TC PROGRAMME QUALITY CRITERIA

The quality criteria for the TC programme are based on the central criterion of the Technical Cooperation Strategy (The 2002 Review[1]) which states that "A *project* meets the central criterion if it addresses an area of real need in which there is a national programme enjoying strong government commitment and support. Such projects take two forms: (a) those that produce a tangible socio-economic benefit in an area in which nuclear technology holds a comparative advantage; and (b) those that clearly support an enabling environment for the use of nuclear technologies (such as safety infrastructures or energy planning)." The central criterion embraces the government's commitment to sustaining the results achieved by the technical cooperation programme.

The TC programme quality criteria were first implemented in 1997, incorporated into PCMF[2] in 2005, and reviewed in 2016. Guidelines for the quality assessment of TC project designs and a quality checklist were developed and are regularly updated to support project teams. In 2020, the criteria and guidelines were revised to reflect the experience gained through quality reviews of the TC programme, as well as the updated evaluation criteria adopted by the OECD/DAC. The updated TC quality criteria together describe the desired attributes of all TC projects: that they "should be relevant to the context, coherent with other interventions, achieve their objectives, deliver results in an efficient way, and have positive impacts that last." [3]

The updated criteria retained "ownership" as a standard that is distinctly relevant for the TC programme. The new OECD/DAC criterion, "coherence", was introduced to enhance understanding of the role of programmes/projects within their specific context. All criteria have been revised to enhance gender mainstreaming.

The quality criteria are applicable across the TC programme and across all phases of the TC programme cycle. They are addressed at the planning stage, during the process of project design and consolidation of the programme prior to submission for approval. The criteria are applied throughout implementation, progress monitoring and reporting, and at achievement assessment prior to closure of the project. A quality-based planning process lays the foundation for efficient project implementation and effective delivery of the programme.

Quality criteria are applicable to all national, regional and interregional projects, based on the project documentation developed using the Logical Framework Approach (LFA). The LFA is used as the standard project cycle management tool for planning, implementation and evaluation and provides a systematic process for involving stakeholders, facilitating dialogue and documenting key relevant dimensions for the project. The LFA provides assurances for clarity, consistency and cause-effect logic for the expected project results, providing SMART indicators for outcome and outputs, as well as taking into consideration the relevant context and risks associated with the project environment.

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[1] GOV/INF/2002/8/Mod.1 dated 25 November 2002

[2] Please refer to TC Programme Planning and Design Glossary for interpretation of standard terms (http://pcmf.iaea.org/DesktopModules/PCMF/docs/2017_18_Docs/other/Planning_and_Design_Glossary_2016_07_05.pdf)

[3] Better Criteria for Better Evaluation. Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use. OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation. 2019

1. Relevance: Is the programme/project doing the right things?

The degree to which the programme/project objective and design are consistent with and respond to the end users' needs, country needs, and partners' policies, and continue to do so, should circumstances change.

Indicators for Relevance:

- Clear linkages with the Country Programme Framework (CPF), with the national development plans, and with SDGs where relevant, or with regional agreements;
- Nuclear or related techniques that have comparative advantages and are relevant to addressing priority development needs with cost-benefit values and potential for long term sustainability;
- Continued national and/or international partnerships;
- Promotes technological self-reliance at national and regional levels through institutional and human capacity development efforts;
- High prospects for achieving outcomes and contributing to impact;
- Potential negative social and environmental effects being avoided and other cross cutting issues including climate change risk mitigation/adaptation considered;
- Different needs and priorities of men and women have been considered;
- Potential for adapting and responding to changing circumstances (not a one-off assessment at design against policy priorities).

2. Coherence: How well does the programme/project fit?

Coherence is demonstrated through the compatibility of the programme or project with other interventions in a region, country, sector or institution.

Indicators for Coherence:

- Existing policies or interventions support the programme/project, or *vice versa*;
- Is linked to other interventions carried out by the same counterpart/government, and is consistent with the relevant international norms and standards to which that counterpart/government adheres;
- Is consistent with other (past or ongoing) interventions in the same context – complementarity, harmonisation and co-ordination with others, and avoiding duplication of effort;
- Connection between the programme/project and the on-going efforts of the IAEA and other programmes to create appropriate synergies.

3. Effectiveness: Is the programme/project achieving its objectives?

The extent to which the programme or project output and outcome results were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.

Indicators for Effectiveness:

- Clarity, logic and realistic cause-effect relationship of project design elements (inputs, activities, outputs, outcome, overall objective);
- Adequate identification and clear formulation of the project outcome in terms of change or improvement in conditions, services, and situations, to be obtained due to the completion of the project outputs and their use;
- SMART performance indicators, including baseline and target, at output and outcome levels, to facilitate monitoring of progress and of results achieved (during and after implementation);
- Indicators are gender-disaggregated where relevant;
- Gender mainstreaming is an explicit requirement in project implementation (e.g. in training opportunities);
- Proper identification of risks and assumptions, at least at output and outcome levels, and risk mitigation strategies.

4. Efficiency: How well are the resources being used?

Efficiency is a measure of how resources (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into results in an economic and timely way, compared to feasible alternatives in the context. Efficiency answers the question: "Could the same results have been attained at a lower cost?" and "How well was the project managed?"

Indicators for Efficiency:

- Adequate and realistic project work plan to ensure smooth project implementation, timely and within planned resources;
- Well defined overall management roles and responsibilities, leadership and practical arrangements at the level of the project team and partners;
- Regular project monitoring and follow-up mechanism are planned and followed (and include gender data-disaggregation);
- Adequate and realistic project budgets are in place.

5. Sustainability: Will the benefits last?

Sustainability refers to the continuation of benefits after the completion of a programme or project; the probability of continued long-term benefits; and the resilience to risk of the net benefit over time. It also includes the financial, economic, social, environmental and institutional capacities of the systems needed to sustain net benefits over time.

Indicators for Sustainability:

- The project is linked to the country's medium/long term goals and/or strategic programme;
- The application of relevant technology and a viable socioeconomic model is supported by the business plan of the counterpart institution when applicable;
- Downstream mechanisms and modalities are in place to ensure effective linkages between counterparts and end users;
- Partnerships with UN specialized agencies, international development organizations and non-profit organizations are identified and in place whenever required;
- Strategic partnerships with regional agreements and among Member States within the regional agreements are promoted;
- Public/private partnerships are taken into account wherever relevant;
- Use of national and regional expertise (men and women) is promoted;
- Realistic programme budget plans are in place;
- Adequate physical and institutional infrastructure in place, as well as human resources to support the project.

6. Ownership: Is there national/regional commitment to the programme/project?

Ownership is demonstrated when Member States exercise effective leadership over their programmes and projects.

Indicators for Ownership:

- Member State commitment to the programme/project is reflected by the allocation of adequate human, technical and financial resources and the provision of an enabling environment (government is engaged in making a change in an area where this technology is relevant);
- A consultative process has taken place and all stakeholders (men and women) have participated in the planning and preparation of the programme/project documentation;
- Well defined roles of national institutions and stakeholders expected to participate in the project;
- Government cost sharing, and funding from other partners is ensured, where applicable;
- There are indications of commitment from relevant authorities in the budget or in-kind.