Supporting evaluation capacity development in partner countries –
Next steps for the Network

This room document and accompanying draft background paper have been prepared by the Secretariat for discussion at the 9th meeting of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 15-16 June 2009.
Moving forward on evaluation capacity development: Next steps for the Network

Introduction

The Evaluation Network is committed to “promote and support evaluation capacity development (ECD) in partner countries.” (Network Mandate) Since the early 1990’s members, both individually and collectively, have actively contributed to improving partner evaluation systems and skills in a variety of ways. There is consensus among members that improving partner capacity is important – particularly in the context of commitments to improve mutual accountability and partner ownership, and efforts to do more joint work with country partners. A strong knowledge base has developed within the Network, including various studies and numerous member experiences with capacity development activities and joint evaluations.

Drawing on these resources and other literature, the Secretariat has outlined some points for discussion and drafted the following background paper to inform a discussion of next steps for Network engagement in evaluation capacity development. The draft paper clarifies capacity concepts, distils some emerging lessons on good practices, and provides suggestions to shape a more strategic way forward.

Points for discussion

To continue building on past efforts, the Network should consider developing an approach to ECD that maximizes Network members’ unique skill sets and leverages the group’s niche in the international evaluation community. Such an approach might concentrate on: i) continued learning about how member evaluation work (including joint evaluations) impacts partner country capacity; ii) further development of emerging lessons to inform donor work in this area and develop practical advice for members; and, iii) facilitation of deeper engagement with partner groups and other networks.

There are some potential challenges to implementing the recommendation to “exchange capacity-building plans in order to identify areas in which collaboration would be useful” (Challenges, opportunities and approaches for increasing joint donor programming of evaluations, SADEV 2008). A significant investment would be required to coordinate such an exchange. Furthermore, given that much capacity work is undertaken outside of evaluation departments (i.e. not by Network members) this would also imply an additional burden on members to coordinate within their agencies.

A more feasible approach could be to focus on practical guidance directly relevant to Network members. To this end, a short practical “tip-sheet” or policy brief for donor evaluation managers could be developed, focusing on how to work in ways that are conducive to supporting (not undermining) partner capacity. Such an output would centre on the capacity implications of members’ own evaluation policy and practice.

In addition to the Network’s own evaluation capacity development work, and member support for various capacity interventions, there may be opportunities for enhanced collaboration on capacity development with partners and other networks, such as IDEAS, the Managing for Development Results Communities of Practice in Africa and Asia (MfDR CoPs), national and regional networks in partner countries, the African Capacity Building Foundation, the World Bank’s regional ECD centres initiative, and others. Links with other ongoing OECD DAC work (on country systems use and on capacity development, for instance) could also be strengthened.

- Are members interested in further synthesising ECD knowledge and lessons?
- Are members interested in a practical ECD tip-sheet for managers?
- Are there specific comments on the background paper or other suggestions?
- How could the Network enhance collaboration with other ECD organisations/efforts?
A strategic approach to Evaluation Capacity Development for the DAC Network on Development Evaluation: What is known and suggestions for moving forward

Draft Background paper by the Secretariat for the 9th Meeting of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation, June 2009

Introduction

There is consensus in the DAC Network on Development Evaluation regarding the importance of supporting the development of partner country evaluation capacities, especially in the context of more joint approaches and a strong emphasis on improving effectiveness. Partner evaluation capacity plays a key role in enabling ownership of development evaluation and ensuring mutual accountability for development results, and is a decisive factor in improving alignment with partner evaluation systems.

Since the early 1990’s, Network members have actively contributed (both individually and collectively) to supporting partner country evaluation capacity through a variety of mechanisms. The Network’s mandate includes the directive to “promote and support evaluation capacity development in partner countries.”

In light of this mandate and building on past experiences, this paper describes what development evaluation capacity is and why it is important, provides an overview of past capacity development work by the Network, outlines some of the key lessons that are emerging from these experiences, and then provides some suggestions for moving this agenda forward. The goal is to assess where the Network and its members are today and how support for strengthening partner countries’ capacity to evaluate could be more effective. The paper does not address the issue of evaluating capacity development interventions, but, rather, addresses direct and indirect efforts to develop, strengthen and maintain partner capacities to initiate, design, conduct and use evaluation.

This work draws on a broad review of past Network documents, member presentations, OECD DAC publications and the work of other development organisations (notably the World Bank and the UNDP) and academic literature. Specific sources are cited throughout and a list of selected references is provided at the end of the document.

