



MAHBOBAS PROMISE EVALUATION POLICY

Policy No.: POL-0044	Subject: Mahbobas Promise Evaluation Policy
<p>Summary of Policy: The purpose of the Evaluation Policy (the policy) is to guide how evaluations are planned, conducted and utilised by Mahbobas Promise. By articulating common standards and approaches, this policy aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support Mahbobas Promise’s efforts to demonstrate the sustainable positive impact of its projects; • improve program and project design and implementation through identifying lessons learned and good practice, and any unintended positive and negative consequences; • provide opportunities for accountability to all stakeholders, particularly those vulnerable and marginalised communities with whom we work; • influence our own work and the practice of peer agencies and other stakeholders, through sharing our experience and learning; • support our policy dialogue and advocacy to influence policy and practice that supports social justice; • support donor relations, fundraising and marketing efforts. 	
Date Approved by the Board: Pending	Date of Effect: Immediate
Staff Affected: Mahbobas Promise International Programs and International Operations and Country Office Country Directors/Managers; and project and program teams.	
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Contents

Introduction3

Purpose3

Scope.....4

Project/program evaluations.....4

Ex-post and other strategic evaluations4

Resourcing.....5

Implementation and responsibilities5

Monitoring and evaluation.....6

Annex 1 Definitions of evaluation terms.....7

Annex 2 Evaluation standards and principles.....8

Annex 3 Mahbobas Promise minimum requirements for evaluation10

MAHBOBAS PROMISE EVALUATION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Mahbobas Promise's (MP) Evaluation Policy was first approved by the MP Board in 2019. This reflected increased attention being paid at that time to program quality and accountability, within MP (MP) and in the broader development community. This updated policy represents Mahbobas Promise's continuing commitment to a systematic and coordinated approach to evaluation practice. The policy is consistent with MP's Good Governance Policy which aims to improve the quality of Mahbobas Promise programs through providing clearer guidance to staff in MP and MP's partners and clarity around roles and responsibilities in the project cycle.

This policy is one part of efforts to improve our evaluations. Other supporting measures will include provision of technical support, capacity building with staff and development of tools. This will help us improve how we design and manage evaluations, ensure high quality reports, improve their accessibility and make best use of the analysis they contain.

A brief glossary with definitions of evaluation-related terms is at Annex I.

PURPOSE

For Mahbobas Promise, evaluation is a key part of the programming cycle. It is the process of rigorously assessing the design, implementation and outcomes of development and humanitarian projects and programs, and considering their impact, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and relevance. Our approach to evaluation is grounded in a strong commitment to accountability, particularly to the communities with whom we work, as well as to our donors and supporters.

The purpose of the Evaluation Policy (the policy) is to guide how evaluations are planned, conducted and utilised by Mahbobas Promise. By articulating common standards and approaches, this policy aims to:

- support Mahbobas Promise's efforts to **demonstrate the sustainable positive impact** of its projects;
- **improve program and project design and implementation** through identifying lessons learned and good practice, and any unintended positive and negative consequences;
- provide opportunities for **accountability to all stakeholders**, particularly those vulnerable and marginalised communities with whom we work;
- influence our own work and the practice of peer agencies and other stakeholders, through **sharing our experience and learning**;
- support our **policy dialogue and advocacy** to influence policy and practice that supports social justice;
- **support donor relations**, fundraising and marketing efforts.

Mahbobas Promise recognises that there is no single best approach to evaluation. The policy therefore provides guidance and minimum standards, whilst being flexible on methods and approaches. This will help us tailor our evaluation work to diverse operating environments, and benefit from the expertise and innovation of country offices and partner organisations.

SCOPE

As a member of MP, we hold ourselves accountable for ensuring Mahbobas Promise's interventions are consistent with agreed MP approaches and standards. These include the MP Program Strategy; key policy commitments and the MP Vision, Mission and Program Principles.

The policy applies to all Mahbobas Promise projects and programs funded by the Australian Government or other Australian private or public donors. This includes both humanitarian (response, rehabilitation and recovery) and long-term development projects.

