Programme Level Evaluation for the

European Integration Fund and

European Refugee Fund

Guidelines for Projects

June 2011

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED

Term	Description
Programme-Level Evaluation	The evaluation of the Programme as a whole, comprising the aggregation of Outputs and Outcomes at the programme level, and the Thematic Evaluation.
Thematic Evaluation	A facilitated process to identify and gather learning and best practice in relation to key Programme themes from across projects.
Project-Level Evaluation	The evaluation undertaken by each Project locally
External Evaluator	The evaluator contracted by each Project to assist them with monitoring and evaluation
Output	The immediate product of your project's actions. In the context of this document, Programme-Level Outputs have been set and are explained in more detail in Section 2. The full set of Programme-Level Outputs is contained in Annex 1.
Outcome	The medium-term result of your projects actions and outputs. In the context of this document, Programme-Level Outcomes have been set and are explained in more detail in Section 2. The full set of Programme-Level Outcomes is contained in Annex 1.
Online Evaluation Survey	The means that will be used to gather data and information from each project on an annual basis for the Programme-level Outputs and Outcomes evaluation

INTRODUCTION

In November 2010, Pobal contracted Nexus Research Co-operative to design a monitoring and evaluation framework for the European Integration Fund (EIF) and European Refugee Fund (ERF). Following a consultation process with various stakeholders, including groups supported under both Funds, a framework was finalised in March 2011.

The framework now needs to be activated, and a key first step in this process is the preparation of guidelines to assist projects with their participation in the Programme-level Evaluation, and to offer some guidance on Project-level evaluation.

These Guidelines are designed for use by Project staff, and by locally-contracted External Evaluators, to facilitate consistency with the overall framework across all projects.

The Guidelines are divided into several sections.

Section 1 provides a summary overview of the **Programme-level Evaluation** process.

Section 2 describes the annual Programme-level **outputs and outcomes reporting** which will be facilitated through an online survey completed by each Project. This section explains the key concepts and provides an overview of Project-level participation.

Sections 3 offers an overview of the **Thematic Evaluation process**, and the establishment of thematic clusters.

Section 4 provides guidance for groups in relation to **Project-level Evaluation**, with some suggestions on what the Project-level evaluation might examine.

Annex 1 contains the menu of **Programme-level Outputs and Outcomes**, along with a description of the various categories used and the data and information needed.

Annex 2 comprises a **step-by-step guide for projects in relation to their participation in the Programme-level Outputs and Outcomes evaluation.**

In addition to these guidelines, advice and support will be available to groups on an on-going basis in relation to the implementation of the framework. Nexus Research Co-op and Pobal will oversee the implementation of the evaluation framework between 2011 and 2014.

For specific queries relating to the overall framework, programme level outputs and outcomes and the annual online evaluation survey, contact Seán Ó Siochrú at 01 2720739 or 087 2048150, or email sean@nexus.ie

For queries relating to thematic evaluation and project level evaluation, contact Brian Dillon at 087 2490849 or email brian@nexus.ie

More general queries may be directed to Ronan Tierney or Ciara Flanagan in Pobal.
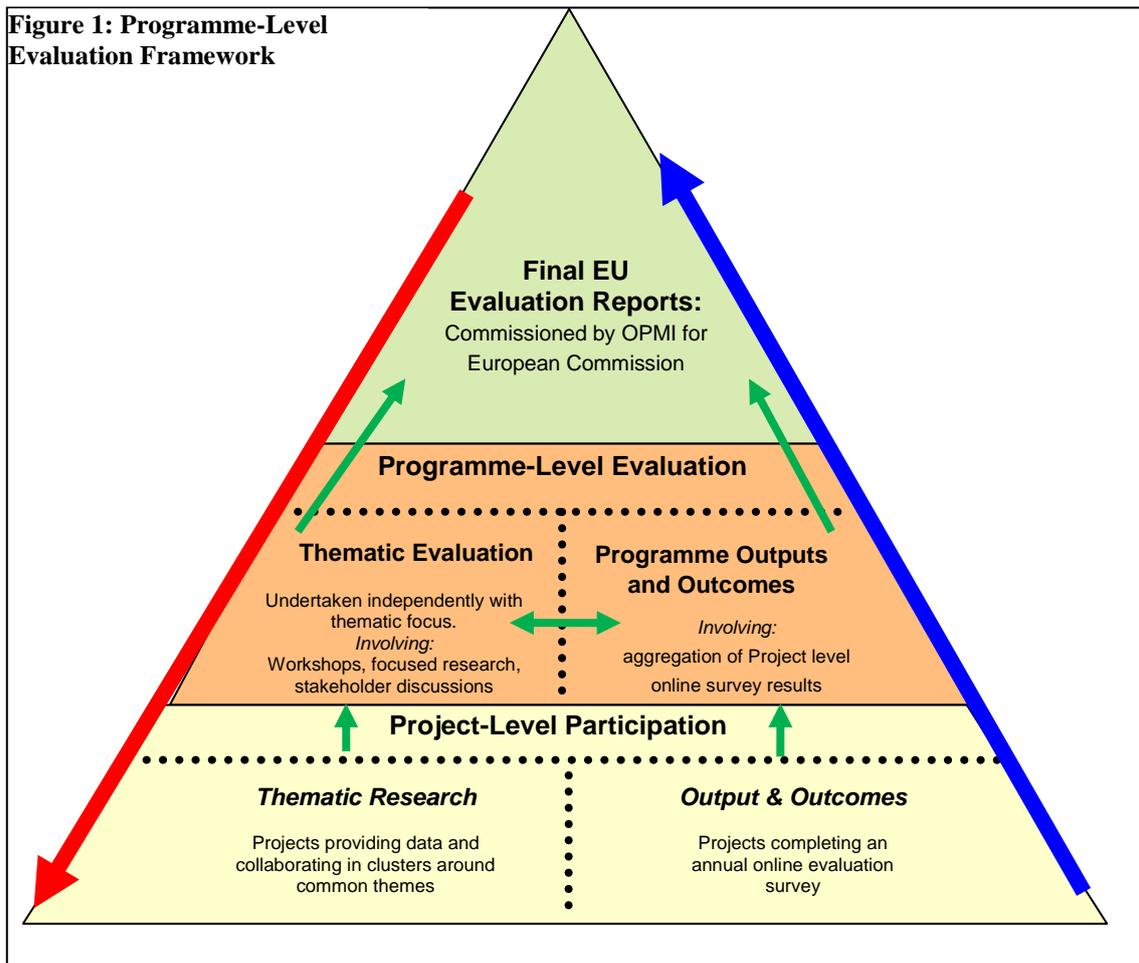
1. THE PROGRAMME LEVEL EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The overall ERF/EIF monitoring and evaluation framework has three inter-related levels as follows:

- Final programme evaluation reports which will be contracted by the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration (OPMI) to an independent evaluator(s).
- Programme-level evaluation which will include a focus on both thematic evaluation and programme level outputs and outcomes; and
- Project-level monitoring and evaluation with a focus on monitoring of progress, process evaluation, project-level thematic learning and project-level outputs and outcomes evaluation.

