RETROSPECTIVE IMPACT EVALUATION SCOPING GUIDE

April 2018

INTRODUCTION

What is a Retrospective Impact Evaluation (RIE)?

A retrospective impact evaluation (RIE) is an ex post evaluation of an evaluand to assess its value, worth, and merit, with a special focus on examining sustainability of intended results as well as unintended impacts. However, due to resource constraints, international development donors and organizations cannot afford to conduct many RIEs, limiting our ability to truly understand longer-term outcomes and impacts after the closure of a program. Save the Children's sponsorship programs are currently investigating the feasibility of conducting RIEs in order to optimize learning from scarce resources. In Save the Children's sponsorship programs, possible RIEs will focus on evaluating both planned and unplanned long-term impacts that can be linked to sponsorship programming. The optimal time for an RIE is between two to five years after sponsorship has finished programming and phased out of the impact area.

What is RIE Scoping?

In order to make good decisions on the management of retrospective impact evaluations, Save the Children developed an approach to evaluating the feasibility of RIEs in sponsorship programs, also known as an evaluability assessment.

Purpose of this Guide

This guide is designed to help teams assess the degree to which a sponsorship impact area is ready for a RIE. This guide is a tool to assist, either external consultants or internal evaluators, with determining the readiness and feasibility (i.e. evaluability) of conducting a retrospective impact evaluation of an impact area after sponsorship programming has phased out.
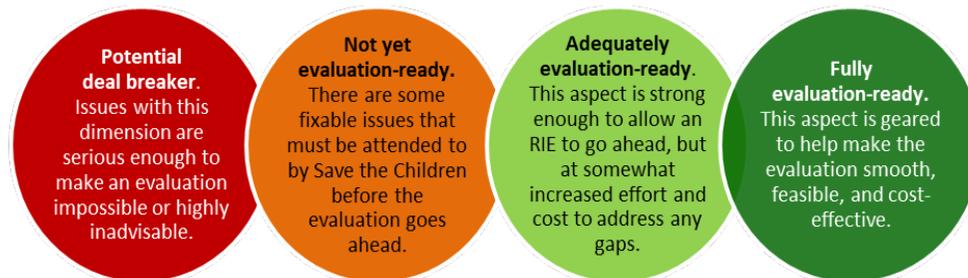
Evaluability is assessed on 4 dimensions:

1. Internal Stakeholder Report

2. External Stakeholder Report

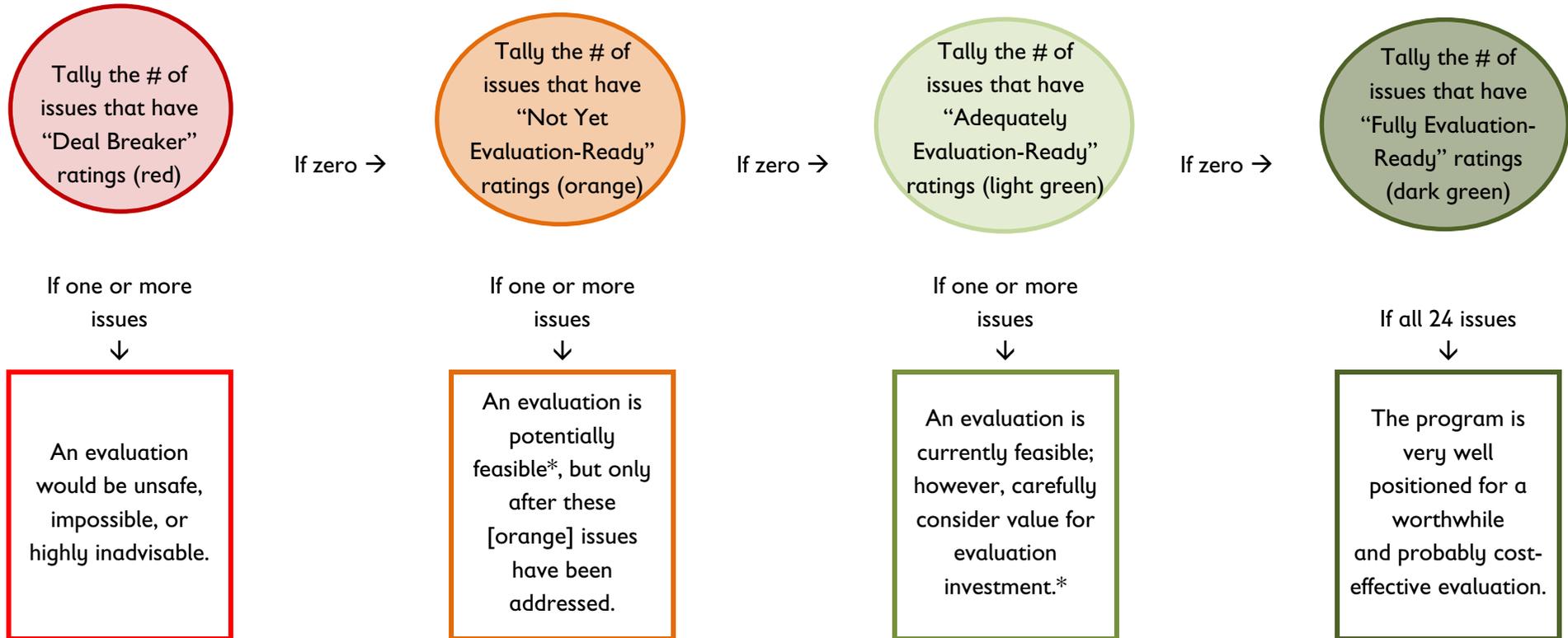3. Evidence and Documentation

4. Contextual Factors

Upon completing this tool, the scoping team will determine the degree to which there is utility and feasibility of conducting the RIE before substantial funds are invested in conducting one. More simply, the scoping team will determine if it is impossible to conduct a RIE, if there are extra steps needed before conducting the RIE, or if the impact area is ready to start a RIE. This is a cost-effective way to inform decision-making and investments in program accountability and learning.

Key points to note when using this guide:

1. The RIE scoping guide lists 24 issues clustered into 4 dimensions that are assessed.

2. A 4-category rating scale (i.e., "mini-rubric") is used to rate evaluation readiness and feasibility on each issue.

3. A group based process should be used to discuss each issue and review relevant data before making the final determination.

4. A decision process is used to determine which of the 4 categories of evaluation readiness and feasibility a sponsorship impact area most closely matches.

Potential deal breaker. Issues with this dimension are serious enough to make an evaluation impossible or highly inadvisable.

Not yet evaluation-ready. There are some fixable issues that must be attended to by Save the Children before the evaluation goes ahead.

Adequately evaluation-ready. This aspect is strong enough to allow an RIE to go ahead, but at somewhat increased effort and cost to address any gaps.

Fully evaluation-ready. This aspect is geared to help make the evaluation smooth, feasible, and cost-effective.

5. Only 8 of the 24 issues have "Potential Deal breaker" as a possible – but rare – rating. This signifies an extremely serious issue that by itself would make an impact evaluation highly inadvisable or impossible. Cells in grey in the tool indicate that a particular rating is not an option for this dimension.

6. For 3 of the 24 issues, "Not Yet Evaluation-Ready" is also grey color. These are issues that, if present, would make an evaluation easier or more cost-effective, but whose absence would not in any way prevent a worthwhile evaluation from being conducted.

7. A "Deal Breaker" cannot be cancelled out by high performance on other ratings. The same is true for aspects of the program that are "Not Yet Evaluation-Ready". For this reason, different level ratings are NOT to be scored numerically, summed, or averaged. [Instead, see #7, below.]

8. An overall conclusion about whether to proceed with a Retrospective Impact Evaluation (RIE) would be made as follows:

   - Tally up the number of ratings of each dimension (color). The tally should be 24 check marks.
   - Start with the left circle and follow the arrows to the appropriate conclusion.
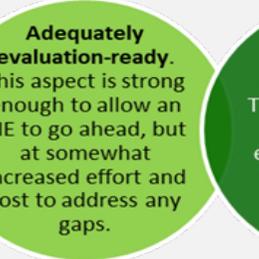
START HERE

↓

Tally the # of issues that have "Deal Breaker" ratings (red)

If zero →

Tally the # of issues that have "Not Yet Evaluation-Ready" ratings (orange)

If zero →

Tally the # of issues that have "Adequately Evaluation-Ready" ratings (light green)

If zero →

Tally the # of issues that have "Fully Evaluation-Ready" ratings (dark green)

If one or more issues
↓

An evaluation would be unsafe, impossible, or highly inadvisable.

