

KIOS Guidelines for Project Evaluation

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1. Purpose of the KIOS Guidelines for Project Evaluation

KIOS Foundation (KIOS) has defined in its strategy 2016-2020 that external evaluations are planned to be conducted of all major projects, namely of projects funded with over 100,000 euros. In addition, partners of KIOS often want to conduct an external evaluation in projects smaller than EUR 100,000 at the end of the project cycle. Typically the cost of the evaluation is included in the project budget, and the partners of KIOS who implement the projects are responsible for commissioning and managing the evaluation assignment.

The KIOS Guidelines for Project Evaluation (the Guidelines) provide guidance on how to commission, manage and implement evaluations of projects funded by KIOS. **The purpose of the Guidelines** is to support the partners of KIOS to produce high-quality evaluations which are useful to them in developing their projects and operations. In addition, KIOS wants to be able to use the evaluation results in developing KIOS' programme and strategy. Evaluations are important tools for learning, accountability for results and use of resources, and facilitation of dialogue between stakeholders.

The Guidelines set out **the expectations of KIOS for ensuring the quality and the focus of the evaluations which should be met at a minimum**. When commissioning evaluations, the partners of KIOS are welcome to set objectives and criteria which exceed the minimum expectations set in the Guidelines.

The partners of KIOS may define the scope of the evaluation and specific questions to be evaluated as long as the minimum expectations set in the Guidelines are included in the evaluation, too. Planning the scope and depth of the aspects to be evaluated should also **take into consideration the size of the project** which will be evaluated and **the financial and human resources available** at the organisation implementing the project.

Because the duration of projects funded by KIOS is typically 1-3 years, the Guidelines focus on **final evaluations** of projects. The evaluations may cover consecutive projects which build on each other and continue focusing on the same thematic issues. The evaluations can also be used for designing a next phase for a project which has ended.

The Guidelines are intended for:

- **Partners of KIOS** who commission and manage evaluations and use the lessons learned from the evaluation results; and
- **experts** who conduct evaluations.

2. Evaluation norms and standards utilised in the Guidelines

The Guidelines utilise the norms and standards set by the OECD/DAC¹ and the Evaluation Manual of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland². The aim is to provide easy to understand guidance which uses concepts familiar to human rights and evaluation practitioners.

The Guidelines provide reference to OECD/DAC definitions of evaluation criteria which are to be used in the evaluations at a minimum. In addition to these criteria, the evaluations will most probably include also concepts and terminology specific to the project under evaluation. The Guidelines do not provide detailed level definitions of norms, concepts or terminology to be used in the individual evaluation assignments. KIOS expects that these definitions will be made and agreed by the KIOS' partners in commissioning the evaluations and the experts who conduct the evaluations.

3. Definition of an evaluation

When commissioning, managing and implementing an evaluation assignment, it is important to keep in mind the core elements which define an evaluation.

OECD/DAC defines an evaluation as follows:³

- An evaluation is an assessment, as **systematic and objective** as possible, of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results.
- The aim is to determine the **relevance and fulfilment** of objectives, developmental efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.
- An evaluation should provide information that is **credible and useful**, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of both recipients and donors.

As summarised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, an evaluation is considered **useful when “it provides evidence on results and challenges, facilitates learning and provides tools for decision-making and future planning”**.⁴

¹ OECD/DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance (1991), available at

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/2755284.pdf>

OECD/DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation (2010), available at

<https://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/qualitystandards.pdf>

OECD/DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance (website)

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

² Evaluation Manual, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Development Evaluation Unit (2018), available at

<https://eoppiva.zapter.io/evaluationmanual2018>

³ OECD/DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance (1991), p. 5, available at

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/2755284.pdf>

⁴ Evaluation Manual, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Development Evaluation Unit (2018) available at

<https://eoppiva.zapter.io/evaluationmanual2018>

4. Procuring an external evaluator

When a partner of KIOS commissions an evaluation, the following aspects should be taken into account in the procurement process:

- **The tendering process has to be carried out in accordance with the relevant legal requirements on public procurement;**
- **The procurement process should be documented**, and the steps of the procurement process have to be decided by the management and explained in writing. Please refer also to the KIOS Project Management and Reporting Guide for guidance on procurement⁵;
- **The expertise of the proposed evaluation team members, the quality of the evaluation proposal, and the proposed price/fee should all be considered as criteria** when selecting an evaluator or an evaluation team; and
- **The evaluator must be independent from the organisation** whose project will be evaluated. Independence provides legitimacy to evaluation and reduces the potential for conflict of interest. For example, if the evaluator is a former employee of the organisation, can it be credibly stated that the evaluator's former colleagues at the organisation do not have influence over the evaluator's perceptions or professional judgement? Could the evaluator be evaluating his/her own work? Is the evaluator conducting other assignments together with the organisation's management or employees?

5. Generating knowledge beyond information already reported to KIOS

When creating the Terms of Reference for an evaluation and communicating with the evaluator about the purpose of the evaluation, the partner of KIOS has to ensure that the evaluation aims to generate knowledge which is not merely repetition of the same information which the partner has already reported to KIOS in the project interim reports and final reports.

The evaluation should not focus mainly on describing in a detailed manner each activity which was implemented in the project because this has already been described or will be described in the project final report submitted to KIOS, depending on the timing of the evaluation. KIOS checks the partner's reporting on the activities against the project plan, budget and expenditure. Repeating the same information in the

⁵ KIOS Project Management and Reporting Guide, p. 24, available at https://www.kios.fi/wp-content/uploads/KIOS-Project-Management-and-Reporting-Guide_eng_1.pdf

evaluation report does not provide additional value to the partner of KIOS or to KIOS. However, if the evaluation finds that the activities differ significantly from the activities which have been reported to KIOS, this is an important finding and should be discussed in the evaluation report.

The partner of KIOS has to provide the evaluator with the narrative and financial interim reports and final reports of the project and other relevant background material which the evaluator needs for conducting a high-quality evaluation.

6. Evaluating outcomes of human rights projects

When KIOS selects projects for funding, KIOS assesses the potential of the project to contribute **to KIOS' Theory of Change (please see Annex 1)** which describes how KIOS moves human rights forward. The project is expected to contribute to achieving some of **the short-term and mid-term outcomes of the Theory of Change**:

- Short-term **changes in capacities** of rights holders and duty bearers and their institutions; and
- Mid-term **changes in behaviour and practices** of rights holders and duty bearers and their institutions.

Each project funded by KIOS has its own approach in aiming to contribute to some of the aspects of the short-term and mid-term outcomes described in the KIOS' Theory of Change. **The evaluation should assess what kind of outcomes the project aimed to achieve and provide evidence on results and challenges.**

The evaluation should also assess any unintended outcomes which might have been produced and which can have positive or negative impacts (please see also the criteria of impact in chapter 7 below). Care should be taken in assessing institutional development of the KIOS partner, for example improvements in project or financial management capacities. These are often not explicitly stated as outcomes which the project aims to achieve, but are nevertheless sometimes results produced in the project.

In evaluating outcomes, the evaluator is expected to have enough competence to identify, analyse and discuss in the evaluation report issues which affected the project implementation and the results achieved. The duration and the size of the project should always be taken into account in the analysis.

7. Evaluation criteria and integration of cross-cutting thematic focuses

All evaluations should address at least the evaluation criteria of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC): relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Depending on the purpose and scope of the evaluation, also other criteria may be added.

Because the mainstream definitions of the OECD-DAC criteria are neutral in terms of human rights dimensions, the evaluator has to **formulate the evaluation questions in a way which integrates human rights dimensions into each of the criteria.**

In addition to integrating human rights dimensions, the three cross-cutting thematic focuses of the KIOS' Theory of Change (please see Annex 1) have to be taken into account in formulating the evaluation questions:

- **Enhancing the security of human rights defenders;**
- **Women's rights and gender equality; and**
- **Rights of vulnerable and marginalised groups.**

Guidance on how to integrate human rights and gender dimensions into evaluations is provided for example by United Nations Evaluation Group.⁶ This guidance can also be adapted to serve as a guidance on how to formulate evaluation questions on enhancing the security of human rights defenders and rights of vulnerable and marginalised groups. It is important that the evaluation questions are always tailored to suit the context of the project under evaluation: for example the focus area of the project and the duration and the size of the project should always be taken into account.

