



## **ROOM DOCUMENT 9**

# **DAC Network on Development Evaluation**

### **KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT:**

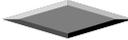
#### **Issues and practical options for the DAC Network on Development Evaluation**

#### **Item 4: i**

This study is submitted by the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands. It was prepared by Rutger Engelhard, Consultant. This room document contains an Executive Summary in English and in French as well as the full report.

It is being presented for CONSIDERATION at the meeting of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation on 15-16 January, 2004.

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**1st meeting  
15 – 16 January 2004**



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# **Knowledge Management:**

## **Issues and practical options for the DAC Network on Development Evaluation**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This paper has been prepared to inform the discussions of the OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation (DAC Network) on practical options for enhancing its knowledge management policies and practices. In particular, the DAC Network wishes to examine the available options for

- exchanging information, experiences and cooperation on evaluation among the members of the Network and with their development evaluation partners; and
- increasing the use of the DAC Evaluation Reports Inventory (DAC Inventory), its principal Internet-based communication tool for disseminating the lessons learned from the evaluations to a range of diverse audiences.

#### ***Lessons learned in knowledge management***

Regrettably, there is no universal definition of ‘knowledge management’, just as there is no agreement to what exactly constitutes ‘knowledge’. Although knowledge management means different things to different people, broadly speaking, it can be regarded as a process through which people generate value from their organization’s intellectual and information-based assets. Generating value from these assets always involves sharing knowledge through prescribed procedures among people within their own organization (or in other organizations).

Knowledge management is not a miracle concept, and in the process of applying it many lessons have been learned. Probably the most important of these lessons is that knowledge management is not a technology-based concept. Nevertheless, today’s discussions on knowledge management often focus exclusively on introducing or improving ICT applications. While ICT applications (such as document databases) often facilitate knowledge management, these tools should not be the starting point for developing a knowledge management policy. Such a policy must be based on decisions as to ‘why’ (organizational goals); ‘what’ (knowledge), ‘who’ (people), ‘how’ (procedures) and ‘how much’ (budgets).

Other lessons learned are that

- it is always difficult to identify what knowledge is to be shared, where that knowledge resides, and how it should be disseminated to potential users;
- many people are apprehensive about sharing their knowledge and are reluctant to make the additional effort to enter their knowledge into a system or to use that system seek out knowledge from others;
- most organizations already make their knowledge available through their websites. Mapping these dispersed knowledge resources and helping potential users to find the information they need appears to be more helpful and certainly much less costly than building centralized databases;

- access is important, but successful knowledge management also requires care, attention and hard work to identify, collect and categorize relevant new knowledge assets. Effort is also needed to encourage people to contribute to those assets, to develop and maintain the infrastructure, to promote knowledge services and monitor their use;
- the knowledge networks of organizations will not be well managed unless an individual (or group of people) has clear responsibility for doing the job;
- knowledge management initiatives require commitment of people and their organizations, preferably formalized in the form of a simple agreement or contract;
- sharing knowledge may be a commendable idea, but without an underlying, widely accepted and well supported reason for doing so, it is likely to become a pointless, expensive exercise;
- getting people on board is essential for any knowledge management project; and
- knowledge management is a political undertaking, especially if it deals with evaluation lessons that are usually associated with success, failure and funding decisions. If no politics appear around a knowledge management initiative, it is probably a good indication that nothing valuable is taking place.

### ***Outcome of an e-consultation***

In the preparation of this paper an e-consultation was conducted with 32 members of the DAC Network to gather their suggestions regarding

- concrete evaluation learning problems that should be jointly taken up;
- key elements of a knowledge management strategy that the DAC Network could adopt to address these evaluation learning problems; and
- features of the DAC Evaluation Reports Inventory (DAC Inventory) that could be refined or added.

### ***Evaluation learning problems and key elements of a knowledge management strategy***

On the basis of the results of the e-consultation, it appears that the majority of respondents would like the DAC Network urgently to address two evaluation learning problems. These are:

- improving the quality of individual evaluations and increasing the opportunities for comparing and synthesizing lessons learned in evaluation studies; and
- increasing awareness of the positive and/or negative results of international development cooperation.

To address these evaluation learning problems, the respondents recommended that the DAC Network enhance current and start up new knowledge management programmes for

- harmonizing and standardizing evaluation methodologies; and
- making better use of lessons learned and other evaluation feedback.

For each of these broad knowledge management activities the respondents collectively suggested detailed programme approaches, including their beneficiaries, concrete results to be achieved within one or two years, pressing problems to be overcome and various knowledge management programmes (for details see pages 16 to 18 of the report and appendix 1).

### *The DAC Evaluation Reports Inventory*

In 1986 CIDA set up the DAC Evaluation Reports Inventory database and has managed it ever since. At the request of the DAC Network, CIDA overhauled the DAC Inventory in 2002. The respondents gave a mixed assessment of the DAC Inventory. Some respondents were very positive; in particular, they

- commended CIDA strongly for its continued support in making the DAC Inventory more useful;
- assessed the general idea of the DAC Inventory as good, sound and logical;
- considered the database to be easily accessible to all, reliable and user-friendly and liked its search functionality; and
- paid tribute to the fact that the contents have been kept manageable and can be extended in an incremental manner.

The same respondents frankly observed that the DAC Inventory faced, in the words of one of them, a *typical collective action problem*, because many, if not most DAC Network members do not make sufficient effort to submit contributions in a timely manner, if they do so at all. For that reason, they argued, the DAC Inventory

- is patchy in coverage and its contents incomplete and not up to date;
- does not include the full texts of evaluation reports and contains poor-quality information; and
- has been overtaken by search engines such as *Google*, and the websites of DAC Network member organizations where most evaluation reports (abstracts *and* full texts) are being published.

The respondents offered many suggestions for increasing the value of the DAC Inventory. By far the largest number of suggestions referred to the need to resolve the ‘collective action problem’ of the DAC Network. In fact, their recommendations are directed at the DAC Network member organizations rather than to CIDA, which manages the Inventory. The three main solutions were: to make the DAC Inventory more up to date and comprehensive; to add hyperlinks to full text documents; and to increase the quality and the scope of information.

### ***Knowledge management: issues and practical options***

The overall response rate to the e-consultations was 52%, indicating that the DAC Network members show great interest in enhancing knowledge management among the Network members and their organizations. How the DAC Network members wish to use Internet-based communication and networking tools to support the implementation of new knowledge management initiatives is less evident. The reason for this inconclusiveness is that the Network’s principal Internet-based knowledge sharing tool, the DAC Inventory of Evaluation Reports, is based on a *centralized knowledge management model*, whereas the DAC Network members have yet to commit themselves to pool their organizations’ intellectual and information-based evaluation assets under one centralized knowledge management structure. Instead, over

recent years all member organizations have created separate sections on their own websites to present the work carried out by their evaluation departments. Some of these sections are small, and consist of just a list of links to evaluation reports carried out over the last few years. Others are comprehensive web resources and include, in addition to archives of full evaluation reports, evaluation planning schedules, 'lessons learned', guides, and links to other relevant sites.

In enhancing its knowledge management, the DAC Network first needs to address a more fundamental question than how to improve or expand the functionalities of the DAC Inventory. The DAC Network members need to consider whether they wish to continue to share lessons learned and other evaluation feedback on the basis of a centralized knowledge management model, and to address the underlying causes of their apparent collective action problem with respect to the DAC Inventory, or to opt for a more decentralized alternative.

A *decentralized knowledge management model* would consist of simply mapping the depositories of evaluation knowledge available within each of the member organizations and providing directions to those who are looking for specific information. This model would better fit the current reality in which the evaluation knowledge of member organizations is dispersed over many websites, databases, libraries and filing cabinets. In this knowledge management model, the DAC Network will have to allow the 'knowledge market' do its work and accept that some member organizations will put more effort and funds into publishing (in print and online) and marketing their reports, lessons learned and other evaluation feedback than others.