PROJECT/PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

Each project/program funded from an Australian source will be evaluated, either in its own right or together with other related projects where appropriate. At a minimum, there must be a final completion report (internal or external) assessing and documenting achievements and lessons learned for future programming. The scope of the evaluations will depend upon the scale and/or nature of the project. On balance, greater effort will be devoted to evaluation of larger and longer-term projects. Annex II outlines the evaluation standards to be observed. The matrix in Annex III outlines the minimum requirements for evaluative processes.

EX-POST AND OTHER STRATEGIC EVALUATIONS

Consistent with the MP Evaluation policy, Mahbobas Promise will conduct annual strategic evaluations where restricted or unrestricted resources can be obtained. This supplements evaluations of individual projects by allowing a focus on issues or themes of importance to Mahbobas Promise, which can build a broader picture of MP's impact. Strategic evaluations may include:

- **ex-post evaluations** undertaken at least 18 months following completion of project activities, to assess the sustainable impact of MP interventions;
- **cluster evaluations**, which assess a number of projects within a given country or region, to assess where possible the synergy of multiple projects (by MP and others) to achieve higher-level impact.

Such strategic evaluations should also take advantage of selected donor-funded program or project evaluations already completed and/or planned. Where looking at multiple projects, these may include samples of both Australian-funded and non-Australian funded projects where this will help give a coherent and useful picture of broader program impact. Strategic evaluations can help us look at how a number of projects interact and how the collective impact may be more than the sum of its parts. In this way, strategic evaluations, together with individual project evaluations, can potentially be part of the building blocks for assessing the impact of MP's Long Term Programs in a given country.

RESOURCING

Mahbobas Promise commits to allocating and generating the resources required for this Policy to be effectively implemented. In that respect, adequate financial support for evaluation must be written into and negotiated wherever possible with Mahbobas Promise's donors. A dedicated budget line between 5% and 10% of project value should be included for all monitoring and evaluation activities for all projects above AUD 150, 000. For projects below this amount, a rule of thumb is that the M&E budget should not be so small as to compromise the accuracy and credibility of results, but neither should it divert project resources away from programming to the extent that results are impacted (see Annex III for more detail).

Regardless of available donor funding, Mahbobas Promise will budget for and undertake a minimum of one strategic evaluation (such as an ex-post or thematic evaluation) each financial year, in line with our commitment to learning and demonstrating impact.

IMPLEMENTATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Roles and responsibilities for evaluations are outlined in detail in the Mahbobas Promise Program Quality Framework. In brief:

- Country Offices (COs) have primary responsibility for planning for and supervising project and program evaluations, with support from the relevant MP member. Responsibilities include developing Terms of Reference for evaluations for review by MP member before signoff; recruiting consultants where needed; undertaking or overseeing field research, consultation and analysis; finalising evaluations based on review and comments on the draft; and preparing and following up the CO management response to the recommendations of the evaluation report.
- A Joint Plan for the evaluation process will be agreed between the CO and International Programs (IP), setting out key steps, inputs, roles and scheduling. Subject to the Plan, IP may provide support to the CO in drafting of TOR, recruitment of consultants, provision of technical input, in-country support for field logistics, review of draft report, and liaison with the Australian donor on followup action.
- To support improved evaluation practice in the Australian portfolio, the Quality & Impact Branch (QI) will develop, disseminate and update relevant tools (with input from International Operations (IO), COs, IP); assist COs as requested on evaluation methodology issues; review draft evaluation reports; compile and analyse Evaluation Summaries from COs, so as to disseminate findings and lessons learned from evaluations within MP and beyond; and post Evaluation Summaries or reports on the Mahbobas Promise website, and the MP Electronic Evaluation Library. Publication should be subject to due consideration around potentially sensitive content (eg beneficiary case studies, photographs of children, quality of report, host government political sensitivities).
- The annual Mahbobas Promise's Programmers' Meeting (coordinated by IO, with support from IP) will include review of evaluative activities and systems within Mahbobas Promise
- QI will be responsible for planning and management of strategic evaluations funded by Mahbobas Promise.

In support of this policy, and as part of rolling out the Mahbobas Promise Program Quality Framework, QI will develop further practical guidance on evaluations, seeking to build where possible on strong and innovative evaluation practice happening within MP and in the sector.