The following sections introduce how OECD/DAC defines the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability and provide some sample questions to illustrate how they may be used in practice.⁷ Examples of evaluation questions on integrating human rights, security of human rights defenders, women's rights and gender equality and rights of vulnerable and marginalised groups are also given below. The evaluation questions should always be tailored to the context of the project under evaluation:

Relevance: The extent to which the aid activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor.

In evaluating the relevance of a project, it is useful to consider the following questions:

- To what extent are the objectives of the project still valid?
- Are the activities and outputs of the project consistent with the overall goal and the attainment of its objectives?
- Are the activities and outputs of the project consistent with the intended impacts and effects?
- Example question on integrating human rights and cross-cutting thematic focuses:
To what extent did the objectives and activities of the project meet the needs of

⁶ Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations, United Nations Evaluation Group, August 2014, see especially chapters 6.2.1.2 and 6.2.1.3, available at <https://hrbaportal.org/archives/tools/monitoring-and-evaluation>

⁷ OECD/DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance (website)
<http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

human rights defenders, women, and representatives of vulnerable/marginalised groups?

Effectiveness: A measure of the extent to which an aid activity attains its objectives.

In evaluating the effectiveness of a project, it is useful to consider the following questions:

- To what extent were the objectives achieved / are likely to be achieved?
- What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?
- Example question on integrating human rights and cross-cutting thematic focuses: During the project implementation, were there systematic and appropriate efforts to integrate perspectives of human rights defenders, women, and vulnerable/marginalised groups?

Efficiency: Efficiency measures the outputs – qualitative and quantitative – in relation to the inputs. It is an economic term which signifies that the aid uses the least costly resources possible in order to achieve the desired results. This generally requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving the same outputs, to see whether the most efficient process has been adopted.

When evaluating the efficiency of a project, it is useful to consider the following questions:

- Were activities cost-efficient?
- Were objectives achieved on time?
- Was the project implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives?
- Example question on integrating human rights and cross-cutting thematic focuses: To what extent did the allocation and use of resources take into account the need to prioritize human rights defenders, women and individuals/groups who are marginalized and/or discriminated against?

Impact: The positive and negative changes produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. This involves the main impacts and effects resulting from the activity on the local social, economic, environmental and other development indicators. The examination should be concerned with both intended and unintended results and must also include the positive and negative impact of external factors, such as changes in terms of trade and financial conditions.

When evaluating the impact of a project, it is useful to consider the following questions:

- What has happened as a result of the programme or project?
- What real difference has the activity made to the beneficiaries?
- How many people have been affected?

- Example question on integrating human rights and cross-cutting thematic focuses: Categorise the difference made to beneficiaries according to human rights defenders, women, and representatives of vulnerable and marginalised groups.

Sustainability: Sustainability is concerned with measuring whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn. Projects need to be environmentally as well as financially sustainable.

When evaluating the sustainability of a project, it is useful to consider the following questions:

- To what extent did the benefits of a project continue after donor funding ceased?
- What were the major factors which influenced the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the project?
- Example questions on integrating human rights and cross-cutting thematic focuses: To what extent did the project produce Institutional change of the KIOS partner conducive to systematically addressing concerns of safety of human rights defenders, women, gender perspectives, and vulnerable and marginalised groups? How has the project affected the institutional strength and resilience of the KIOS partner?

8. Evaluation methodology

The Terms of Reference of the evaluation prepared by the partner of KIOS should provide general methodological guidance, both for data collection and analysis. The evaluator may propose a more detailed methodology in the evaluation proposal in the procurement process or in the evaluation inception phase. The Terms of Reference should also indicate what data is already available for the evaluation.

9. Quality assessment of the evaluation report

The evaluator prepares the draft evaluation report. The quality of the draft report is assessed and commented at least by the KIOS partner organisation's management whose project was evaluated. Other stakeholders may be invited to give feedback, too.