Both knowledge management models will be facilitated by technology. A simple web portal with a variety of spider, syndication and search functionalities, (thematic) alert services, a Q&A facility, etc., would be sufficient to make such this decentralized model work. If the DAC Network opts for the centralized management option, it could develop the DAC Inventory into an evaluation knowledge and learning centre, and apply its centralized knowledge management structure to generate added value from the intellectual and information-based assets of the member organizations.

It seems that only after an agreement has been reached on the fundamental issue of whether to adopt a centralized or decentralized knowledge management model, can the Network members begin working out the various programmes for improving knowledge management in the DAC Network summarized in this report.

# **GESTION DU SAVOIR ET DES CONNAISSANCES**

## **Enjeux et solutions pour le Réseau CAD sur l'évaluation du développement**

### **COMTE RENDU SUCCINT**

Cet exposé a été préparé afin d'informer les parties dans les discussions du Réseau OCDE/CAD sur l'évaluation du développement (Réseau CAD) sur les options pratiques destinées à améliorer la politique et la pratique de sa gestion du savoir et des connaissances. Plus précisément, le Réseau CAD souhaite examiner les options disponibles concernant :

- l'échange d'informations, d'expériences et la coopération dans l'évaluation parmi les membres du Réseau ainsi qu'avec leurs partenaires participant à l'évaluation du développement.
- l'intensification de l'utilisation de l'inventaire des Rapports d'évaluation du CAD du CAD, qui constitue son moyen de communication en ligne prédominant pour transmettre à une palette variée de lecteurs les enseignements issus des évaluations menées.

#### ***Des enseignements tirés de la Gestion du savoir et des connaissances***

Il n'existe malheureusement pas de définition universelle de la 'Gestion du savoir et des connaissances', de la même façon qu'il n'existe pas de définition commune concernant les composants exacts qui constitue la 'connaissance'. Si la signification de la gestion du savoir et des connaissances peut varier d'une personne à l'autre, on peut généralement la considérer comme un processus par lequel les gens créent une richesse à partir des informations et données dont les organisations auxquelles ils appartiennent sont propriétaires. Produire de la valeur à partir de ce genre d'actifs implique l'application de procédures spécifiques régulant le partage et la communication des connaissances entre les membres d'une organisation (ou avec d'autres organisations).

La gestion du savoir et des connaissances n'est pas une solution miracle, et beaucoup de leçons ont été tirées de son application. La plus importante de ces leçons est certainement le fait que la gestion du savoir et des connaissances n'est pas un concept basé sur la technologie. Cependant, les discussions actuelles sur la gestion du savoir et des connaissances se concentrent exclusivement sur l'introduction ou l'amélioration des applications des technologies de l'information. Alors que les applications des technologies de l'information (telles que les bases de données documentaires) facilitent souvent la gestion du savoir et des connaissances, ces outils ne devraient pas constituer la base d'une politique de gestion du savoir et des connaissances. Ces politiques doivent être basées sur des décisions ayant trait au 'pourquoi' (les objectifs organisationnels), à 'quoi' (les connaissances), à 'qui' (les gens), au 'comment' (les procédures) et au 'combien' (le budget).

Nous pouvons également citer les enseignements suivants :

- il est toujours difficile d'identifier les connaissances à partager, l'endroit où se trouvent ces connaissances et la manière de les communiquer aux utilisateurs potentiels.

- beaucoup de gens sont réticents à l'idée de partager leurs connaissances et de produire l'effort supplémentaire de consigner leurs connaissances dans un système ou d'utiliser ce système pour effectuer des recherches dans les connaissances d'autres personnes.
- la plupart des organisations ont déjà rendu leurs connaissances accessibles depuis leur site Web. Il apparaît plus utile et certainement moins coûteux de baliser ces sources dispersées de connaissances et d'aider les utilisateurs potentiels à trouver les informations qu'il recherchent plutôt que de créer des systèmes de bases de données centralisées.
- l'accès aux données est important, cependant la gestion efficace du savoir et des connaissances implique également du soin, de l'attention et beaucoup de travail afin d'identifier, collecter et catégoriser les nouvelles connaissances, encourager les gens à y contribuer, développer et maintenir l'infrastructure, promouvoir les services liés à la gestion du savoir et des connaissances et contrôler l'utilisation de ces services.
- les réseaux de connaissances des organisations ne peuvent être bien gérés que quand un individu ou un groupe de personnes en est clairement responsable.
- les initiatives de la gestion du savoir et des connaissances exigent un engagement total de la part des personnes et de leur organisations, de préférence formalisé sous la forme d'un simple contrat.
- le partage des connaissances est une idée louable, mais sans une raison de fond généralement acceptée et bien soutenue, il risque de devenir une pratique coûteuse et sans intérêt.
- il est essentiel de réunir les soutiens nécessaires des gens pour tout projet de gestion du savoir et des connaissances.
- la gestion du savoir et des connaissances est une affaire d'influence, lorsqu'elle concerne l'évaluation d'enseignements tirés de succès, échecs et décisions budgétaire. Si une initiative de gestion du savoir et des connaissances n'est pas teintée de recherche d'influence, cela signifie probablement que rien d'important n'est en train de se produire.

### ***Résultats d'un sondage en ligne***

Lors de la rédaction de ce document, un sondage en ligne a été effectué sur un panel de 32 membres du Réseau CAD afin de réunir leurs suggestions concernant les sujets suivants:

- les problèmes à traiter en groupe concernant l'analyse des évaluations.
- les éléments clé d'une stratégie de la gestion du savoir et des connaissances que le Réseau CAD pourraient adopter afin de remédier aux problèmes d'analyse des évaluations.
- les fonctions l'inventaire des Rapports d'évaluation du CAD qui pourraient être adaptées ou ajoutées.

### *Les problèmes d'analyse des évaluations ainsi que les éléments clé d'une stratégie de la gestion du savoir et des connaissances*

Les résultats du sondage indiquent que deux solutions doivent être mises en place concernant les problèmes identifiés par une majorité des personnes sondées pour lesquels une action urgente du Réseau CAD est souhaitée:

- améliorer la qualité des évaluations individuelles et augmenter les possibilités de comparaison et synthèse des leçons apprises lors des études d'évaluation.
- augmenter la prise de conscience des résultats positifs et/ou négatifs de la coopération du développement international.

Pour traiter ces problèmes d'analyse des évaluations, les personnes sondées recommandent d'améliorer les programmes actuels de la gestion du savoir et des connaissances ainsi que de démarrer des programmes pour

- l'harmonisation et la standardisation des méthodologies d'évaluation
- faire un meilleur usage des enseignements tirés et des autres informations collectées.

Pour chacune de ces activités globales de gestion du savoir et des connaissances, les personnes sondées ont suggéré collectivement des approches de programmes détaillées, mentionnant leurs bénéficiaires, les résultats concrets à obtenir d'ici un ou deux ans, les problèmes les plus urgents à surmonter et différents programmes de gestion du savoir et des connaissances (pour de plus amples informations, veuillez consulter les pages 16 à 18 dans le rapport et l'appendice 1).

### *L'Inventaire des rapports d'évaluation CAD*

L'ACDI gère la base de données d'inventaire des rapports d'évaluation du CAD depuis 1986. A la demande du Réseau CAD, l'ACDI a procédé à une révision complète l'inventaire CAD en 2002. Le bilan des réponses des personnes sondées sur l'inventaire CAD est mitigé. Certaines personnes sondées ont répondu :

- félicitations à l'adresse de l'ACDI pour leur effort constant d'accroître l'utilité de l'inventaire CAD.
- l'idée générale de l'inventaire CAD est considérée bonne, logique et solide.
- la base de données se révèle facile d'accès, simple d'utilisation, fiable et inclut une fonction de recherche très appréciée.
- une gestion efficace du contenu a été maintenue peut être étendue étape par étape.