If one or more issues
↓

An evaluation is potentially feasible*, but only after these [orange] issues have been addressed.

If one or more issues
↓

An evaluation is currently feasible; however, carefully consider value for evaluation investment.*

If all 24 issues
↓

The program is very well positioned for a worthwhile and probably cost-effective evaluation.

* Even if an evaluation is feasible, it may not always deliver sufficiently valuable insights for the required investment of time and money. Programs with sparse data and other challenges will require a higher level of expertise and a greater intensity of effort, both of which can be costly. The RIE scoping team should provide recommendations for issues that are classified as "Not Yet Evaluation-Ready" or "Adequately Evaluation-Ready."

RIE SCOPING ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

1. Internal Stakeholder Support	**Potential deal breaker.** Issues with this dimension are serious enough to make an evaluation impossible or highly inadvisable.	**Not yet evaluation-ready.** There are some fixable issues that must be attended to by Save the Children before the evaluation goes ahead.	**Adequately evaluation-ready.** This aspect is strong enough to allow an RIE to go ahead, but at somewhat increased effort and cost to address any gaps.	**Fully evaluation-ready.** This aspect is geared to help make the evaluation smooth, feasible, and cost-effective.
1.1 How committed are the CO and Sponsorship staff to investing the necessary time and resources to support a useful and credible RIE? ▪ *Would CO and sponsorship staff spend the extra time needed to ensure all past program reports are properly archived on AMS?[1]* ▪ *Are staff too busy to devote even more time to support a RIE?* ▪ *Would they be willing to pay half or most of the RIE costs from their CO budget?*	Not an Option	☐ The CO's senior management and Sponsorship staff express limited commitment and interest because of time and resources.	☐ The CO's senior management and Sponsorship staff express commitment and interest if they are not too busy or high financial threshold.	☐ The CO's senior management and Sponsorship staff express full commitment and interest and will find the time and resources.
1.2 How clear are the CO and Sponsorship staff about the roles they would have in an RIE? ▪ *Are staff clear about the program documentation & information over the last 10-years that needs to be available and interested in helping ensure it is available and accessible, such as SitAn, IAPP, SAP,SARs, Performance Evaluations, special studies?[2]* ▪ *Are ALL these documents available & accessible?* ▪ *How comfortable are staff with an independent evaluator conducting the RIE with little to no involvement of Save the Children staff?*	Not an Option	☐ The CO's senior management and Sponsorship staff are less clear about their role and only slightly interested in helping.	☐ The CO's senior management and Sponsorship staff are relatively clear about their role and mostly interested in helping.	☐ The CO's senior management and Sponsorship staff are clear about their role and interested in helping.
1.3 How clearly do the Country Office senior staff and sponsorship staff understand what it would take to ensure that the RIE is maximally relevant, useful, and influential? ▪ *Do staff think the findings from a RIE would relevant & useful for future programming for sponsorship overall?* ▪ *Does the CO senior staff have questions they would like answered about the sponsorship program that occurred in the impact area?* ▪ *Do they think their partners (NGOs, local and national government) would be interested in the findings of the RIE?*	Not an Option	☐ The CO's senior management and Sponsorship staff see it as having little relevance, use or influence.	☐ The CO's senior management and Sponsorship staff see it as being mostly relevant, useful and influential.	☐ The CO's senior management and Sponsorship staff do see it as very relevant, useful, and influential.