This section summarises the programme-level evaluation framework and describes project-level participation within it. As such, this section will provide an overview of the Final EU Evaluation Reports, the Programme-Level Evaluation, and what is required of local projects to participate in the Programme-Level Evaluation. A separate section (Section 4) provides guidance in relation to Project-Level Evaluation.

Figure 1 below illustrates the different levels and the key activities that will be undertaken as part of the Programme-Level Evaluation. This is followed by a brief description of each level.

Figure 1: Programme-Level Evaluation Framework

Final EU Evaluation Reports:
Commissioned by OPMI for European Commission

Programme-Level Evaluation

Thematic Evaluation
Undertaken independently with thematic focus.
Involving:
Workshops, focused research, stakeholder discussions

Programme Outputs and Outcomes
Involving:
aggregation of Project level online survey results

Project-Level Participation

Thematic Research
Projects providing data and collaborating in clusters around common themes

Output & Outcomes
Projects completing an annual online evaluation survey

Final EU Evaluation Reports

At the apex of the diagram, the **Final EU Programme Evaluation Report** is an EU requirement for both the ERF and EIF, and will be contracted by the OPMI to an independent evaluator. The EU will provide a template to Member States in due course outlining what will be required. Any reports produced as part of the Programme-Level Evaluation outlined below will be made available to inform the Final EU Programme Evaluations.

This aspect of the framework is not discussed any further in these Guidelines.

Programme Level Evaluation

The Programme-Level Evaluation aggregates the results from individual Projects, and adds value specifically at the Programme level. There are two key elements.

- The **Programme-level Output and Outcome Evaluation** will draw together results from the Project level. Groups will complete an online evaluation survey by providing details of their projects outputs and outcomes as of the 30th June each year, and at the Project end date. The online survey will be completed by Project staff, with the support of their respective External Evaluators where necessary. The completion of the online evaluation survey by each project will enable outputs and outcomes to be aggregated at the Programme level.

- **Programme-level Thematic Evaluation** will focus on identifying and gathering learning and best practice in relation to key programme themes. Clusters of projects will form around a given theme to identify lessons and what works well, how and why. Each Project will either participate directly in a thematic cluster, or will at minimum feed their thematic learning and relevant data into the cluster discussions. The clusters will be facilitated by Nexus Research Co-op and Pobal. Three or more selected themes will be covered on strands relevant to the work of EIF and ERF.

A Programme-level Outputs and Outcome Evaluation report will be produced annually, while the Thematic Evaluation will take the form of interim and final reports.

The findings from both areas of evaluation will be combined in the **Final Programme-Level Evaluation Report.**

Project-Level Participation in Programme Level Evaluation

The **Project-level** participation in the Programme evaluation has two corresponding components.

In relation to the Outputs and Outcomes evaluation, each Project will provide data and other required information via the annual online survey. Each Project will match its own outputs against the common Programme-level Outputs and Outcomes, thus building coherent links between Project-level and Programme-level activities.

Each Project will also choose one or more themes of interest and relevance to its work. Working with their respective External Evaluators, each will gather data and learning on the relevant theme, and engage with other projects within a Thematic cluster. It is envisaged that there will be 3-4 thematic clusters. Cluster workshops, organised as much as possible to coincide with Pobal networking meetings, will offer opportunities to explore learning and related issues.

2.   PROGRAMME-LEVEL OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES EVALUATION

This section looks in more detail at the evaluation of Outputs and Outcomes of the Programme as a whole, and their inter-relationship.

2.1 Why Programme-level Outputs and Outcomes?

Each ERF and EIF Project has its own set of objectives, actions, outputs and outcomes, tailored to its specific focus and environment. Each uses these to monitor progress and to assess whether the Project is achieving its goals.

However, these are not suitable for assessing progress at the level of the Programme, since these objectives, actions, expected outputs and outcomes are unique to each Project. Though differences may often be small, they nevertheless make it impossible to aggregate or to directly compare the results of Projects within and across the ERF and the EIF Programmes as a whole.

To address this at the Programme-level, a common set of Programme Outputs and Outcomes have been identified that captures the variety and scope of work undertaken by projects in both the ERF and EIF, thus enabling Programme-level evaluation, comparison and aggregation.

Please note that from this point on, the terms 'Output' and 'Outcomes' in capitals refers specifically to the Programme-level (as contained in Annex 1), and not to any outputs or outcomes that you might have described in your Project Plan.

2.2 How will the Programme Output and Outcome Evaluation take place?

Each Project will be asked to complete an online survey annually, and at Project end. The survey, especially tailored to the ERF and EIF Programmes, will collect data from each Project. Most of the data and information required should already be gathered by projects in the course of their work. Where this is not the case, steps will need to be taken to ensure that relevant data is collected in Years 2 and 3 of your Project. Projects will need to take time to prepare both quantitative and qualitative information in advance of completing the survey. (See Annex 2 for a step by step guide to this.)

The online survey will be completed by each Project at the following times:

- **Annually** by the end of July, to cover the previous July 1st to June 30th period. For 2011, **the deadline for completion of the survey is 23rd August**.

- Upon completion of each Project.

The survey will be accessed and filled out via a Web link that will be sent by the end of June each year, when the precise completion deadlines will also be given. Please note that you will be able to complete the survey over a period of time, returning to it as many times as you need up until the deadline.

2.3 Understanding Programme Outputs and Outcomes

The difference between Outputs and Outcomes, as they are used here, should first be clarified.

The **Outputs** of a project result directly from its ways or working, its various working methods. An output:

- is usually a means to an end;
- is entirely or largely under the control of the Project, and completion is not dependent on others outside the project's sphere of influence;
- tends to be immediate or produced in the short-term.
- result is more often reflected in quantitative (numerical) terms, describing what happened directly as a result of the project activities

Conversely, **Outcomes**:

- are generally more closely related to the final impact for the target groups
- are usually influenced by other factors which may be beyond the control of the project;
- can be achieved in the short-term but often tend to be medium and longer-term, sometimes taking effect only after Project completion.
- Are more often reflected in qualitative terms, describing the impact for the target group.

