



OECD DAC NETWORK ON DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION

# EVALUATING DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION

SUMMARY OF KEY NORMS  
AND STANDARDS

SECOND EDITION

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**The Network on Development Evaluation** is a subsidiary body of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) at the OECD. Its purpose is to increase the effectiveness of international development programmes by supporting robust, informed and independent evaluation. The Network is a unique body, bringing together 31 bilateral donors and multilateral development agencies: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, and the World Bank Group.

# INTRODUCTION

**T**he DAC Network on Development Evaluation is a unique international forum that brings together evaluation managers and specialists from development co-operation agencies in OECD member countries and multilateral development institutions. Its goal is to increase the effectiveness of international development programmes by supporting robust, informed and independent evaluation.

A key component of the Network's mission is to develop internationally agreed norms and standards to strengthen evaluation policy and practice. Shared standards contribute to harmonised approaches in line with the commitments of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. The body of norms and standards is based on experience, and evolves over time to fit the changing aid environment. These principles serve as an international reference point, guiding efforts to improve development results through high quality evaluation.

The norms and standards summarised here should be applied discerningly and adapted carefully to fit the purpose, object and context of each evaluation. This summary document is not an exhaustive evaluation manual. Readers are encouraged to refer to the complete texts available on the DAC Network on Development Evaluation's website: **[www.oecd.org/dac/evaluationnetwork](http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluationnetwork)**. Several of the texts are also available in other languages.



## DEFINING EVALUATION

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 and fulfilment of objectives, development 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.

Evaluation also refers to the process of determining the worth or significance of an activity, policy or program.

This and other key definitions are covered in the *Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management*. The glossary is a useful capacity development tool that helps build shared understandings of fundamental evaluation concepts. The glossary is available in Arabic, Chinese, Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Kiswahili, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish.

## WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN THE DAC GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS IN EVALUATION AND RESULTS BASED MANAGEMENT

### Impacts

Effets à long terme, positifs et négatifs, primaires et secondaires, induits par une action de développement, directement ou non, intentionnellement ou non.

### التحليل أدوات

المعلومات لمعالجة تُستخدم أساليب التقييم أثناء وتفسير ما.

### 底线研究

底线研究分析描述活动实施之前对象的情况。根据底线研究，可以对活动的进程进行评价或比较。

### Utvärderingsbarhet

Den utsträckning i vilken en aktivitet eller ett program kan utvärderas på ett tillförlitligt och trovärdigt sätt.

### Outcome

The likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs

### Intervento di sviluppo

Strumento di aiuto utilizzato dai partner (donatori e non) per la promozione dello sviluppo.

### Цель

Задача более высокого порядка, выполнить которую позволит действие по развитию. Связанный термин: цель проекта.

# DEVELOPMENT OF NORMS AND STANDARDS FOR EVALUATION

A set of core **principles for evaluation of development assistance** (summarised in Part I) were adopted by the OECD DAC in 1991 and are at the heart of the Evaluation Network's approach to evaluation. The principles focus on the management and institutional arrangements of the evaluation system within development agencies.

During a **review of the evaluation principles** in 1998, most DAC members reported having made progress in implementing the core principles and found them useful and relevant. These fundamental evaluation principles not only remain a key benchmark for development evaluation but also serve as the basis for DAC Peer Reviews – the only internationally agreed mechanism to assess the performance of OECD DAC members' development co-operation programmes. However, the review also highlighted areas requiring adjustment or more specific guidance, setting the stage for further developments.

The **DAC criteria for evaluating development assistance** (detailed in Part II) are based on the evaluation principles and serve as a general guide of measures that can be applied, and are useful for assessing development work.

A thorough analysis of members' evaluation policies and practices undertaken in 2006, based on a review of peer reviews conducted over a period of eight years, led to the development of **Evaluation Systems and Use: A Working Tool for Peer Reviews and Assessments** (Part III). This document provides the key elements of a strong evaluation function in development agencies and is used to advance implementation of the principles.

The most recent step in the development of a normative framework is the definition of **Quality Standards for Development Evaluation** (presented in Part IV). These standards provide guidance on evaluation process and product. Following a test phase of three years, they were approved by the Network on 8 January 2010 and endorsed by the DAC on 1 February 2010.

In addition to these general norms and standards, OECD DAC members recognise the need for specific guidance in certain areas of development evaluation. Building on evaluation experiences and the texts described above, guidance has been developed in a number of areas. The most significant of these **guidance documents** are presented in Part V.



## PART I

# DAC PRINCIPLES FOR EVALUATION OF DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

Adopted at the OECD DAC High Level Meeting in 1991, the evaluation principles were published in 1992 as part of the *DAC Principles for Effective Aid*. An overview of key elements of the original document is provided below.

