



PARIS

DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION DIRECTORATE
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE

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DCD/DAC/EV(2000)6
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Working Party on Aid Evaluation

GLOSSARY OF EVALUATION AND RESULTS BASED MANAGEMENT (RBM) TERMS

The attached document is submitted to the Working Party on Aid Evaluation for review at its meeting on 22-23 November 2000. It has been prepared by Mr. Knut Samset, consultant. An Annex containing terms and definitions submitted by Members will be made available as a background document for the meeting.

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GLOSSARY OF EVALUATION AND RESULTS BASED MANAGEMENT (RBM) TERMS

1. Background

1. In 1986, OECD published its “Glossary of Terms Used in Evaluation”¹. It presented 65 terms used by DAC Members in conducting evaluations, defined in both English and French. It also included specific comments made by various Members, indicating differences in terminology and interpretations.

2. The 1986 DAC glossary has since helped introduce terminology, both in government aid agencies, NGOs and other key institutions involved in international development aid – both in developing and developed countries.

3. Fifteen years later, in September 1999, the DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation initiated the present project to review the current use of terminology in Member countries.² The project aimed to produce a revised glossary that can help reduce terminological differences by confirming agreed terms and encouraging appropriate harmonisation of terms.³

4. The present document is the outcome of an extensive consultation process between Members. Initially, the project built a database of glossaries submitted by Members. The glossaries provided the basis for a review of Members’ use of terminology that was presented to the Working Party on Aid Evaluation’s 32nd meeting at OECD, Paris, on 10-11 February 2000. The database was subsequently revised based on additional submissions from Members. Draft definitions were prepared and thereafter discussed at a Task Force meeting in New York on 22-23 June. A draft glossary was then prepared and distributed to Members for comments in July. The present glossary was finalised after consideration of comments received from Australia, EU, France, the Netherlands, the World Bank, UNDP and USA.

5. The present document is submitted for review at the Working Party on Aid Evaluation’s 33rd meeting in Paris on 22-23 November.

6. The final glossary will be published in English, French and Spanish.

1. Published in ‘Methods and Procedures in Aid Evaluation. A Compendium of Donor Practice and Experience’, OECD, Paris 1986.

2. The work has been done by Dr. Knut Samset, Scanteam international, Oslo, in cooperation with Ms. Kristin Sandberg, M.Sc.

3. This included considering the terminology used in Results Based Management (RBM), which has been introduced in several agencies in recent years.

2. Selection of terms

7. The glossaries submitted by Members provide the basis for this project. It includes 200 terms and about 700 definitions. The terms are listed alphabetically in a separate document that provides an overview of which Members have adopted the terms and how they have defined them.⁴

8. The review of these glossaries indicated that most of the 200 terms have been defined only by a few Members. In fact, only 14 terms have been defined by more than ten agencies. This lack of conformity among Members does not automatically lead to the conclusion that the DAC 1986 Glossary has failed to have an effect on Members' selection of terminology. Over the last 15 years since the Glossary was introduced there has been much activity and inventiveness among Members in using and improving tools and systems for evaluation and quality improvement. DAC's terminology has contributed to a widespread and deeply rooted tradition in the agencies to use variants of project and program cycle management based on the log-frame methodology and DAC's evaluation model. This is reflected in the material.

9. The difficulty inherent in the selection and definition of terms referred to above, as well as the willingness and efforts made to improve tools and practices, suggest that this may be a better time than ever for the DAC to attempt to harmonise methodology, terminology and practice among Members. However, as lessons from the past suggest, harmonisation is not only a matter of making available terminology with clear definitions – it has to be firmly rooted in the dynamics of practices and the use of new methodologies.

10. Over the last years there has been a radical shift in the modes of cooperation between donors and recipient countries that require different approaches and methodologies in management and evaluation. This is illustrated by the introduction of Results Based Management. Today, most Members see evaluation as an integral part of the overall performance management system. However, agencies have developed their RBM systems in relative isolation and the systems differ particularly in terms and definitions of RBM hierarchy levels, and in number of levels. To harmonise RBM terms and approaches is probably more of a challenge than to harmonise between RBM and DAC evaluation terms.

