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**DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation**

*OUTCOME OF THE REGIONAL  
SEMINAR AND WORKSHOP ON  
EVALUATION CAPACITY  
DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA  
Abidjan – Côte D'Ivoire  
November 16-19, 1998*

Submitted by  
the African Development Bank

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**OUTCOME OF THE REGIONAL SEMINAR AND WORKSHOP  
ON EVALUATION CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA  
HELD IN ABIDJAN – COTE D’IVOIRE - NOVEMBER 16-19, 1998**

**1. Introduction**

1.1 The Regional Seminar and Workshop on “Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Development in Africa” held in Abidjan, 16-19 November 1998, brought together delegates from some 12 African countries, donors and private sector professionals in order to take stock of the progress that has taken place in the Continent and to share lessons of experience gained so far by African governments. For some time now, public sector reform, public expense control, and evaluation capacity development have attracted much attention from developing country governments and donors alike. Conferences, meetings and training sessions have been held in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. In 1990 the first of these conferences had been held in Abidjan; eight years later it was time to take stock of what African governments and donors had accomplished.

1.2 The first seminar on evaluation in Africa, conducted jointly by the African Development Bank (ADB) and the DAC was held in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire from 2-4 May 1990. Its objectives were:

- To promote a better understanding of the evaluation needs as perceived by the African countries themselves;
- To explore the ways and means of strengthening self-evaluation capacity of African countries;
- To sensitize African countries on the contribution of evaluation as an efficient development management tool;
- To identify the means of assistance to be put in place by donors for the strengthening of the evaluation capacity of African countries; and
- To evaluate the training capacity and explore ways of exchanging at the regional level, the experiences acquired by the countries of the region.

1.3 Though these objectives may not all have been followed by specific or concrete actions by donors and national government alike, the growing demand for monitoring and evaluation systems is proof that the 1990 ground-breaking seminar did impact on many administrative structures.

1.4 The 1998 Abidjan seminar (November 16-19), which was attended by 40 participants from 12 African countries<sup>1</sup> and the same number from Development Assistance Agencies, was a follow-up of many of the points raised eight years before. It proposed:

- To have an overview of the status of evaluation capacity in Africa in the context of public sector reform and public expenditures management;

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<sup>1</sup> Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe.

- To seek a consensus on the purpose, elements and processes of monitoring and evaluation (M & E) in support of development;
- To share lessons of experience about evaluation capacity development concepts, constraints and approaches in Africa;
- To identify strategies and resources for building M & E supply and demand in African countries;
- To provide tools for developing a country M & E action plan;
- To provide country teams, representing 12 African countries, sufficient knowledge and skills to develop preliminary action plans for Monitoring & Evaluation (M & E) systems, based on each country's individual circumstances;
- To create country networks for follow-on work.

1.5 The African Development Bank appreciates the contribution of the sponsors<sup>2</sup> and those who provided invaluable assistance in preparing the agenda, chairing or moderating sessions and group discussions, and presenting case studies and experiences.

## **2 Summary of Discussions and Outcome of the Seminar**

2.2 Discussions during the Seminar underlined important trends in African governments and aid agencies. *First*, there is a global trend towards more accountable, responsive and efficient government. *Second*, the role of evaluation within individual development assistance agencies is gaining in clarity and effectiveness. *Third*, the outlook for development partnership, across the development community is brighter than it has ever been. With the spread of results based management there is a growing demand for evaluation capacity development (ECD) programs that would help foster better planned public sector reforms and more transparent public expenses procedures.

2.3 The diversity of experiences presented in the papers submitted (1) by the participants of the 12 African countries present at the workshop, and (2) by the representatives of funding agencies made quite clear that no standard ECD approach was best. Significant factors influenced the adoption, organization and dissemination of evaluation processes :

- Differing administrative cultures;
- The degree and depth of determination to adopt evaluation methods;
- The level of technical knowledge in this field;
- The weak demand for evaluation in many countries.