## I. CENTRAL MESSAGES

The principles provide general guidance on the role of aid evaluation in the aid management process, with the following central messages:

- Aid agencies should have an evaluation policy with clearly established guidelines and methods and with a clear definition of its role and responsibilities and its place in institutional aid structure.
- The evaluation process should be impartial and independent from the process concerned with policy-making, and the delivery and management of development assistance.
- The evaluation process must be as open as possible with the results made widely available.
- For evaluations to be useful, they must be used. Feedback to both policy-makers and operational staff is essential.
- Partnership with recipients and donor co-operation in aid evaluation are both essential; they are an important aspect of recipient institution-building and of aid co-ordination and may reduce administrative burdens on recipients.
- Aid evaluation and its requirements must be an integral part of aid planning from the start. Clear identification of the objectives which an aid activity is to achieve is an essential prerequisite for objective evaluation. (Para. 4)

## II. PURPOSE OF EVALUATION

The main purposes of evaluation are:

- to improve future aid policy, programmes and projects through feedback of lessons learned;
- to provide a basis for accountability, including the provision of information to the public.

Through the evaluation of failures as well as successes, valuable information is generated which, if properly fed back, can improve future aid programmes and projects. (Para. 6)

### **III. IMPARTIALITY AND INDEPENDENCE**

The evaluation process should be impartial and independent from the process concerned with policy making, and the delivery and management of development assistance. (Para. 11)

Impartiality contributes to the credibility of evaluation and the avoidance of bias in findings, analyses and conclusions. Independence provides legitimacy to evaluation and reduces the potential for conflict of interest which could arise if policy makers and managers were solely responsible for evaluating their own activities. (Para. 12)

Impartiality and independence will best be achieved by separating the evaluation function from the line management responsible for planning and managing development assistance. This could be accomplished by having a central unit responsible for evaluation reporting directly to the minister or the agency head responsible for development assistance, or to a board of directors or governors of the institution. To the extent that some evaluation functions are attached to line management they should report to a central unit or to a sufficiently high level of the management structure or to a management committee responsible for programme decisions. In this case, every effort should be made to avoid compromising the evaluation process and its results. Whatever approach is chosen, the organisational arrangements and procedures should facilitate the linking of evaluation findings to programming and policy making. (Para. 16)

### **IV. CREDIBILITY**

The credibility of evaluation depends on the expertise and independence of the evaluators and the degree of transparency of the evaluation process. Credibility requires that evaluation should report successes as well as failures. Recipient countries should, as a rule, fully participate in evaluation in order to promote credibility and commitment. (Para. 18)

Transparency of the evaluation process is crucial to its credibility and legitimacy... (Para.20)

### **V. USEFULNESS**

To have an impact on decision-making, evaluation findings must be perceived as relevant and useful and be presented in a clear and concise way. They should fully reflect the different interests and needs of the many parties involved in development co-operation. Easy accessibility is also crucial for usefulness... (Para. 21)

Evaluations must be timely in the sense that they should be available at a time which is appropriate for the decision-making process. This suggests that evaluation has an important role to play at various stages during the execution of a project or programme and should not be conducted only as an ex post exercise. Monitoring of activities in progress is the responsibility of operational staff. Provisions for evaluation by independent evaluation staffs in the plan of operation constitute an important complement to regular monitoring. (Para. 22)

## **VI. PARTICIPATION OF DONORS AND RECIPIENTS**

... whenever possible, both donors and recipients should be involved in the evaluation process. Since evaluation findings are relevant to both parties, evaluation terms of reference should address issues of concern to each partner, and the evaluation should reflect their views of the effectiveness and impact of the activities concerned. The principle of impartiality and independence during evaluation should apply equally to recipients and donors. Participation and impartiality enhance the quality of evaluation, which in turn has significant implications for long-term sustainability since recipients are solely responsible after the donor has left. (Para.23)

Whenever appropriate, the views and expertise of groups affected should form an integral part of the evaluation. (Para. 24)

Involving all parties concerned gives an opportunity for learning by doing and will strengthen skills and capacities in the recipient countries, an important objective which should also be promoted through training and other support for institutional and management development. (Para. 25)

## **VII. DONOR CO-OPERATION**

Collaboration between donors is essential in order to learn from each other and to avoid duplication of effort. Donor collaboration should be encouraged in order to develop evaluation methods, share reports and information, and improve access to evaluation findings. Joint donor evaluations should be promoted in order to improve understanding of each others' procedures and approaches and to reduce the administrative burden on the recipient. In order to facilitate the planning of joint evaluations, donors should exchange evaluation plans systematically and well ahead of actual implementation. (Para.26)

## **VIII. EVALUATION PROGRAMMING**

An overall plan must be developed by the agency for the evaluation of development assistance activities. In elaborating such a plan, the various activities to be evaluated should be organised into appropriate categories. Priorities should then be set for the evaluation of the categories and a timetable drawn up. (Para.27)

Aid agencies which have not already done so should elaborate guidelines and/or standards for the evaluation process. These should give guidance and define the minimum requirements for the conduct of evaluations and for reporting. (Para.31)