11. RBM systems are in their infancy and some degree of harmonisation of systems and terminology is both necessary and inevitable. There are no fundamental conflicts that would make harmonisation impossible. All major agencies are likely to adopt some RBM system in the near future as a main element in their efforts to improve quality. The need to standardise terminology is obvious.⁵

12. RBM and evaluation is seen as integral elements in a wider quality improvement effort. The revised Glossary presented below therefore includes evaluation, RBM and log-frame terms, as well as common supporting terms.

13. A considerable share of the 200 terms defined by Members has not been included in the revised Glossary. They are either not specific to evaluation practices, such as milestone, lesson, completions, etc., or they are specialized terms that are used by too few.

4. See: Glossary of Evaluation and RBM Terms. Terms and Definitions Submitted by Members. OECD, October 2000.

5. The ambition with RBM to coordinate strategically between different donors at country level would also call for a common terminology seen both from the donors', but particularly from recipient governments' point of view.

14. The revised DAC glossary is limited in number to 68 essential terms. This makes it more likely that Members will adopt the selected terms. The objective criterion for selecting these terms has been the extent to which they have been adopted and/or considered essential by Members. In addition, the relevance of the different terms in relation to predominant methodologies and the way evaluations and RBM are performed today have been considered.

15. The 68 terms include 24 of the terms defined in the 86 DAC Glossary, and an additional 44 terms. Most of the definitions have been simplified and revised to reflect the current use of terms.

3. Delineation of terms

16. In the DAC 86 Glossary, terms were grouped and presented in six categories. In the revised Glossary below, terms are presented alphabetically for easier access, since all members present their glossaries alphabetically. To further ease access for users, the terms are grouped and listed under the headings below:

- Quality assurance
- Stakeholders
- Logical Framework
- Results Based management
- Evaluation measures and criteria
- Types of evaluation
- Tools and analyses

Clearly, these are not mutually exclusive and some terms may appear under several headings. The selection of groups does not indicate sequence or ranking of priority.

17. The final Glossary will be made available on the DAC's Internet homepage, allowing convenient access to the terms both alphabetically and by sub-grouping.

TERMS DELINEATED

Quality assurance

Appraisal
Audit
Evaluation
Monitoring
Performance measurement
Project cycle management
Quality Assurance
Results-Based management
Review

Stakeholders

Beneficiaries
Partners
Stakeholders
Target group

Logical Framework

Activity
Assumptions
Causal relationship
Development intervention
Development objective
Immediate objective
Indicator
Input
Logical framework
Outputs
Purpose

Result Based Management

Accountability
Attribution
Benchmark
Causal relationship
Country strategy
Input
Outcome
Outputs
Performance
Performance indicator
Performance measurement
Purpose
Results framework
Results-Based management
Strategic objective

Evaluation measures and criteria

Accountability
Attribution
Base-line study
Development intervention
Effect
Effectiveness
Efficiency
Evaluability assessment
Feedback
Impact
Indicator
Lessons learned
Relevance
Reliability
Sustainability
Terms of reference

Types of evaluations

Cluster evaluation
Country Programme Evaluation
Ex-ante evaluation
Ex-post evaluation
External evaluation
Formative evaluation
Independent evaluation
Internal evaluation
Joint Evaluation
Meta-evaluation
Mid-term evaluation
Participatory evaluation
Process evaluation
Program evaluation
Project evaluation
Sector evaluation
Sector program evaluation
Self-evaluation
Thematic Evaluation

Tools and analyses

Analytic tools
Base-line study
Data collection tools
Reliability
Triangulation
Validity

4. Glossary with terms and definitions

Accountability

Obligation to provide a true and fair view of performance and the results of operations.

Note: Relates to the obligations of development partners to act according to clearly defined responsibilities, roles and performance expectations, and ensure credible monitoring evaluation and reporting.

Activity

Actions taken or work performed through which inputs, such as funds, technical assistance and other types of resources are mobilized to produce specific outputs (LFA term).

Note: Activity is also used as a general term for development interventions such as projects, programs, loans, grants, etc.

