



**NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID**  
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# Norwegian Church Aid's **PATH** to high quality Evaluations and Research

Official Evaluation and Research Policy





Norwegian Church Aid's

# PATH

to high quality Evaluations  
and Research



**NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID**

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*The revised Evaluation and Research Policy builds on Norwegian Church Aid's Evaluation Policy from 2013. Several paragraphs have been inspired by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) "Applying Evaluation Criteria thoughtfully" and USAid's research Policy. In addition, sections from EU's General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) form part of the revised Evaluation & Research Policy.*

*Layout: Steinar Zahl / Studio Zate*

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# Acronyms, Abbreviations and Key words

**NCA:** Norwegian Church Aid

**GERA:** Global Evaluations and Research Advisor

**CO:** Country Office

**MEL:** Methods, Evaluations, and Learning

**ToR:** Terms of Reference

**INGO:** International non-governmental organization

**SMT:** Senior Management Team

**OECD:** Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

**Intervention:** The term “intervention” is used throughout the policy to mean the topic or object of the evaluation or research. I.e., intervention encompasses all NCA's different types of efforts (policy, strategy, programme, project, and/or activity) that may be evaluated or investigated.

**Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria:** The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has established common definitions for six evaluation criteria – relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability – to support consistent, high-quality evaluation. These criteria, referred to as the DAC-criteria, provide a normative framework used to determine the merit or worth of an intervention. The criteria can be thought of as a set of lenses, providing complementary perspectives that together give a holistic picture of an intervention and its results.<sup>1)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> OECD (2021), *Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/543e84ed-en>.

# Foreword

When rights-holders and donors see Norwegian Church Aid's purple logo, they trust that relief will be delivered and adapted to the local context in the most effective and impactful way possible, without causing harm.

## **Evaluations and research help build that trust.**

In order to be truly effective as an organization, we need to craft programmes and interventions that are based on evidence – evidence that tells us what benefits rights-holders the most. As a data-driven and results-based organization, high quality evaluations and research are therefore seen as prerequisites for the constant refinement of Norwegian Church Aid's work and how the organization evolves over time.

In this policy, we present key elements for evaluation and research and introduce Norwegian Church Aid's **PATH** to high quality evaluations and research. PATH is an acronym for **Preregistered, Accountable, Transformative** and **Honest** evaluations and research. By preregistering our evaluations and research, we prevent reporting bias and enhance trust in Norwegian Church Aid's work. By being accountable, we conduct our work responsibly, and when evaluations and research projects are transformative, they produce lasting change. Finally, by promoting a culture of honesty, we uphold transparency in all parts of these processes, making open dissemination of evaluation and research findings an integral part of Norwegian Church Aid's work. In turn, this provides the vital foundation of openness and trust needed in order to fulfil our commitments to donors, partners and rights-holders.

So, with the release of this Evaluation and Research Policy, we renew our ambitious commitment to build an evaluation and research practice that is based on scientific methods and objective judgments. This will in turn provide us with evidence-based findings and specific recommendations that can tell us what benefits rights-holders the most.


## **Together for a just world**

Dagfinn Høybråten  
*General Secretary*

## 1. Introduction

**Are we reaching those who need our help in an efficient way? Are our projects and interventions as effective as possible? What are the lessons learned? And how can these lessons improve our work going forward?**

In order to answer these questions, we need to understand what we have achieved in the past – and where major challenges still lie ahead. This type of understanding can be developed through the use of high-quality evaluations and research.

In this revised Evaluation and Research Policy, we present both familiar and new concepts related to evaluation and research integrated in our new PATH-framework. We also describe how to use evaluations and research to continuously improve and deliver on NCA's mission to save lives and seek justice through evidence-based interventions and programmes (See our [Global Strategy – Faith in action](#) , for details on mission and strategy).

### 1.1 What is an evaluation?

NCA's evaluations should be used strategically to e.g., refine focus areas, change the goal hierarchy in country plans, introduce new elements in our programmes and/or change how we implement a specific intervention. The end goal is always accountability, learning and adaptation.



