

FOREWORD

The humanitarian system is facing a period of significant uncertainty. Reductions in funding from traditional donors, alongside the increasing scale, complexity and duration of crises, are putting real pressure on how we work and the choices we make. At the same time, the sector is grappling with long-standing challenges around power, equity and sustainability.

In this environment, learning is more important than ever. We need to know what is working and what is not. We need to understand the difference that humanitarian action makes in the lives of people affected by crisis, and how it could make a greater difference in the future.

Evaluation has a crucial role to play in this. It enables us to look beyond activities delivered to the results achieved, to identify both intended and unintended outcomes, and to generate lessons that improve performance. At its best, evaluation provides the evidence that allows humanitarian actors to adapt in real time, to hold ourselves accountable, and to make better decisions in the face of uncertainty. Crucially, it can also help us to understand humanitarian action in its wider context – not only what happens within individual programmes, but also how it links with other systems: with development and peacebuilding efforts, with actors at different geographical levels, with global policies, and with the natural environment.

Building on extensive consultation across the sector, the guide provides clear definitions and practical advice to contribute to more relevant, useful and transformative evaluations. The guide is intended to help us ask better questions – questions that place people affected by crisis at the centre, that interrogate how power is exercised, and that open up space for new approaches.

We hope you will use this guide to generate insights that matter, to adapt your work to changing realities, and to contribute to a humanitarian system that is more effective, more accountable and better able to meet the needs of people affected by crisis.

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