It is recognised that operational factors outside MP's immediate control may affect the ability to fully meet all aspects of the Evaluation Policy in every case. These may include environmental constraints due to emergency or security; donor constraints such as unwillingness of some donors to adequately resource evaluations; varying capacity settings across Country Offices; and availability of qualified and affordable consultant expertise in evaluation. Mahbobas Promise and Country Offices are expected to make best efforts to address these issues; where difficulties are encountered, these will be flagged at the earliest opportunity for discussion between both parties so as to agree the best available alternative approach.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Adherence to this Policy will be monitored by QI and progress reported periodically to the Mahbobas Promise International Program and Operations Committee. Monitoring will consider the following:

- effective dissemination of the policy through Country Office structures and Australian funded activities;
- familiarity and confidence of Mahbobas Promise project and program teams with the policy at both head office and country levels;
- reporting of results from evaluations undertaken;
- application and compliance with the policy, and users' assessment of its clarity and usefulness, to be used in future review of the policy;
- extent to which the policy generates learning and exchange of evaluation results and practice amongst country offices and its contribution to improved practice.

In addition, reports from strategic evaluations will be presented to Mahbobas Promise's Management committee when completed.

ANNEX I DEFINITIONS OF EVALUATION TERMS*Project completion report*

For projects of small size or short-term duration, the minimum evaluation requirement is a final report upon completion of project which assesses and documents achievements and lessons learned for future programming. This will usually also serve as the final report to the donor.

Baseline

An analysis describing the initial conditions (and indicators) before the start of a project/program, against which progress can be assessed or comparisons made. The baseline survey may be conducted internally by MP or by external advisors.

Endline

An analysis describing the conditions (and indicators) at the completion of a project/program (usually as part of its final evaluation), to compare with baseline conditions and assess change. Endline studies are not evaluations themselves, but an important part of assessing change.

Midterm evaluation or review

For projects 24 months or more in length, an evaluation, or review should be conducted. The terms midterm evaluation and midterm review are often used interchangeably, however in general midterm evaluations are conducted externally and include a midline quantitative analysis. Midterm reviews can be conducted internally or externally and the emphasis is on qualitative analysis. Both are formative and improve the quality of on-going projects and programs.

End-of-project Evaluation (EoP) or Final Evaluation

Conducted at the completion of project implementation to assess how well the project achieved its intended objectives. These evaluations focus on impact, sustainability and accountability. All projects should have some form of final assessment, whether it is internal or external. Larger projects will generally have independent evaluations conducted by external evaluator(s), lending a degree of objectivity and technical and/or sectoral expertise.

Ex-post evaluations

Evaluations conducted 18 months or more after the end of the project to assess long-term impact and the sustainability of outcomes.

Internal

Evaluations or reviews conducted by Mahbobas Promise or Country Office staff with expertise in monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) such as program quality focal points or advisors.

External

Evaluations or reviews conducted by non-MP specialists/consultants hired specifically for the purpose of the evaluation, or by MP staff from outside the particular country office (e.g. appropriately skilled regional staff or head office staff).

ANNEX 2 EVALUATION STANDARDS AND PRINCIPLES

The following evaluation standards reflect the key approaches for Mahbobas Promise's conduct of evaluations. They draw on the principles identified in the MP Evaluation Policy, and incorporate relevant updates from other policy documents.

Standards on Evaluation Content

- A. **FOCUS ON IMPACT:** The primary focus of our evaluations will reflect our interest in the impact of MP's work on sustainable improvement in the wellbeing of poor and marginalised women, men, boys and girls. Evaluations should assess both benefits and harms including intended and unintended impacts, considering relevant groups such as women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and other marginalised groups. They should consider the extent to which projects build the resilience of impact groups in the face of external shocks and changes.
- B. **ALIGNMENT WITH MP STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS:** All evaluations need to include an analysis of the activity's alignment with or contribution to implementation of key MP approaches, particularly relating to the MP Program Strategy, as well as the relevant Long Term Program/s of the Country Office.
- C. **GENDER:** All evaluations will include analysis of gender issues and impacts, in line with the MP Gender Policy, and across all dimensions of the MP Women's Empowerment Framework. Data will be disaggregated by sex, age and other diversity factors and analysis will report upon gender equality results and the relative impact of the project upon women and men, boys and girls. To facilitate effective field data collection and analysis, gender-balanced evaluation teams should be used.