#### Evaluation

NCA's understanding of evaluations closely follows the evaluation definition laid out by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC), which reads as follows:

*“An evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, coherence, impact and sustainability of our work. An evaluation also refers to the process of determining the worth, effect or significance of a development intervention.”* <sup>2)</sup>

Evaluations are an integral part of NCA's work, and we prioritise evaluations that promote and contribute to organisational learning and accountability throughout NCA. Evaluations should focus on a few key questions that go beyond what can be answered using monitoring data (e.g., whether a project or activity is meeting its performance targets) and go further to explore why and how a project or activity is achieving, or not achieving, its objectives. In other words, evaluations differ from and are complementary to monitoring. **Monitoring** is normally an internal exercise that enables regular progress reporting. Evaluations, on the other hand, can be either internal or external and focus on the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of interventions or programmes, while providing recommendations for how to refine and adapt our approach. When evaluations are carried out by an independent third-party consultant or researcher, they are **external**. When evaluations are carried out by NCA or partner staff, they are **internal**. In most cases, the evaluation team should be **mixed**, i.e., set up as a collaboration between an external consultant or researcher and internal NCA or partner staff.

Evaluations also differ somewhat from reviews and/or other programme quality assessments. These types of assessments tend to be less comprehensive than evaluations and are often limited in scope and focus on pre-identified problem areas in an intervention or programme. Reviews can be conducted both externally and internally but are usually internal in the form of reflective sessions and/or after-action reviews. Finally, evaluations are often mandatory requirements and form integral parts of funding agreements with donors and partners, while reviews most often are initiated internally.

At NCA, evaluations and research projects follow a “PATH”. **PATH** is an acronym for **Preregistered, Accountable, Transformative** and **Honest** evaluations and research. By following the PATH-framework, we ensure that all evaluations and research projects conducted by NCA are as objective and scientifically rigorous as possible (details on how to apply the PATH-framework in practice can be found in chapter 4).

<sup>2)</sup> OECD: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>



**IMPORTANT:** All evaluations and research projects must include several key mandatory elements. See details on how to develop these elements in Chapter 10.3 in our Operations manual. An overview of mandatory elements can also be found in [attachment 10E10](#).

Finally, NCA's compliance with "Standards and Commitments" should always be included in evaluations. For further details on all NCA standards and commitments, see [chapter 10](#) in the Operations Manual.

## 1.2 Why evaluate or conduct research?

Evaluations and research conducted at NCA have two primary purposes: 1) Accountability to rights-holders and donors, and 2) learning to improve effectiveness. While sometimes seen as in conflict with each other, these two purposes can be mutually reinforcing, be achieved simultaneously and span all projects as long as both are valued. In fact, accountability and learning for effectiveness can be seen as prerequisites for the constant refinement of NCA's work and how the organisation evolves over time. In NCA, we need high-quality evaluations and research in order to track the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, impact and sustainability of our programs. Along with monitoring, evaluation and research can e.g., contribute evidence to improve programming, intervention design and resource decisions, developing NCA's greater body of knowledge and learning.

## 1.3 Different types of evaluations?

Different types of evaluations cover different scopes and levels of NCA's interventions and thematic areas and are conducted at different stages/phases of a project and/or programme.

Before implementation of new interventions, **pilot evaluations and/or reviews** are recommended, as they can document initial lessons learned, and we can make adjustments and decisions based on these lessons before a new intervention is launched. Interventions in NCA should also have a registered baseline. **Baseline** data should always be collected before an intervention is introduced

for the first time. This is done in order to establish a baseline measure in the intervention target population and/or the situation the intervention or programme aims to change. In order to draw inferences and generalise the results of a baseline study to the target population, the sampling needs to be **random** – i.e., all units (households, individuals) have the same probability to be part of the study. Without baseline data, it is difficult to plan, monitor and/or evaluate future effectiveness or impact. Baselines therefore provide us with a critical reference point for future evaluations and a knowledgebase for future programme development and refinement (see [Baseline mini-guide for details](#)).

Evaluations come in many forms and bare too many names to mention in this policy. Below we therefore briefly describe the most common, overarching evaluation forms used (see the operations manual [chapter 10.3](#) for more guidance on how to design and implement evaluations).