The quality of the evaluation report is assessed against:

- The Terms of Reference and the evaluation questions further elaborated during the inception phase;
- The reporting system agreed with the evaluator during the inception phase; and
- The expectations of KIOS for ensuring the quality and the focus of evaluations set in the KIOS Guidelines for Project Evaluation.

KIOS partners are also encouraged to utilise OECD/DAC (see chapter “Evaluation norms and standards utilised in the Guidelines” above) and EU standards⁸ for assessing the quality of the evaluation report.

The comments on the draft evaluation report should **focus on correcting factual mistakes and misunderstandings** by the evaluation team, but not on the interpretations and conclusions of the team as long as their analysis is based on evidence.⁹

More in-depth guidance on ensuring the quality of the evaluation report is available for example in the Evaluation Manual of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.¹⁰

10. Management response

The last step of the evaluation process is dissemination of the evaluation’s results and preparation of the management response of the organisation whose project was evaluated.

The evaluation report should include findings and recommendations which can be used as a basis for using the evaluation for future planning and decision-making. A management response of the partner of KIOS on the evaluation should be included in the evaluation report for this purpose.

11. Further guidance and questions

KIOS partners are encouraged to contact their focal point at KIOS if they have any questions on any aspects relating to the present Guidelines.

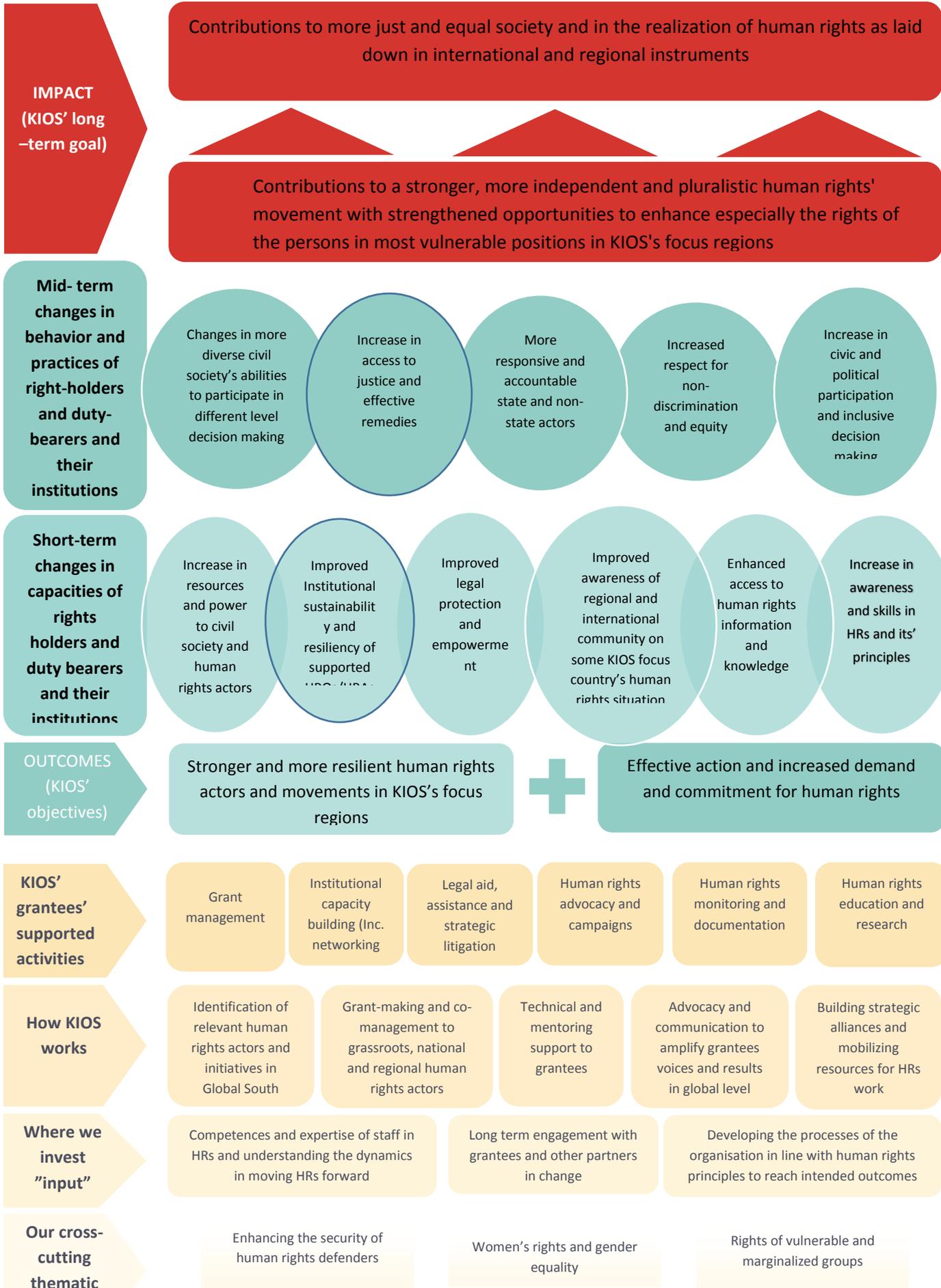
⁸ European Commission, International Cooperation and Development, Evaluation approach and methodology: https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation-approach-and-methodology_en

