



ROOM DOCUMENT NO. 1

DAC WORKING PARTY ON AID EVALUATION

**KEY ELEMENTS FROM THE
BRAINSTORMING DISCUSSION**
WP-EV 35th meeting, 14-15 November 2001

Prepared by the Secretariat

Agenda item 4

36th meeting
29-30 May 2002

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I. Introduction

1. As agreed at the 34th meeting of the WP-EV, part of the November 2001 meeting of the WP-EV was devoted to a brainstorming session. Participants divided into break-out groups to informally discuss issues related to the mandate, modalities of work, and priorities for current and future work topics. In order to stimulate the discussion, the Chair had prepared a short note (Room Document No. 6). Members widely expressed appreciation of the initiative and welcomed the opportunity to exchange views on an informal basis.

II. Main areas identified by each group

2. Group 1 was chaired by Colin Kirk (UK), who reported on the four topics it discussed: i) methods and systems, mainly on the need for the WP-EV to tackle the new development co-operation agenda and instruments, such as SWAPs, PRSP, budget support; ii) sharing experience in order to enhance the impact of evaluation lessons; iii) approaches to joint evaluations which alleviate costs and the burden on partner countries, and address new challenges of development assistance; iv) evaluation capacity building and the need to create a sub-group which would build on past efforts, create links with the key bodies involved in evaluation capacity building, and expand work in this area.

3. Group 2 was chaired by Robert Picciotto (WB). Christoph Graf (Switzerland) reported on the strengths and weaknesses of the WP-EV, key areas of interest and suggestions for further work. Among the strengths of the WP-EV are its co-operative approach and its position in the DAC. However, the group felt that too much time in the plenaries is devoted to process issues and not enough to substance, which weakens its effectiveness. Key areas of interest in current work include: decentralisation and local governance, joint work, gender, poverty reduction evaluation methods, and RBM. Suggestions for future work included: enhancing quality in evaluation practice, further integrating partner country views in evaluations, strengthened peer review of evaluation systems, as well as new work modalities such as constituting sub-groups or task forces on topics of importance.

4. Group 3 was chaired by Elizabeth Brouwer (Australia) who reported on the group's discussion on capacity-building issues and the need for pursuing these efforts; evaluation of humanitarian assistance and post-conflict reconstruction; synergies between evaluation and audit functions within agencies and within Members' national systems. Other subjects discussed included the group's interest in impact factors on aid effectiveness (e.g. corruption); and their desire to pursue work involving experience with "poor performers", and the effectiveness of NGO partners and multilateral organisations.

5. On behalf of Group 4, chaired by Rob van den Berg (Netherlands), Goberdhan Singh (Canada) reported on the group's discussion on the mandate of the WP-EV. The group felt that the wording of the mandate did not fully reflect the new challenges in development co-operation. It concluded that the WP-EV's modalities of work should take into consideration further participation by partners as well as new challenges in development. The WP-EV should aim to maximise the utility of its work, and agree to more sharing of findings and lessons between its Members and the broader evaluation and development communities. The group introduced the idea of a "kit" for newcomers and partners involved in the work of the WP-EV, which could include past publications.

III. Summary of the discussions

i) Main points on the mandate

- Members recognised the quality of the work conducted by the WP-EV to date, the value-added for them of collaborative work, and the role the WP-EV has played in fostering collaboration amongst them;
- While some Members felt the mandate should be adapted to reflect various new challenges of development assistance, many others felt it was broad enough to include areas of interest to the WP as these evolve. Several members who had previously represented their country as DAC delegates noted that from a practical point of view, changing mandates could involve a lengthy process in the DAC and, moreover, the present wording of the mandate was not an impediment to any topic being taken up by the WP.
- Many noted the value of learning from each other through joint efforts within the WP-EV.

ii). Main points on modalities of work for implementing the mandate

- The collaborative aspect of the WP-EV's work is important
 - a) to produce lessons based on many donors' experiences which are of value to the development community at large.
 - b) to produce joint guidelines/harmonise methodologies and procedures
- The WP needs to engage with other actors (partner countries, UN, and NGOs) more actively.
- The work conducted in sub-groups is very appreciated by Members. It allows them to deepen their individual involvement in specific areas, and further enhances the quality of the work by the WP-EV as a whole. Workshops permitting focused substantive discussions were also considered useful means of working.
- All recognised the need for the WP-EV to address the evolving challenges of development co-operation, including the Millennium Development Goals, PRSPs, SWAPs, addressing conflict and post-conflict situations, etc.

iii). Some areas for further exploration

The WP should reflect on ways to:

- Increase the sharing of lessons and findings among Members, the DAC and other bodies, in a timely manner.
- Enhance learning from each other, including in the areas of evaluation methods and procedures.
- Expand the audience for some products and invite non-members to participate in certain areas of work.
- Continue to contribute to the work of other groups and learn from others.

IV. Conclusions by the Chair

6. The Chair of the WP-EV concluded the discussion by noting that the brainstorming session and break-out groups had been considered useful and participatory by Members. He noted the suggestion of working in sub-groups on especially challenging themes or issues in the current development co-operation agenda (SWAPs, PRSPs, pre- and post-conflict situations, difficult partnerships, etc.). The WP-EV would

need to collaborate with other groups working on these issues. He evoked the need to be able to bring key findings to a higher level, including the SLM and the HLM in a timely manner, which could require dispensing with standard consultation and approval procedures. In response to the suggestion raised by Germany and several others in the brainstorming discussions, the Chair proposed to prepare a paper on key lessons as background for the December SLM discussion on Afghanistan. He concluded that the present mandate is sufficiently broad to accommodate new challenges and work modalities. Lastly, he requested that the Secretariat prepare this paper which synthesises the discussions in the brainstorming sessions. This would feed into the preparations for the next WP meeting as well as the discussions on the Work Programme for 2003-04.

VII. Next steps for consideration

7. In order to be able to implement some of the possible next steps, Members will need to consider the possibility of devoting more resources to joint work and enhancing the ability of the WP-EV to act in these areas in the future. New activities will require additional support, and Members should consider contributing substantially and financially to joint WP-EV activities as they draw up their regular budgets and in preparing their future evaluation plans and programmes. There is agreement in general on the need for more joint work, but in practice it seems that evaluation planning processes focus mainly on individual agency accountability for results. Next steps could be to:

- Pursue and enhance efforts to undertake joint activities and studies, and foster joint accountability.
- Create task-focused sub-groups to advance work on:
 - a) Evaluation capacity building including recipient-led evaluation.
 - b) Methodologies for evaluating new aid instruments (including PRSPs, SWAPs etc.).
 - c) Joint impact studies.
- Meet demands for timely synthesis studies of evaluation findings (e.g. Chair's note on Afghanistan); new work on "poor performers".
- Further develop approaches to joint evaluations to reduce transaction costs and contribute to learning;
- Address new topics in collaboration with other DAC subsidiary bodies or non-member agencies, with a view to drawing up lessons from experience on:
 - a) Conflict situations.
 - b) Difficult partnership situations.
 - c) Multilateral agencies' effectiveness.
 - d) Exploring synergies between the audit and evaluation functions of members' agencies and within their national governments.
 - e) Work on lessons of ICT support.
- Hold fewer formal meetings, and instead hold more focused workshops on substantive issues driven by task forces and sub-groups. These could also involve other partners who could contribute their experience. These workshops should be driven by Members' needs and could be hosted by them.
- Develop a "kit" for introducing new members to the work of the WP-EV.