



ROOM DOCUMENT NO. 3

DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation

UPDATE:
***“EVALUATING GENDER EQUALITY
AND WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT”
A FOLLOW-UP OF THE DAC 1993/94
WID ASSESSMENT ON EVALUATION***

**Submitted by
the Swedish International Development
Co-operation Agency (Sida)**

**31st Meeting
27-28 January 1999**

**UPDATE: 'EVALUATING GENDER EQUALITY AND
WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT' - A FOLLOW-UP OF
THE DAC 1993/94 WID ASSESSMENT ON EVALUATION**

*(Submitted by
the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)*

This note is submitted for information and discussion at the meeting of the Working Party on Aid Evaluation 27-28 January 1999.

I. The Follow-up Review

The purpose of the Follow-up Review is to discover the extent to which the conclusions, observations and recommendations of the DAC 1993/94 WID Assessment have been implemented with regard to evaluation.

Of 31 distributed *Guides for Reporting* to Members, observers and non-DAC OECD countries, replies were received from 15 Members and one observer. Seven Members have not responded.

Of the replies received, thirteen are from Member Countries who also participated in both the main part of the 1993/94 WID Assessment as well as the Theme III Study at that time on WID in Aid Evaluation: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the European Commission, Finland, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. The remaining three replies were received from two members with relatively new evaluation functions (Portugal and Spain) and from a regional lending institution (the Asian Development Bank/ASDB).

Several replies noted the usefulness of the exercise in terms of providing an opportunity for internal review and reflection on their agencies' approaches and practice with respect to issues of gender equality and women's empowerment in evaluation.

Altogether, eight Members and the ASDB carried out special assessments in order to answer question 11 (regarding gender balance 1995-1997 and expertise on evaluation teams). Four members conducted special reviews of a selection of evaluation reports in order to provide detailed answers to questions 16 and 17 in the *Guide for Reporting* (Australia, Canada, Finland and Sweden). Three of these were received and the fourth (Finland) is to be completed in the first quarter of 1999. A further such review was reported to be planned for early in 1999 (Denmark).

In addition to the completed Reporting Guides, nine respondents included examples of Good Practice, special reports, policy statements or other materials, and several of those who submitted only the Guide provided lengthy explanations and clarifications of their replies.

II. Preliminary Findings of the Review

Although comparability in relation to the 1993/94 WID Assessment of some of the information reported is not absolute due to a number of factors, respondents' impressions are that there has been an increase in both the quantity and quality of information on women and gender in evaluation reports. Replies note that the increase in quantity of information is more apparent and marked than that of quality. While the incidence of information on women and on gender issues in evaluation reports appears to be significantly more frequent than five years ago, it is not clear how much quality has improved in terms of the depth and relevance of discussion that the evaluation reports contain.

Several members have undergone and/or are undergoing organizational changes or adjustments in terms of institutional mechanisms that affect evaluation since the 1993/94 WID Assessment. These include new organizational and administrative structures for development cooperation (e.g. Sweden, UK), in management and in reporting (e.g. Belgium, Norway, Switzerland, USA, UK) or revised overall or gender policies that have come into effect since 1993/94 or that are in the pipeline for 1999 or the near future (Denmark). Several have also new policies or procedures with respect to project and programme planning and management that affect and should improve the evaluation function (e.g. Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland), primarily in the direction of a greater emphasis on improved reporting according to specified performance indicators during implementation.

Policy developments in terms of changes and refinements are striking. Fifteen respondents (14 Members and ASDB) have gender policies. Of these, as many as eleven (all Members) have new or expanded policies formulated *after* the 1993/94 WID Assessment. A number of these seem to have been inspired by the Fourth World UN Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Moreover, in several cases, these now include a Strategy, a Plan of action, or are said to be due for updating or further revision in the near future (1999 or 2000).

In terms of other factors, e.g. attention to gender equality and women's empowerment in project and programme design, through performance indicators, compliance mechanisms where inclusion is required in planning and monitoring procedures, the significance of participatory approaches in evaluations, etc., the total picture is very mixed and not entirely conclusive in terms of what conjunction of circumstances and mechanisms actually seems to produce the best results in evaluations and in terms of impact in the field. Some factors and observations particularly noted by members in terms of what seems to work best in terms of (1) the evaluation process and (2) impact in the field include: explicit Terms of Reference; allowing sufficient time and other resources for evaluations; evaluators' competence; small-scale, cross-sectoral interventions directed to women that encompass mutually reinforcing components; changes in reporting systems towards continual performance reports during implementation; policy adjustments; and participatory approaches.

Perhaps not surprisingly, a main preliminary conclusion that can be drawn is that *there seems to be no single and entirely consistent correct way to achieve good coverage of issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment in evaluations*. Factors which seem to promote good coverage include: staff and consultants' expertise and

commitment; compliance mechanisms to enforce requirements; methodological refinements with respect to both project or programme planning and design as well as to evaluation; identifying good, gender-sensitive progress indicators, implementable strategies and good guidance materials for evaluation procedures; soliciting gender expertise in consultants through tendering processes; clear Terms of Reference explicitly requesting information on gender equality and the situation of women; and the active participation of partners and local stakeholders or end-users in evaluations. However, these may be combined in a number of ways, and as stated, there may be more than one conjunction of factors that works acceptably well.

Another conclusion is that a number of serious weaknesses persist, some of which are not unique to evaluation, *inter alia* concerning conceptual categories in evaluations (women? women's empowerment? gender? gender equality? WID? GAD? What about men?), and the difficulty of identifying gender-sensitive indicators, efforts which appear to be still in the very early stages of development.

One feature of the review that affects our understanding of how best to address gender issues, gender equality and women's empowerment through evaluation is the fact that the *Guide for reporting* has been directed only to members and not to partner countries or organizations. A very few of the responding agencies that stated that participatory methodologies were used in evaluations relayed impressions from their partners. Otherwise, the review reflects primarily members' own perceptions of results and impact. In connection with this, one interesting point of notable divergence of experience and perceptions concerns the use and value-added of participatory approaches. A few felt that such methodologies improved attention to gender issues, while others did not. This is clearly one theme that should be explored further, and that should be a point of discussion in the upcoming seminar.

III. Next Steps

A final draft report will be compiled by early May 1999 that will (1) sum up the experiences of the responding agencies; (2) sum up key questions in the *Guide for Reporting*; (3) identify a selection of a few interesting cases of good practice in the field and of exciting initiatives in terms of policy or methodological adjustments from among the materials submitted, in terms of what might benefit evaluation capacity; and (4) provide recommendations on the format and timing of the workshop in the late fall of 1999 in which some partners will participate, to discuss the findings of the review and the implications it has for building evaluation capacity with respect to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Members are invited to discuss particular points in this Room Document and to contribute their impressions of these.