## **IX. DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF EVALUATIONS**

Each evaluation must be planned and terms of reference drawn up in order to:

- define the purpose and scope of the evaluation, including an identification of the recipients of the findings;
- describe the methods to be used during the evaluation;

- identify the standards against which project/programme performance are to be assessed;
- determine the resources and time required to complete the evaluation. (Para.32)

It is essential to define the questions which will be addressed in the evaluation - these are often referred to as the “issues” of the evaluation. The issues will provide a manageable framework for the evaluation process and the basis for a clear set of conclusions and recommendations... (Para.35)

## **X. REPORTING DISSEMINATION AND FEEDBACK**

Evaluation reporting should be clear, as free as possible of technical language and include the following elements: an executive summary; a profile of the activity evaluated; a description of the evaluation methods used; the main findings; lessons learned; conclusions and recommendations (which may be separate from the report itself). (Para.39)

Feed back is an essential part of the evaluation process as it provides the link between past and future activities. To ensure that the results of evaluations are utilised in future policy and programme development it is necessary to establish feedback mechanisms involving all parties concerned. These would include such measures as evaluation committees, seminars and workshops, automated systems, reporting and follow-up procedures. Informal means such as networking and internal communications would also allow for the dissemination of ideas and information. In order to be effective, the feedback process requires staff and budget resources as well as support by senior management and the other actors involved. (Para.42)

# REVIEW OF THE DAC PRINCIPLES FOR EVALUATION OF DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

The Principles remain a core evaluation reference for DAC members and serve as the basis for reviewing development agency evaluation functions in the DAC peer reviews. Moreover, the Network periodically reviews implementation of the Principles and takes stock of members' evaluation systems.

In 1998, members of the Working Party on Aid Evaluation (now the DAC Network on Development Evaluation) carried out a complete review of their experiences with the application of the Principles (OECD, 1998). The objective was to examine the implementation of the principles, in order to assess their usefulness. The review demonstrated that evaluation in development co-operation was evolving and changing focus. Most members of the Network had re-organised their central evaluation offices to provide them with a new role with a strong focus on aid effectiveness. Moreover, central evaluation offices had moved away from project evaluation to programme, sector, thematic and country-level evaluations.

Members indicated that the Principles were useful and relevant in guiding their work and, in some cases, in re-organising their evaluation offices. The review found that most members comply to a large extent with the Principles. Based on these results, it was concluded that the Principles are still valid. Nevertheless, it was recognised that the principles needed to be complemented and reinforced with guidance (e.g. good or best practices) in key areas. These include ways to: improve feedback and communication practices; promote an evaluation culture; implement country programme and joint evaluations; promote partnerships; and evaluate humanitarian aid.

In 2009, a study of member evaluation systems and resources was carried out, based on a comprehensive survey of all Network members. It focused on how members are implementing core elements of the Principles, including: the independence and credibility of the evaluation function, agenda setting and management follow-up and the involvement of partner countries. The report provides an analysis of overall trends, as well as an individual evaluation profile for each Network member. The study found that most development agencies now have a clear evaluation policy providing a clear mandate for the main evaluation unit and protecting the independence of the evaluation function.

The trend towards evaluations of a wider scope (thematic, country or sector level) has continued and there is a growing interest in looking beyond outputs to assess development impacts of aid. Evaluation units are under increasing pressure to demonstrate results. Joint evaluations have become more common and many members are now working to coordinate evaluation plans with other donors and increase joint work with partner countries. Challenges remain in terms of human resource capacities, supporting lesson learning and ensuring the systematic take up of evaluation findings to improve development effectiveness.



## PART II

# EVALUATION CRITERIA

When evaluating development co-operation programmes and projects it is useful to consider the following criteria, laid out in the *DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance*.

### 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 programme or a project, it is useful to consider the following questions:

- To what extent are the objectives of the programme still valid?
- Are the activities and outputs of the programme consistent with the overall goal and the attainment of its objectives?
- Are the activities and outputs of the programme consistent with the intended impacts and effects?

### EFFECTIVENESS

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

In evaluating the effectiveness of a programme or 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?

### EFFICIENCY

Efficiency measures the outputs – qualitative and quantitative – in relation to the inputs. It is an economic term which is used to assess the extent to which 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 programme or a project, it is useful to consider the following questions:

- Were activities cost-efficient?
- Were objectives achieved on time?
- Was the programme or project implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives?

## **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 programme or a project, it is useful to consider the following questions:

- What has happened as a result of the programme or project and why?
- What real difference has the activity made to the beneficiaries?

## **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 programme or a project, it is useful to consider the following questions:

- To what extent did the benefits of a programme or project continue after donor funding ceased?
- What were the major factors which influenced the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the programme or project?

## PART III

# EVALUATION SYSTEMS AND USE: A WORKING TOOL FOR PEER REVIEWS AND ASSESSMENTS

This framework was developed in March 2006, on the basis of a thorough analysis of DAC peer reviews conducted over a period of eight years. The tool was designed to strengthen the evaluation function and promote transparency and accountability in development agencies. It has been developed with peer reviews in mind and as a management device for improving evaluation practice in aid agencies. It is a “living” tool, meant to be updated in function of experience.