I. Setting the stage

Core definitions

Development evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed development project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results (OECD, 2002). The aim of evaluation is to determine the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the activity, policy or programme as relates to development goals. Evaluation can serve a variety of functions but is principally used for learning and/or accountability purposes.
Within the Network, the term has been used primarily to describe evaluation of official development assistance (ODA) and development co-operation activities, though this concept has evolved over time. In the past, development co-operation has often been evaluated by and for donor development agencies exclusively. Greater emphasis is now being placed on mutual accountability, joint approaches and country-leadership. In this context, a broader definition of evaluation is needed. Therefore, the term evaluation is used more broadly in this paper to cover evaluation accountability and learning needs beyond ODA, including evaluating developing country governments’ own efforts to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development.

**Evaluation capacity** can be defined as the ability of people and organisations to define and achieve their evaluation objectives (OECD, 2006). Capacity involves three interdependent levels: individual, organisational and the enabling environment, that together demand, supply and use evaluation. The capacity to evaluate includes the power to set the evaluation agenda, determining what is evaluated and what questions are asked. Capacity covers the complete evaluation process, from the demand for evaluation, initiation and carrying out of evaluations, to learning from and disseminating the results. This includes the evaluation system (policy, legal and institutional arrangements) as well as the wider accountability environment. Capacity issues implicate actors across the entire range of stakeholders involved in and affected by development co-operation, including not only governments but also intended beneficiaries, civil society, implementing partners and the general public in both donor and partner nations.

![Figure 1 Three levels of evaluation capacity](image)

**Evaluation capacity development** (ECD) is understood as the process of unleashing, strengthening and maintaining evaluation capacity. Capacity development is more than a transfer of technical skills. Capacity development is a long-term change process that takes place in the context of ongoing partner and donor efforts to strengthen related systems of management, governance, accountability and learning to improve development effectiveness.

Figure 2 outlines visually the capacity challenge and some general approaches to developing capacity.
Figure 2. Evaluation capacity problem map

Underlying Causes

- Weak accountability systems
- Weak institutions & governance
- Lack of technical skills and resources for evaluation

Problem

Low/inadequate partner evaluation system

Effects

- Little learning and lack of information for decision making
- Low accountability for results

Result

- Poor development results
- Low aid effectiveness

Intervention Package

Target

Strong/adequate partner evaluation system

Outcome

- Information needs met, public policies improved
- Donors and partners held accountable for results

Goal

- High aid effectiveness
- Sustainable development / MDGs
**Why is partner evaluation capacity important to the Network?**

Partner capacity is relevant to the Network specifically because strong partner capacity enables ownership of evaluation processes and outputs, and helps ensure mutual accountability for development results. Capacity is also a key determining factor in the ability of partners to take an active leadership role in joint work. Capacity influences the ease with which donors and partners can work towards better alignment of development assistance evaluation – a commitment made in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and reinforced in the Accra Agenda for Action (2008).

Improving ownership and accountability are essential to advancing aid effectiveness and improving development outcomes.

Improving partner evaluation capacity has become a goal for both donors and partners, as seen by the increasing demand for evaluation training in the south, as well as frequent reports from members of the DAC Evaluation Network on the difficulty of conducting joint evaluations given low capacities. Demands for improved development results and the increased reliance on partner country systems to implement more aligned development strategies have drawn attention to capacity gaps across the board – including in evaluation. Partner capacity is recognised as a “critical missing factor in current efforts to meet the MDGs.”(OECD, 2006b)

Capacity development in the evaluation field specifically should be seen as part of the broader effort to improve public policy making to achieve development goals. Much energy is being devoted to not just increasing the quantity of resources available for development (through public financing, development assistance and other sources) but also to improving the quality of development policies and programmes. Evaluation plays a role in this push to improve effectiveness: good evaluation can contribute to better planning and management of development initiatives to improve effectiveness and enhance domestic accountability systems in partner countries.

The evolution from “donor-centric” ODA evaluation to joint and partner-led approaches has also shifted the discussion from the capacity of donors to the evaluation capacities of partners themselves. While evaluating development co-operation has, in the past, been largely donor-led, it is becoming increasingly clear that donor evaluation alone is not enough. Partner-led evaluation is also needed to ensure reliable and relevant evaluations, and to build partner ownership of development processes and improve accountability to their own populations for development results. Commitments to alignment have set the stage for more extensive use of local evaluation systems, highlighting capacity challenges at the country level. Furthermore, the domestic accountability needs of partners – beyond evaluating development co-operation – are becoming increasingly apparent.

There is a growing demand for evaluations that move beyond implementation and look at the outcomes and impacts of development activities. In this context, there is some appreciation that partners and beneficiaries may provide information about the “real impacts” of development assistance that would be missed if these stakeholders are ignored.

