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DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION DIRECTORATE
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE

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DAC Network on Development Evaluation

Summary Record of the Fourteenth Meeting of the DAC Evaluation Network

27-28 November 2012

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14th MEETING SUMMARY RECORD

DAC NETWORK ON DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION

27-28 NOVEMBER 2012

Tuesday 27 November 2012

I. OPENING SESSION

1. The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming members and guests and invited those who were attending the meeting for the first time to briefly introduce themselves. The Chair welcomed guests from the Islamic Development Bank Operations Evaluation Department and the United Arab Emirates and thanked them for the valuable collaboration, together with the African Development Bank in producing an Arabic version of the DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation. The agenda was adopted [DCD/DAC/EV/A(2012)2] and members approved the 13th meeting summary record [DCD/DAC/EV/M(2012)1].

2. Network Vice-Chair William Carlos and the Secretariat provided an introduction to EVALNET. The presentation highlighted how the network functions: sharing experiences and networking, developing norms and guidance, knowledge management, linking to policy communities and facilitating collaboration. The Vice-Chair also highlighted the important role of the Secretariat in enabling the work of the Network and shaping the agenda. A short overview of major EVALNET achievements was provided, as well as examples of a range of current work (from developing tip-sheets to producing syntheses of evaluation findings).

Members agreed to the following next steps:

- Members were invited to engage actively with the network on social media and agreed to share news and interesting events with the Secretariat for sending out to a broad audience via the Newsletter and by systematically sending reports (with key words and abstracts) to DEReC.
- Drawing on the presentation, the Secretariat will develop a short introduction packet about EVALNET for new members and guests.

II. SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS

3. Building on the discussion on systematic reviews at the last network meeting, this session delved further into the issues of synthesising research evidence to answer policy-relevant questions about what works and what does not in international development. Katriona Gillespie and Christine Kolbe (DFID) presented its programme on systematic reviews and discussed quality standards for reviews. Lessons from this experience include the importance of focusing on developing good questions, and taking the time needed to identify "enduring questions" where the evidence base needs to be strengthened. There is also a need to focus on use, and responding to initial enthusiasm by asking whether or not a systematic review is the best way to answer a particular question. Systematic reviews are a long term contribution to building up the development evidence base. Some examples of findings from a synthesis of evaluation findings on

HIV were presented, along with the summary note on preventing HIV: "Evaluation Insights #7: Evidence on Preventing HIV".

4. The discussion focused on evidence -- the quality of evidence available for synthesis, the importance of quality standards and the political implications of evidence gaps (weak evidence) or lacking evidence. It was remarked that many evaluations are found to be of low quality; in fact this was one of the drivers behind creating the DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation. More work is needed to improve terms of reference, build evaluation capacities and quality check evaluation processes and reports. Members agreed on the need to define better protocols for the synthesis of qualitative research methods. Several members emphasised that reviews are one area where it is particularly useful to build on the work of others and avoid duplicating effort.

The following next steps were agreed:

- Members will share plans for systematic review with the Secretariat for inclusion in the evaluation plans database. Members are encouraged to draw on work completed by others.
- The Secretariat will start including systematic reviews in the DAC Evaluation Resource Centre (DEReC).

Afternoon Session

5. Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Facilitator Frode Neergard (Denmark) introduced the role of the DAC facilitators for subsidiary bodies, emphasising that he aims to facilitate interaction between the DAC and EVALNET (and other subsidiary bodies) to strengthen synergies across the DAC family. He gave an update on the forthcoming High Level Meeting of the DAC in London, including the topics on post-2015 development agenda, the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation and Development Finance. The DAC has approved the programme of work and budget (2013/2014) including EVALNET's proposed outputs. He also informed members of the election of Mr. Erik Solheim as DAC Chair. He noted the quality of EVALNET's work, its exemplary dissemination efforts, as well as the very large turnout at the meetings and assured members that he would share these observations with the DAC.

III. LESSONS ON DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION

6. Karen Jorgensen (Secretariat) described the 12 Lessons series, which collects experience and insights from DAC experience and peer reviews. The aim of the publication is to help DAC members, country partners and other providers of development assistance, by identifying good practice and providing concrete examples of how it can be achieved. The *Evaluating Development: 12 Lessons from the OECD DAC* publication will be aimed primarily at senior management in development agencies, as well as practitioners. It should capture the most important aspects of evaluation for a development agency. It is an opportunity to take stock of experience and current practice among EVALNET members and to send a strong message to development policy makers about the place of evaluation in today's development context. EVALNET has been asked to contribute to this secretariat-led work.