1. **Midline Evaluations:** A midline evaluation presents an opportunity to assess an intervention or programme and identify potential for corrections and/or improvements. This is done by measuring the positive and/or negative changes that have occurred between the baseline measure and the midline measure in pre-specified indicators and/or monitoring data. The main aim of midline evaluations is above all learning. Findings from midline evaluations should therefore be used to refine, adapt or adjust Theories of Change (ToCs), interventions and/or programmes in order to accelerate e.g., the relevance, effectiveness, and/or impact of the interventions or programme going forward.
2. **Endline Evaluation:** An endline evaluation takes place after the implementation of an intervention and/or programme has been completed to measure e.g., effectiveness and impact from baseline via midline to endline (a longitudinal design), and to report on key indicators and learning outcomes. Endline evaluations are used for accountability and reporting purposes

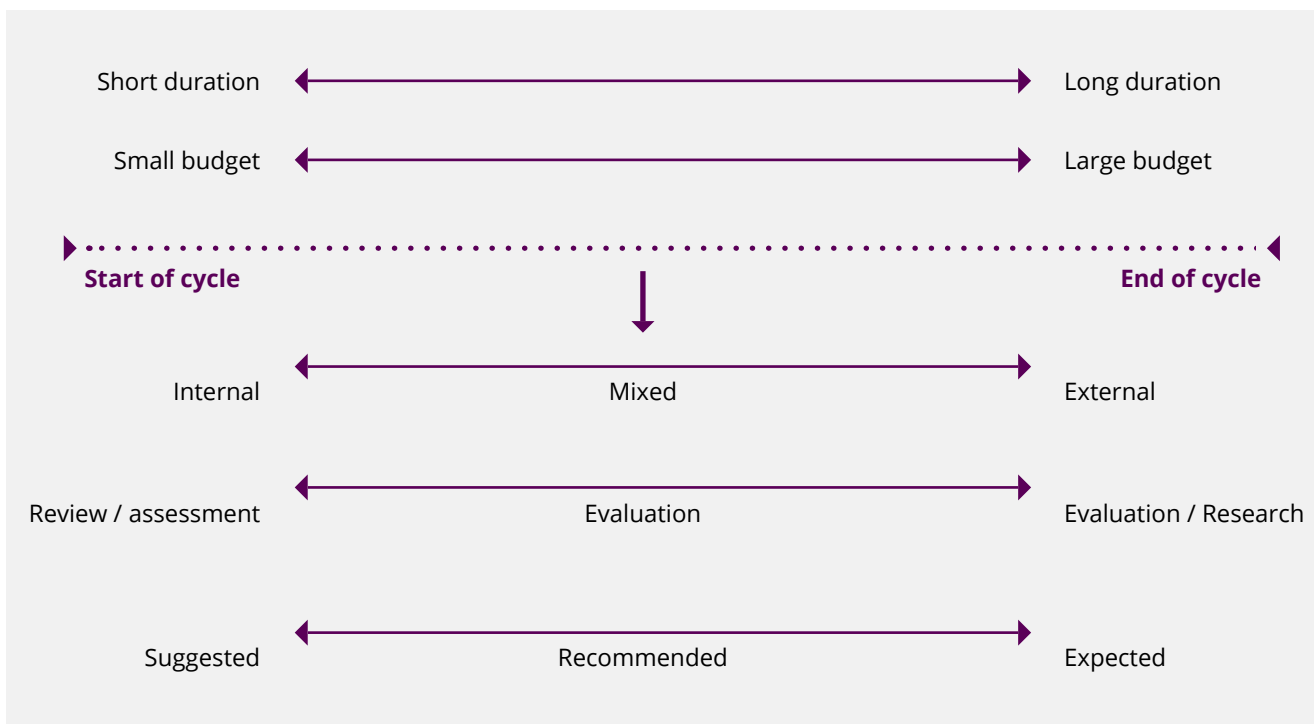
and should be conducted externally. Still, clear goals for learning should be included.

- 3. **Formative evaluations:** An evaluation that provides critical information about implementation is a formative evaluation. Formative evaluations are defined as assessment processes designed to identify e.g., the relevance, efficiency and/or coherence of our implementation efforts. Formative evaluation enables us to explicitly study the complexity of implementation and suggests ways to answer questions about context and adaptations, while the programme or intervention is ongoing. In other words, formative evaluations support learning *during* the evaluation process.
- 4. **Randomized Controlled trials / Impact Evaluations:** A randomized, controlled

impact evaluation is a specific type of impact evaluation used to measure the effect of an intervention or programme. In this evaluation type, study participants are randomly assigned to one or more groups that receive different variants of an intervention, known as the “treatment group(s)”, and a comparison group that does not receive any intervention, known as the “control group” or “counterfactual”. The researchers/evaluation team then measure the outcomes of interest in the treatment and control groups over time and compares the results. Randomized Impact evaluations make it possible to obtain a rigorous and unbiased estimate of the causal effect of an intervention; in other words, what specific changes to rights-holders’ lives can be attributed to the intervention itself.

