

DAC NETWORK ON DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION

Workshop on Joint Evaluations *Challenging the Conventional Wisdom - the View from Developing Country Partners* 20-21 April 2005, Nairobi, Kenya

BACKGROUND NOTE

Introduction and Rationale

The DAC has asked the Network on Development Evaluation¹ to review and analyse past experiences and options for the future for joint evaluations. A literature review and consultations with 100 representatives of donor agencies (bilateral and multilateral), civil society, and consultants have so far been undertaken. The Nairobi Workshop is the vital final stage in the consultation process; and solicits the view from developing country partners. We will have two overall objectives: (1) To review past experience of joint evaluations and to analyse their benefits and challenges; and (2) To develop recommendations on how joint evaluations should be planned, implemented and followed-up for the maximum benefit of all partners. National consultants and representatives of partner governments have been invited to participate.

Context and Background

Joint evaluations have been on the development evaluation agenda since the early 1990s. The 1991 *DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance* state, “joint donor evaluations should be promoted in order to improve understanding of each others’ procedures and approaches and to reduce the administrative burden on recipients”. The principles also underline the importance of involving the aid recipients.

Some, but not all, aid agencies have made significant efforts in delivering joint evaluations. Flagship joint evaluations in the 1990s included the evaluation of the WFP by Canada, the Netherlands and Norway (1994), the evaluation of EU Food Aid (1997), and the International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience (1996). In 1998, the *Review of the DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance* concluded that the 16 DAC members who had participated in joint evaluations, “found them highly – or, more often occasionally – satisfactory”. The report stressed that joint evaluations “have proven to be satisfactory as they allow first-hand learning from each other, give greater results, facilitate feedback, mobilise knowledge, improve follow-up and save resources”. However, respondents also voiced reasons for concern, namely “higher costs, since [joint evaluations] require more time and resources to assure co-ordination and foster mutual understanding. Hidden agendas, different approaches, too general and diplomatic conclusions as they have to combine different interests, increased complexity and delays and different political objectives, also work against effective joint evaluations”.

In 2000, the Evaluation Network published a guidance booklet; *Effective Practices in Conducting a Joint Multi-Donor Evaluation*. Since then, we have seen a range of joint evaluations, including: *Joint Evaluation of the Road Sub-Sector Programme Ghana* (2000) led by Denmark; *Toward Country-led Development* (2003) a World Bank initiated evaluation of the CDF; *Local Solutions to Global Challenges: Towards Effective Partnership in Basic Education* (2003) initiated by the Netherlands; and *Addressing the Reproductive Health Needs and Rights of Young People since ICPD, The Contribution of UNFPA and*

¹ The Network on Development Evaluation is a subsidiary body of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Its purpose is to increase the effectiveness of international development programmes by supporting robust, informed and independent evaluation. The Network is a unique body; bringing together evaluation managers from thirty bilateral and multilateral development agencies. The Network improves evaluation policy and delivery by sharing good practice among its members and by collaborating on joint studies, reports and guidance documents. It seeks to improve aid effectiveness by supporting the development of operational and policy lessons from evaluations. The Network also facilitates collaboration on joint and multi-donor evaluations and synthesis studies. In addition, the Network is committed to enhancing evaluation capacity development in partner developing countries; for increased transparency, accountability and development effectiveness.

IPPF (2004) led by Germany. Other recent or ongoing efforts include the evaluation of *IFAD*, of the *Enabling Development Policy of WFP*, of *Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons*, of the *International Trade Centre*, of the *Triple C Concept in EU Development Co-operation*, and of *General Budget Support*.

The significant number of joint evaluations in recent years may suggest that the evaluation community is responding to current paradigms in development policy and delivery. In the context of SWAPs, PRSPs, basket funding and budget support it becomes increasingly difficult for any one donor to disaggregate and evaluate its own individual impact. Joint evaluations, therefore, may offer a way for two or more agencies to review and assess their common impact. In March 2005, at the DAC High Level Forum, the international community also reaffirmed its commitment to ownership, harmonisation, alignment, results and mutual accountability in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. In these contexts, there is an urgent need to review past experience of joint evaluations and to develop clear recommendations on how they can best be planned, implemented and followed-up in the future.

Key Issues: Workshop Day One

The first day of the workshop will look back and review past experience of joint evaluations. Key questions likely to be addressed will include:

What do we mean by joint evaluations?

The *DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management* defines a joint evaluation as one, “to which different donor agencies and/or partners participate”. This implies a double meaning in the term joint evaluations; they can be either a joint effort between several donors and/or a joint effort involving the partner country or aid recipient. Also, joint evaluations may involve two or twenty partners, all of which may be involved equally or some may be ‘silent partnerships’. Do we need a new terminology to distinguish between the various significations of the broad term ‘joint evaluations’?

What have been the benefits and challenges of joint evaluations?

When donors work together to undertake joint evaluations, does this increase or decrease the transaction costs for the aid recipient? When donors work together does this increase their power, and weaken the voice of southern partners? When joint evaluations include the aid recipients, does this create real partnership and joint ownership of the process? Do joint evaluations carry more or less legitimacy in the eyes of their target audiences? Do joint efforts facilitate evaluation of cooperation and harmonisation? Do joint evaluations encourage mutual learning and capacity building? Do we want more or fewer joint evaluations, and whose interests do they really serve?

Key Issues: Workshop Day Two

The second day will look forward to the future, and ask how joint evaluations should be planned, delivered and followed-up for the maximum benefit of all partners. Key questions are likely to include: Do we need improved mechanisms to help coordinate upstream planning for joint evaluations? What roles should different partners take within a joint evaluation? What kinds of governance/management structures work best? How do we encourage partnership between countries and enable aid recipients to take real ownership of the evaluation process? How should we involve civil society and a broader range of stakeholders? How do we create a level-playing field for all partners? What role should consultants take, and how should they be managed? What are the common challenges experienced, and how can they be overcome?

Workshop Follow-Up

The report, *Joint Evaluations, Recent Experiences, Lessons Learnt, and Options for the Future*, which will integrate the workshop outcomes and recommendations, will be presented to the DAC Network on Development Evaluation in June 2005 and published thereafter. This work is expected to have significant influence on the way that future evaluations are undertaken.