2.4 In light of these factors it was widely suggested that a customized, adapted approach, based on a diagnosis of the specific set of factors for each case, was the most promising avenue of action.

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<sup>2</sup> The World Bank Group;

- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP);
- Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA);
- Norway's Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC);
- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

2.5 In their diagnostic, the country groups identified situations of weak (even very weak) demand and supply for M&E activities. Recurrent themes of their diagnostic can be identified:

- Many groups felt that the legislative and/or administrative frameworks were not adapted to the needs of M&E activities. They did not authorize its expansion in new sectors nor did they offer any encouragement or adequate protection to civil servants in the field.
- Though some countries have built a core evaluation sector, weak coordination between ministries hampered its development and the building of a credible accountability system.
- Most groups noted that training had been the major constraint to the emergence of a reliable supply of local expertise.
- Without proper budget allocations M&E becomes an empty shell, another case of wishful thinking.

2.4 The proposed action plans, though not the product of an official function, did isolate important, recurrent themes:

- Institutional support both inside and outside Africa for ECD is seen as crucial. Whether it be improved legislation, a new set of administrative guidelines for evaluation, increased awareness to these problems of national governments, donors, or international organizations, every avenue must be used. Indeed it may well be that there is a need for action plans devised and programmed by African governments but that an “Action Plan for Donors” may also help sustain the momentum;
- Training support in Africa (on M&E or on evaluation concepts, methods and practices) appeared as the backbone for any ECD programme;
- Different databases were suggested: (1) one with evaluators (practitioners, consultants, government officials in-charge of M&E, auditing boards, private sector firms), this could be the first step towards the creation of an African Evaluation Society; (2) another that would collect and make accessible lessons learnt and best practices of M&E operations.

2.6 In an informal meeting of Donors participants highlighted that there are different levels among country participants evidenced by the credibility/quality and reliability of country action plans developed during the workshop. Donors’ Experience on ECD in Africa and the result-oriented approach of Donors have led to the adoption of a prudent approach concerning Donor support. Prioritization of actions to be undertaken by Donors and the demand-driven approach are pre-requisite for ECD in Africa. Possible approaches would be twinning arrangements to support auditing institutions or management bodies, research institutions, scholarship programmes in African universities on audit and evaluation. Other approaches would be joint evaluations (where possible) and advocacy at the policy level to promote M&E systems and its usefulness at the sectoral level or within the frame of the policy dialogue with governments. Coordination among Donors is also necessary in order to select countries where the demand and supply for evaluation were identified. Country Operations in Donor respective Institutions should be informed on the achievements/results of the Seminar for a follow-on work on ECD from the operational side.

### **3 Concluding Remarks and the Road Ahead**

- 3.2 The seminar achieved its immediate objectives of promoting a better understanding of the evaluation needs as perceived by the African countries themselves, creating an incipient network of evaluators and in providing them with sufficient knowledge to allow them to develop preliminary action plans for Monitoring & Evaluation in the context of public sector reform.
- 3.3 Discussions and exchanges during the seminar sent a clear signal that the trend towards more responsive, accountable and efficient government is lasting and will influence future development strategies. They also underlined that not all countries were at the same level of institutional development in ECD; that each country followed its specific path according to its administrative culture. This then suggests the adoption of a step by step approach, tailored to the needs and stage of each country. A diagnosis of demand and supply for evaluation should be initiated in partnership between donors and the concerned country so as to identify an action plan.
- 3.4 The road ahead can only be described as complex and full of important challenges. Constraints to the development of a demand for evaluation capacity in Africa must be lifted; coordinated efforts at the country level may help resolve the obstacles to the supply of effective, credible and trained expertise. Harmonization in ECD strategies has not been optimal and hence the match between demand and supply has been lacking.
- 3.5 The Report on proceedings of the Seminar and Workshop which will be circulated early February 1999, will also be distributed to all core ministries in country participants. Priority for ECD within the Donor Operational Departments should also lead to an "Action Plan for Donors" in order to help sustain the momentum and the environment conducive to strengthened M&E systems and evaluation culture in Africa.