## 2. Do we need to evaluate?

The short answer to this question is yes. But, NCA’s interventions vary considerably, so this evaluation and research policy stipulates two specific parameters (duration and budget) that should be considered when planning an intervention and its evaluation(s). In addition, where you are in the intervention life cycle also needs to be considered, as shown in figure 1 below.



**Note:** These considerations should only be applied in the absence of specific donor requirements. Donor requirements and contracted obligations must otherwise always be adhered to.

Evaluation plans are a part of NCA's long-term country plans. In addition, each office is required to include an evaluation plan in the Annual Plan. It is the senior management team in the country/area office who is responsible for initiating evaluations, but NCA's Senior Management Team (SMT) and GERA can also request evaluations of certain projects/programmes. GERA can also be consulted when COs develop the evaluation plan.

Considering the two parameters (budget & duration) and the intervention life cycle (start, midway or end), by placing an intervention at different points on each dimension in figure 1, should help guide your decisions. For example, when the duration of the intervention is short, the budget is small and you are in an early phase of the intervention, an internal review or assessment is suggested. In the same way, when the intervention is of considerable length, has a substantial budget and is nearing its end phase, an external, comprehensive endline evaluation with the potential for some research output is expected. Each dimension in the figure can and should also be considered separately, so an intervention could be of e.g., long duration, have a medium budget and be midway. In such a case, it is recommended that e.g., a mixed evaluation team conducts a midline evaluation.

**Still, the following NCA-standard apply:**

- All of NCA's interventions should be reviewed/evaluated at least once, unless the duration is set to 12 months or less. This standard can also apply to humanitarian interventions of shorter duration than 12 months and/or projects where 12 months activities/funding are linked together over several years.
- Endline evaluations should be external in order to uphold accountability and transparency.
- Midline evaluations should have internal or mixed evaluation teams in order to increase learning and knowledge harvesting.
- Smaller, internal reviews/assessments are recommended as a normal routine for any intervention at regular time intervals,

or when particular issues are identified/needs to be resolved.

### 3. The Global Evaluations and Research Programme



Global Evaluations and Research

In NCA we have a full programme dedicated to the development and execution of best practice evaluations and research. The main aim of the programme is to improve NCA's evaluative work and research, gather evidence, and identify higher-

level learning outcomes that can be broadly implemented in NCA's future programmatic work. The programme encompasses all evaluations and research projects conducted by NCA, but also includes specific, in-depth, head office led/initiated global evaluations and research projects that contribute to the programme's knowledgebase.

Each year, NCA's Global Evaluations and Research advisor (GERA) at the Department for International Programmes (DIP), conducts a global evaluation and/or builds staff capacity as part of the Global Evaluations and Research Programme. The global evaluation may be e.g., an evaluation of NCA's programme framework, a thematic area, intervention, or a cross-cutting issue where we particularly want to learn more from our experiences. Evaluations of humanitarian responses are also included in the programme. The programme considers evaluations in situations where the context has changed considerably, or where evaluations might be useful in order to improve risk management and/or provide learning by reviewing a project or interventions. The annual programme plan is approved by the Department of International Programmes Director.

The following criteria informs the topics selected for the programme's global evaluations and research:

- The topic is relevant, i.e., in concord with NCA's Programme Framework.

- The topic is global, i.e., covering work in at least two countries.
- The topic is applicable, i.e., findings can be broadly implemented in the organization.
- The topic covers an existing knowledge gap.

In practice, this means that the global programme focuses on fewer, more in-depth evaluations and research projects that utilize best practice scientific methods and dissemination strategies that ensure high levels of implementation and reintegration of evidence-based recommendations in the organization. The programme also includes capacity building of NCA staff according to evaluation and research findings and recommendations. All of NCA's global evaluations and research projects are preregistered in order to ensure full transparency.