[1] AMS – Award Management System
[2] SitAn- Situational Analysis; IAPP – Impact Area Presence Plan; SAP: Sponsorship Annual Plan; SAR – Sponsorship Annual Report
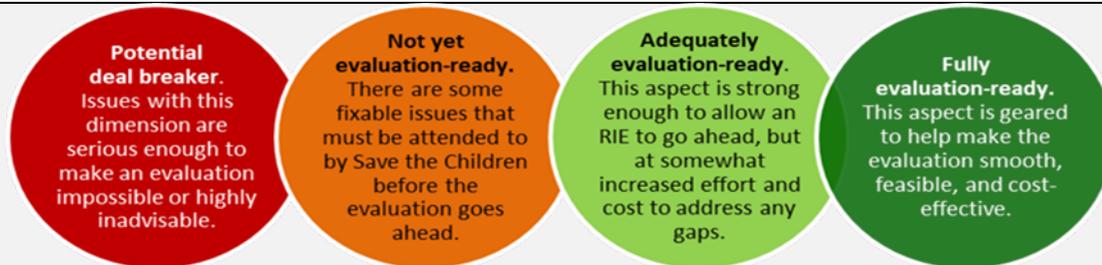
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RIE Scoping Issues and Questions

1.4 How well can the CO and Sponsorship staff articulate the value of doing an RIE and say how they anticipate using the insights to inform thinking and decision making? ▪ Are staff uncertain if any findings from an RIE would provide new or insightful learning that could be utilized in current or future programming? ▪ Do staff feel that an RIE is just another activity added to already too many sponsorship activities? ▪ Can the staff articulate what value can come from RIE?	Not an Option	☐ The CO's senior management and Sponsorship staff anticipate it to minimally inform program improvement and decision-making.	☐ The CO's senior management and Sponsorship staff anticipate it will inform program improvement and decision-making.	☐ The CO's senior management and Sponsorship staff expect it to richly inform program improvement or decision-making.
1.5 How open are the CO and Sponsorship staff to the possibility that the evaluation may reveal negative findings and learnings, which will need to be accepted and utilized? ▪ Are staff willing to have a RIE that examines possible negative as well as positive outcomes and impacts? ▪ What if the RIE concludes that it could find no major or sustainable results? ▪ What if the RIE reports dissatisfied children, parents, community leaders, or partners on some issues?	Not an Option	☐ The CO's senior management and Sponsorship staff are hesitant to reveal possible negative findings.	☐ The CO's senior management and Sponsorship staff are mostly interested to learn about possible negative findings.	☐ The CO's senior management and Sponsorship staff are fully interested in learning about possible negative findings.
1.6 How strong is the agreement among the Country Office and sponsorship staff about the purposes of the RIE and the key evaluation questions it will seek to answer? ▪ To what degree of consensus among staff about the purpose of an RIE? ▪ Do staff generally agree about the objectives of a RIE? ▪ Do staff have specific questions they would like a RIE to answer?	Not an Option	☐ The CO's senior management and Sponsorship staff have limited agreement about purpose or key evaluation questions.	☐ The CO's senior management and Sponsorship staff are mostly in agreement about purpose or key evaluation questions.	☐ The CO's senior management and Sponsorship staff are in full agreement on purpose and key evaluation questions.
1.7 How open are Country Office and sponsorship staff to allowing for a variety of potential evaluation designs and methods for an RIE? ▪ Are staff open to, perhaps, not agreeing with the RIE design? ▪ Are the staff open to, perhaps, not agreeing with all the methods that may be used? ▪ Are the staff open to, perhaps, not knowing how a professional evaluator might assess the value, worth, and merit of sponsorship programming based on the RIE?	Not an Option	☐ The CO's senior management and Sponsorship staff believe only one or limited types of designs and methods are appropriate.	☐ The CO's senior management and Sponsorship staff are mostly open to different designs and methods.	☒ The CO's senior management and Sponsorship staff are very open to many different designs and methods.

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RIE Scoping Issues and Questions

Observations and comments (Dimension 1- Internal Stakeholder Support):