**What has the Network done?**

Evaluation capacity development has been on the Network’s agenda since its creation. The OECD DAC Principles on Development Evaluation (1991) laid the foundation, stating that, “Involving all
parties concerned [in evaluations] gives an opportunity for learning by doing and will strengthen skills and capacities in the recipient countries, an important objective which should also be promoted through training and other support for institutional and management development.” Current Network work focuses on learning about capacity development and facilitating the sharing of member experiences.

In donor agencies, responsibility for evaluation capacity development is often shared between evaluation departments (Network members) and those charged with technical assistance, governance, capacity development, or other programme sectors. It can involve technical assistance, and has often been focused on training evaluators. Because of this division of mandates, a 1996 study concluded that it is, “very unlikely that bilateral evaluation departments can take operational responsibility for support to evaluation capacity building” because of their independence and capacity limitations. Nonetheless, many Evaluation Network members do carry out ECD activities, or serve as advisors to ECD efforts undertaken elsewhere in their agencies. As the study continued, “bilateral evaluation units [can use] their professional competence to advise and support operational units’ activities and promote ECB in guideline and policy formulation.” (Schaumburg-Müller, 1996) The Network has maintained capacity development in partner countries as a key work stream for most of its history.

A series of regional seminars were held in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean in the 1990s. These joint efforts of the OECD DAC and the regional multilateral development banks aimed at promoting and strengthening evaluation capabilities in developing countries. Though there was wide consensus and commitment to improving capacity, the resulting action plans gained little traction and did not result in significant improvements. These efforts, though ultimately unsuccessful, demonstrated a growing consensus on ECD strategies and priorities, laying the ground work for later efforts. (IADB and OECD DAC, 1993)

A 1996 study on donor support to and experiences with ECD found extensive efforts underway in donor agencies, though many of the activities were not regularly assessed and focused primarily on individual training. (Schaumburg-Müller, 1996) The experiences of members lead to a number of conclusions but also raised a number of issues, highlighting knowledge gaps in this field – particularly in regards to sustainability and sequencing. The study described how, in order to continue building partner capacity, the Network (then the “DAC Expert Group on Aid Evaluation”) could: “promote a common methodology and terminology; encourage and facilitate members in coordinating sector and country evaluations and in sharing them with host-country evaluation institutions; continue supporting regional networking to promote exchange of expertise; support regional and south-south seminars and training; and, facilitated the exchange of information on donor [ECD] support activities and promote the assessment of these activities.” The Network and its members have been active on all of these fronts, to a greater or lesser extent, since then. The ongoing sharing of experiences has shed light on some of the issues raised in the report, particularly in the areas of donor coordination, joint evaluation and avoiding donor biases.

In 2003, a workshop “Partners in development evaluation – learning and accountability” was held in Paris. Discussions and a number of room documents looked at partner capacity and involvement in joint work and the role of donors in supporting partner capacity, and the resulting publication pulled
A 2006 fact-finding study led by Japan found that extensive ECD work continues. The study included 26 agencies (21 bilateral and 5 multilateral) and a total of 88 separate ECD interventions were reported including training and scholarships (37), workshops (31), technical support to projects/programmes (18), financial support (18), joint evaluations (22), dialogue at policy levels (10) and other types (8). The diversity of interventions in this area is characteristic of both the multidimensional nature of capacity development work, and of the lack of a clear definition of what exactly constitutes capacity development (which leads to variation in donor reporting). The fact-finding study came up with many suggestions for effective capacity development measures (see Annex 1), which have helped informed member efforts.

At the Third International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results, held in Hanoi on 5 – 8 February 2007, capacity issues were a key dimension in the discussions, underlining the importance of renewed and focused attention to the matter.

Currently, many Network members support international and in-country evaluation training programmes, such as International Program for Development Evaluation Training (IPDET) – created out of recognition of the lack of suitable training opportunities. The Shanghai International Program on Development Evaluation Training (SHIPDET), regional and national evaluations associations, and communities of practice have also been supported by the Network and its members. From a donor perspective, the recent growth in evaluation associations (such as IOCE, AfrEA and IDEAS, and national organisations) is a positive step that brings hope for sounder, increasingly partner-led evaluations of development activities in the future. National and regional evaluation associations have been one of the main entry points for donor work on strengthening evaluation capacities.

In 2008, a study was commissioned on partner country experiences with capacity development in francophone West Africa, based on a survey of partner country stakeholders. Survey respondents highlight that there is much room for improved capacity and that demand is increasing for quality evaluation of development in partner countries. Professional evaluation associations are emerging, highlighting the strong desire of individual evaluators to build skills and contribute to strengthening the accountability environment in-country.