#### 4. The **PATH**-framework

##### **What are the overall requirements of an evaluation or research process in NCA? What standards and regulations need to be upheld?**

These questions and more are answered in this section. Here we outline the requirements set, the international standards NCA adheres to, and key deliverables for all evaluations and research projects.

All NCA evaluations and research projects should adhere to NCA's "PATH-framework for evaluation and research". "PATH" is an acronym for **Preregistered, Accountable, Transformative** and **Honest** evaluations and research. By using the PATH-framework as our guide, we ensure that all evaluations and research projects conducted by NCA are as objective and scientifically rigorous as possible.

##### **(P) Why get evaluations and research preregistered?**

Preregistration is the practice of registering a scientific study/evaluation before it is conducted. Preregistration of NCA's evaluations

and research serves to prevent reporting bias and enhance trust in NCA's work. Specifically, preregistration helps us distinguish between hypothesis-generating (exploratory) and hypothesis-testing (confirmatory) evaluations and research. Both modes of study are needed, but **a single dataset cannot be used to both generate and test a hypothesis**. When this happens, the credibility of the evaluation or research findings are reduced. By defining and registering key questions, hypotheses, methods, and an analysis plan before we observe the outcomes, we help prevent bias, reduce data dredging, and avoid hypothesizing after the results are known.

##### **What is preregistration?**

Preregistration, in its simplest form, is a one-page form answering basic questions related to the planned evaluation or research project. After the evaluation or research is conducted and the report draft is ready, reviewers from the Steering Group simply need to check whether the evaluation team/consultants or researchers adhered to the preregistered plan or not. If they did, the report/publication can be published online, regardless of what the findings show. On the other hand, if there are several deviations from the plan, e.g., the main finding listed concerns other topics than the ones registered, the Steering Group should request a revision in order for the report/publication to come in line with the preregistered analysis plan. If a revision is not possible, due to e.g., unforeseen but necessary changes in the design, method and/or analyses, a section describing "adherence to preregistration" should be included in the report, highlighting deviations.

In the standard NCA preregistration format, evaluators/consultants/research institutions should therefore prepare a preregistration form [↗](#) describing the research hypotheses, methodology of the evaluation/research project, and an analysis plan. This form is then locked for editing with a timestamp signature and posted/registered online. The preregistered evaluation/research is then conducted, and when the project is completed, the reviewed evaluation/research summary is then published, together with a link to

the preregistration form. The form is approved by NCA's Global Evaluations and Research Advisor. For details on preregistration, please refer to Operations Manual, [chapter 10.3.4](#).



Preregistration is only mandatory for global evaluations and research projects, but NCA strongly encourages the practice, especially for larger, more comprehensive evaluations.

Preregistered evaluations and research will be awarded a preregistration badge.

## (A) How to make evaluations and research **accountable**?

Accountability is the process of “using power responsibly, taking account of, and being held accountable by, different stakeholders, primarily those who are affected by the exercise of such power” ([CHS Alliance](#)). This principle should also be adhered to in all NCA's evaluations and research projects. The importance of contextualization and user involvement is therefore key when establishing accountability in evaluation and research processes. Evaluations and research projects should therefore, to a large degree, take local context into consideration and field visits are strongly recommended, including direct contact with key stakeholders and rights-holders through user involvement in key phases of the evaluation or research process.

For evaluations and research to be credible and accountable, participation of the main stakeholders (partners, rights holders, duty bearers and back donors) in the process is crucial. A reference group is not a mandatory element but should be established if feasible with members of the relevant local communities to be evaluated. The reference group could be e.g., involved in designing the objectives of the evaluation/ research, participate in parts of the data collection, oversee the evaluation process, and/or review the draft evaluation report, making sure conclusions and recommendations are contextualized. Please also see [NCA accountability framework](#) for further details. The framework

can also be found in the Operations manual, [chapter 10.3](#).

**Requirements from donors:** Different donors have different requirements for evaluations and research projects, and NCA aligns with each donor's requirements. Some donors might request to approve the ToR before implementation. If the donors' standards are more comprehensive than what is spelled out in this policy, **NCA will align with the donor requirements**. NCA should also strive to coordinate its evaluation and research efforts with other donors, and for instance initiate joint evaluations/studies with other ACT- alliance members where feasible.