Ces mêmes personnes sondées ont également observé avec franchise que l'inventaire CAD souffrait, pour citer l'une d'entre elles, d'un *'problème typique d'action collective'*, car beaucoup, si ce n'est la plupart des membres du Réseau CAD ne font pas l'effort d'envoyer leurs contributions dans les délais impartis, si tant est qu'ils les envoient. C'est pourquoi elles pensent que l'inventaire CAD:

- manque d'unité et ne contient pas toutes les informations et n'est pas à jour.

- ne contient pas l'intégralité des rapports d'évaluation et contient des informations de qualité médiocre.
- peut être remplacé par les moteurs de recherche tels que *Google*, et les sites Web des organisations membres du Réseau CAD, où sont publiés la plupart des rapports d'évaluations (résumés *et* textes complets).

Les personnes sondées ont proposé beaucoup de suggestions pour améliorer l'Inventaire CAD. L'écrasante majorité des suggestions d'amélioration de l'Inventaire CAD font référence à la résolution du problème d'action collective du Réseau CAD. En fait, leurs solutions suggérées sont dirigées aux organisations membres du Réseau CAD, plutôt qu'à l'ACDI, qui gère l'inventaire. Les trois solutions principales sont :

- actualiser l'Inventaire CAD et rendre son contenu plus complet,
- ajouter des liens vers les versions intégrales des textes
- augmenter la qualité et la portée des informations présentées.

### ***La Gestion du savoir et des connaissances : enjeux et solutions***

Le taux de réponse au sondage de 52% indique que les membres du Réseau CAD ont montré un grand intérêt dans l'amélioration de la gestion du savoir et des connaissances parmi les membres du réseau et leurs organisations. La façon dont les membres du Réseau CAD souhaitent utiliser la communication en ligne et les outils de collaboration pour l'implémentation de nouvelles initiatives pour la gestion du savoir et des connaissances est par contre moins évidente. La raison de cette ambivalence est que le moyen de communication en ligne prédominant du Réseau, l'Inventaire CAD des rapports d'évaluation est basé sur un *modèle centralisé de gestion du savoir et des connaissances*, tandis que les membres du Réseau CAD doivent encore s'engager à mettre les informations et données dans un système centrale de gestion du savoir et des connaissances. A la place, toutes les organisations membres ont créé durant les dernières années, des sections spécifiques sur leurs sites Web personnels afin de présenter le travail fait par leurs départements d'évaluation. Certaines de ces sections sont réduites et ne contiennent qu'une liste de liens vers les rapports d'évaluation produits durant les dernières années. D'autres constituent des ressources Internet complètes et contiennent non seulement les archives des rapports complets d'évaluation, mais également des planifications des évaluations, 'des leçons apprises', des guides et des liens vers d'autres sites pertinents.

Pour améliorer la gestion du savoir et des connaissances, le Réseau CAD doit d'abord solutionner un problème plus fondamental que la simple amélioration de l'inventaire CAD ou l'implémentation de nouvelles fonctionnalités. Les membres du Réseau CAD doivent choisir entre retenir les leçons du passé et les autres commentaires d'évaluation concernant un modèle centralisé de gestion du savoir et des connaissances et traiter les raisons profondes de leur problème évident d'action collective en ce qui concerne l'Inventaire CAD, ou d'opter pour une solution plus décentralisée.

Un *modèle décentralisé de gestion du savoir et des connaissances* pourrait être constitué d'un simple balisage des dépôts de connaissances d'évaluation disponibles chez chaque organisation membre et de fournir les indications nécessaires pour ceux qui cherchent des informations spécifiques. Ce modèle s'adapterait mieux à la façon dont les connaissances d'évaluation des organisations membres sont réparties sur plusieurs sites Web, bases de données, bibliothèques et archives. Dans cette optique le Réseau CAD va devoir accepter qu'une situation de 'laisser faire' s'installe dans laquelle certaines organisations membres s'investiront d'avantage que d'autres dans la quantité d'efforts fournis et budgets consacrés à la publication

(sur papier et en ligne) et à la promotion de leurs rapports, enseignements et autres commentaires d'évaluation.

Ces deux modèles de gestion du savoir et des connaissances peuvent être implémentés par des moyens techniques. Un simple site portail incluant diverses technologies de recherche, réutilisation de contenu, des services (thématique) d'alerte, une Foire Aux Questions etc., pourrait suffire pour faire fonctionner le modèle décentralisé. Si le Réseau CAD opte pour le modèle centralisé, il pourrait faire évoluer l'Inventaire CAD vers un centre de connaissances d'évaluation et d'apprentissage et utiliser sa structure centralisée de gestion du savoir et des connaissances afin de générer une valeur ajoutée à partir des informations et données des organisations membres.

Il semble qu'il soit nécessaire de parvenir à un accord sur le problème fondamental de l'adoption d'un modèle centralisé ou décentralisé de gestion du savoir et des connaissances, pour que les membres du Réseau puissent commencer à mieux définir les différents programmes d'amélioration de gestion du savoir et des connaissances parmi le Réseau CAD abordés dans ce rapport.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper has been prepared to inform the discussions of the OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation (DAC Network) on practical options for enhancing its knowledge management policies and practices. In particular, the DAC Network wishes to examine the available options for

- exchanging information, experiences and cooperation on evaluation among the members of the Network and with their development evaluation partners; and
- increasing the use of the DAC Evaluation Reports Inventory (DAC Inventory), its principal Internet-based communication tool for disseminating the lessons learned from the evaluations to a range of diverse audiences.

This planned discussion on enhancing knowledge management is not a stand-alone event and is taking place within the framework for 'Evaluation Feedback for Effective Learning and Accountability'. This framework, developed by the DAC Network at a workshop in September 2000,<sup>1</sup> emphasizes that

- getting evaluation lessons across to a range of diverse audiences requires a sophisticated and concerted approach; and
- Internet-based communication tools are an important addition to the evaluation toolbox, although they need to be used intelligently and should not replace conventional approaches.

This paper has been prepared by Contactivity bv (Leiden, the Netherlands) under an assignment of the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As part of this assignment, Contactivity conducted an e-consultation with the members of the DAC Network to gather their suggestions regarding

- concrete evaluation learning problems that should jointly be taken up;
- key elements of a knowledge management strategy that the DAC Network could adopt to address these evaluation learning problems; and
- features of the DAC Evaluation Reports Inventory that could be refined or added ('customer feedback').

The paper is structured as follows:

- section 2 provides a brief overview of the potential benefits and common challenges of knowledge management, including ten lessons learned in this field that the DAC Network may wish to take into account when improving the Network's knowledge management practices;

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<sup>1</sup> Workshop on Evaluation Feedback for Effective Learning and Accountability, Tokyo, 26-28 September 2000, OECD/DAC.

- section 3 presents a summary of the responses to the e-consultation, including ‘customer feedback’ with respect to the DAC Inventory; and
- section 4 highlights a number of issues that the DAC Network needs to address, and proposes and discusses some practical options for enhancing knowledge management within the Network.

The author would like to thank the 34 members of the DAC Network who participated in the e-consultation for sharing their insights and volunteering their suggestions. The level of participation in the e-consultation (52%) was very high, certainly when taking into account that a number of respondents participated explicitly on behalf of one or more colleagues. The author hopes that they will recognize themselves in this report and that they will find its contents helpful in structuring their discussions on enhancing the knowledge management policies and practices of the DAC Network.

## TEN LESSONS LEARNED IN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Regrettably, there is no universal definition of ‘knowledge management’, just as there is no agreement to what exactly constitutes ‘knowledge’. Although knowledge management means different things to different people, broadly speaking, it can be regarded as a process through which people generate value from their organization’s intellectual and information-based assets. Generating value from these assets always involves sharing knowledge through prescribed procedures among people within their own organization (or in other organizations). Better knowledge sharing is never an end in itself, and knowledge management seems to be pointless unless it is focused on supporting the goals of an organization, such as enhancing its outreach, and improving the quality and profitability of its products and services.

