include:

- particularly innovative project designs;
- projects where monitoring suggests particularly positive or negative outcomes;
- projects undergoing a redesign; or
- flagship projects demonstrating World Vision development models.

In these situations, adequate resources should be provided to effectively examine the results of the project using rigorous evaluation methods.

Conclusion

Evaluations of World Vision projects that ended or changed phase in the 2012 financial year demonstrate the benefits of these projects to their communities and also produce learnings which can help us improve our programs. Better quality, more focused evaluations are needed to strengthen the evidence of the effectiveness of World Vision's programs and generate more useful learnings; enabling us to increase our ability to improve the wellbeing of the children and communities we serve.

Ethiopia: Children from the Samre Area Development Program. Photo: Ilana Rose/World Vision

Appendix 1—What we did

Methods for this Annual Evaluation Review were similar to those employed in previous years. This year, the approach was expanded slightly to identify:

- patterns in the results, particularly by the type or project (Area Development Programs compared to other projects);
- information on reporting of Child Wellbeing Outcomes;
- outstanding examples of successful projects and rigorous evaluations; and
- key messages that would be useful to share.

Process in brief

- A list of projects funded by World Vision Australia ending in the 2012 financial year was sourced from our project management database; and a report from our document storage system was used to identify projects for which evaluation reports had been added during or since the 2012 financial year.
- Evaluation reports for these projects were sought from our information systems and from International Programs Group staff.
- A team comprising staff from Program Research and Advisory, International Programs and Australia Programs reviewed evaluation reports according to 14 standard questions and entered data into a Microsoft Access database.
- A staff member and a volunteer from Program Research and Advisory, analysed the data, drafted the report and revised the report in light of feedback from the team.

Team

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Project Sponsors: Lucia Boxelaar, Julianne Scenna

Appendix 2 - Evaluation reports reviewed

Country	Project #	Project name	Project type
Afghanistan	1AFG021	SHAPE II - STI HIV/AIDS Prevention and Education Program	Project
Africa	1AFR025-30	Africa Gender Programme (Rwanda, Zambia, Malawi, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa)	Project
Azerbaijan	1AZE030D	e-institutionalization in Azerbaijan	Project
Burundi	1BDI006	'Springs of Life' Water and Sanitation Project	Project
Cambodia	1CAM067	HIV Models of Learning Cambodia	Project
Cambodia	1CAM074	Land Management Education Project	Project
Cambodia	1CAM075	Community Care for Children Project	Project
Chad	1TCD033	West Africa Natural Resource Management - Chad	Project
Chad	1TCD039	Gueni River	ADP
Ethiopia	00599	Shenkolla	ADP
Ethiopia	00429	Samre	ADP
Ethiopia	00177	Alamata	ADP
Ghana	1GHA010	Buruli Ulcer Prevention and Treatment (BUPaT) Phase II	Project
Ghana	1GHA022	Talensi Natural Resource Management Project	Project
Ghana	01979	Talensi-Nabdam	ADP
Guatemala	02274	Bendición de Dios	ADP
Haiti	1HTI013	Governance	Project
Haiti	01548	PACODES	ADP
India	1IND063	HIV Models of Learning India	Project
India	1IND085	Empowering Children for HIV AIDS Mitigation Project Goa	Project
India	00870	Betul	ADP
India	00836	Baran	ADP
India	00785	Raipur Urban	ADP
Indonesia	1IDN065	KITA - HIV/AIDS Pilot Project of Channels of Hope	Project
Indonesia	1IDN078	Economic Empowerment @ Work - Sikka	Project
Indonesia	02039	Sumba Timur	ADP
Indonesia	01463	Surabaya	ADP
Kenya	01076	Mtito Andei	ADP
Laos	1LAO055	Champasack Clean Water Supply and Sanitation Project	Project
Laos	1LAO058	HIV and AIDS Prevention, Care and Advocacy in Champasack	Project
Laos	1LAO093	Phoukhon primary school construction	Project
Mali1	MLI002	West Africa Natural Resource Management - Mali	Project
Mauritania	1MRT012	West Africa Natural Resource Management - Mauritania	Project
Mongolia	01153	Bayankhongor	ADP
Mongolia	01157	Zavkhan	Project
Mozambique	1MOZ087	AusAID Civil Society WASH Fund: Chacaba WASH	Project
Myanmar	1MYA099	Transition Phase-Bogale CNTP (Cyclone Nargis Rehabilitation Program)	Project
Myanmar	1MYA100	Transition Phase-Pyapon CNTP(Cyclone Nargis Rehabilitation Program)	Project
Myanmar	00391	Loikaw	ADP
Myanmar	1MYA120	World Food Program Jan-Jun 2012 Yenanchaung	Project
Nicaragua	1NIC018	Lessons from Life: Prevention of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) HIV	Project
Niger	1NER005	West Africa Natural Resource Management - Niger	Project
Northern Sudan	1NSD069	Integrated Water Supply & Sanitation Bulbul South Darfur	Project
Northern Sudan	1NSD078	GFD Phase XV & SFP July-Dec 2011	Project
Pakistan	1PAK020	Agro-Forestry & Climate Change	Project
Pakistan	1PAK021	Household Enterprise Development	Project
Pakistan	1PAK030	Echoes - CDIS Project	
Papua New Guinea	1PNG070	Children Are a Priority	Project
Papua New Guinea	1PNG090	AusAID Civil Society WASH Fund: Bogia WASH	Project
Rwanda	02974	Rutare (Rwamiko)	ADP
Rwanda	00551	Rebero	ADP
Senegal	1SEN028	VITALIS PHASE III : Maintenance and Return of Talibe Children to their Areas of Origin	Project
Senegal	1SEN052	Beysatol – Economic and Environmental enhancement	Project
Senegal	00406	Mampatim	ADP
Senegal	00188	Fimela	ADP
Solomon Islands	1SOL048	AusAID Civil Society WASH Fund: SOL Schools WASH	Project
Sri Lanka	1LKA037	Health for the South	Project
Sri Lanka	1LKA049	Perma Culture, Livelihoods & Nutrition Project	Project
Sri Lanka	1LKA059	Food Security in Sri Lanka	Project
Swaziland	1SWZ046	H/N Initiative - Swaziland	Project
Swaziland	01228	Macudvulwini	ADP
Tanzania	02956	Mukulat	ADP
Uganda	1UGA035	NE Masaka Water/Environment Project	Project
Uganda	1UGA061	Abim Livelihood Improvement Project	Project
Uganda	1UGA063	Pader District Improved Health and Education Project	Project
Uganda	01476	Arapai	ADP
Uganda	01513	Wabinyonyi	ADP
Uganda	01521	Aboke	ADP
Vietnam	1VNM092	Strengthening Integration of Comm-based Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation into ADPs	Project
Vietnam	1VNM095	Huong Hoa Community WASH	Project
Vietnam	1VNM096	Project to Enable Disability Mainstreaming in WVV ADPs	Project
Zambia	00771	Mweru	ADP
Zimbabwe	02424	Muzarabani	ADP
Zimbabwe	02430	Dande	ADP