Related terms: component, development intervention

Analytical tools

Methodologies used to analyse information and focus on particular issues during an evaluation.

Note: Common analytical tools include economic analysis, cost-effectiveness analysis, cost-benefit analysis, environmental analysis, gender analysis, institutional analysis, socio-cultural analysis, technology assessment, statistical analysis, qualitative analysis, sensitivity analysis, SWOT-analysis, etc.

Appraisal

An overall assessment of the relevance, feasibility and potential sustainability of a development intervention prior to a decision of funding.

Note: the purpose of appraisal is to enable decision-makers to make rational choices between optional development interventions and contribute to good design.

Related term: Ex-ante evaluation

Assumptions

Expectations about external factors (or risks) which could affect the progress or success of a development intervention, but over which the management has no direct control.

Note: *Initial assumptions* constitute conditions perceived to be essential for the success of a development intervention. *Critical assumptions* constitute conditions perceived to threaten the implementation of a development intervention. (also called *killing assumptions*).

Related terms: external factors, risks.

Attribution

The causal link between observed (or expected) changes and a specific intervention.

Note: Attribution refers to that which is to be credited for the observed changes or results achieved. It is an expression of the extent to which observed development effects can be attributed to a specific intervention, in view of the effects of other interventions or confounding factors

Audit

An independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organization's operations. It helps an organization accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.

Note: the distinction is made between *regularity* (financial) audit, which focuses on the compliance with applicable statutes and regulations; and *performance* audit, which is concerned with the audit of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. By *internal audit* is meant an audit undertaken by the organisation itself, while a group outside the organisation being audited executes an *external audit*.

Base-line study

An analysis describing the situation prior to a development intervention, against which progress can be assessed or comparisons made.

Benchmark

Reference point or standard against which performance or achievements can be assessed.

Note: the benchmark might refer to what has been achieved in the past, by other comparable organizations, or what could reasonably have been achieved in the circumstances.

Beneficiaries

The individuals (the target groups) or organisations that benefit, directly or indirectly, from the development intervention.

Note: The distinction is commonly made between *direct* (intended) *beneficiaries* and *indirect* (not intended) *beneficiaries*.

Causal relationship

The logical connection between related, interdependent results that explains effects and what causes them.

Note: The term is applied both to plausible linkages as well as accurate statistically proven relationships.

Related terms: vertical logic, narrative summary, results chain

Cluster evaluation

An evaluation of a set of related projects and/or programs

Country Programme Evaluation

Evaluation of one donor or agency's entire portfolio of development interventions to a partner country, notably one of the program countries.

Country strategy

A country strategy constitutes a framework of objectives and priorities for a country drawn up and used to steer development assistance

Related terms: strategy, strategic framework

Data collection tools

Methodologies used to identify information sources and collect information during an evaluation.

Note: Common methods include informal and formal surveys, direct and participatory observation, community interviews and focus group interviews, expert opinion, case study, literature search, etc.

Development intervention

Generic term for donor and non-donor support aimed to promote development

Note: Examples are projects, programs, grants, loans, etc.

Related terms: activity, component

Development objective

Same as Goal

Effect

A generic term that refers to the intended and unintended changes resulting directly or indirectly from a development intervention.

Related terms: primary effect, secondary effect, unexpected effect, direct effect, external effect, indirect effect, gross effect, net effect, first round effect

Effectiveness

A measure of the extent to which a development intervention has attained its objectives at the goal or purpose level.

Related terms: efficacy, outcome

Efficiency

A measure of how economically inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to outputs.

Evaluability assessment

Assessment of information requirements and available knowledge in order to determine whether reliable and credible answers can be given to the questions asked.

Evaluation

An assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of an on-going or completed development intervention. The aim is to determine the relevance of objectives, developmental efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of both partner and donor.

Ex-ante evaluation

Evaluation that is performed before implementation

Related term: appraisal

Ex-post evaluation

Evaluation of a development intervention after it has been completed.

Note: It may be undertaken directly after or long after completion. It strives to understand the factors of success or failure, as well as the sustainability of results and impacts. It also tries to draw conclusions that can be generalised to other interventions.