2. External Stakeholder Support	Potential deal breaker. Issues with this dimension are serious enough to make an evaluation impossible or highly inadvisable.	Not yet evaluation-ready. There are some fixable issues that must be attended to by Save the Children before the evaluation goes ahead.	Adequately evaluation-ready. This aspect is strong enough to allow an RIE to go ahead, but at somewhat increased effort and cost to address any gaps.	Fully evaluation-ready. This aspect is geared to help make the evaluation smooth, feasible, and cost-effective.
2.1 How serious are any personal, attitudinal, or cultural barriers or reluctance of children who grew-up in the impact area, whether sponsored or non-sponsored, to participating in an RIE? ▪ *Are there any negative feelings from children in the impact area about closing the sponsorship program, which may result in less cooperation for an evaluation?* ▪ *Did anything happen during sponsorship's time in the impact area that would make evaluators asking questions to children about programming unwelcomed?*	☐ Majority of Sponsored and non-Sponsored children refuse to be contacted or participate.	☐ Many of Sponsored and non-Sponsored children refuse to be contacted or participate.	☐ Many of Sponsored and non-Sponsored children are willing to be contacted and participate.	☐ The vast majority of Sponsored and non-Sponsored **children** are willing to be contacted and participate.
2.2 How serious are any barriers or reluctance that might prevent a significant number of families of Sponsored and non-Sponsored children in the impact area from participating in an RIE? ▪ *Are there any negative feelings from households (parents) about closing the sponsorship program, which may result in less cooperation for an evaluation?* ▪ *Did anything happen during sponsorship's time in the impact area that would make evaluators asking questions to households about our programming unwelcomed?*	☐ Majority of caregivers of Sponsored and non-Sponsored children refuse to have their children contacted and to participate.	☐ Many of caregivers of Sponsored and non-Sponsored children refuse to have their children contacted and to participate.	☐ Many of caregivers of Sponsored and non-Sponsored children are willing to have their children contacted and to participate.	☐ The vast majority of **caregivers** of Sponsored and non-Sponsored children are willing to have their children contacted and to participate.

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RIE Scoping Issues and Questions

2.3 How serious are any barriers or reluctance that might prevent important community leaders and groups in the impact area from participating in an RIE study? ▪ *Are there any negative feelings from the community (leaders) about closing the sponsorship program, which may result in less cooperation for an evaluation?* ▪ *Did anything happen during sponsorship's time in the impact area that would make evaluators asking questions to community leaders about our programming unwelcomed?*	☐ The majority of community leaders, and groups, do not support and refuse to participate and oppose an evaluation.	☐ Many community leaders, and groups, do not support and refuse to participate and oppose an evaluation.	☐ Many community leaders, and groups, do support and are willing to participate and oppose an evaluation.	☐ The vast majority of **community** leaders and groups support and are willing to participate.
2.4 How serious are any barriers or reluctance that might prevent important public/ government partners of the sponsorship program from participating in an RIE study? ▪ *Are there any negative feelings from the partners and/or government about closing the sponsorship program, which may result in less cooperation for an evaluation?* ▪ *Did anything happen during sponsorship's time in the impact area that would make evaluators asking questions to government representatives about our programming unwelcomed?*	☐ The majority of influential gov't officials refuse to participate and oppose an evaluation.	☐ Many of influential gov't officials refuse to participate and oppose an evaluation.	☐ Many of influential gov't officials support and are willing to participate.	☐ The vast majority of influential gov't **officials** support and are willing to participate.

<u>Observations and comments (Dimension 2 – External Stakeholder Support):</u>

3. Evidence & Documentation	**Potential deal breaker.** Issues with this dimension are serious enough to make an evaluation impossible or highly inadvisable.	**Not yet evaluation-ready.** There are some fixable issues that must be attended to by Save the Children before the evaluation goes ahead.	**Adequately evaluation-ready.** This aspect is strong enough to allow an RIE to go ahead, but at somewhat increased effort and cost to address any gaps.	**Fully evaluation-ready.** This aspect is geared to help make the evaluation smooth, feasible, and cost-effective.
3.1 To what extent does the sponsorship program have relevant, valid, and credible data and information (evidence) about the program's intended outcomes**?** ▪ *Were all performance evaluations (baseline, mid-term, end-line) conducted?* ▪ *Are all performance evaluation reports available, accessible, and have relatively credible design and reliable findings?* ▪ *Were special studies, both quantitative and qualitative, conducted, with reports available, accessible, and have relatively reliable and credible findings?*	Not an option	☐ Few if any monitoring data as well as performance evaluation data and reports exist or are accessible.	☐ Many, but not the majority, of monitoring data as well as performance evaluation data and reports exist and are accessible.	☐ Virtually all monitoring data as well as performance evaluation data and reports exist and are accessible.