Knowledge management is a recent addition to the toolbox of the organizational development consulting industry. It is not a miracle concept, and in the process of applying it in large corporate companies many lessons have been learned. The DAC Network is not a private sector organization but a professional network of evaluation departments of bilateral and multilateral donor organizations. Nevertheless, awareness of the lessons learned in the private sector may help in the formulation of policies to enhance the DAC Network’s knowledge management. The following paragraphs summarize ten of these lessons learned.

### **1. Technology should not dictate knowledge management**

Knowledge management is not a technology-based concept. Nevertheless, today’s discussions on how to enhance knowledge management often focus exclusively on introducing or improving ICT applications. While ICT applications (such as document databases) can often facilitate knowledge management, these tools should not be the starting point for developing a knowledge management policy. Such policies should be based on decisions as to ‘why’ (organizational goals); ‘what’ (knowledge), ‘who’ (people), ‘how’ (procedures) and ‘how much’ (budgets).

### **2. *Knowing what knowledge is relevant to users***

It is always difficult to identify what knowledge is relevant to be shared, where that knowledge resides, and how to disseminate it to potential users. This challenge is further complicated by the fact that knowledge exists in a variety of forms: *explicit* (e.g. represented in evaluation reports), *embedded* (e.g. in the form of evaluation methodologies), and *tacit* (undocumented knowledge captured by the evaluators in the course of their research). The majority of today’s knowledge management initiatives are narrowly focused and revolve around identifying, classifying and indexing *explicit* knowledge in a document management system or database. For evaluation learning, however, *embedded* and *tacit* knowledge are often of much greater interest.

### **3. *Sharing knowledge is an unnatural activity***

During the implementation of knowledge management projects, it is found over and over again that many people are apprehensive about sharing their knowledge, and are reluctant to make the additional effort to enter their knowledge into a system or to use that system seek out knowledge from others. Both

policy makers and ICT experts tend to overlook the fact that for these reasons people have to be highly motivated to participate in knowledge management projects.

#### ***4. Mapping knowledge yields better access than centralized databases.***

Most organizations already make much of their knowledge available through their websites – in the form of articles, reports, manuals or interactive information services. As a result, the web has developed into an immense, but chaotic depository of knowledge. Bringing these dispersed knowledge resources together in one place and creating hierarchical knowledge management models seem to be a logical step towards generating added value from these information-based assets. However, such big, centralized information architectures are complex, often understood only by their creators, and content maintenance is time-consuming and costly. As a result, centralized database projects involving many organizations (or departments within an organization) are rarely fully implemented and their content is almost always out of date. Alternatively, mapping dispersed knowledge resources and helping potential users to find the information they need on web can be much more helpful and is certainly much less costly. In fact, mapping knowledge is most likely to yield better access to and use of knowledge.

#### ***5. Access is only the beginning***

Access is important, but successful knowledge management also requires care, attention and hard work to identify, collect and categorize relevant new knowledge assets. Effort is also needed to encourage people to contribute to those assets, to develop and maintain the (technological) infrastructure, to promote knowledge services and monitor their use. Management of content and promotion of information services are essential elements for the success of a knowledge management project.

#### ***6. Knowledge management requires knowledge managers***

Within an organization or network of organizations knowledge will not be well managed unless an individual (or group of people) has clear responsibility for doing the job. The tasks of such ‘knowledge managers’ do not differ much from those of the secretariat of a conventional professional network.

#### ***7. Knowledge management initiatives need a knowledge contract***

Knowledge management initiatives require the commitment of large numbers of people and their organizations (or departments). Formalizing this commitment in the form of simple agreement has frequently proven to be highly effective. Such a knowledge contract can include summaries of the various tasks to be carried out, the individuals to whom those tasks have been allocated, and milestones in the implementation process. Since knowledge management initiatives are often protracted projects, the contents of such agreements can serve as a point of reference in later stages of the implementation process.

#### ***8. Knowledge management needs a purpose***

Knowledge management policies can not be divorced from organizations (or a network of organizations) and their goals. While sharing knowledge (in the form of reports, methodologies or best practices) may be a commendable idea, there must be an underlying, widely accepted and well supported reason for doing so. Without such an overarching purpose, agreed to by all parties involved, knowledge management is likely to become a pointless, expensive exercise.

### ***9. Knowledge management requires attention to people and cultural issues***

The implementation of a concerted knowledge management project, decided upon by the management team of an organization (or the steering committee of a professional network of organizations), will always require changes in the procedures and work processes of various departments (or of individual member organizations). The introduction of new technologies that facilitate knowledge management will always lead to new tasks, activities and procedures, and will make some old ones redundant. In many cases staff will be asked to hand over their knowledge, experience and good practices — the very intellectual assets that make them valuable as professionals. The cultural aspects of such organizational changes and their potential impacts on people down the line are often ignored. Getting people on board is essential for the success of any knowledge management project.

### ***10. Knowledge management is political***

Knowledge is power, and knowledge management is therefore a political undertaking, especially if it deals with evaluation lessons that are usually associated with success, failure and funding decisions. Professionals tend to decry politics and argue that they only get in the way. But astute knowledge managers acknowledge and cultivate the politics of knowledge management, and lobby for and broker deals between those who have knowledge and those who wish to use it. At the highest level, they will try to shape the governance of knowledge to ensure its better utilization across the organization (or a professional network such as the DAC Network for that matter). If no politics appear around a knowledge management initiative, it is probably a good indication that nothing valuable is taking place.

Many more lessons have undoubtedly been learned in recent years. However, these ten lessons can already be of help in assessing knowledge management initiatives and identifying aspects that may require extra attention. They can also serve as a checklist when developing knowledge management policies and designing activities to implement them.

## THE OUTCOME OF AN E-CONSULTATION

In November 2003, the members of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation were invited to participate in an e-consultation with three rounds of questionnaires. The purpose of this e-consultation was to gather their collective suggestions regarding

- concrete evaluation learning problems that need to be jointly addressed;
- key elements of a knowledge management strategy that the DAC Network could adopt to address these evaluation learning problems; and
- features of the DAC Evaluation Reports Inventory that could be refined or added ('customer feedback').

The questions put to the DAC Network members in this e-consultation focused on

- identifying and prioritizing concrete knowledge management activities (ongoing and new) to be included in an enhanced knowledge management policy of the DAC Network;
- determining the principal group(s) of beneficiaries of each of these activities;
- articulating concrete results to be achieved for each of the prioritized activities;
- identifying pressing problems that need to be addressed by the DAC Network as a whole; and
- listing the types of support expected from the DAC Network secretariat.

In addition, the second round of the e-consultation was intended to gather 'customer feedback' on the DAC Inventory, the DAC Network's principal knowledge management activity.

An initial invitation to participate in this e-consultation was sent to 65 members of the DAC Network, of whom 34 responded to one or more of the e-questionnaires, representing an impressive response rate of 52%. A description of the setup and a detailed report on the responses can be found in appendix 1.

### **Knowledge management activities**

The DAC Network members identified seven types of activity that could be part of the Network's knowledge management policy. These are:

1. sharing and disseminating lessons learned and other feedback from evaluations;
2. sharing knowledge on evaluation methodologies;
3. undertaking joint evaluations and meta-reviews;

4. improving network processes and creating a marketplace for exchanging ideas;
5. exchanging evaluation planning information;
6. building evaluation capacities; and
7. maintaining and using the DAC Inventory.

When asked to prioritize these activities from the perspective of *enhancing the DAC Network's effective learning through evaluation feedback*, the large majority of respondents selected the first two activities in the above list: (1) sharing and disseminating lessons learned and other feedback from evaluations, and (2) sharing knowledge on evaluation methodologies.

Collectively, the respondents provided comprehensive descriptions of these two knowledge management activities, including their objectives, beneficiaries, concrete results to be achieved, problems to be overcome, Network activities to be enhanced or started, and the support required from the DAC Network secretariat (details can be found in appendix 1). Based on their responses, the evaluation learning problems to be addressed and knowledge management approaches to be adopted can be articulated as follows.