How do Outputs contribute to Outcomes?

A key question is how outputs contribute to, or bring about, these wider desired outcomes. While there is often no *strict* dividing line between the two, usually a point can be identified along a continuum - from an immediate action taken by the Project at one end, to a desired impact on the target group at the other – where, based on the above criteria, an output can be distinguished from its intended outcome.

A few examples are provided below to illustrate this distinction.

The outputs of a Drop-in Centre would include providing information and advice to the target group. *Outputs*, in numerical terms, can be the number of clients seen, the number provided with specific information leaflets, the number referred to other agencies, and so forth. The *outcomes* relates to how these outputs were used by the target groups, and the benefits they derived from them. For instance the outcome of referrals might be that a certain number of those referred successfully received a service that improved their well being – but perhaps others referred received no benefits, for reasons that had nothing to do with the project.

Clients who received information leaflets may also have used that information to understand and to assert their rights in a situation – a concrete benefit. But the leaflet could also have been written in a way that is difficult to understand, and hence – for reasons that *were* the fault of the project - could not possible result in a benefit. Thus whether or not an *output*, which by definition is largely under the control of the project, achieves the *desired outcome*, which can fall outside the sphere of influence of the project, cannot be taken for granted and requires additional research.

Providing training in intermediate-level English language is another example. The *output* of the training can be numerically given as the number of participants who complete the course. The intended *outcome* is that those completing it will be able communicate more easily with the wider community, resulting ultimately in more satisfactory and effective inter-cultural contact. But this presupposes, first, that they have really gained the skills intended and, second, that they have actually had opportunities to communicate and furthermore that these

opportunities have been of benefit. It therefore cannot be assumed that because a certain number of people have completed that training, the anticipated benefits have accrued to them. (And it is important that the reasons for failure or success are also learned – and indeed to see whether other outcomes and benefits, that were not anticipated, have been achieved.)

Short-Term, Medium Term and Final Outcomes

Distinctions can be drawn between *short-term, medium-term* and *final outcomes*.

For instance, an output may be the delivery of training to primary schools staff or to Gardaí intended to enable them to deal sensitively with refugees who have experienced trauma. The *short-term intended outcome* for the project is that these service providers *gain the skills* to work with the target group, and a *medium-term intended outcome* is that they will proceed to use the skills. And the longer-term *final intended outcome* is that the refugees – the ultimate target group - will be assisted in overcoming their trauma through the services provided by the service providers who were successfully trained. This is a final intended outcome but it is well beyond the immediate control of the Project. However, unless it is achieved, the ultimate goal of the Project is not met, perhaps through no fault of its own

Outcomes can also be *ongoing and sustained,* such as an outcome that enables agencies to collaborate more effectively: The *output* in this case might be to develop agreed guidelines or structures that enable more effective inter-agency co-ordination; the direct or *short-term outcome* might be improved service delivery to refugees; and the *final outcome* would be a sustained improvement that their lives as a result of enhanced services.

2.4 Overview of the Annual Online Evaluation Survey

The annual online survey allows projects to complete all of what is required in relation to the Programme-Level Outputs and Outcomes element of the framework. The following give an overview of the different sections of the survey.

Annex 2 contains a step-by-step guide for Projects in relation to how they should approach their participation in this aspect of Programme-level evaluation.

After a preliminary section that asks you for any overall figures regarding beneficiaries, the survey divides into four Parts. Part A and B are concerned with Programme Outputs. Part A is focussed on outputs that directly support or involve Target Groups, and Part B is focused on those that work with others such as service providers and the wider environment. Part C concerns Programme Outcomes, and Part D covers learning and lessons.

INPUTTING PROGRAMME OUTPUTS: PARTS A AND B

The Programme Level Outputs contained in Part A and B are generic in nature, with each encompassing a range of related Project activities.

For instance *Output 7: Providing targeted support to young people from the Target Group* might involve a range of activities working with youth clubs, schools, leisure, music, sport, arts or other areas. Or *Output 11: Supporting actions to directly combat racism* includes many different activities that directly address racism and xenophobia, such as public meetings, seminars, protocols on responses, and rights redress. Any given Project is unlikely to be involved in all of these activities, but they will provide data and information on those aspects that they have been involved in.

Note than many Outputs will not be relevant to your project at all. **Complete the survey in relation to the Programme Outputs that are relevant to your project.** So prior to sitting down to complete the survey (see Annex 2), your first step should be to identify one by one

which of these Programme Outputs best approximates or encompasses your own Project outputs, and then complete the questions for each.

The different types of questions contained in Part A and B are:

(i)   **Numerical** where a number of entered e.g. total number of male and female asylum seekers who visited the centre in the previous period;

(ii)   **Multiple-choice** where you choose one or more options often with an 'Other' category e.g. different types of English language provision such as beginners, intermediate, advanced;

(iii)   **Free-form lists**, where you write in, in your own words, a list of activities undertaken, usually one line for each e.g. listing all the one-off intercultural events you have run;

(iv)   Longer **open descriptions**, where you are asked to give some more details, e.g. the focus and direction of capacity building actions.

Completing the survey questions is relatively straightforward. However, it does assume that you keep good records of your interactions with, and services provided to, Target Groups. Almost all the data and information required should be available from your records. If not, it is up to each Project to take steps to ensure such data can be collected and compiled for future surveys. This may involve working with your External Evaluator to develop a plan for capturing relevant data and information.

Bear in mind that we are not attempting necessarily to capture *all* Project outputs here, though we would hope to account for the majority of them, especially those that are considered important. If you feel that major outputs from your Project are not captured through the survey, please contact Nexus Research Co-op or Pobal to discuss.

INPUTTING PROGRAMME OUTCOMES: PART C

Completing this section is going to be more challenging, and will almost certainly require the extensive participation of the External Evaluator.

The Programme Outcomes are, in anything, even more generic in nature than the Programme Outputs. A more detailed description is provided for each in Annex 1. Because of the nature of Outcomes, most, with some exceptions, describe *actual benefits* for the Target Groups.

Many Programme Outcomes will not be relevant to your Project, and this will be assumed of those you choose to ignore in the survey. Others will be relevant but only in the future, perhaps because you have not yet influenced them to an appreciable extent. This can be noted in your response.

The structure for Part C is the same as in Part A and B. You are asked to go through the Outcomes one by one, completing a series of questions. The emphasis is, however, different.