7. The plenary discussion focused on the need for lessons that address the underlying challenges of evaluability and evidence-based policy making (preconditions for quality evaluation).

Report back from small group discussions

1. **Strategic framework**: The group's discussion focused on the challenge of putting in place an agency policy that helps set the stage for evaluation. Such a policy should be checked or revisited every so often to make sure it is suitable to current objectives and that it is working as intended. Evaluation units should work to help advise others in the agency to strengthen the quality of design, monitoring and evaluation.

2. **Delivering quality evaluations:** The group observed the importance of developing a good terms of reference / scope of work that is not too restrictive, nor too broad, and of having a limited number of clear questions to focus an evaluation. Applying the *DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation* is seen as useful. It was also pointed out that involving stakeholders in the evaluation process can help increase their interest in and take up of evaluation findings. There should be a process of quality assurance, from early on in the evaluation, including a check of terms of reference, as well as a stock taking of lessons to inform planning of future evaluations. The group concluded that quality requires proper methods, resourcing and evaluability of programmes.

3. **Capacities and incentives for evaluation**: This group looked at how communication and the process of learning from evaluation and planning programmes or policies should be closely linked to create a culture of learning across the organisation. This requires policy support and incentives to engage in learning. There needs to be some process of endearing evaluation, so that colleagues do not view evaluators as "police" but instead value the contribution evaluation can make to their own work. In terms of working with partner countries, the group discussed the challenge of identifying suitable counterparts, and difficulties in building a shared understanding of the purpose and mutual benefits of evaluation.

- Follow-up: It was agreed that the Secretariat will revise the document based on this discussion and share a complete draft with members before it is sent to the editorial board (early 2013). It will be published for the 30th anniversary year of the network (2013).

LAUNCH OF "EVALUATING PEACEBUILDING ACTIVITIES IN SETTINGS OF CONFLICT AND FRAGILITY"

8. The Norwegian Ambassador to the OECD, Tore Eriksen, opened the event, describing the relevance and value of the work, as well as its importance to Norway. EVALNET Chair Martyn Pennington highlighted the publication of the *DAC Guidance on Evaluating Peacebuilding Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility - Improving Learning for Results* (OECD 2012). The guidance is useful not only for commissioning or doing evaluations, but also in supporting evidence-based analysis more broadly and as a starting point for programme design, strategic planning and management. Increasing the evidence-base for programming in these fields should be a top priority.

- Follow up: Members agreed to invite their evaluation staff and other colleagues, particularly those working in development, humanitarian and peacebuilding support in settings of conflict and fragility, to use the guidance and to contribute to the online discussion portal: http://dmeforpeace.org . The Secretariat will circulate hard copies and links to the free e-book.

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IV. RESULTS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS - AN EVALUATION PERSPECTIVE

9. The Secretariat opened the session by providing background on the network's work in this area. As part of a new work programme on results, a meeting is planned in the spring of 2013 for operation managers to take a fresh look at the results agenda. EVALNET's work can contribute by focusing on results pressures and management systems from an evaluative perspective. This involves critical analysis of the reality of results management systems -- their usefulness for various purposes – political, management, accountability perspectives.

10. Janet Vähämäki (Consultant) presented findings from a study "Review: Results Based Management in Development Cooperation" (2011). She emphasised that there is agreement on the basic idea that better information is needed to make better decisions, but described some of the difficulties encountered in implementing results systems. Challenges often arise because of the different purposes and interests involved -- some view the results systems as a means to control and closely manage an organisation, while others place emphasis on the learning focus of results systems. There are also problems regarding expectations: governments often want short, simple information, yet results chains in international development are frequently long and complex. Information produced by results systems is often not used for what it is intended or not used at all.

11. Riitta Oksanen (Finland) described the findings of an evaluation of the Results-Based Approach in Finnish Development Cooperation and the management response to the findings. She shared how political action was sparked by the quite critical evaluation report, which encouraged the Ministry to become less risk-adverse and more flexible, and to increase capacities for critical analysis.

12. Walter Kolkma and Hemamala Hettige (the Independent Evaluation Department of the Asian Development Bank) presented their evaluation of the Bank's experience with managing for development results (MfDR) and some reflections on how the systems have changed overtime. Marie Gaarder (Norad) highlighted findings from an annual report on the general lack of data and systems to assess performance and how this hampers attempts to evaluate rigorously, especially in terms of understanding impact. While guidelines exist, there is little implementation. Evaluators also bear some responsibility and can be creative about finding other sources of data when there are gaps in the results system.