### **Evaluation learning problems and knowledge management approaches**

On the basis of the results of the e-consultation, two evaluation learning problems that the DAC Network members as a group would like to address could be identified. These are:

- improving the quality of individual evaluations and increasing the opportunities for comparing and synthesizing lessons learned in evaluation studies by harmonization and standardization of evaluation methodologies; and
- increasing awareness of the positive and/or negative results of international development cooperation by making better use of lessons learned and other evaluation feedback.

The respondents suggested the following knowledge management approaches for each of these evaluation learning problems.

#### ***Harmonization and standardization of evaluation methodologies***

For this evaluation learning problem, the key learning question, the beneficiaries, concrete results, pressing problems and the knowledge management programmes suggested by the respondents can be summarized as follows:

##### ***Key learning question***

- How to improve the quality of evaluations through harmonizing and standardizing evaluation methodologies used by the DAC Network members and their consultants?

##### ***Key beneficiaries***

- DAC Network members and their consultants.

### *Secondary beneficiaries*

- Evaluation professionals, students and experts in NGOs and the research community.

### *Concrete results to be achieved within one or two years*

- a comprehensive overview of the evaluation methodologies currently being used by the DAC Network members and their consultants;
- an agreement on minimum good-practice standards of reliability of data and validity of evaluation methodologies; and
- evidence that the DAC Network is being used as a forum for programming (joint) evaluations.

### *Pressing problems*

- the lengthy process of standardizing evaluation methodologies and guidelines;
- the slow adaptation of methodologies to political and institutional changes;
- the tendency to share information on evaluation methodologies only after they have been fully polished rather than as they are being developed; and
- the absence of a forum for interacting with colleagues on harmonizing and standardizing evaluation methodologies and guidelines;

### *Knowledge management programmes suggested by the respondents*

- develop guidelines for project, programme, sector and country evaluations;
- encourage joint evaluations;
- organize a workshop on harmonizing evaluation methodologies every two years;
- continue with informal workshop sessions attached to regular DAC Network meetings to share progress and conclusions in projects ‘Reviews of quality evaluations’ and ‘Evaluation systems and structures’;
- reintroduce regional workshops, with participants from recipient countries;
- improve the coordination of evaluation by better use of planning matrix; and
- facilitate information exchange between DAC Network members through a simple electronic learning/discussion/information platform, moderated by the DAC Network secretariat and Australia.

*DAC Network framework (draft programme of work 2004-2006):*

Work cluster ‘Strengthen evaluation systems and improve quality of evaluations’ with projects (1) review of quality of evaluations (lead: Australia), and (2) evaluation systems and structures (lead: yet to be decided).

***Making better use of lessons learned and other evaluation feedback***

For this evaluation learning problem, the key learning question, the beneficiaries, concrete results, pressing problems and the knowledge management approaches suggested by the respondents can be summarized as follows:

*Key questions*

- how can the quality of development cooperation be improved by effectively applying the lessons learned and evaluation feedback in project approval and review processes; and
- how can accountability be increased by making better use of the lessons learned and other evaluation feedback.

*Key beneficiaries*

- policy makers and task managers in donor agencies; and
- the media and the wider public.

*Secondary beneficiaries*

- evaluation professionals, consultants, and development practitioners.

*Concrete results to be achieved within one or two years*

- evidence of better use of evaluation feedback by policy makers, programme task managers and evaluators in their work;
- an ongoing programme of synthesis studies to draw generalized advice from the lessons learned;
- the publication of a periodical with reports on lessons learned, synthesis studies (by theme, sector or country) and impact studies
- the inclusion of regular informal meetings to share lessons learned and the results of common studies, and to discuss topics in the DAC Network work programme;
- a comprehensive compilation of lessons learned, by theme, sector and country;
- increased numbers of submissions and of requests from users (donors, NGOs and universities) of the DAC Inventory; and
- the establishment of a learning platform for sharing the results of evaluations and the lessons learned among members.

### *Pressing problems*

- the limited interest among policy makers in the evaluation activities and results, despite the fact that at international level evaluation seems to be considered a crucial activity.
- an insufficient aggregation of evaluation results for use by the higher echelons of policy management; and
- the absence of a DAC Network-wide dissemination strategy, with effective, proactive mechanisms to provide lessons learned in a timely and easily accessible manner and to minimize the risk of information overload.

### *Knowledge management programmes suggested by the respondents*

- develop a DAC Network-wide dissemination strategy, which could include the publication of a web magazine, with an associated printed bulletin and e-mail newsletter focusing on lessons learned and evaluation highlights;
- proactively plan and implement synthesis studies and draw general advice from lessons learned;
- compile and aggregate lessons learned and other evaluation feedback by theme, sector and country for use by higher echelons of policy management;
- improve the utilization of the DAC Inventory – by keeping it up to date and making it more user-friendly (for both contributors and end-users); by including a section presenting lessons learned and other evaluation feedback; and by improving the promotion of its services (to raise public awareness); and
- develop the DAC Network's website in order to fulfil its service functions.

### *DAC Network framework (draft programme of work 2004-2006):*

The DAC Network acknowledges the fact that the accountability paradigm is moving beyond individual agency attribution (page 4). In view of the importance that the respondents to the e-consultation attach to improving the use of lessons learned and other evaluation feedback, the DAC Network may wish to consider adding activities that address this evaluation learning problem to its Programme of Work for 2004-2006.

In order to enable the DAC Network secretariat to facilitate and support the implementation of these two knowledge management programmes, one respondent suggested that member organizations might wish to consider establishing a trust fund (or similar funding mechanism) to pool resources and allow for smoother funding and management of Network activities.

### **Feedback on the DAC Evaluation Reports Inventory**

In 1986 CIDA set up the DAC Evaluation Reports Inventory database and has managed it ever since. The DAC Inventory represents an essential platform for sharing information on project and programme evaluations among Network members and with other development partners. It also serves as a learning interface for improving performance, in terms of the outcomes of development projects and the evaluation activities of individual members. At the request of the DAC Network, CIDA overhauled the DAC

Inventory in 2002. This renovation involved the migration of all information to an Oracle database and the introduction of a new website with advanced search facilities that provided better access to the information. In addition, new work procedures were introduced in order to minimize the length of time between the submission of new information and its inclusion in the database. Moreover, access to the abstracts included in the DAC Inventory was integrated into the Global Development Gateway.

In the second round of the e-consultation the respondents were asked to list the strong and weak aspects of the DAC Inventory in its new setup, and to suggest features that need to be added or further refined in order to increase its value.

### ***Strong and weak aspects of the DAC Inventory***

The respondents gave a mixed assessment of the DAC Inventory. Some respondents were very positive; in particular, they

- commended CIDA strongly for its continued support in making the DAC Inventory more useful;
- assessed the general idea of the DAC Inventory as good, sound and logical;
- considered the database easily accessible to all, reliable and user-friendly;
- liked the search functionality that allows for a great variety of search criteria, making it easy to seek relevant material with quick results; and
- paid tribute to the fact that the contents have been kept manageable and can be extended in an incremental manner by working with sector codes and summaries (which are kept up to date).

They also argued that the DAC Inventory was potentially

- an authoritative and comprehensive source of evaluation information, covering the whole family of donors and including a wide range of evaluation reports from different donors, countries and sectors; and
- a very good instrument for sharing knowledge and learning from others' lessons learned because all DAC Network members can contribute. It exists and members appear to want to keep it going.

Nevertheless, the same respondents frankly observed that the DAC Inventory faced, in the words of one of them, a *typical collective action problem*, in that many, if not most DAC Network members do not make sufficient effort to submit contributions in a timely manner, if they do so at all. For that reason, they argued, the DAC Inventory

- is patchy in coverage, because its contents are incomplete and not up to date. It is therefore not exhaustive and does not provide a systematic and comprehensive overview of the evaluation work of the DAC Network member organizations;
- does not include the full texts of evaluation reports;
- contains poor-quality information because the reports are 'often sweet but never sour', and the abstracts are presented in different formats making comparisons difficult;

- can not be adequately searched for key words, because the reports are not independently checked against the key words used by the organizations that submit the reports; and
- has been overtaken by search engines such as *Google*, and other websites (of the DAC Network member organizations and other development agencies) where most evaluation reports (abstracts *and* full texts) are being published.