The goals here are to:

(i)   Determine how central each Outcome is to your project;

(ii)   Estimate the extent of effort your Project devoted to each Outcome the previous year;

(iii)   Estimate the extent to which your Project since it commenced has influenced, if at all, each area of Outcome;

(iv)   Note which, and to what extent, your (Programme) Outputs have contributed to each area of Outcome;

(v)   Crucially, present the reasons you believe – the evidence – that your Project has had an influence on each relevant Outcome.

Perhaps the greatest challenges are in establishing a link between the Outputs and the Outcomes, and generating evidence for this link and in relation to Outcomes in general.

Annex 2, a *Step by Step Guide to Outputs and Outcomes Evaluation*, offers some specific ideas here that will assist projects in making these links.

LEARNING AND LESSONS: PART D

This final section invites Projects to record what they have learned, and the lessons they would like to share, during the course of their Project work as a whole.

It adopts an open, non-prescriptive, approach to allow projects the latitude needed to record lessons in their own way. There are just two key questions in this section, under each of which you enter lessons and learning. The questions are as follows:

What has your Project learned in relation to:

a) *its strategies and practices for engaging with the project Target Group(s);*

b) *how best mainstream provision of supports for the project Target Group(s) can be enhanced.*

It also asks you to note those things that your Project

- *Should stop doing*
- *Should keep doing*
- *Should start doing.*

Finally, Part D also asks for your ideas about thematic issues that have emerged during the course of your work and that might be interesting to pursue via the Thematic Evaluation. This information will inform the selection of themes for the Thematic Evaluation.

3.   THE THEMATIC EVALUATION

Building in a thematic element to the Programme evaluation is aimed at:

- Providing a mechanism though which projects can identify and review those elements of their work that address a particular theme.

- Collecting and reviewing information from Projects' own practice that develops an insight or increases understanding about this theme: with a particular focus on what the lessons might be available for mainstream service provision and/or policy development.

- Sharing and discussing these learning points and their implications with other Projects that have the same focus in their work.

- Bringing forward lessons and recommendations for service providers and policy makers: based on an analysis of results from different thematic groups formed.

3.1   How do Projects identify a "Theme"?

The process of selecting and agreeing the themes that will form part of the Thematic Evaluation will begin immediately with the completion by projects of a question in Part D of the online evaluation survey. This question will ask projects to give their initial thinking on themes to pursue. Nexus/Pobal will then review the results of the first online survey submitted by projects.

Based on an analysis of the suggestions made, and the results of the first survey, a number of possible themes will be proposed. These will be circulated to projects, requesting interest and commitment to participation. Projects can also suggest changes or additions at this stage. The themes will then be finalised at the next ERF/EIF networking meeting to be held on 20th October 2011.

In thinking through what theme(s) may be of interest to explore, projects should ensure that the theme:

- *Is central to project practice*: there is the potential for results from the work of thematic clusters to have a positive influence on areas of mainstream policy and service delivery. For this to happen, lessons emerging from the work need to be backed up by real experience and evidence on the ground. Projects should therefore consider themes where they correspond with issues arising frequently in the work.

- *Have some relevance to issues or challenges emerging for Target Groups*: a theme chosen should relate in some way to an area the project has identified as requiring change or improvement – and (even more important) where change or improvement is seen as feasible or possible. While collaboration around particular themes may prove interesting from a learning point of view, the focus for thematic clusters will be on bringing lessons from the evaluation forward to the stage where real and realisable proposals for action can be formulated.

One means by which Projects could begin to identify themes of interest is to engage in a discussion about 'factors helping' and 'factors hindering' the work, for example:

- where helping factors might offer an opportunity to turn project-level experiences into good practice at a broader policy or mainstream service delivery level, or

- Where hindering factors might point up areas of mainstream service delivery where change is needed, as well as providing some insight into how it might happen.

Possible themes can also emerge, however, from your project's verifiable outcomes or impacts. Demonstrating a particularly beneficial or positive outcome of your work, associated with a particular approach to the work, can also point to an area or 'theme' where there may be very real implications for mainstream policy and practice.

3.2   Do Projects have to participate in the Thematic Evaluation?

All projects are expected to participate at some level in this aspect of the evaluation. Projects can choose, however, the level at which they become involved. The choice is between:

(A) PARTICIPATION IN THEMATIC CLUSTERS OR WORKING GROUPS

Working or cluster groups will be established around each of the themes agreed. Projects choosing to become involved in a working group will be expected to engage in some preparatory work before cluster meetings, attend those meetings, and then engage in some follow-up work. In practice this will mean:

1. Nexus/Pobal providing a format and approach to be used by projects in collecting information and relevant evidence in preparation for thematic cluster meetings. Projects, with the help of their evaluator, will complete these so that documentation highlighting issues, needs and possible solutions can be prepared in advance of a cluster meeting. Reference to this task (of helping projects collect information relating to particular themes) should be included in project terms of reference for local evaluators.

2. Projects participating in cluster meetings where, with other projects, the focus will be on reaching consensus on key issues; preparing documentation and agreeing on a strategy to disseminate and influence around these key issues. There will be at least two cluster meetings organised around each theme.

3. Projects undertaking follow-up tasks, which may be agreed at working groups, in relation to dissemination and mainstreaming of lessons and proposals emerging.

4. Pobal, through on-going project networking meetings, providing the facility for organising joint activities and review of progress in relation to thematic clusters. Cluster meetings will be arranged as much as possible to coincide with Pobal ERF/EIF networking meetings.

(B) PARTICIPATION IN THEMATIC EVALUATION WITHOUT BEING PART OF CLUSTER WORKING GROUP

Projects who do not commit to participation in cluster working groups will still be expected to 1) Select at least one theme and 2) Collect information, using the prepared template noted above, on this theme. Projects meeting in cluster groups will in this way have the benefit of some input from all projects associated with the theme.

One part of the final outcome (and report) from the evaluation process will focus on the thematic element. Returns from all projects on particular themes, using common guidelines, will allow for a more coherent and stronger presentation of cross-project learning to be made.

It is important to bear in mind, however, that:

- Projects do not need to limit themselves to one thematic area. They can choose to be connected with two or more if they see the value in doing so. Such effort may be seen by projects as worthwhile in their local operational environment – as well as for the purposes of overall programme evaluation. They may assist, for example, in

initiating locally-based service responses or efforts to 'mainstream' at local level when project funding ends.

- Projects should only decide to participate fully in cluster working groups if:

    - The particular theme is close to the work of your own project – and where you have experiences and insights to bring to the working group.

    - Potential benefits, especially in terms of contributing to positive change on specific issues, are associated with sharing experiences and networking with other projects.