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RIE SCOPING ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

3.2 To what extent does the sponsorship program have relevant, valid, and credible data and information (evidence) about the program's unintended outcomes? ▪ *Did the annual program monitoring plan/system include identifying and investigating unintended outcomes from programming?* ▪ *Did the performance evaluations include identifying and investigating unintended outcomes from programming?* ▪ *Were any unintended outcomes, whether positive or negative, ever reported in one or more SARs?*	Not an option	☐ Little to no information and data exist about unintended outcomes that have occurred.	☐ Some information and data exist about unintended outcomes that have occurred.	☐ Sufficient information and data exist about unintended outcomes that have occurred.
3.3 To what extent does the sponsorship program have relevant, valid, and credible data about quality of program implementation and outputs? ▪ *Was all programming monitored to assess its quality?* ▪ *Did all program interventions have outputs with targets that were tracked?* ▪ *Are successes and challenges to program implementation and achievement of outputs discussed in the SARs?*	Not an option	☐ Little to no information and data exist about quality of program implementation and outputs.	☐ Some information and data exist about quality of program implementation and outputs.	☐ Substantial information and data exist about quality of program implementation and outputs.
3.4 How complete and up-to-date are child-level records of sponsored children? ▪ *Does the ASST database have records have, at a minimum, sponsored children's name, age, gender and current address?[3]* ▪ *Are all sponsored children records easily available and accessible?*	☐ Child name and/or location **NOT** available for significant numbers of children.	☐ Child's name and location available in enough records; other data may be thin.	☐ Child's name and location is available in virtually all records, with some other data.	☐ Virtually all child records are complete and up to date with useful additional data.
3.5 How complete and up-to-date are family-level records of sponsored children? ▪ *Are there complete records on sponsored children's family members for each child, village name, changes in composition of the family over time and current location and contact information?* ▪ *Are all sponsored children's family records easily available and accessible?*	Not an option	☐ Little to no family-level information, data, or records exist.	☐ Most family-level information, data, or records exist.	☐ Full family-level information, data, or records exist.
3.6 How substantial were any issues with program attrition or out-migration, which might make it difficult to track outcomes for significant numbers of children and their families? ▪ *Was there a relatively large-scale out-migration of children and families from the impact area over the 10-years?* ▪ *Did children and families move frequently from one location to another, even if not out of the region, that would make finding them difficult for a RIE?*	Not an option	☐ Attrition of children in the program and out-migration of other children is high or suspected to be high.	☐ Attrition of children in the program and out-migration of other children is known or suspected to be modest.	☐ Attrition of children in the program and out-migration of other children is known to be minimal.

RIE Scoping Issues and Questions				
3.7 How complete and up-to-date are community-level data, and information in sponsorship's child information database as well as community monitoring records? ▪ *Are data about the leaders, funded activities, and accomplishments of community groups that were sponsorship partners during the 10-years available and readily accessible?* ▪ *For the entire 10-years, are data available about all the communities and villages in which sponsorship programming was implemented?* ▪ *Are data available about the beginning and ending of programs conducted in each community?*	Not an option	☐ Little to no community-level data and information as well as community monitoring records are up-to-date or complete.	☐ Most community-level data and information as well as community monitoring records are up-to-date or complete	☐ Virtually all community-level data and information as well as community monitoring records are up-to-date or complete.
3.8 To what extent does the sponsorship program have documentation about changes that affect sustainability of sponsorship outcomes and objectives, such as strengthened community and organizational capacity, new policies, budgets, or support? ▪ *Were advocacy efforts well documented and if so, are these documents currently available and accessible?* ▪ *For any, and all, policy-related changes that occurred due to sponsorship, are is there a description of the process, leaders, funding, or dates enacted related to the policy(ies)?*	Not an option	Not an option	☐ Some documentation and evidence exist about strengthened community and organizational capacity, new policies, budgets, which support sustainability.	☐ Adequate documentation and evidence exist about strengthened community and organizational capacity, new policies, budgets, which support sustainability.
3.9 What is the availability of any reliable national, regional or low-level data, whether gov't or other (DHS, MICS) for indicators similar to core programming result indicators prior to, during and after Sponsorship programming? ▪ *Are Demographic Household Surveys (USAID), Multi-Cluster Surveys (UNICEF), or reliable government, local or national, data available that have comparable measures of outcomes used in sponsorship programming?*	Not an option	Not an option	☐ Few reliable national, regional, or low-level data exist for result indicators used in the core programming.	☐ A reasonable # of reliable national, regional, or low-level data exist for result indicators used in the core programming.