External evaluation

Evaluation of a development intervention conducted by individuals outside the donor and implementing organisations.

Feedback

The process of transmitting information that is generated through evaluation to parties for whom it is relevant and useful. It may include findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons from experience.

Note: Feedback, as distinct from dissemination, is the process of ensuring that lessons learned are incorporated into new operations.

Formative evaluation

Evaluation conducted during implementation with the intent to improve performance.

Note: Formative evaluations may also be conducted for other reasons such as compliance reasons, legal requirements or as part of a larger evaluation initiative.

Related term: process evaluation

Goal

The higher-order objective to which a development intervention contributes (LFA term).

Related term: development objective

Immediate objective

Same as Purpose

Impact

The positive and negative changes produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.

Note: also interpreted as the longer term goal level effects attributable to a development intervention (RBM term)

Independent evaluation

An evaluation carried out by persons separate from those responsible for managing decision making or implementing the development intervention.

Indicator

Quantitative or qualitative variable that provides a simple and reliable basis for assessing achievement, change or performance.

Related term: objectively verifiable indicator, performance indicator

Inputs

The financial, human and material resources necessary to produce the intended outputs of a development intervention.

Internal evaluation

Evaluation of a development intervention conducted by individuals belonging to the donor or implementing organisations.

Joint Evaluation

Evaluations jointly conducted by different donor agencies and/or partners.

Note: Joint evaluations commonly aim to analyse the effectiveness of programs and strategies, the complementarity of efforts supported by different partners, co-ordination, etc.

Lessons learned

Learning from a specific experience that is applicable to a generic situation.

Related term: feedback, development experience, best practices

Logical framework

Management tool used to improve the design of development interventions. It helps to identify strategic elements (inputs, outputs, purpose, goal) and their causal relationships, and the external assumptions (risks) that may influence success and failure. It thus facilitates planning, execution and evaluation of a development intervention.

Note: an LFA matrix is the analytic framework used to present the results of a logical framework analysis.

Related term: Project framework

Meta-evaluation

Evaluation of evaluations performed to judge the quality of evaluations. The term is also used for evaluations designed to aggregate findings from a series of evaluations.

Related term: Evaluation synthesis

Mid-term evaluation

Evaluation performed towards the middle of the period of implementation of the intervention. Its principal aim is to draw conclusions for managing a development intervention.

Related term: on-going evaluation

Monitoring

A continuing function that uses systematic collection of data to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with early indications of progress and achievement of objectives

Related term: performance monitoring

Outcome

A measure of immediate achievements resulting from a development intervention's outputs. (RBM term)

Note: some agencies refer to outcome as the purpose-level achievements of all types.

Related terms: result, impact, effect.

Outputs

The tangible immediate and intended results to be produced through sound management of the agreed inputs. Examples of outputs include goods, services or infrastructure produced by a development intervention, meant to help realize its purpose.

Related terms: results, deliverables, operational objectives.

Participatory evaluation

Evaluation in which representatives of agencies and stakeholders (including beneficiaries) work together in designing and carrying out an evaluation.

Note: the primary focus may be the information needs of stakeholders rather than the donor.

Partners

The institutions that collaborate to achieve mutually agreed upon objectives

Note: partners may include governments, NGOs, international non-governmental organizations, universities, professional and business associations, private businesses, etc.

Performance

The degree to which a development intervention or institution operates according to specific criteria/standards or achieves results in accordance with stated expectations.

Performance indicator

A variable that allows the verification of changes in the development intervention or shows results relative to what was planned.

Related terms: performance target, target

Performance measurement

Activities undertaken by line management to assess performance of development interventions and agency operations.

Related terms: performance assessment, performance monitoring

Process evaluation

An evaluation of the internal dynamics of development intervention and/or institution.

Note: process evaluations emphasize how a product/outcome is produced rather than analyzing the product itself.

Related term: formative evaluation

Program evaluation

Evaluation of several individual development interventions, which converge to attain the same development objectives.

Note: a program is a time-bound intervention that differs from a project in that it may cut across sectors, themes and/or geographic areas, involve several projects, and may be supported by different funding sources.