13. During the discussion, several members noted that they saw their own systems reflected in the experiences of Finland, ADB and Norway, and that the report usefully draws attention to the multiple challenges related to results systems. The weaknesses of country-level results systems in partner countries, despite more than a decade of capacity support, was highlighted, as was the need for country-led, not donor-driven, results systems. Part of the challenge is around forming active demand for results and performance information, and creating political incentives to encourage feedback.

- Follow up: Members will share any further evaluation of corporate results management systems or support to partner country systems to be feed in to ongoing work in the Development Co-operation Directorate.

V. NEWS BOARD

14. The news board item provided an opportunity for updates on important ongoing work and to gather input from members to take the work programme forward. The following actions were taken and next steps agreed:

- **Evaluating budget support:** Catherine Pravin (European Commission) provided an update on ongoing work: Mozambique (EC, France, Italy, Ireland, Belgium, Netherlands, Finland, Germany), Tanzania (Ireland, EU, Denmark, Netherlands), Morocco (EV, France, Spain), Burundi (led by Belgium). Members agreed that the revised methodological approach to evaluating budget support is a valuable way to take forward joint work. The document will be published and translated into French. Members are encouraged to engage in joint evaluations, together with partner country governments and other donors, whenever assessing budget support and to use the methodological approach.
- **Communicating Evaluation Results:** Nick York (DFID) gave a report on a successful Workshop on Communicating Evaluation Results (12 October 2012 – London) organised by the Informal Network of Development Communicators (DevCom) and DFID, in collaboration with the EVALNET. The workshop brought together 57 participants from DevCom and from EVALNET. The results of a survey of DEVCOM and EVALNET conducted in preparation for the meeting were presented. It interestingly found that 100% of evaluators thought they needed to improve communication of results. The discussion highlighted in particular that evaluation and communication offices have very different functions, with evaluation focused on improving the effectiveness of development assistance, and communicators focused on increasing support for aid. Peter Da Costa (consultant) will shortly finalise a study on "Communicating Evaluation Results", for distribution to both networks. The Secretariat will create a webpage for members compiling useful resources and ideas for communication.
- **Multilateral effectiveness:** Ted Kliest (IOB Netherlands) will be stepping down as DAC EVALNET representative for the UNEG-DAC peer reviews next year and a successor will need to be identified. Interested members are requested to contact the Secretariat. A consultant is doing a stock taking of the peer review experience and members were asked to cooperate with this research. An evaluation of MOPAN will take place shortly and members were encouraged to be involved. Following a stock taking in 2010, the GEF Evaluation Office now hosts an online community of practice, called the Comprehensive Evaluation Platform for Knowledge Exchange (CEPKE: www.cepke.org) to provide an informal platform for evaluation specialists and other interested professionals to share ideas, information, and experiences related to carrying out comprehensive evaluations of institutions.
- **Evaluating multi-donor trust funds**: Members discussed the need for further work looking at the evaluation of multi-donor funds, and ensuring sufficient coverage and accountability. An informal group, made up of the Netherlands, the World Bank IEG and Ireland will investigate possible 'evaluation deficits' in multilateral funds, including multi-donor trust funds. The Netherlands will

make an inventory of all relevant funds, followed by an investigation of the evaluation arrangements per fund. This inventory will then be used to develop a plan of action focusing on possible avenues to strengthen the evaluation function in/of those funds showing an 'evaluation deficit'. This plan of action will be tabled for discussion and decision at the next EVALNET meeting.

- **Evaluation Insights:** The Secretariat provided an update on briefs produced to date and described the active dissemination efforts to ensure evidence reaches relevant policy communities. Several members expressed interest in a note on support to civil society in developing countries and how donors work with civil society organisations. Members interested in upcoming briefs on debt relief, Zambia, civil society, statebuilding support or another topic, are invited to contact the Secretariat. Members were invited to request hard copies for events and share the briefs widely with colleagues working in relevant policy divisions.
- **Private sector support:** The IEG World Bank shared a note proposing an event next year on private sector development, with a list of possible themes to focus the discussion. The event could take place in conjunction with an EVALNET meeting or a relevant policy event. An informal group of interested members made up of the EC, Denmark, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Austria, Norway, ADB, AfDB and EBRD, and led by the World Bank and the Secretariat will further develop ideas for the event in 2013. Members are requested to send comments directly to: MTaylordormond@ifc.org and hans.lundgren@oecd.org .
- Nicolina Lamhauge(OECD Environment Directorate) described work to explore methodological approaches on evaluating **climate change adaptation** and welcomed the involvement of EVALNET members to provide expert feedback on the terms of reference and draft reports. The World Bank IEG, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the Global Environment Fund (GEF) expressed interest.