### 1. Evaluation policy: role, responsibility and objectives of the evaluation unit

- Does the ministry/aid agency have an evaluation policy?
  - Does the policy describe the role, governance structure and position of the evaluation unit within the institutional aid structure?
  - Does the evaluation function provide a useful coverage of the whole development cooperation programme?
  - According to the policy, how does evaluation contribute to institutional learning and accountability?
  - How is the relationship between evaluation and audit conceptualised within the agency?
  - In countries with two or more aid agencies, how are the roles of the respective evaluation units defined and coordinated?
- ➔ **Is the evaluation policy adequately known and implemented within the aid agency?**

### 2. Impartiality, transparency and independence

- To what extent are the evaluation unit and the evaluation process independent from line management?
- What are the formal and actual drivers ensuring/constraining the evaluation unit's independence?
- What is the evaluation unit's experience in exposing success and failures of aid programmes and their implementation?
- Is the evaluation process transparent enough to ensure its credibility and legitimacy? Are evaluation findings consistently made public?

- How is the balance between independence and the need for interaction with line management dealt with by the system?

→ **Are the evaluation process and reports perceived as impartial by non-evaluation actors within and outside the agency?**

### 3. Resources and staff

- Is evaluation supported by appropriate financial and staff resources?
- Does the evaluation unit have a dedicated budget? Is it annual or multiyear? Does the budget cover activities aimed at promoting feedback and use of evaluation and management of evaluation knowledge?
- Does staff have specific expertise in evaluation, and if not, are training programmes available?
- Is there a policy on recruiting consultants, in terms of qualification, impartiality and deontology?

### 4. Evaluation partnerships and capacity building

- To what extent are beneficiaries involved in the evaluation process?
- To what extent does the agency rely on local evaluators or, when not possible, on third party evaluators from partner countries?
- Does the agency engage in partner-led evaluations?
- Does the unit support training and capacity building programmes in partner countries?

→ **How do partners/beneficiaries/local NGOs perceive the evaluation processes and products promoted by the agency/country examined in terms of quality, independence, objectivity, usefulness and partnership orientation?**

### 5. Quality

- How does the evaluation unit ensure the quality of evaluation (including reports and process)?
- Does the agency have guidelines for the conduct of evaluation, and are these used by relevant stakeholders?
- Has the agency developed/adopted standards/benchmarks to assess and improve the quality of its evaluation reports?

→ **How is the quality of evaluation products/processes perceived throughout the agency?**

## 6. Planning, coordination and harmonisation

- Does the agency have a multi-year evaluation plan, describing future evaluations according to a defined timetable?
- How is the evaluation plan developed? Who, within the aid agency, identifies the priorities and how?
- In DAC members where ODA responsibility is shared among two or more agencies, how is the evaluation function organised?
- Does the evaluation unit coordinate its evaluation activities with other donors?
- How are field level evaluation activities coordinated? Is authority for evaluation centralised or decentralised?
- Does the evaluation unit engage in joint/multi donor evaluations?
- Does the evaluation unit/aid agency make use of evaluative information coming from other donor organisations?
- In what way does the agency assess the effectiveness of its contributions to multilateral organisations? To what extent does it rely on the evaluation systems of multilateral agencies?

## 7. Dissemination, feedback, knowledge management and learning

- How are evaluation findings disseminated? In addition to reports, are other communication tools used? (Press releases, press conferences, abstracts, annual reports providing a synthesis of findings)?
- What are the mechanisms in place to ensure feedback of evaluation results to policy makers, operational staff and the general public?
- What mechanisms are in place to ensure that knowledge from evaluation is accessible to staff and relevant stakeholders?

→ **Is evaluation considered a 'learning tool' by agency staff?**

## 8. Evaluation use

- Who are the main users of evaluations within and outside the aid agency?
- Does evaluation respond to the information needs expressed by parliament, audit office, government, and the public?
- Are there systems in place to ensure the follow up and implementation of evaluation findings and recommendations?

- How does the aid agency/ministry promote follow up on findings from relevant stakeholders (through e.g. steering groups, advisory panels, and sounding boards)?
  - Are links with decision making processes ensured to promote the use of evaluation in policy formulation?
  - Are there recent examples of major operation and policy changes sparked by evaluation findings and recommendations?
  - Are there examples of how evaluation serves as an accountability mechanism?
- ➔ **What are the perceptions of non evaluation actors (operation and policy departments, field offices, etc) regarding the usefulness and influence of evaluation?**



## PART IV

# DAC EVALUATION QUALITY STANDARDS

## INTRODUCTION

The DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation identify the key pillars needed for a quality development evaluation process and product. They are intended for use by evaluation managers and practitioners. The Standards are not mandatory, but provide a guide to good practice. They were developed primarily for use by DAC members, but broader use by all other development partners is welcome.