Related term: Country program evaluation

Project cycle management

A tool for defining the tasks and management functions to be performed in the course of a project's lifetime.

Note: this commonly includes the stages of identification, preparation, appraisal, implementation/supervision, evaluation, completion and lesson learning.

Project evaluation

Evaluation of an individual development intervention designed to achieve specific objectives within a given budget and time period.

Note: a project is an intervention that consists of a set of planned, interrelated activities designed to achieve defined objectives within a given budget and a specified period of time.

Purpose

The improved situation to which a development intervention is expected to contribute significantly if completed successfully and on time (LFA term).

Note: the purpose is the central objective expressed in terms of the expected benefits for the target group. It does not refer to the services provided by the project (these are outputs), but to the benefits that beneficiaries derive as a result of using these services.

Related term: immediate objective, tactical objective

Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance encompasses any management activity that is concerned mainly with assessing and improving quality of development interventions.

Note: examples of quality assurance activities include appraisal, RBM, reviews during implementation, evaluations, etc.

Relevance

The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are still consistent with the target group's needs and priorities and the partner's and donor's policies.

Reliability

Consistence or dependability of data, with reference to the quality of the instrument or procedure used to collect evaluation data.

Note: information is reliable when repeated observations using the same instrument under identical conditions produce similar results.

Result

A measurable change due to a cause-and-effect relationship i.e. the intended consequences of an intervention.

Related terms: output, outcome, effect

Results framework

The results chain that explains how the strategic objective is to be achieved, including causal relationships and underlying assumptions.

Related terms: vertical logic, narrative summary, causal relationship, strategic framework, results chain

Results-Based Management (RBM)

A broad management strategy aimed at achieving important changes in the way agencies operate, with improving performance and achieving results as the central orientation. Results based management provides a coherent framework for strategic planning and management by improving on learning and accountability.

Review

An assessment of the performance of a development intervention, periodically or on an ad hoc basis.

Note: a review is more extensive than monitoring, but less than evaluation. An evaluation is more comprehensive, and places greater emphasis on impact, relevance and sustainability.

Sector evaluation

Evaluations of a selection of development interventions, all of which are located in the same sector, either in one country or cross-country.

Note: a sector includes a specific area of activities such as health, industry, education, agriculture, transport etc.

Sector program evaluation

Evaluation of donor assistance to a national sector provided within a framework of national policies, strategies, activity programmes or activity components, for which the national government must be fully responsible.

Note: sector program support implies that the donor supports national activities consistent with agreed policy concerns, but does not support individual projects or programs.

Self-evaluation

An evaluation by those who are administering a development intervention in the field.

Stakeholders

Agencies, organizations, groups or individuals who have a direct or indirect interest in the development intervention, or who affects or is affected positively or negatively by the implementation and outcome of it.

Strategic objective

The most ambitious result that a donor, along with its partners, can materially affect, and for which it is willing to be held accountable within the time period of the Strategic Objective.

Sustainability

The continuation of benefits from a development intervention (such as assets, skills, facilities or improved services) after major development assistance has been completed.

Target group

The specific group for whose benefit the development intervention is undertaken.

Related terms: customer, client, reach.

Terms of reference

An explanation of the requirements for conducting an evaluation.

Note: the Terms of Reference (ToR) commonly define the purpose and scope of the evaluation, the methods to be used, the standard against which performance is to be assessed, the resources and time required, and reporting requirements.

Related term: mandate

Thematic Evaluation

Evaluation of selected aspects or crosscutting issues in different types of development interventions (poverty, environment, choice of technology, gender equality, sustainability, etc.)

Triangulation

The use of several sources of information, methods or analysts to verify information and substantiate an assessment.

Note: by combining multiple data-sources, methods, analysts or theories, evaluators hope to overcome the bias that comes from single informants, single-methods, single observers or single theory studies.

Validity

The extent to which the information measures what it is intended to measure.

Note: Validity can be compromised by using technically invalid, or overly subjective data collection and analytic techniques. Validity can often be improved by using several different measures, information sources or methods for the same phenomenon, see triangulation.