    - The project is willing to commit to working group participation, preparatory and follow-on tasks (as outlined above)

4.   PROJECT-LEVEL EVALUATION

Each Project is required to prepare a Project-level evaluation, and almost all the data collected and research undertaken to fulfil Programme-level requirements will also contribute to the project-level evaluation.

Beyond these Programme-level requirements, Projects are free to plan and develop their own terms of reference for such an evaluation. Many projects have already contracted External Evaluators, and have positive prior experience of the process. For others, however, the process may be relatively new. This section offers some guidance on what Projects might consider as part of the Project-level evaluation.

Much of what is presented below is taken from a handbook, *"A Project Manager's Guide to Evaluation"*, edited by Jenny Hughes, that was completed to assist projects designing and carrying out their own evaluations. You may find it useful to download a version of this, which presents the range of different choices involved, providing information, explanations and advice on each. You can download a copy from:

http://www.scribd.com/doc/24808362/A-Project-Manager%E2%80%99s-Guide-to-Evaluation-

by-Jenny-Hughes

4.1: Remembering the Difference between Monitoring and Evaluation

Most projects will already be engaged in (or have planned) some way of monitoring their activities on an on-going basis. Monitoring is about checking - checking whether inputs match outputs, whether income balances expenditure, whether actual activity matches planned activity. It is also about recording the gaps between them.

Evaluation is about explaining why the gaps exist. (And remember, the 'gaps' can show over-performance as well as deficits or shortfalls and it is important to record these as the evaluation process will be interested in why this happened and whether there are factors which should influence future planning.)

Evaluation is purposeful; it is a means to an end not an end in itself. For example:
- Evaluation of things, which have happened, helps projects make decisions about the future.

- Evaluation is based on asking specific questions about a project and finding the answers. It is an investigative process.

- Evaluation is systematic and scientific. It involves collecting evidence, making comparisons, measuring things against criteria.

- Evaluation means that someone, ultimately, has to make judgements about the value or worth of something so an evaluation must be interpretive, not simply descriptive.

Monitoring is not the same as evaluation because it is descriptive rather than interpretive and is not intrinsically directed toward learning. However, evaluation is almost impossible if there is no monitoring system in place.

4.2 Deciding on the Purpose of the Project Level Evaluation

A clear statement on the prime purpose of the evaluation is essential. Is the evaluation directed towards demonstrating accountability, is it to be primarily a developmental or learning process, or are you intending to do both? To help you answer this question, it is

useful to think who the evaluation is for, that is, who will be the prime recipients of the evaluation products? Is the evaluation for the funding agency, for policy makers or the management team or for the project participants or partners? By and large, practitioners will be more interested in evaluation as a diagnostic or learning process, whereas project sponsors are more likely to be interested in a project justification-approach.

Try writing a statement that starts "*By the end of the project, the evaluation will answer the following questions...*". Then you can list them. These questions should reflect the type of project and its objectives. For example:
What impact has the training had on participants?
Has the project changed attitudes, behaviours or skills in a way that leads to improvements in living circumstances or wellbeing?
Are organisations or networks created sustainable?

4.3 Drawing up an Evaluation Plan

So that both your project and your Evaluator have a clear idea of what the evaluation will look like and so that you can monitor the work, you should have a written evaluation plan. Ideally, this should be prepared at the main project planning stage. However, in practice it is likely to be prepared jointly by you and your Evaluator after he or she is appointed. The following outline plan is presented as an example:

I. SAMPLE EVALUATION PLAN

A. WHAT YOU ARE GOING TO EVALUATE?

- Project model (our assumptions about target population, interventions).

- Project objectives and actions as stated in the Project Plan

- Whether expected target group outcomes were achieved

B. QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE EVALUATION

- Are project objectives being attained? If not, why? What barriers or problems have been encountered? What kinds of things facilitated implementation?

- Are expected participant outcomes being attained? If not, why? What barriers or problems have been encountered? What kinds of things facilitated attainment of participant outcomes?

- Do participant outcomes vary as a function of project actions? Which actions and approaches taken by the project contributed to which outcomes?

C. TIMEFRAME FOR THE EVALUATION.

- When data collection will begin and end

- Critical milestones or reporting deadlines

II. EVALUATING IMPLEMENTATION OBJECTIVES – PROCEDURES AND METHODS.

Each evaluation question (identified above) should be framed as an evaluation objective. It is often useful to use the projects objectives as a way of being more explicit about the evaluation objectives. For example*: "to establish if participants have become more capable of accessing services they need*." For each objective, list:

- The type of information needed to determine if the objective is being attained, and to assess barriers and facilitators.

- Sources of information (that is, where you plan to get the information including staff, participants, program documents). Be sure to include your plans for maintaining confidentiality of the information obtained during the evaluation.

- Time frame for collecting information.

- Methods for collecting the information (such as interviews, observations, records reviews).

- Methods for analysing the information to determine whether the objective was attained (for example tabulation of frequencies, assessment of relationships between or among variables, who the evaluator should consult in drawing conclusions or implications).

- Repeat this information for each project objective, or aspect, that is being evaluated

III   PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING AND MONITORING THE EVALUATION.

- Procedures for supporting or training staff to collect evaluation-related information.

- Procedures for conducting quality control checks of the information collection process (progress reports from Evaluator to the project etc).

- Timelines for collecting, analysing, and reporting information, including procedures for providing evaluation-related feedback to programme managers and staff.

4.4   Terms of Reference for the External Evaluator

While your External Evaluator will primarily work with you in relation to preparing the Project-level Evaluation, s/he will also play a role in facilitating your participation in the Programme-Level Evaluation.

As such, The Terms of Reference you draw up for the External Evaluator should include reference to the Programme-Level Evaluation. The following is the suggested text:

Participation in the Programme Level Evaluation
The Consultant will work closely with the overall Programme Evaluation Team, located with Pobal. This Team is responsible for the Programme level evaluation, and has developed a Framework to ensure that Project level evaluation activities are coordinated to the extent that is required to produce a Programme level report. Following the Framework, which will be available, the Consultant will work with the Team in two areas in particular, providing research input from the project. These two areas are as follows:

Annual Project Outputs and Outcomes
Firstly, an online evaluation survey will be used to gather local data on a limited set of pre-defined Programme-level Outputs and Outcomes. The Consultant will assist projects to input into this tool during July of each year (for the period up to 30th June), covering only relevant data. This will also involve gathering and entering specific evidence of project Outcomes and lessons learned during the evaluation process.

Thematic Evaluation
Second, a small set of Thematic Evaluations will be prepared with clusters of Projects formed. Each Project will contribute to at least one Thematic Evaluation cluster, or more if they chose to. The Consultant will contribute to this thematic work in areas that are of direct relevance to the Project. This will involve collecting data on the agreed Theme(s), and assisting projects to contribute as part of the cluster.

