

Developing Key Evaluation Questions: Case Study

This case study accompanies Switchboard's information guide *Developing Key Evaluation Questions*.

Step 1

Sana manages the Helping Hands Youth Program, a program whose main objectives are to improve the ability of school-aged refugee youth to navigate a new school system, to build social bridges at school, and to develop academic confidence. The program consists of three main interventions: a refugee after-school and summer school program, teacher professional development workshops, and school-related support for parents of enrolled youth.

Sana and her team want to find out if their program is effective, so they sit down to review the program documents to make sure they're prepared to embark on an evaluation project. They developed [a theory of change and detailed logical framework \(logframe\)](#) for their most recent application for funding. They walk through these materials together, then turn to the topic of evaluation planning.

Steps 1-2

After spending an afternoon brainstorming, Sana and her team have come up with a long list of potential evaluation questions and have categorized each by evaluation type:

Outcome

- Did we see improvements in the ability of school-aged refugee youth to navigate their new school system?
- Did children participating in the program build social bridges at school?
- Did children reached through the program demonstrate improved academic confidence?
- Were there any differences in outcomes for boys and girls?
- After participating in the program, did parents have improved capacity to help their children adjust to life in their new schools?

Process

- What changes did teachers trained through the program make to better support refugee students in navigating the school system, building social bridges, and developing academic confidence?
- Do teachers think the professional development workshops are useful?
- Was the program accessible to refugee youth, including girls?
- To what extent did youth and their parents regularly attend after-school programs and

academic support meetings? What factors influenced attendance?

- How was the program implemented in different schools? To what extent was the program implemented as planned?

Impact

- What is the impact of our program on refugee youth? Does our program have a measurable impact on our key outcomes, compared to no intervention?

Step 3

Sana's team review each of their questions against the criteria of specificity, importance, and feasibility. They come up with :

Question	Specific?	Important?	Feasible?
Did we see improvements in the ability of school-aged refugee youth to navigate their new school system?	Y	Y	Y
Did children participating in the program build social bridges at school?	Y	Y	Y
Did children reached through the program demonstrate improved academic confidence?	Y	Y	Y
Were there any differences in outcomes for boys and girls?	Y	Y	Y
After participating in the program, did parents have improved capacity to help their children adjust to life in their new schools?	Y	Y	Y
What changes did teachers trained through the program make to better support refugee students in navigating the school system, building social bridges, and developing academic confidence?	Y	Y	Y
Do teachers think the professional development workshops are useful?	N	Y	Y
Was the program accessible to refugee youth, including girls?	Y	Y	Y
To what extent did youth and their parents regularly attend after-school programs and academic support meetings? What factors influenced attendance?	Y	Y	Y
How was the program implemented in different schools? To what extent was the program implemented as planned?	Y	Y	Y
What is the impact of our program on refugee youth? Does our program have a measurable impact on our key outcomes, compared to no intervention?	Y	Y	N



Sana and her team decide to move forward with the questions that meet all three criteria—those assigned a “no” in any column will not be considered. They decide that the question “Do teachers think the professional development workshops are useful?” is not specific enough, and the team will revise it before moving forward.

While the team would like to determine the impact of their program on refugee youth, they realize that given their resources it is not feasible for them to explore this question. They lack the budget and capacity to conduct a rigorous impact evaluation, so they will strike this question and plan to revisit it should additional funds become available.

Now, the team will move forward with their other questions by developing a detailed evaluation plan and will further revise the questions as needed.

The IRC received competitive funding through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Grant #90RB0053. The project is 100% financed by federal funds. The contents of this document are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