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RIE Scoping Issues and Questions

3.10 How complete and up-to-date is the information about the program's context and environment that may have enabled or hindered implementation or the achievement of outcomes? ▪ *Were both potentially beneficial and adverse events, such as social, economic, and/or natural events monitored in the impact area during the 10-years?* ▪ *If so, were the beneficial and/or adverse effects on sponsorship programming or outcomes described and discussed in SARs?*	Not an option	Not an option	☐ Some information is available about the program's context and environment that may have enabled or hindered implementation or the achievement of outcomes.	☐ Adequate information is available about the program's context and environment that may have enabled or hindered implementation or the achievement of outcomes.

Observations and comments (Dimension 3 – Evidence & Documentation):

4. Context	**Potential deal breaker.** Issues with this dimension are serious enough to make an evaluation impossible or highly inadvisable.	**Not yet evaluation-ready.** There are some fixable issues that must be attended to by Save the Children before the evaluation goes ahead.	**Adequately evaluation-ready.** This aspect is strong enough to allow an RIE to go ahead, but at somewhat increased effort and cost to address any gaps.	**Fully evaluation-ready.** This aspect is geared to help make the evaluation smooth, feasible, and cost-effective.
4.1 How serious are any major external events in the country or impact area's foreseeable future that could prevent an impact evaluation from happening or make it unsafe? ▪ *Will political events (e.g., elections) or activities (e.g., protests), be occurring in the near future that would make an RIE unsafe?* ▪ *Currently, are nature-related issues, such as severe drought or flooding that could hinder a RIE?* ▪ *Currently, are there any serious public health issues that could hinder a RIE?*	☐ One or more serious events will be occurring in the near future, which would prevent, substantially hinder, or make it unsafe.	☐ Some potentially serious events will be occurring in the near future, which could prevent, substantially hinder, or make it unsafe.	☐ Some minor events will be occurring in the near future, which might hamper but not substantially hinder or make it unsafe.	☐ No serious events will be occurring in the near future, which would prevent, substantially hinder, or make it unsafe.

RIE Scoping Issues and Questions

4.2 If Sponsorship (or other agencies/ organizations) have any intervention or expansion plans for the former impact area during the projected evaluation timeframe, how seriously might that interfere with a potential RIE? *Does SC, or sponsorship, plan to continue doing so type of programming in the impact area after sponsorship phase-out?* *Are there local or international NGOs entering or scaling-up their programming in the impact area during or after sponsorship phase-out?* *Does the government have plans to begin or scale-up similar programming in the impact area after sponsorship phase-out?*	Not an option	Not an option	☐ Some agencies / organizations have plans to start or expand programs, with similar results as Sponsorship programming.	☐ No agencies/ organizations have plans to start or expand programs, with similar results as Sponsorship programming.
4.3 Will the RIE be able to obtain an "approval" from both a national ethics review committee and SCUS Ethics Review Committee? *Is there a local (e.g., regional and/or national) ethics committee that provides ethics reviews and approvals that an RIE would need to obtain?* *Can the CO facilitate in obtaining a local ethics review and approval for a RIE?* *Can the CO facilitate in obtaining an ethics review and approval from SCUS' Ethics Review Committee?*	☐ The RIE is not able to obtain an "approval" from a national ERC or SCUS' ERC to conduct the evaluation.	☐ The RIE will be able to obtain an "approval" from a national ERC but not SCUS' ERC to conduct the evaluation.	☐ The RIE will be able to obtain an "approval" from SCUS' ERC but not a national ERC to conduct the evaluation.	☐ The RIE will be able to obtain an "approval" from a national ERC and SCUS' ERC to conduct the evaluation.