⁹ Evaluation Manual, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Development Evaluation Unit (2018), chapter 7.5, available at <https://eoppiva.zapter.io/evaluationmanual2018>

¹⁰ Evaluation Manual, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Development Evaluation Unit (2018), chapters 7.5 and 8, available at <https://eoppiva.zapter.io/evaluationmanual2018>

Annex 1: KIOS' Theory of Change

“Committed support to human rights movement in global south since 1998”



Monitoring and evaluation

(Project/program and organizational evaluations assess both processes and outcomes guided by human rights standards and principles)

KIOS' Theory of change in words: IF KIOS provides funding and other support to build the capacity and resiliency of the key human rights actors in its' focus regions THEN it is possible for these local human rights actors to improve awareness raising, human rights education, legal protection, advocacy and campaigning, monitoring and documentation and institutional sustainability (including improving security of HRDs) and THEREFORE mobilize broader demand and space for human rights and increase right-holders participation and inclusion and take effective action to hold state and other power holders accountable to human rights and FINALLY contribute to their actions to take positive or preventive actions to promote, protect and fulfil human rights.

Assumptions:

From immediate outcomes to longer term outcomes and impact:

- Governments and non-state actors are accountable to the civil society and comply with their human rights obligations
- Political support and appropriate supporting instruments for human rights work even in challenging environments continues and improves
- Engagement and active involvement of other boundary stakeholders

From outputs to immediate outcomes:

- The capacity gaps analyses are responding to the challenges monitored/reported by human rights actors or/and mechanisms
- Civil society is considered as a key driver of social change in all societies.
- Local organisations have best knowledge of the relevant needs in their communities
- There has been adequate amount of funding to integrate HRBA in all the phases of grantees work.
- KIOS has adequate resources to make transformative human rights work and to integrate HRBA in all the phases of its programme
- Operating environment is favourable to the human rights interventions
- Supporting smaller and medium size local human rights actors working in grassroots, national and/or regional level leads to redistribution of power and improved demand for/and by the most marginalized groups

From input to output:

- Grant making process (including criteria, expert assessment and decision-making) leads to supporting local initiatives with high relevance, efficiency and impacts.

Definitions of rights-based results

OUTPUTS of KIOS and KIOS grantees meaning the activities used in closing the capacity gaps of right-holders and duty-bearers and their institutions (e.g. increase in following key activities: human rights education and research, human rights monitoring and documentation, human rights advocacy and campaigns, Legal aid, assistance and strategic litigation, institutional capacity building)

SHORT TERM OUTCOMES of KIOS and KIOS grantees meaning the changes in capacities of rights holders and duty bearers and their institutions

MID- AND LONGER TERM OUTCOMES of KIOS and KIOS grantees meaning the changes in behavior and practices of right-holders and duty-bearers and their institutions

IMPACT changes in the realization of human rights of most vulnerable as laid down in international and regional instruments