One respondent commented that the DAC inventory ‘seems to remain a tool for evaluation specialists, but has not much outreach to operational staff. This is a generic problem not confined to the DAC Inventory: even if all my colleagues were really aware about the Inventory's existence, I doubt that they would use it much. There is already an abundance of evaluation results and lessons learned specific to our instruments, which have to be disseminated by the evaluation unit in order to be taken into account. Our own small database has proven the least effective way to do so’.

### ***Suggestions for increasing the value of the DAC Inventory***

The respondents’ many suggestions for increasing the value of the DAC Inventory can be summarized as follows.

By far the largest number of suggestions for increasing the value of the DAC Inventory referred to resolving the ‘collective action problem’ of the DAC Network. In fact, their suggested solutions are directed at the DAC Network member organizations rather than to CIDA, which is managing the Inventory. The three main solutions were:

- make the DAC Inventory more up to date and comprehensive (19x)
- add hyperlinks to full text documents (4x); and
- increase quality and scope of information (4x).

In addition, the respondents suggested some interesting changes and additions to the website. These focused on improving the organization and presentation of the information to make it more accessible (10x), on increasing the interactivity of the website by adding a dedicated search engine (4x), and on increasing the website’s visibility (3x).

## KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT: ISSUES AND PRACTICAL OPTIONS

In their collective responses, the DAC Network members who participated in the e-consultation attached particular importance to addressing two evaluation learning problems:

- improving the quality of individual evaluations and increasing the opportunities for comparing and synthesizing lessons learned in evaluation studies; and
- increasing awareness of the positive and/or negative results of international development cooperation.

The respondents suggested two knowledge management approaches to address these problems: (1) the harmonization and standardization of evaluation methodologies applied by the DAC Network member organizations, and (2) making better use of lessons learned and other evaluation feedback. For realizing these two approaches, they advised a wide range of knowledge management programmes, which can be grouped into three categories:

1. Exchanging information, experiences and cooperation on evaluation among the DAC Network members, without necessarily using ICT applications:
  - a. re-establishing, continuing or enhancing DAC Network activities, such as informal workshops attached to DAC Network meetings, holding regular thematic and regional workshops, and making better use of the evaluation planning matrix; and
  - b. encouraging new (or already planned) DAC Network initiatives such as joint evaluations, synthesis studies and the compilation and aggregation of lessons learned and other evaluation feedback by theme, sector and country for use by the higher echelons of policy management.
2. Increasing the use of the DAC Inventory, the principal Internet-based communication tool for disseminating the lessons learned from evaluations to a range of diverse audiences:
  - a. improving the functionalities of the DAC Inventory; and
  - b. establishing a simple electronic learning/discussion/information platform to facilitate information exchange among DAC Network members.
3. Developing a DAC Network-wide dissemination strategy.

Category 1 consists of suggested programme activities that are already included in or could be easily integrated into the DAC Network's proposed Programme of Work and Budget 2004-2006. These activities could be arranged using well known practices of professional networks (project-based funding by one or more Network members with one taking the lead).

The suggested initiatives in category 2 related to improving the DAC Inventory and the development of other ICT-based networking tools for sharing knowledge. Several respondents recommended that the functionalities of the DAC Inventory be expanded, and that the abstracts database be transformed into a learning platform for sharing lessons learned and other evaluation feedback. They proposed various ways to increase substantially the numbers of submissions by member organizations and of requests from potential users (operational departments of member organizations, NGOs, universities, the media, etc.). Other respondents suggested that an accompanying periodical could be produced, containing reports on lessons learned, synthesis studies (by topic, sector or country) and experiences from impact studies, together with email alerts highlighting new submissions and their contents. These and other recommended improvements are not cost-neutral and maintenance-neutral, however. For CIDA they would require substantial investments in technology and increased annual budgets for content management. Further, the DAC Network member organizations would have to adjust their own procedures and work processes in order to guarantee the timely submission of quality information in prescribed formats.

It seems essential that for a discussion on any future knowledge management policy, including the development and implementation of a DAC-wide dissemination strategy (category 3), the DAC Network first takes a decision with respect to the future of the DAC Inventory.

### **DAC Evaluation Report Inventory: analyzing the collective action problem**

The DAC Inventory is a straightforward abstracts database with an online search functionality and a no-nonsense web interface. All DAC Network members are expected to submit abstracts of their evaluation reports. Thus, over time, the Inventory could offer a comprehensive overview of all evaluation studies that have been carried out, providing a basis for knowing who is doing what, where, with what success, and for exchanging lessons learned and other evaluation feedback.

However, the DAC Inventory is facing a shortage of submissions. The number of abstracts submitted each year has actually fallen, from 778 in 1992 to just 37 in 2002, despite the substantial improvements to the database made by CIDA in early 2002. The full texts of evaluation reports could be uploaded onto the database, and full disclosure of evaluation reports was widely accepted during the Tokyo workshop on Evaluation Feedback and Effective Learning in September 2000. Nevertheless, no member of the DAC Network has yet submitted the complete text of one of its evaluation reports.

Meanwhile, most, if not all DAC Network member organizations have created separate sections on their own websites to present the work carried out by their evaluation departments. Some of these sections are small, and consist of just a list of links to evaluation reports carried out over the last few years. Others are comprehensive web resources and include, in addition to archives of full evaluation reports, evaluation planning schedules, 'lessons learned', guides, and links to other relevant sites. Further, only two of the sites examined (in November 2003) feature a link to the DAC Inventory, and just three include links to the websites of other members of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation.

In the words of three respondents to the e-consultation, 'the idea [of the DAC Inventory] is good, sound and logical. It exists and members appear to want to keep it going'. Why, then, is the DAC Inventory not living up to expectations, and why is there a serious shortage of submissions by the DAC Network members?

To help explain the disappointing performance of the DAC Inventory, some of the lessons learned in knowledge management initiatives elsewhere (section 2) may provide some pointers. For example,

- the document database project seems to be narrowly focused, revolving around classifying and indexing the abstracts of evaluation reports. However, are the intended users looking for the

information being offered, without the added value of, for example, a wide range of statistical analyses, thematic compilations of lessons learned from the evaluation studies, or links to the full texts of the reports?

- sharing abstracts might be a commendable initiative, but has the underlying purpose of doing so been articulated, accepted and supported by the DAC Network members?
- are the staff of the member organizations sufficiently motivated to produce the abstracts and to share them with the DAC Inventory instead of publishing them on their own websites?
- have people and cultural issues been adequately addressed by the individual member organizations when changing their procedures and work processes to ensure that abstracts are regularly submitted?
- have the member organizations collectively signed a simple contract expressing their commitment to the DAC Inventory and its content maintenance over the years?

Knowledge management is not a technology-based concept, yet the e-consultation yielded a large number of technology-based solutions to improve the utilization of the DAC Inventory. For the DAC Network, however, there is no easy solution to its 'collective action problem' by making plans to improve the DAC Inventory itself. The DAC Network first needs to address a more fundamental question than how to improve or expand the functionalities of the DAC Inventory. The DAC Network needs to consider whether it wishes to continue to share lessons learned and other evaluation feedback on the basis of its current centralized knowledge management model, or to opt for a more decentralized alternative.

### **Knowledge management: centralized versus decentralized models**

If the DAC Network opts to continue its current *centralized knowledge management model*, the DAC Inventory with its hierarchical information architecture could well be the basis for its future knowledge management strategy. The abstracts database could be expanded into an evaluation knowledge and learning centre, and its centralized knowledge management model applied to generate added value from the intellectual and information-based assets of the member organizations. This option, however, would require the DAC Network member organizations to

- make a genuine commitment to pool their intellectual and information-based evaluation assets under a centralized knowledge management;
- find adequate solutions for removing the explicit and implicit obstacles that together have resulted in the current collective action problem;
- bring together – as a group of organizations – substantial financial resources for investment in the development of knowledge management routines that will generate the expected added value from their combined intellectual and information-based assets; for the development of additional ICT applications; and for financing ongoing content management activities and marketing its information services; and
- introduce changes in the knowledge management of their own organizations (policies, procedures and work processes) in order to guarantee the timely submission of quality information in prescribed formats.