The Standards aim to improve quality and ultimately to strengthen the contribution of evaluation to improving development outcomes. Specifically, the Standards are intended to:

- improve the quality of development evaluation processes and products,
- facilitate the comparison of evaluations across countries,
- support partnerships and collaboration on joint evaluations, and
- increase development partners' use of each others' evaluation findings.

The Standards support evaluations that adhere to the *DAC Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance* (1991), including impartiality, independence, credibility and usefulness, and should be read in conjunction with those principles. The Principles focus on the management and institutional set up of evaluation systems and remain the benchmark against which OECD DAC members are assessed in DAC Peer Reviews. By contrast, the Standards inform evaluation processes and products. The Standards can be used during the different stages of the evaluation process and in a variety of ways, including to assess the quality of evaluations, inform practice, strengthen and harmonise evaluation training, or as an input to create evaluation guidelines or policy documents.

The Standards should be applied sensibly and adapted to local and national contexts and the objectives of each evaluation. They are not intended to be used as an evaluation manual and do not supplant specific guidance on particular types of evaluation, methodologies or approaches. Further, these Standards do not exclude the use of other evaluation quality standards and related texts, such as those developed by individual agencies, professional evaluation societies and networks.

The Standards are structured in line with a typical evaluation process: defining purpose, planning, designing, implementing, reporting, and learning from and using evaluation results. The Standards begin with some overall considerations to keep in mind throughout the evaluation process.

# 1 OVERARCHING CONSIDERATIONS

## 1.1 DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION

Development evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed development intervention, its design, implementation and results. In the development context, evaluation refers to the process of determining the worth or significance of a development intervention.

When carrying out a development evaluation the following overarching considerations are taken into account throughout the process.

## 1.2 FREE AND OPEN EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation process is transparent and independent from programme management and policy-making, to enhance credibility.

## 1.3 EVALUATION ETHICS

Evaluation abides by relevant professional and ethical guidelines and codes of conduct for individual evaluators. Evaluation is undertaken with integrity and honesty. Commissioners, evaluation managers and evaluators respect human rights and differences in culture, customs, religious beliefs and practices of all stakeholders.

Evaluators are mindful of gender roles, ethnicity, ability, age, sexual orientation, language and other differences when designing and carrying out the evaluation.



## **1.4 PARTNERSHIP APPROACH**

In order to increase ownership of development and build mutual accountability for results, a partnership approach to development evaluation is systematically considered early in the process. The concept of partnership connotes an inclusive process, involving different stakeholders such as government, parliament, civil society, intended beneficiaries and international partners.

## **1.5 CO-ORDINATION AND ALIGNMENT**

To help improve co-ordination of development evaluation and strengthen country systems, the evaluation process takes into account national and local evaluation plans, activities and policies.

## **1.6 CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT**

Positive effects of the evaluation process on the evaluation capacity of development partners are maximised. An evaluation may, for instance, support capacity development by improving evaluation knowledge and skills, strengthening evaluation management, stimulating demand for and use of evaluation findings, and supporting an environment of accountability and learning.

## **1.7 QUALITY CONTROL**

Quality control is exercised throughout the evaluation process. Depending on the evaluation's scope and complexity, quality control is carried out through an internal and/or external mechanism, for example peer review, advisory panel, or reference group.



## 2 PURPOSE, PLANNING AND DESIGN

### 2.1 RATIONALE AND PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The rationale, purpose and intended use of the evaluation are stated clearly, addressing: why the evaluation is being undertaken at this particular point in time, why and for whom it is undertaken, and how the evaluation is to be used for learning and/or accountability functions.

For example the evaluation's overall purpose may be to:

- contribute to improving a development policy, procedure or technique,
- consider the continuation or discontinuation of a project or programme,
- account for public expenditures and development results to stakeholders and tax-payers.

### 2.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The specific objectives of the evaluation clarify what the evaluation aims to find out. For example to:

- ascertain results (output, outcome, impact) and assess the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and sustainability of a specific development intervention,
- provide findings, conclusions and recommendations with respect to a specific development intervention in order to draw lessons for future design and implementation.

### 2.3 EVALUATION OBJECT AND SCOPE

The development intervention being evaluated (the evaluation object) is clearly defined, including a description of the intervention logic or theory. The evaluation scope defines the time period, funds spent, geographical area, target groups, organisational set-up, implementation arrangements, policy and institutional context and other dimensions to be covered by the evaluation. Discrepancies between the planned and actual implementation of the development intervention are identified.

## **2.4 EVALUABILITY**

The feasibility of an evaluation is assessed. Specifically, it should be determined whether or not the development intervention is adequately defined and its results verifiable, and if evaluation is the best way to answer questions posed by policy makers or stakeholders.

## **2.5 STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT**

Relevant stakeholders are involved early on in the evaluation process and given the opportunity to contribute to evaluation design, including by identifying issues to be addressed and evaluation questions to be answered.