II. What we know today

A number of lessons are beginning to emerge from these and other evaluation capacity development efforts, including lessons regarding the indirect effects of joint evaluations on capacity. The 1996 and 2006 studies show the evolution of donor work in this field over time, and have compiled observations about what works well and what does not. Many of these findings have been confirmed by studies of ECD activities, member experience and feedback from partner countries.
Donor assessments also provide information on what factors contribute to successful (or less successful) evaluation capacity development. Unfortunately, ECD efforts have not always been consistently monitored and evaluated, resulting in low accountability for results and patchy understanding of the relative effectiveness of different ECD techniques. More systematic learning from ongoing/past capacity development interventions, particularly from the partner country perspective, could contribute to refining the list below.

The following section outlines some emerging lessons on the role of external partners in supporting evaluation capacity development in partner countries. These issues could serve as an input to developing further guidance on this topic. The list will need to be refined based on ongoing experience and could benefit from further input from partners.

**Make capacity a priority by including it in programme and evaluation plans**

While country-led and joint evaluation processes can contribute to strengthening individual and institutional evaluation capacities in partner countries, capacity development does not happen “automatically”. Joint efforts are more likely to make a meaningful contribution to capacity when developing evaluation capacity is an explicit goal from the outset. ECD may even be included in the terms of reference (TOR) to ensure that capacity needs are identified and dealt with as an integral part of the evaluation process. This will not only strengthen capacity but also lead to a more effective and higher quality joint process. (Danida, forthcoming)

General good practice indicates that evaluation needs and resources should be identified and addressed during the planning of development activities. Where feasible, evaluation capacity issues should be included as well. For instance a plan for developing evaluation capacity could be incorporated into implementation agreements, country assistance strategies, JAS’s, etc. If evaluation plans are agreed to during the programme/policy design phase this can help ensure timely involvement and buy-in of partners and allow sufficient lead time to address any identified capacity gaps, resulting in a more meaningful level of participation and ownership, and a higher quality evaluation.

For joint evaluations involving partner countries, the capacities needed to participate usefully in the evaluation should be identified early and addressed. This can be done, for instance, by building a “learning by doing” dimension into the evaluation process or by including partners as observers of the evaluation team.

**Capacity development should be owned and controlled by partners**

Capacity development is “necessarily an endogenous process of change” (OECD, 2006) and must therefore be beneficiary-led and owned from the outset. Partners should take the “driver’s seat,” not just in needs assessment, but throughout the ECD programme lifecycle – including identifying priorities, creating capacity development plans and evaluating ECD initiatives. Donors can support and facilitate the strengthening of capacities, but they cannot “import” capacity.

To support early buy-in and ownership (as well as develop higher quality programmes) needs assessments and planning should be participatory, partner-led and thorough. Capacity development
interventions should start with a thorough, evidence based needs assessment or mapping of some sort, including a review of ongoing and past evaluation capacity efforts by other development stakeholders with an eye to co-ordinating with those efforts.

**Pay attention to supply and demand**

Useful evaluation systems are not supply driven, but balance supply and demand for quality evaluation outputs. Many ECD efforts have focused on the supply side of the question: training evaluators, collecting data, producing reports, etc. with not enough attention paid to stimulating public interest in development results, policy response systems, management responses, and other factors that stimulate demand and build an active accountability environment in partner countries.

**Where demand is low, capacity may be hidden**

Often evaluation skills and resources exist but are underutilized or hidden due to a lack of support systems, low demand for evaluation from management or weak accountability systems. These factors must be kept in mind when undertaking evaluation needs assessments and developing strategies. External partners should not assume there is zero evaluation capacity, even if at first glance there is little or no evaluation activity taking place.

**Support from and demand for evaluation at the political level is crucial**

A commitment to and understanding of the benefits of evaluation, especially among top levels within the partner government, helps ensure that evaluation capacities are employed appropriately within a wider environment of accountability. Individual or organisational “champions” with a high level of commitment can be critical in generating momentum towards change and building support among management and staff. Champions should be identified, targeted, and supported in the long run as change facilitators. Emerging lessons suggest focusing efforts on the evaluation function within particular organisations (such as the Ministry of Planning or the Coordinating Office for Development Co-operation) and building institutionalised champions there that can be leveraged to create wider change.

**Tailored interventions are most likely to have a significant impact**

Experience has clearly demonstrated that a one “size-fits-all” approach is not appropriate in evaluation capacity development (nor most other kinds of capacity development for that matter). ECD approaches must be tailored to fit the institutional, organisational and individual capacities of developing country partners (which vary widely).