It is expected that the data and evidence-gathering activities required for these two areas will not require a significant amount of additional work beyond what would anyhow be undertaken in evaluating the Project.

ANNEX 1: PROGRAMME OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES.

This Annex contains the description of Programme Outputs and Outcomes to be used for the Programme-level Evaluation and in completing the online survey.

In the tables that follow, Programme Outputs are first presented, each with a set of 'indicators' i.e. data or information by which progress can, in practice, be measured.

This is followed with Programme Outcomes, where the indicators of progress come in the form of a number of questions and a more general request for evidence.

<u>Bear in mind that in the online survey, you will be entering information only for those Programme Outputs and Outcomes that you consider relevant to your project.</u>

Programme Outputs

There are two kinds of Programme-level Outputs. The first (covered in Part A of the online survey) includes Outputs that are about direct supports to your Target Group.

The second (covered in the Part B of the online survey) looks at Outputs that are not directly or exclusively about your Target Group, and that are focused on service providers and the wider environment.

Section A: Outputs relating to direct supports for Target Groups

Output 1: Providing information and advice through a 'drop-in' service. A 'drop-in' service is a service delivered by a group in its premises where the Target Group can access information and/or advice and support on a one-to-one basis.	• Total Number of individual Target Group members visiting (and gender) • Total Number of times services accessed by the Target Group • Total Number of referrals made to other service providers • Five most common information/ advice requests received
Output 2: Providing Information and Advice through Outreach services Outreach Services include visiting households, hostels and other locations (such as the offices of another organisation) to directly interact with the Target Group, to provide information and/or advice and support.	• Total Number of outreach visits undertaken • Total Number of individual Target Group members accessing this service (and gender) • Total Number of referrals made to other service providers • Five most common information/ advice requests received
Output 3: Delivering themed information supports Themed information supports comprises workshops or clinic on specific themes relating to rights and entitlements or social services, and resource material produced such as welcome packs , websites etc.	• Total Number and type of workshops/clinics held • Total Number of individual Target Group members attending (and gender) • Brief description of resource material produced

Output 4: Building capacity in English language
 	
English language training may be provided on its own or in the context of wider vocational or other training, and can vary from one-to-one tuition to advanced and FETAC accredited courses.
	• Total Number of Target Group members participated in English language training (and gender)
	• Total Number completed at each level
	  - One-to-one
	  - Conversational
	  - Beginners
	  - Intermediate
	  - Advanced
	  - FETAC Accredited

Output 5: Non-language related education and training This includes all vocational and non-vocational training and education courses, except for English language.	• Brief Description of the education and training • Total Number of Target Group members participated in this training and education (and gender) • Total Number completing each type of training
Output 6: Mentoring Supports This comprises dedicated mentoring programmes whereby Irish nationals, or people who have lived in Ireland for some time, provide mentoring support to the target group on a one-to-one basis	• Total Number of Target Group Members participating (and gender) • Total number of Irish/other nationals participating • Total number of mentoring partnerships formed
Output 7: Providing targeted support to young people from the Target Group. Some activities focus specifically on young people, involving youth clubs, schools, homework clubs, leisure, music, sport, arts and other areas. These often involve not just the Target Group but an intercultural aspect.	• Brief description of each activity • Total Number of young people from Target Group participating (and gender) • Total Number of Irish/other nationals participating
Output 8: Providing advocacy and legal support	• Brief Description of each activity • Total Number of Target Group members

for individuals These can include follow-up on legal issues, direct advocacy, providing (volunteer) interpreters and other support activities in dealing with third parties.	receiving support (and gender)
Output 9: Providing trauma and other counselling supports (ERF only) Trauma and other personal counselling services are provided to address experiences of Target Group prior to arrival.	• Total Number of individual Target Groups members receiving counselling (and gender) • Total Number of individual counselling sessions provided • Total Number of group counselling session provided

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2" style="text-align:center">Section B: Outputs related to service providers and the wider environment</th></tr>
<tr>
<td>Output 10: Supporting intercultural/interfaith dialogue

An intercultural and interfaith activity is where the Target Group and Irish/other nationals directly interact with each other, where at least one goal of which is to enhance mutual understanding and promote integration. This can include once off events or ongoing activities.</td>
<td>• Total Number of <i>once-off</i> intercultural/interfaith events delivered
• Short description of each
• Total Number (excluding project staff) participating from Target Group
• Total Number of Irish/other nationals participants
• Number and type of <i>ongoing</i> intercultural/interfaith initiatives underway
• Short description of each
• Total Number (excluding project staff) participating from Target Group
• Total Number of Irish/other nationals participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Output 11: Supporting actions to directly combat racism.

Reaching beyond the Target Groups themselves, some activities directly address racism and xenophobia, through actions such as public meetings, seminars, protocols on responses, and rights redress.</td>
<td>• Brief description of each activity
• Total Number of people participating from the Targets Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Output 12: Building capacity of statutory sector.

This includes enhancing the ability of the statutory agencies and service suppliers, including schools, Gardaí and others, to understand and better orient their services towards the needs of the Target Groups.</td>
<td>• Brief description of each activity, including any resource material produced
• Total Number of training/learning events held
• Total number of participants
• List participating agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Output 13: Building capacity of business sector.

The focus of this is improving the private sectors understanding of intercultural issues, and to better orient both employment and services provided towards the Target Groups.</td>
<td>• Brief description of each activity, including any resource material produced
• Total Number of training/learning events held
• Total Number of people (excluding Target Group) participating
• Brief description of each activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Output 14: Building capacity of community/ voluntary sector.

This comprises supporting improved understanding of intercultural issues among the community/voluntary sector, including service suppliers, and to enable more effective approaches to supporting the Target Groups.</td>
<td>• Brief description of each activity, including any resource material produced
• Total Number of training/learning events held
• Total Number of people (excluding Target Group) participating</td>
</tr>
</table>

Output 15: Promoting mainstreaming and policy development	• Brief description of each initiative to promote mainstreaming, and related output
Mainstreaming of project activities or outputs can be undertaken within the promoting organisation (for instance through a commitment to repeat it after funding is completed) or externally through replication or partial replication by others of aspects of the Project activity or Project processes. Promoting mainstreaming may take place via specific mainstreaming structures, developing toolkits and guidelines for replication. Some projects aim to influence policy on foot of learning accrued through their project. This can take place via policy working groups, policy briefing papers, seminars and conferences	• Brief description of each initiative to promote policy development, and related output
Output 16: Supporting other marginalised groups This covers benefits to marginalised groups, other than the ERF/EIF Target Groups, that may have benefited from your project actions	• Total Number and type of such beneficiaries • Brief description of activities and nature of the beneficiary participation

Programme Outcomes

Programme Outcomes are of two types: Those that directly affect the target groups, and those that that relate also to the wider community and to service providers. Each is described below, with the key questions that relate to both noted at the end.