## **2.6 SYSTEMATIC CONSIDERATION OF JOINT EVALUATION**

To contribute to harmonisation, alignment and an efficient division of labour, donor agencies and partner countries systematically consider the option of a joint evaluation, conducted collaboratively by more than one agency and/or partner country.

Joint evaluations address both questions of common interest to all partners and specific questions of interest to individual partners.

## **2.7 EVALUATION QUESTIONS**

The evaluation objectives are translated into relevant and specific evaluation questions. Evaluation questions are decided early on in the process and inform the development of the methodology. The evaluation questions also address cross-cutting issues, such as gender, environment and human rights.

## **2.8 SELECTION AND APPLICATION OF EVALUATION CRITERIA**

The evaluation applies the agreed DAC criteria for evaluating development assistance: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. The application of these and any additional criteria depends on the evaluation questions and the objectives of the evaluation. If a particular criterion is not applied and/or any additional criteria added, this is explained in the evaluation report. All criteria applied are defined in unambiguous terms.

## **2.9 SELECTION OF APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY**

The purpose, scope and evaluation questions determine the most appropriate approach and methodology for each evaluation. An inception report can be used to inform the selection of an evaluation approach.

The methodology is developed in line with the evaluation approach chosen. The methodology includes specification and justification of the design of the evaluation and the techniques for data collection and analysis. The selected methodology answers the evaluation questions using credible evidence. A clear distinction is made between the different result levels (intervention logic containing an objective-means hierarchy stating input, output, outcome, impact).

Indicators for measuring achievement of the objectives are validated according to generally accepted criteria, such as SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely). Disaggregated data should be presented to clarify any differences between sexes and between different groups of poor people, including excluded groups.

## **2.10 RESOURCES**

The resources provided for the evaluation are adequate, in terms of funds, staff and skills, to ensure that the objectives of the evaluation can be fulfilled effectively.

## **2.11 GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES**

The governance and management structures are designed to fit the evaluation's context, purpose, scope and objectives.

The evaluation governance structure safeguards credibility, inclusiveness, and transparency. Management organises the evaluation process and is responsible for day-to-day administration. Depending on the size and complexity of the evaluation, these functions may be combined or separate.

## **2.12 DOCUMENT DEFINING PURPOSE AND EXPECTATIONS**

The planning and design phase culminates in the drafting of a clear and complete written document, usually called "Terms of Reference" (TOR), presenting the purpose, scope, and objectives of the evaluation; the methodology to be used; the resources and time allocated; reporting requirements; and any other expectations regarding the evaluation process and products. The document is agreed to by the evaluation manager(s) and those carrying out the evaluation. This document can alternatively be called "scope of work" or "evaluation mandate".

## 3 IMPLEMENTATION AND REPORTING

### 3.1 EVALUATION TEAM

A transparent and open procurement procedure is used for selecting the evaluation team.

The members of the evaluation team possess a mix of evaluative skills and thematic knowledge. Gender balance is considered and the team includes professionals from partner countries or regions concerned.

### 3.2 INDEPENDENCE OF EVALUATORS VIS-À-VIS STAKEHOLDERS

Evaluators are independent from the development intervention, including its policy, operations and management functions, as well as intended beneficiaries. Possible conflicts of interest are addressed openly and honestly. The evaluation team is able to work freely and without interference. It is assured of co-operation and access to all relevant information.

### 3.3 CONSULTATION AND PROTECTION OF STAKEHOLDERS

The full range of stakeholders, including both partners and donors, are consulted during the evaluation process and given the opportunity to contribute. The criteria for identifying and selecting stakeholders are specified.

The rights and welfare of participants in the evaluation are protected. Anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants is protected when requested or as needed.

### 3.4 IMPLEMENTATION OF EVALUATION WITHIN ALLOTTED TIME AND BUDGET

The evaluation is conducted and results are made available to commissioners in a timely manner to achieve the objectives of the evaluation. The evaluation is carried out efficiently and within budget. Changes in conditions and circumstances are reported and un-envisaged changes to timeframe and budget are explained, discussed and agreed between the relevant parties.

### 3.5 EVALUATION REPORT

The evaluation report can readily be understood by the intended audience(s) and the form of the report is appropriate given the purpose(s) of the evaluation.

The report covers the following elements and issues:

### 3.6 CLARITY AND REPRESENTATIVENESS OF SUMMARY

A written evaluation report contains an executive summary. The summary provides an overview of the report, highlighting the main findings, conclusions, recommendations and any overall lessons.

### 3.7 CONTEXT OF THE DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTION

The evaluation report describes the context of the development intervention, including:

- policy context, development agency and partner policies, objectives and strategies;
- development context, including socio-economic, political and cultural factors;
- institutional context and stakeholder involvement.

The evaluation identifies and assesses the influence of the context on the performance of the development intervention.