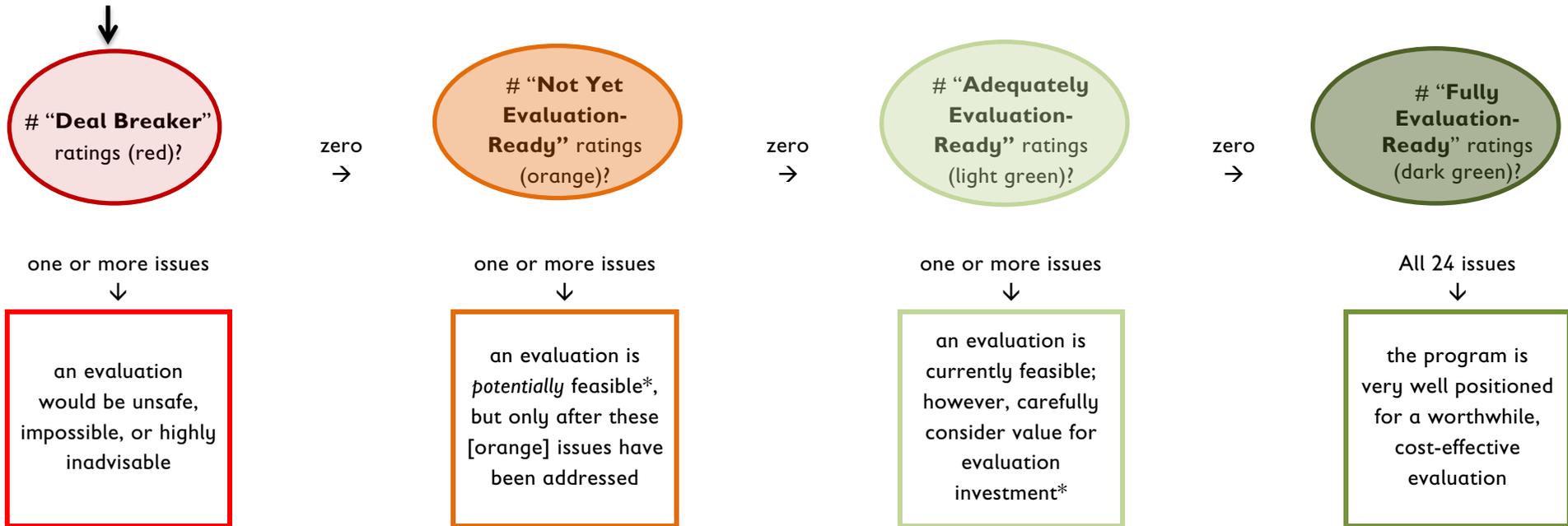**Observations and comments** (Dimension 4 - Context):

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OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF EVALUABILITY

Instructions: Tally up the number of ratings at each level.
Work from left to right to identify the appropriate conclusion about whether and under what conditions to proceed with an RIE.

Potential deal breaker. Issues with this dimension are serious enough to make an evaluation impossible or highly inadvisable.

Not yet evaluation-ready. There are some fixable issues that must be attended to by Save the Children before the evaluation goes ahead.

Adequately evaluation-ready. This aspect is strong enough to allow an RIE to go ahead, but at somewhat increased effort and cost to address any gaps.

Fully evaluation-ready. This aspect is geared to help make the evaluation smooth, feasible, and cost-effective.

Number of ratings in each category (total = 24)			

START HERE
↓

"**Deal Breaker**" ratings (red)?

zero →

"**Not Yet Evaluation-Ready**" ratings (orange)?

zero →

"**Adequately Evaluation-Ready**" ratings (light green)?

zero →

"**Fully Evaluation-Ready**" ratings (dark green)?

one or more issues
↓

an evaluation would be unsafe, impossible, or highly inadvisable

one or more issues
↓

an evaluation is *potentially* feasible*, but only after these [orange] issues have been addressed

one or more issues
↓

an evaluation is currently feasible; however, carefully consider value for evaluation investment*

All 24 issues
↓

the program is very well positioned for a worthwhile, cost-effective evaluation

* Even if an evaluation is *feasible*, it may not always be *worth* the investment. Programs with patchier data and other challenges will require a greater expertise and intensity of effort, both of which can be costly. This must be weighed against the value of the insights that could come from the evaluation.

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Helpful references:

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