If the DAC Network opts for a *decentralized knowledge management model*, the collective evaluation knowledge of the member organizations would be (or would remain) dispersed over many websites, databases, libraries and filing cabinets. The member organizations could agree on some knowledge management standards, but in practice the quality of the knowledge, its level of aggregation and its presentation will vary per member organization. The DAC Network will have to accept letting the 'knowledge market' do its work. Some member organizations will put lots of effort and funds into publishing (in print and online) and marketing their reports, lessons learned and other evaluation feedback, while others will attach less importance to such dissemination activities, or may just have smaller budgets to undertake them. In this model, the DAC Network would simply map the depositories of evaluation knowledge available within each of its member organizations and provide directions to those who are looking for specific information. A relatively simple web portal with a variety of spider, syndication and search functionalities, (thematic) alert services, a Q&A facility, etc., would be sufficient to make such this decentralized model work. The content management of the portal could be taken up by one of the member organizations, or it could be outsourced to a professional or commercial organization with sufficient knowledge of development evaluation and specialized in managing the content of such portals.

Although both knowledge management models will be facilitated by technology, the choice of which one to adopt should be based on decisions regarding

- *why*: what are the underlying goals of the DAC Network in sharing lessons learned and other evaluation feedback?
- *what*: which explicit, embedded or tacit intellectual and knowledge assets are being shared?
- *who*: who are the intended users and what are their knowledge needs?
- *how*: what is the best approach for ensuring that information is actually shared? and
- *how much*: what will it cost to set up and maintain the knowledge management system?

## CONCLUSIONS

With an overall response rate to the e-consultation of 52%, the DAC Network members show great interest in enhancing knowledge management among the Network members and their organizations. In doing so, they would like to focus first and foremost on addressing two evaluation learning problems:

- improving the quality of individual evaluations to increase the opportunities for comparing and synthesizing the lessons learned in evaluation studies; and
- increasing the knowledge of the positive and/or negative results of international development cooperation among policy makers and task managers in their agencies.

Through the e-consultations, the DAC Network members provided suggestions for knowledge management programmes to address these two evaluation learning problems that together form a range of practical options for

- harmonizing and standardizing the evaluation methodologies used by the DAC Network members; and
- better utilizing the lessons learned and other evaluation feedback from the member organizations.

How the DAC Network members wish to use Internet-based communication and networking tools to support the implementation of these two knowledge management programmes is less evident. The reason for this inconclusiveness is that the Network's principal Internet-based knowledge sharing tool, the DAC Evaluation Reports Inventory, is based on a *centralized knowledge management model*, but the DAC Network members have yet to commit themselves to pool their organizations' intellectual and information-based evaluation assets under one centralized knowledge management structure. Instead, over recent years all member organizations have created separate sections on their own websites to present the work carried out by their evaluation departments. Some of these sections are small, and consist of just a list of links to evaluation reports carried out over the last few years. Others are comprehensive web resources and include, in addition to archives of full evaluation reports, evaluation planning schedules, 'lessons learned', guides, and links to other relevant sites.

In enhancing its knowledge management, the DAC Network first needs to address a more fundamental question than whether to improve or expand the functionalities of the DAC Inventory. The DAC Network members need to consider whether they wish to share lessons learned and other evaluation feedback on the basis of a centralized knowledge management model and to address the underlying causes of their apparent collective action problem with respect to the DAC Inventory, or to opt for a more decentralized alternative.

A *decentralized knowledge management model* would consist of simply mapping the depositories of evaluation knowledge available within each of the member organizations and providing directions to those who are looking for specific information. This model would better fit the current reality in which the evaluation knowledge of member organizations is dispersed over many websites, databases, libraries and filing cabinets. In this knowledge management model, the DAC Network will have to allow the

'knowledge market' do its work, and accept that some member organizations will put more effort and funds into publishing (in print and online) and marketing their reports, lessons learned and other evaluation feedback than others.

Both knowledge management models will be facilitated by technology. A simple web portal with a variety of spider, syndication and search functionalities, (thematic) alert services, a Q&A facility, etc., would be sufficient to make the decentralized model work. If the DAC Network opts for the centralized management option, it could develop the DAC Inventory into an evaluation knowledge and learning centre, and apply its centralized knowledge management structure to generate added value from the intellectual and information-based assets of the member organizations.

It seems that only after an agreement has been reached on the fundamental issue of whether to adopt a centralized or decentralized knowledge management model, can the network members begin working out the various programmes for improving knowledge management in the DAC Network summarized in this report.

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## APPENDIX 1: PURPOSE, PARTICIPANTS AND RESULTS OF THE E-CONSULTATION

In November 2003, 65 members of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation were invited to participate in an e-consultation with three rounds of questionnaires.

### Purpose

The purpose of this e-consultation was to gather their collective suggestions regarding

- concrete evaluation learning problems that need to be jointly addressed;
- key elements of a knowledge management strategy that the DAC Network could adopt to address these evaluation learning problems; and
- features of the DAC Inventory that could be refined or added ('customer feedback').

### Participation

The participation in the three rounds of the e-consultation was as follows:

Total DAC Network members invited to participate	65	100%
Number of members who participated in		
all 3 consultations	16	25%
2 out of 3 consultations	10	15%
1 out of 3 consultations	8	12%
Total participants	34	52%

The 34 DAC Network members who participated were:

Aude de Amarin, Rob van den Berg, Yves Boulanger, Marie-Helène Bouvard, Jean Louis Chomel, Dominique De Crombrughe, Stephen Curry, Lars Elle, Sakari Erapohja, Julie Feinsilver, Osvaldo Feinstein, Marco Ferroni, Elaine Grigsby, Penny Hawkins, Gregory Ingram, Colin Kirk, Ted Kliest, Thomas Knecht, Toku Kobayakawa, Frederik Korfker, Klaus Krämer, Thierry Lippert, Eva Lithman, Andrea Liverani, Hans Lundgren, Anton Maier, Mohammed Manaï, Hunter McGill, Finbar O'Brien, Lyn Quinn, Guglielmo Riva, Michael Ruleta, William Stevenson, and Kaoru Suzuki.

### Questions asked

The questions put to the DAC Network members in this e-consultation focused on

- identifying and prioritizing concrete knowledge management activities (ongoing and new) to be included in an enhanced knowledge management policy of the DAC Network;
- determining the principal group(s) of beneficiaries of each of these activities;
- articulating concrete results to be achieved for each of the prioritized activities;

- identifying pressing problems that need to be addressed by the DAC Network as a whole; and
- listing the types of support expected from the DAC network secretariat.

In addition, the second round of the e-consultation was intended to gather ‘customer feedback’ on the DAC Evaluation Reports Inventory, the DAC Network’s principal knowledge management activity.

### ***Consolidated results***

In the *first round of e-consultations* the DAC Network members were asked to identify concrete knowledge management activities for the DAC Network, to identify the principal beneficiaries and pressing problems.

The respondents identified seven types of activity that could be part of the Network’s knowledge management policy. These are:

- sharing and disseminating lessons learned and other feedback from evaluations;
- sharing knowledge on evaluation methodologies;
- undertaking joint evaluations and meta-reviews;
- improving network processes and creating a market place for exchanging ideas;
- exchanging evaluation planning information;
- building evaluation capacities; and
- maintaining and using the DAC Inventory.

In the *second round of the e-consultation*, the respondents were asked to prioritize these seven knowledge management activities from the perspective of *enhancing the DAC Network’s effective learning through evaluation feedback*. The large majority of respondents selected the first two activities in the above list as the activities with the highest priority:

- sharing and disseminating lessons learned and other feedback from evaluations,
- sharing knowledge on evaluation methodologies.