### 3.8 INTERVENTION LOGIC

The evaluation report describes and assesses the intervention logic or theory, including underlying assumptions and factors affecting the success of the intervention.



### **3.9 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF INFORMATION SOURCES**

The evaluation report describes the sources of information used (documents, respondents, administrative data, literature, etc.) in sufficient detail so that the adequacy of the information can be assessed. The evaluation report explains the selection of case studies or any samples. Limitations regarding the representativeness of the samples are identified.

The evaluation cross-validates the information sources and critically assesses the validity and reliability of the data.

Complete lists of interviewees and other information sources consulted are included in the report, to the extent that this does not conflict with the privacy and confidentiality of participants.

### **3.10 EXPLANATION OF THE METHODOLOGY USED**

The evaluation report describes and explains the evaluation methodology and its application. In assessing outcomes and impacts, attribution and/or contribution to results are explained. The report acknowledges any constraints encountered and how these have affected the evaluation, including the independence and impartiality of the evaluation. It details the techniques used for data collection and analysis. The choices are justified and limitations and shortcomings are explained.

### **3.11 CLARITY OF ANALYSIS**

The evaluation report presents findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons separately and with a clear logical distinction between them.

Findings flow logically from the analysis of the data, showing a clear line of evidence to support the conclusions. Conclusions are substantiated by findings and analysis. Recommendations and any lessons follow logically from the conclusions. Any assumptions underlying the analysis are made explicit.



### **3.12 EVALUATION QUESTIONS ANSWERED**

The evaluation report answers all the questions detailed in the TOR for the evaluation. Where this is not possible, explanations are provided. The original questions, as well as any revisions to these questions, are documented in the report for readers to be able to assess whether the evaluation team has sufficiently addressed the questions, including those related to cross-cutting issues, and met the evaluation objectives.

### **3.13 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CHANGES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE EVALUATION**

The evaluation report explains any limitations in process, methodology or data, and discusses validity and reliability. It indicates any obstruction of a free and open evaluation process which may have influenced the findings. Any discrepancies between the planned and actual implementation and products of the evaluation are explained.

### **3.14 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF DISAGREEMENTS WITHIN THE EVALUATION TEAM**

Evaluation team members have the opportunity to dissociate themselves from particular judgements and recommendations on which they disagree. Any unresolved differences of opinion within the team are acknowledged in the report.

### **3.15 INCORPORATION OF STAKEHOLDERS' COMMENTS**

Relevant stakeholders are given the opportunity to comment on the draft report. The final evaluation report reflects these comments and acknowledges any substantive disagreements. In disputes about facts that can be verified, the evaluators investigate and change the draft where necessary. In the case of opinion or interpretation, stakeholders' comments are reproduced verbatim, in an annex or footnote, to the extent that this does not conflict with the rights and welfare of participants.



## 4 FOLLOW-UP, USE AND LEARNING

### 4.1 TIMELINESS, RELEVANCE AND USE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation is designed, conducted and reported to meet the needs of the intended users. Conclusions, recommendations and lessons are clear, relevant, targeted and actionable so that the evaluation can be used to achieve its intended learning and accountability objectives. The evaluation is delivered in time to ensure optimal use of the results.

Systematic dissemination, storage and management of the evaluation report is ensured to provide easy access to all development partners, to reach target audiences, and to maximise the learning benefits of the evaluation.

### 4.2 SYSTEMATIC RESPONSE TO AND FOLLOW-UP ON RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are systematically responded to and action taken by the person(s)/ body targeted in each recommendation. This includes a formal management response and follow-up. All agreed follow-up actions are tracked to ensure accountability for their implementation.

### 4.3 DISSEMINATION

The evaluation results are presented in an accessible format and are systematically distributed internally and externally for learning and follow-up actions and to ensure transparency. In light of lessons emerging from the evaluation, additional interested parties in the wider development community are identified and targeted to maximise the use of relevant findings.



## PART V

# GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

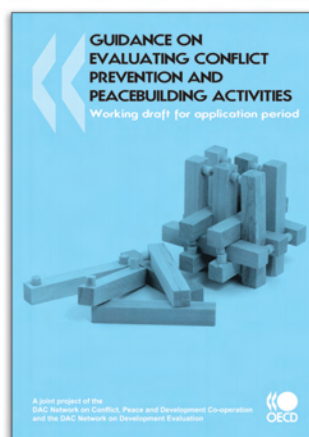
In response to the need for more specific guidance in certain areas of development evaluation, and building on evaluation experiences and the principles described above, a number of documents have been developed to steer evaluation policy and practice. Some of these guidance documents are presented below.

### GUIDANCE ON EVALUATING CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING ACTIVITIES: WORKING DRAFT FOR APPLICATION PERIOD

(OECD, 2008)

This document features challenges and emerging best practices for evaluating conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities.

With growing shares of aid resources, time and energy being dedicated to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, there is increased interest to learn what works, as well as what does not work and why. This guidance seeks to help answer these questions by providing direction to those undertaking evaluations of conflict prevention and peacebuilding projects, programmes and policies. It should enable systematic learning, enhance accountability and ultimately improve the effectiveness of peacebuilding work.