Standards on Evaluation Processes

- D. **EFFECTIVE PLANNING AND BASELINES:** Whenever possible, planning for evaluation should begin at the time of project design, rather than waiting until the end of the project. This includes conducting an appropriate baseline at project start-up that will allow later comparison to assess 'before-and-after' change, including for gender impacts. Project monitoring frameworks and processes should also be set up so as to provide useful data for evaluation purposes.
- E. **RIGOUR:** Evaluation plans should clearly outline the methodology used, and look to utilise a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods so as to provide a credible, objective assessment of results. When drafting or reviewing evaluation reports, staff should ensure that assertions regarding impact are linked to data and evidence.
- F. **PARTICIPATION:** All evaluations will include, whenever possible, significant participation and high level of influence of parties external to MP, in planning, implementation, analysis, and utilisation of evaluations. In particular, project and program participants (both women and men) should be provided the opportunity to provide their assessment and experiences of MP's work and its outcomes.
- G. **TRANSPARENCY:** Evaluation results and learning will be made available in the public domain through summaries and/or reports being placed online, with due consideration to potentially sensitive content

(eg case studies of project beneficiaries, photographs of children, host government sensitivities and other contextual issues). They will also be made accessible (for example through translation) to host governments, MP partners, peer organisations, and participant communities, recognising that different formats may be required for different audiences.

- H. **INTEGRITY:** Evaluation activities will be conducted openly and in a transparent manner. Staff members and external evaluators engaged by MP will maintain the highest possible professional, ethical and personal standards. In particular, they will ensure the honesty and integrity of the evaluation process, and respect the security and dignity of the stakeholders with whom they interact.
- I. **INDEPENDENCE:** The findings and recommendations of those conducting an evaluation should be included in their report without interference of managers, although a process of consultative, negotiated agreement should be undertaken from the outset. Those associated with activities being evaluated should be given the opportunity to respond to conclusions and recommendations, and their responses included in the final version of the official evaluation report.

**ANNEX 3 - MAHBOBAS PROMISE PROGRAM EVALUATION POLICY
MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR EVALUATION, BY PROJECT SIZE AND DURATION**

This matrix sets out evaluation requirements for humanitarian and long-term development projects funded by Mahbobas Promise. Humanitarian (response, rehabilitation and recovery) projects must observe the MP Humanitarian Accountability Standards and MP Emergency Protocols, though it is recognised that the requirements outlined in this matrix may not be feasible in all humanitarian cases due to operational constraints.

The matrix is based on categorizing projects by size (budget) and project duration (years). These categories are somewhat arbitrary, but the principles underlying this categorization are that: the larger a project, the greater our concern for effective resource utilisation and project impact; and the longer a project's duration, the greater the potential for impact (positive or negative) and the greater the ability of the project to evolve on the basis of experience and lessons learned during implementation.

For Australian-funded projects, this matrix provides a basis for joint planning of evaluations between Country Offices and Mahbobas Promise. As per the Mahbobas Promise Program Quality Framework, any proposed departures from the requirements outlined below should be documented with justification and submitted to PE IP for approval.

TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET	DURATION OF PROJECT		
	SHORT-TERM > 1 year	MEDIUM-TERM 1 – 3 years	LONG-TERM > 3 years
SMALL < \$10,000	Project completion report - internal Recommended M&E Budget: at least 2 %	Baseline Final Evaluation, internal or external Recommended M&E Budget: at least 2 %	Baseline Final Evaluation, internal or external Recommended M&E Budget: at least 2 %
MEDIUM \$10,000 - \$100k	Final Evaluation - internal or external Recommended M&E Budget: up to 3%	Baseline Final Evaluation (incl. endline) - external Recommended M&E Budget: 3%	Baseline Final Evaluation (incl. endline) – external Recommended M&E Budget: 5%

EVALUATION POLICY

APPROVAL PENDING

TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET	DURATION OF PROJECT		
	SHORT-TERM > 1 year	MEDIUM-TERM 1 – 3 years	LONG-TERM > 3 years
LARGE >\$100k	Baseline Final Evaluation - external Recommended M&E Budget: 3%	Baseline Final Evaluation (incl. endline) - external Recommended M&E Budget: 3%	Baseline Mid-Term Review - external Final Evaluation (incl. endline) – external Ex-post evaluation (where appropriate or of strategic interest) - external Recommended M&E Budget: 10% +