**Core Humanitarian Standard:** The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability<sup>3)</sup> (CHS) sets out nine commitments that organisations and individuals involved in humanitarian response or development aid can use to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance they provide. NCA is CHS-certified and adheres to the CHS standards in all our work. This also applies when conducting evaluations and research. For details refer to [CHS's webpage](#).

**General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR):** EU's GDPR requirements set out detailed regulations for companies and organisations to uphold when collecting, storing, and managing personal data. It applies both to European organisations that process personal data of individuals in the EU, and to organisations outside the EU that target people living in the EU. Although NCA operates in non-EU locations, we adhere fully to these regulations and the regulations need to be considered when collecting and storing data.<sup>4)</sup> Every data collection should therefore incorporate an explicit informed consent from every individual that is included as a part of the evaluation and research sample, and particular care should be taken to remove all identifiers from the data sets. For details on NCA's adherence to GDPR, you can visit our [GDPR pages](#) on “ONE”. Here you will find updated information on regulations and practice.

<sup>3)</sup> <https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/>

<sup>4)</sup> For detailed information, please see: <https://europa.eu/youreurope/business/dealing-with-customers/data-protection/data-protection-gdpr/>



## (T) How to ensure that our evaluations and research projects are **transformative**?

In NCA we want to build a strong evaluation and learning culture and develop a shared understanding of the purpose of evaluations in meeting our learning goals. All evaluations and research initiated by NCA should therefore aim to produce lasting change and inform NCA's work in the future. At NCA, we do this in order to evolve and learn as an organisation. Following up on evaluation and research findings is therefore an essential learning exercise in NCA. It is the responsibility of the Country office Management Team to plan for learning.

Findings from evaluations and research can only be transformative when specific and actionable recommendations are clearly presented in the reports/publications and the **mandatory management response letter**, with an explicit intent to improve our practice in the future. In order to promote such organizational learning, key recommendations and follow-up plans should be shared widely within the organization.

Global meetings, Communities of Practice, and Weeks of Meetings are arenas that are considered suitable for ensuring that we learn from evaluations and research. Here learning is communicated also to those not directly involved in the projects themselves. Still, in order for NCA to be truly transformative, findings from evaluations and research should be repeatedly reintegrated in our daily work, as a natural part of the project and/or programme life cycle. This could e.g., be done through the sharing of evaluation/research results to relevant staff in an easily accessible and/or operational way in dedicated learning sessions.

**Reintegrating lessons learned:** NCA invests substantial time and resources into conducting evaluations and research, and it is important that we make the most of the knowledge that they produce. NCA's Global Evaluations and Research advisor (GERA) therefore annually reports on NCA's evaluations and research output in order to enhance organizational learning. Findings are

presented in the **Global Evaluation and Research Programme's Annual report**.

The purpose is twofold; (1) to extract and synthesise lessons learned from evaluations/research that will be of value to NCA operations and strategic positioning, with a view to inform the board, NCA staff, internal debates, and to improve procedures globally; (2) to extract lessons in order to inform evaluation/research procedures and policy. NCA's Board may request for specific evaluations to be presented at board meetings.

**Sharing lessons learned:** The dissemination and sharing of learning outcomes from NCA evaluations and research projects are highly encouraged in order to increase the transformative power of our output. This includes activities that make reports available publicly and document best practices. Evaluations and research projects should therefore have a well thought out plan for sharing and dissemination of findings and learning.

**NCA's official Evaluations webpage:** GERA and the MEL-team are responsible for making NCA's evaluations and research public on NCA's official website, including evaluation reports and summaries from external, internal and global evaluations/research.

See [NCA's Knowledge Management Strategy \(2020\)](#) [↗](#) for a more comprehensive look at reintegration of learning in NCA.

## (H) How to keep evaluations and research **honest**?

Honesty, as an integral part of the PATH framework, is **an absolute prerequisite for a valid, unbiased, and fruitful learning process**. Evaluation and research at NCA should therefore strive to promote a culture of honesty and openness from the level of preregistration, via data collection, reports, and actionable recommendations, to the dissemination of findings and sharing of lessons learned.

By being honest when conducting evaluations

and research, we are explicit, clear, and open about the methods, findings, and achievements of our work, ensuring high levels of integrity and transparency. By being honest, we also provide the vital foundation of openness and trust that is needed in order to fulfil our commitments as an organization to donors, partners, stakeholders, and rights-holders.