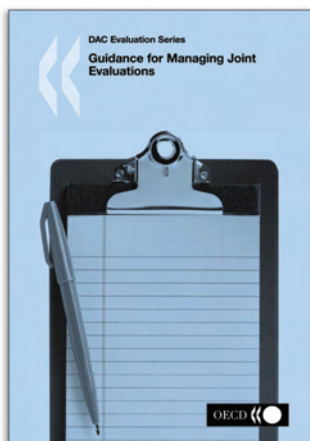


Some of the emerging key messages of the guidance include:

- Donors should promote systematic, high quality evaluation of all conflict prevention and peacebuilding work – including work carried out by implementing partners such as NGOs.
- Evaluations should be facilitated through better programme design.
- Coherent and co-ordinated intervention and policy strategies are needed to make progress towards peace.
- Concepts and definitions of conflict prevention and peacebuilding require clarification.

## GUIDANCE FOR MANAGING JOINT EVALUATIONS

(OECD, 2006)



This publication provides practical guidance for managers of joint evaluations of development programmes aiming to increase the effectiveness of joint evaluation work. It draws on a major review of experiences presented in “Joint Evaluations: Recent Experiences, Lessons Learned and Options for the Future” and the earlier guidance *Effective Practices in Conducting a Joint Multi-Donor Evaluation* (2000).

The focus in this publication is not on participatory evaluation with its techniques for bringing stakeholder communities into the process, but on evaluations undertaken jointly by more than one development co-operation agency. Such collaborative approaches, be they between multiple donors, multiple partners or some combination of the two, are increasingly useful at a time when the international community is prioritising mutual responsibility for development outcomes and joint approaches to managing aid.

Joint evaluations have the potential to bring benefits to all partners, such as:

- mutual capacity development and learning between partners;
- building participation and ownership;
- sharing the burden of work;
- increasing the legitimacy of findings;
- reducing the overall number of evaluations and the total transaction costs for partner countries.

Nevertheless, joint work can also generate specific costs and challenges and these can put significant burdens on the donor agencies. For example, building consensus between the agencies and maintaining effective co-ordination processes can be costly and time-consuming; delays in the completion of complex joint evaluations can adversely affect timeliness and relevance.

## EVALUATION FEEDBACK FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

(OECD, 2001)

This publication highlights different feedback systems, and outlines the areas identified as most relevant for improving evaluation feedback. It also outlines the main concerns and challenges facing evaluation feedback and the means to address these.

A major challenge lies in conveying evaluation results to multiple audiences both inside and outside development agencies. Thus, feedback and communication of evaluation results are integral parts of the evaluation cycle. Effective feedback contributes to improving development policies, programmes and practices by providing policy makers with the relevant information for making informed decisions. The differences between agencies in their background, structure and priorities means that this is not an area where a blueprint approach is appropriate. Moreover, there is a need to tailor feedback approaches to suit different target audiences. However, a number of areas for action can be identified at various levels.

Suggested actions to improve evaluation feedback include:

- take steps to understand how learning happens within and outside the organisation, and identify where blockages occur;
- assess how the relevance and timeliness of evaluation feedback can be improved, and take steps to ensure this happens;
- develop a more strategic view of the how feedback approaches can be tailored to the needs of different audiences;
- put much more effort into finding better ways of involving partner country stakeholders in evaluation work, including the feedback of evaluation lessons;
- take steps to increase the space and incentives for learning within the organisation (both from evaluations and other sources).

## GUIDANCE ON EVALUATING HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN COMPLEX EMERGENCIES

(OECD, 1999)

This publication is aimed at those involved in the commissioning, design and management of evaluations of humanitarian assistance programmes.

Historically, humanitarian assistance has been subjected to less rigorous evaluation procedures than development aid. As the share of ODA allocated to humanitarian assistance has risen, and awareness of its complexity has increased, the need to develop appropriate methodologies for its evaluation became steadily more apparent. This guidance complements the *DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance* by highlighting aspects of evaluation which require special attention in the field of humanitarian assistance.

# EVALUATING DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION

## SUMMARY OF KEY NORMS AND STANDARDS

### SECOND EDITION

A key component of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation's mission is to develop internationally agreed norms and standards for development evaluation. These inform evaluation policy and practice and contribute to harmonised approaches in line with the commitments of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. The body of norms and standards is based on experience, and evolves over time to fit the changing aid environment. The norms and standards serve as an international reference point, guiding efforts to improve development results through high quality evaluation.

The norms and standards summarised here should be applied discerningly and adapted carefully to fit the purpose, object and context of each evaluation. As this summary document is not an exhaustive evaluation manual readers are encouraged to refer to the complete texts available on the DAC Network on Development Evaluation's website: **[www.oecd.org/dac/evaluationnetwork](http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluationnetwork)**.