A: Direct Outcomes for Target Groups
1. Enhanced **life-skills and personal development** of Target Groups. This includes the Target Group gaining skills that help with day-to-day interactions and communications in the community (such as language skills), and contribute to personal development and feelings of well-being (such as trauma and other counselling).
2. Enhanced **day-to-day interaction with the local community** by the Target Group, and enhanced inter-cultural dialogue, understanding and respect. This refers to the capacity of Target Groups to interact in their communities on a day-to-day and ongoing basis, including in the context of project related activities (both one-off events and ongoing activities) and in their ordinary interactions at school and work, and with neighbours and the wider community.
3. Higher level of participation in social and recreational **groups and associated activities** by the Target Group This refers to participation in social and recreational activities, including membership of social and recreational groups, as indicative of being more embedded in local and community life.
4. Enhanced capacity of target group to engage in collective action and to become actively engaged in civil society organisations This refers to increased evidence of Target Groups organising collectively, and/or participating in community and voluntary organisations with a focus on addressing Target Group issues and advocating for change
5. Enhanced capacity of Target Groups to **identify, seek and obtain** training, education and employment opportunities. There are two aspects to this: (i) Improved skills and capacities needed to successfully identify, apply for and be recruited to employment and training or educational opportunities, such as producing a CV, applying for a job, filling out forms, attending interviews, seeking out and getting career-guidance support, work experience, job shadowing; (ii) Attending and completing direct vocational skills courses that will qualify individuals for specific jobs, or completing for instance foundation-level courses as prerequisites to proceeding to further education, that improve their chances of obtaining employment or further education.
6. Enhanced **access to statutory, social and community services** for Target Groups, including enhanced capacity and empowerment of Target Groups to access such services This specifically refers to an improved access to statutory and social services for the Target Group. It also includes enhanced capacity and empowerment of Target Groups including how to identify appropriate services, awareness concerning entitlements, and the ability to communicate with the service providers.

7. Improved **redress for Target Groups in relation to racism**, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination.

Many factors combine to produce this outcome such as

* the presence of structures to identify and record incidence of racism and discrimination
* the implementation of explicit guidelines for to ensure an appropriate response
* the presence and evident operation redress mechanisms
* improved public and service-provider understanding of relevant issues.

B: Outcomes related to Service Providers and the Wider Community

8. Improved **skills and capacities of statutory bodies and community and voluntary organisations** in their interaction with Target Groups.

This refers to positive outcomes derived from improved capacities and skills of organisations in direct and indirect interactions with the Target Groups

9. Improved **collaboration between statutory bodies and community/voluntary organisations** engaged in inter-cultural and integration activities, leading to better and more efficient service provision.

This refers to statutory agencies and the community and voluntary sector working together to co-ordination of services, and to bring about improvements of services that relate specifically to the Target Group.

10. Greater **embedding of inter-culturalism** among social and other groups and the public more generally.

This refers to defined groups, not primarily involved with inter-cultural issues, such as youth clubs, sports clubs, faith-based groups, schools or businesses, and their awareness and understanding of inter-cultural issues and capacity to enhance interaction between them and Target Groups.

11. **Mainstreaming or replication** of programme good practice, within Project and partners or outside.

This refers to the current or future replication of the Project activities, within the Project sponsor or partners themselves or elsewhere for instance amongst other statutory agencies or community/voluntary bodies.

12. Changes in **policy or practices among organisations or companies** with which Target Groups relate, based on learning from the Project and from which the Target Group can gain benefits.

This includes changes in formal practices and policies of statutory agencies or community/ voluntary organisations, changes in policy or programmes of government or other public bodies, or changes in policy and practices of private or public enterprises, the effect of which is to generate benefits for the Target Group.

For each Outcome selected by Projects as relevant, in both A and B above, the following question will be put:

1. Estimate the relative focus, in terms of effort and resources, you devoted last year to influencing this Outcome.

2. In the context of the overall level of Target Group needs in this Outcome area, what level of influence do you believe your Project's activities have had since you began?

3. Which of the relevant Programme Outputs (i.e. ones you identified as relevant to your) contributed to this Programme Outcome since the start of your Project

4. Please present, or point to, any evidence that your Project has influenced this Outcome. This might involve quantitative or qualitative indicators of progress for this Outcome, that can be linked to your project's activities and Outputs.

ANNEX 2:   STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH TO PROGRAMME OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

Project-level participation in the Programme Outputs and Outcomes evaluation will be completed in a number of steps, culminating with the completion of the online survey. The survey itself is primarily a means to report – the groundwork and analysis for the evaluation will be undertaken mainly beforehand. It will much easier and efficient to complete the survey with all, or most, of the information you need already to hand.

The following is therefore a suggested set of steps that you can take to complete the process for 2011. It will become easier in later years since you will already be familiar with the process and can prepare, as required, throughout the year rather than at the end.

The following are intended for the Project Manager and staff, working closely with your External Evaluator. However, some of the steps may involve the participation of other stakeholders involved in your Project.

Step 1: Explore how your Project relates to Programme Outputs and Outcomes

Annex 1 contains the detailed Programme level Outputs and Outcomes. These are designed for the ERF and EIF Programmes as a whole, and your first step will therefore be to undertake a kind of *mapping exercise* between your own Project's activities and the Programme Outputs and Outcomes here.

You may wish to begin by asking yourselves the following questions about Programme Outputs:

- Which *Programme Outputs* are, or are likely to be, relevant to my Project?
- Which of my Project's activities (objectives, actions, outputs, outcomes) contribute to *each* of these relevant Outputs?
- In *what ways*, and to *what extent*, do my Project's activities contribute to each of these Outputs?

The same can then be considered for the Programme Outcomes

- Which *Programme Outcomes* are, or are likely to be, relevant to my project?
- Which of my Project's activities (objectives, actions, outputs, outcomes) contribute to *each* of these relevant Outcomes?
- In *what ways*, and to *what extent*, do my Project's activities contribute to each of these Outcomes?

The Programme Outputs and Outcomes are in some cases likely to be expressed in a more generic manner than your own Project outputs or outcomes. The task for you is to identify which Programme Outputs or Outcomes *best represent or encompass* those of your Project.