VI. EVALNET'S FUTURE WORK

15. The Secretariat informed members that the mandate of the Evaluation Network has been extended until end December 2014. All renewed DAC bodies were requested to revise their mission statements and the Bureau, after consultations with members, submitted a revised mission statement, which was approved by the DAC on 12 November (DCD/DAC(2012)42). The overall mission of the Evaluation Network is to "contribute to better development results using evaluation to build a strong evidence base for policy making and for learning".

To meet this objective, the Network works to:

- Advocate and share knowledge on best practice in evaluation.
- Synthesise evaluation evidence on key development topics and share findings and lessons
- Work with developing country partners to increase collaboration and promote and support evaluation capacity development.

16. In light of the revised mandate and the approved programme of work and budget, new work will be developed and ongoing work will continue in a number of areas. Specifically, work will be needed to synthesise key evidence in priority policy areas, which will involve producing Insights notes and other summaries, but also action to communicate and disseminate evaluation findings. New work on the private

sector will be explored (led by the IEG World Bank). Further work is also planned on budget support, peer reviews, capacity development and DEReC.

17. In response to specific requests from the DAC Chair, the Network will need to deliver a synthesis of findings on poverty reduction or in specific sectors that have a strong poverty focus. The network will need to continue to build relationships with developing country partners and strengthen mutual learning. Finally, the Secretariat highlighted the importance of continuing to build relationships with other providers of development assistance, including non-DAC donors and private foundations. The network will also engage with the results agenda – beginning with the discussion at this meeting. To fund this programme of work, a request for voluntary contributions has been made to all members for support to the overall programme.

18. Members were invited to share ideas for celebrating next year's 30th Anniversary of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation. There was support for the idea of marking the occasion, including the suggestion that past and present EVALNET Chairs write a short note or conduct an interview talking about the key highlights of their time as chair.

VII. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

19. No items were raised under any other business.

Close of the Meeting

20. The Chair thanked members and closed the meeting. The next EVALNET meeting will take place 18-19 June 2013. The Bureau will meet in early 2013 to discuss follow up actions.

INFORMAL SESSION

Presentation of the Strategic Impact Evaluation Fund (SIEF)

21. Andrea Cook (DFID) described SIEF, a trust fund for impact evaluation funded by DFID and managed by the World Bank. SIEF is designed as a multi-donor trust programme providing funding and expertise for donors and developing country partners to commission impact evaluations with high policy relevance. Christine Kolbe (DFID) provided highlights of the fund experience to date and results of the first call for proposals and lessons learned opportunities for capacity building. During the question and answer period, DFID clarified how SIEF differs from other impact evaluation initiatives, notably in terms of overall capacity to rapidly scale up production of high quality evidence and the value-added of drawing on existing Bank skills and experience.

- Follow up: Members are encouraged to share this resource and consider supporting SIEF or applying for funding.

22. The task team meeting was chaired by Riitta Oksanen (Finland). The meeting began by agreeing to a short note outlining the key concepts as a working consensus to guide future work. The main written comments received from the United Kingdom and Austria will be incorporated, in particular to highlight the complexity and non-linearity of capacity development processes and to put the emphasis on the demand side. David Rider-Smith (DFID, Uganda) presented an analytical framework on understanding the

enabling environment for evaluation and shared a proposal to study the demand-side of evaluation in five African countries. The proposal was well received and DFID is encouraged to continue this work and share it with other members.

23. France presented a short note on promoting partner-donor evaluations. It was suggested that a practical way to begin would be with a survey of partner countries involved in the Paris Declaration to identify opportunities to support country-led joint evaluation work. France will further develop the proposal.

- Follow up: Task team members agreed to finalise the working definition before the end of the year and to hold a telephone conference in January 2013 to discuss work priorities for the next year.

Participants List for the 14th Meeting of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation

Liste des Participants pour la 14eme Réunion du Réseau du CAD sur l'évaluation du développement

27/11/2012 - 28/11/2012

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