In the *third round of e-consultations*, the respondents were invited to list, for each of these two knowledge management activities, (1) what concrete results they would like the Network to achieve during the first year, (2) what existing Network activities should be refined/enhanced, and what new one started, and what support from the DAC Network secretariat would be required to achieve the intended results?

With respect to the two knowledge management activities that were given top priority, the responses can be summarized as follows:

Sharing and disseminating ‘lessons learned’ and feedback from evaluations

### *Objective.*

The respondents articulated one objective for this knowledge management activity:

- Better use of ‘lessons learned’ and other feedback evaluation to increase knowledge of the positive and/or negative results of development cooperation policies within donor agencies, within research institutes, universities and civil societies in the South and the North, and among the media and the public at large.

### *Beneficiaries*

The principal group of beneficiaries identified by the respondents comprises the members and observers of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation. However, they also identified three other groups:

- policy makers and task managers in donor agencies who approve proposals and/or review projects for quality at entry;
- evaluation professionals, consultants, development practitioners in donor agencies, research institutes, universities and civil society organizations in donor and recipient countries; and
- the media and the wider public.

### *General activities*

The following general knowledge management activities were identified:

- collecting and disseminating ‘lessons learned’ (results, outcomes and abstracts of evaluations);
- providing easy access for operational staff to lessons of past experiences that may be relevant to their operations; and
- making optimal use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) to provide effective access to the information contained in the lessons learned.

### *Concrete results to be achieved within one or two years*

The respondents indicated that within one or two years they would like to achieve the following results:

- the inclusion of regular informal meetings to share lessons learned and the results of common studies, and to discuss topics in the DAC Network work programme;
- an ongoing programme of synthesis studies to draw generalized advice from the lessons learned;
- a comprehensive compilation of lessons learned, by theme, sector and country;
- increased numbers of submissions and of requests from users (donors, NGOs and universities) of the DAC Inventory;

- the publication of a periodical with reports on the lessons learned, synthesis studies (by topic, sector or country) and impact studies (possibly combined with a DAC Inventory periodical/activity report highlighting new submissions and their quality);
- the establishment of a learning platform for sharing the results of evaluations and the lessons learned among members; and
- evidence of better use of evaluation feedback by policy makers, programme task managers and evaluators in their work.

### *Pressing problems*

With regard to problems that need to be addressed by the DAC Network, the respondents noted the following:

- the absence of a DAC Network-wide dissemination strategy, with effective, proactive mechanisms to provide lessons learned in a timely and easily accessible manner and to minimize the risk of information overload;
- the underutilization of the DAC Inventory, which needs to be updated and made more user-friendly (for both contributors and end users), with better marketing of its services (to raise public awareness);
- the lack of an appropriate and shared definition of ‘lessons learned’;
- the lack of a freely accessible, comprehensive database of lessons learned;
- the a need for a continuous, systematic exchange of views on evaluation activities within the DAC Network to digest new information; and
- an insufficient aggregation of evaluation results for use by the higher echelons of policy management.

### *Existing DAC Network activities to be refined/enhanced*

The respondents identified the following existing DAC Network activities that need to be enhanced in order to achieve the desired results:

- improve the DAC Inventory by encouraging the contributions of DAC Network members and observers;
- develop the DAC Network’s website in order to fulfil its service functions;
- continue (informal) sessions attached to regular DAC network meetings to share lessons learned and information on methodology development; and
- proactively plan for the development of synthesis studies.

### *New DAC Network activities to be undertaken*

The following new activities need to be undertaken:

- reintroduce regional workshops – with participants from the recipient countries – on evaluation topics and themes in order to bring knowledge to the beneficiaries; and
- speed up the development of proposals for a series of synthesis studies; and
- publish a bulletin on ‘evaluation topics and highlights’.

### *Support required from the DAC Network secretariat*

In order to realize the objectives of this knowledge management activity, the respondents felt that the DAC Network secretariat needs to provide support by:

- becoming proactively involved in planning a programme on synthesis studies;
- establishing templates for reporting; and
- facilitating a more (pro-)active role of DAC Network members and observers.

It was noted that the capacity of the DAC Network secretariat is limited, and suggested that a trust fund (or similar funding mechanism) be established to pool resources and allow for smoother funding and management of network activities.

### *Sharing knowledge on evaluation methodologies*

The respondents’ comments and suggestions regarding this second knowledge management activity can be summarized as follows.

#### *Objectives*

The respondents articulated two objectives for this activity:

- harmonizing the evaluation methodologies used by DAC Network members;
- developing standard methodologies and guidelines for project, programme, sector and country evaluations.

#### *Beneficiaries*

The respondents identified the DAC Network members as the principal beneficiaries of this knowledge management activity. However, other groups in the South and the North could also benefit, such as government programme staff, evaluation professionals, consultants, students and experts in NGOs and the research community.

#### *General activities*

The following general activities were identified:

- sharing information on state-of-the-art evaluation concepts and on approaches applied to new problems such as country evaluations or programmatic lending evaluations;
- sharing lessons learned and the results of innovations (pilots) in evaluation research;
- producing guidelines and papers on particular methodologies and related topics, since some of the learning takes place while compiling papers, discussing drafts, etc.;
- sharing planning information using the matrix developed for this purpose; and
- conducting workshops and other periodic meetings to discuss issues relevant to the objectives of this activity.

*Concrete results to be achieved within one or two years*

The respondents indicated that they would like to achieve the following results within one or two years:

- a comprehensive overview of the evaluation methodologies currently being applied by the DAC Network members;
- an agreement on minimum good practice standards of reliability of data and validity of evaluation methodologies; and
- evidence that the DAC Network is being used as a forum for programming (joint) evaluations.

*Pressing problems*

The respondents identified the following problems that need to be addressed by the DAC Network:

- the absence of a forum for interacting with colleagues on the subjects at hand and for presenting/discussing experiences, innovative approaches (and perhaps ideas?);
- the lack of a single, well structured, easily accessible and up to date source of evaluation feedback for reference;
- methodologies might not adapt quickly enough to political and institutional changes;
- the lengthy production processes of standard methodologies and guidelines (papers);
- the tendency among DAC Network members to share information on methodologies only after they have been fully polished rather than as they are being developed; and
- the limited interest among policy makers in the evaluation activities and results, despite the fact that at international level evaluation seems to be considered a crucial activity.

*Existing DAC Network activities to be refined/enhanced:*

The respondents identified the following existing DAC Network activities that need to be enhanced in order to achieve the desired results:

- improve the utility of the current planning matrix and timely submission of planning information;
- continue (informal) sessions attached to regular DAC network meetings to share information on methodology development, lessons learned, etc.; and
- carry on with the work of the task force on (criteria and standards for quality) evaluation (led by Australia).

*New DAC Network activities to be undertaken:*

The following new activities need to be undertaken:

- establish the task force on joint evaluations that was already foreseen in 2003;
- organize a workshop on harmonizing evaluation methodologies every two years; and
- develop an electronic evaluation learning platform or website (possibly in combination with the DAC Inventory).

*Support required from the DAC Network secretariat*

In order to realize the objectives of this knowledge management activity, the respondents considered that the DAC Network secretariat needs to provide support by:

- providing advice to and getting actively involved in the work of the task force on quality information (may need approval in DAC itself);
- organizing a specific workshop on evaluation methodologies;
- compiling a roster (and list of email addresses) of facilitators and good presenters from the evaluation community;
- taking charge of the collection of information (on planning of (joint) evaluations) from and providing feedback to DAC Network members;
- facilitating of information exchange among DAC Network members; and
- producing guidelines for joint evaluations

It was also noted in this case that the capacity of the DAC Network secretariat is limited, and suggested that a trust fund (or similar funding mechanism) be established to pool resources and allow for smoother funding and management of network activities.

The ‘customer feedback’ on the DAC Inventory gathered during the e-consultation is included in the body of the report (section 3.3).