## 5. Additional elements to consider for research projects

The word “research” is derived from the Middle French “recherche”, which means “to go about seeking.” Significant overlap exists between such “seeking” in research and evaluations, and evaluations often produce research-like results. Still, some aspects set research and evaluations apart. **In this section we therefore outline some additional elements to consider when conducting research.** At NCA we define research as:

*A creative, systematic, scientific activity undertaken in order to increase our knowledge base, and the analytical use of this knowledge to improve interventions and programmes.*

All research conducted by NCA should therefore be hypothesis-driven. This requires high-quality data, rigorous methods, and analyses that go beyond descriptive reports. Research should also aim to produce results that can identify causal links between interventions and indicator-level effects (e.g., Randomized Controlled Trials/Impact evaluations) or longitudinal designs with control groups and/or associations between interventions and indicator outcomes (using e.g., cross-sectional designs).

This form of research allows NCA to develop, test, and refine the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, sustainability, and impact of our interventions. Research should also inform policy, strategic direction of programs, and overcome identified barriers that hamper implementation. Research at NCA should therefore aim to:

- Respond to priorities in NCA
- Enable scientific discovery and innovation that improve our work

- Develop strategies that ensure uptake and reintegration of research results

Research should be conducted in the following main formats:

- Field experiments (full RCTs/impact evaluations or intervention studies with control groups)
- Mixed methods, observational studies (cross-sectional, longitudinal, prospective/retrospective)
- Implementation research (pilot studies, formative and adaptive studies)

NCA staff with research competence can co-author and publish scientific articles and other scholarly work in collaboration with research institutions/universities. Publishing scientific work is a useful means of sharing important research findings, innovation, and experience from the field with other INGOs, donors and scholars, and provide NCA staff opportunities to continually develop and demonstrate thematic, scientific, and methodological expertise. Still, it is worth noting that publishing articles in international peer-reviewed journals is a large undertaking and should always be done in close collaboration with external researchers, research institutions, or universities.

**Mandatory requirements for research:** Following an initial approval from GERA, all research projects must be approved by NCA’s senior management team (SMT). Therefore, before embarking on the development of a research project, always confer with GERA in advance. Please also refer to Operations Manual [chapter 10](#) <sup>10</sup> for minimum requirements related to NCA’s international standards and commitments. For details on responsible data management, refer to [chapter 10.4](#) <sup>10.4</sup>. **In addition, consider the following mandatory elements:**

1. Research projects at NCA must be conducted in collaboration with an external research institution and/or university or highly skilled consultants with research competency.

2. NCA's Global Evaluation and Research Advisor (GERA) must be included in all research projects as a steering group member.
3. A scientific publication is an official NCA document. Therefore, the author(s) of the publication represents him/herself/ themselves as affiliated with NCA.
4. A clear contract describing the order of authors and data ownership must be developed.
5. All research data must be stored and shared responsibly in accordance with GDPR.
6. All research should be externally financed or based on donor funding earmarked for research components within existing programmes/projects.
7. All new grant proposals for research projects must be developed in close collaboration with external research institutions and/or universities and should be submitted to funding bodies, such as the Norwegian Research Council (NFR), EU-grants, or other relevant funding programmes when possible.
8. All research must have a clear rationale for why the knowledge is needed, and a specific strategy for how this knowledge will be sourced. Furthermore, all research must have an a priori plan for how the findings will be used and disseminated in order to foster learning within NCA.
9. Research publications must increase the evidence base of our programmes and interventions. The subject matter of the publication must therefore be directly or indirectly related to work conducted by NCA.
10. Research publications must be published in Open Access journals, so that all NCA's research output is available to everyone, everywhere in the world. This includes rights-holders, those who have helped inform the research, contributed to it, and/or other researchers and practitioners in the field. A budget for Open Access fees must therefore be included in all research proposals.





The main focus of Norwegian Church Aid's Global Evaluations and Research Programme is to gather evidence and identify higher-level learning outcomes that can be broadly implemented in our future programmatic work. With the release of this Evaluation and Research Policy, we renew our ambitious commitment to build an evaluation and research practice that is based on scientific methods and objective judgments. Key elements for evaluation and research are outlined and Norwegian Church Aid's PATH to high quality evaluations and research is presented.

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