In terms of the manner and extent of your Project's influence, the answers may not be immediately apparent to you, especially for Programme Outcomes. However, the purpose at this point is to have **an overall look at how your project relates to these** Programme Outputs and Outcomes, and much of the survey is about this.

It is suggested that this step might be undertaken by the Project Manager and/or External Evaluator. You might want to note down your main conclusions here, concerning those Programme Outputs and Outcomes that are most relevant to your Project.

Step 2: Gathering the data for Outputs

Each of the Programme Outputs in Annex 1 has a number of indicators regarding which the survey will be seeking data. You should go through each Output that you have identified in Step 1 above as relevant to your Project, one by one, and examine whether you already have the data in the Project records.

Most of these data items are numerical, recording how many of your Target Group(s) have used a service, their gender and so forth. Others are more qualitative, such as for a Drop-in Centre: "List the five most common information/advice requests you have received from the target group." For both categories, raw data may be available but may also need to be compiled.

If you have difficulty interpreting what is meant by some categories or terms used, remember that you can always phone or email Nexus/Pobal for assistance. (See the Introduction for contact details)

It is also very important to note what relevant data your project is not currently collecting, and what steps you might be able to take to gather it – if not for 2011, then for 2012 and subsequent years (see Step 6 below).

Step 3: Gathering Data and Evidence about Outcomes

Gathering data and information on Programme Outcomes tends to be more difficult than for Programme Outputs. Partly for this reason there are far fewer specific questions asked in the survey about them. Each Project's External Evaluator should consider with the Project how best to assess its achievements, and in this context much of the information required here will be gathered.

In the online survey you will be asked the questions for *each* Outcome that you have identified as relevant to your Project. The following are the first two questions:

1. *Estimate the relative focus, <u>in terms of effort and resources</u>, you devoted <u>last year</u> to influencing this Outcome?*

2. *In the context of the <u>overall level of Target Group needs</u> in this Outcome area, what level of influence do you believe your Project's activities have had <u>since you began your Project</u>?*

It is important to think about the distinction between these.

The first is asking the relative extent of effort your Project devoted to achieving this Outcome. For instance if this was the sole Outcome that you were attempting to influence, you would answer that it was the greatest focus of your effort – indeed 100% of your effort and resources went into it.

The second question is about the extent to which your efforts *actually influenced* the area of need related to this Outcome. You may feel that, despite the fact that you put all your effort into it, the amount of influence you had was small – because the problem is so large.

The third question below is different in nature, but will be very useful in getting an approximate overall picture, based on the aggregate experience of the Project, of which Programme Outputs contributed to each Programme Outcomes. The question posed for *each* Outcome is:

3. Which of the Programme Outputs (from among those you identified as relevant to your Projects) contributed to this Outcome <u>since the start of your Project</u>?

You will be asked to rank this influence on a scale of 1 to 5 and a sensible 'best estimate' is all that is sought. Please note that you are asked to assess the *extent of influence each Programme Output* (resulting from the work of your Project) *had on a given Outcome*, and not for instance how much effort you may have devoted to that Output.

The final question about each Outcome is as follows:

4. *Present, or point to, any <u>evidence</u> that a desired <u>Outcome</u> has come about, and whether and how your Project <u>has influenced</u> this Outcome.*

Here you are requested to:
- enter the summary of any research you have done;
- offer an overview and references to any other research that is relevant
- indicate the areas in which you intend to do research in the future.

You are also asked to email any research reports completed or other documents you believe are relevant directly to Nexus/Pobal.

This question is about demonstrating the influence your project has had in relation to bringing about a particular Outcome.

Of course, a comprehensive answer to this question might require research well beyond the resources available to your project. We are asking only that you answer this as best you can, in a practical manner and based on your experience as well as any formal and informal research, studies or statistics that might be available. In general, it will be important to include, at some point, the direct participation of Target Groups in the research.

Some approaches to gathering information on immediate Outcomes are standard, for instance questionnaires issued to participants immediately upon completion of a training course, and if possible again after a given period. Focus groups are also a useful tool, as are individual interviews.

Bear in mind also that, in the first year, you may have few Programme Outcomes to report on, either because your Project has not yet got to the that point, or because your own evaluation research has not yet been able to assess results.

But certainly this question will become more important in later years and at the end of your Project.

One specific suggestion is worth considering here.

All four of the Outcome Questions above could, in most cases, benefit greatly from the considered opinions and views of your Project Staff and volunteers, Steering Committee members, and Project partners. You might organise, working with your External Evaluator, a facilitated **Workshop** specifically focusing on these questions. The goal would be to obtain, where possible, a consensus and where this is not possible to note the divergences and reasons for them. The documented results could be directly entered into the online survey, noting its source, alongside any other evidence.

This Workshop could also discuss the lessons and learning from the project, outlined in the next step below.

Step 4: Gathering Lessons and Leaning

Part 4 of the survey is about summarising the lessons and learning from each Project. Please note that responses will be shared with all other projects and summarised for the Programme as a whole in the Annual Programme Report.

The survey asks you to summarise the main lessons and learning under two main headings:

What has your project learned in relation to:

a)   *its strategies and practices for engaging with the project Target Group(s);*

b)   *how best mainstream provision of supports for the project Target Group(s) can be enhanced.*

It also asks you to note those things that the Project

- *Should stop doing*
- *Should keep doing*
- *Should start doing.*

These are deliberately open questions, allowing each Project plenty of latitude to answer in its own way.

Finally, the survey will ask you to indicate which Themes, if any, are emerging that you Project might be interested to pursue in the context of the Thematic evaluation.

All the above could be explored in the context of the facilitated Workshop suggested above.

Step 5: Completing the Survey

At this point, you should be ready to complete the online output and outcome survey itself. Even with all the information to hand it may take some time as you are also likely to have to refer elsewhere and confer with others during the process. Bear in mind, the survey can be saved as you go along, and returned to later. Nevertheless, it should be possible to complete it in a couple of sessions, covering one or more parts in each session.

And remember, assistance by email or (most of the time) by phone will be available from Nexus/Pobal as indicated in the introduction.

Step 6: Reviewing the Process and Requirements

During the course of implementing Steps 1 to 4 above you might discover that you are not currently gathering some of the data that is required for the survey, and indeed that would be useful for your own project planning and evaluation. Note these as you go along.

After the completing the survey, it would be useful to immediately draw up a plan for gathering any data and information that is missing, and incorporate this into your standard

Project monitoring activities or into your evaluation plan being supported by the External Evaluator.

You might also note any comments your have about the online survey, and report them to Pobal/Nexus. The Survey will continue to be refined over the coming years.