For instance, middle-income countries Egypt and Sri Lanka have made improvements in their own public management systems, including evaluation (Jayasekera, undated and Kusek, 2008). While supported by donors, these initiatives are largely partner-led. Progress has been impressive even in some low-income countries, for instance, Uganda and Vietnam (Hauge, 2003 and Cuong & Fargher, 2007). Some developing country partners are initiating and carrying-out their own evaluation agendas with donors playing a consultative or back-up role. On the other hand, the capacity challenges in certain contexts, particularly situations of fragility and conflict, can be daunting and will
require different forms of engagement. In these situations donor action must be timely, sustained and carefully targeted to reach the critical management functions first. Evaluation capacity may take a back seat.

The need to have *locally relevant* evaluation training is one reason why the availability of evaluation training opportunities *in-country* has been cited as being a significant factor contributing to the success of ECD activities. (OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 2006)

**A “learning-by-doing” approach helps strengthen trust and capacity**

One of the best ways to build capacity is by using it. Many field experiences confirm that one of the most effective adult learning techniques in evaluation is hands-on “learning by doing.” Directly involving staff and officials in evaluation work, including design and testing of the methodology, data collection, TOR drafting, report writing, dissemination and follow-up, is one of the best ways to improve both individual capacity and the management capacity of institutions. This finding is supported by the Vietnam case study (Cuong & Fargher, 2007) as well as a short survey of participants in phase I of the “Evaluation of the Implementation of the Paris Declaration,” among others. In some cases, inclusion of partners as observers of external evaluation teams, or a mix of external and self-evaluations can be used to meet these learning needs while maintaining a sufficiently independent evaluation process. (Danida, forthcoming)

Furthermore, reports from partner countries, including many involved in the joint Paris Declaration evaluation, indicate that one of the most important dimensions of effective joint processes is the level of trust among partners. When trust of partner country representatives is demonstrated by giving them responsibility and concrete ways to contribute to the joint process, ownership is strengthened and confidence reinforced. Giving control responsibility for evaluation projects directly to partner stakeholders demonstrates trust and directly reinforces capacity. Some partners indicate that out-dated donor notions of low partner capacity result in existing capacity being overlooked. Capacity that is not used will be lost over time.

In addition there are growing opportunities for “south to south” learning and these can be particularly fruitful. Donors can support and facilitate peer learning efforts, while partner countries take the lead.

**Capacity development efforts must move beyond training**

Evaluation is inextricably linked to the wider accountability system in a society. Citizen voice, freedom of the press, and other dimensions of the enabling environment are perhaps beyond the scope and mandate of evaluation agencies’ but should be kept in mind when conducting evaluations and ECD work in particular. Transparency and accountability in the public sector play a core role in determining if and for what purposes evaluation can and will be carried out.

Capacity building efforts have too often focused solely on technical training or skill building of individuals, neglecting the important role of incentives and the overall accountability environment. Capacity development should address all three levels: enabling environment, organisational, individual. Dimensions of the evaluation system beyond individual skill building require further
attention. In particular, the demand for and use of evaluations and the accountability environment in which evaluation takes place cannot be ignored. For example, a 2004 evaluation of the International Program for Development Evaluation Training (IPDET) found that many participants met strong resistance from within their own agencies and institutions when they attempted to put into practice the evaluation training they had received out of country. The political and “cultural” dimensions of institutions were unaffected by trainings targeted at individuals, resulting in frustration and failure to use capacity that had been created. (Jua, 2004)

The benefits and risks of evaluation must be clear

The benefits of evaluation must be clear, especially when trying to convince staff and decision-makers of its usefulness. An early and visible “success,” for example a high quality evaluation that has a major policy impact perceived by stakeholders as meaningful, can be critical in building sustainable support in and around evaluation systems. Such successes raise the positive incentives for individuals to participate in evaluation and can increase individual demand for training and other capacity development activities. High visibility of evaluation outputs helps improve the accountability environment, making it more likely that quality evaluations will be produced and used consistently.

As with all processes of change, there will be “winners” and “losers” as capacity development advances. These and other risks should be taken into account, especially to avoid having progress undermined by those who perceive evaluation as a threat.

Strategic co-ordination improves the effectiveness of capacity development

The lack of donor co-ordination in aid evaluation creates undue burdens on both donor and partner evaluation systems. The burden of repetitive, overlapping, or contradictory evaluation visits, information requests, approaches, criteria, etc. can drain existing capacity. In an environment of scarcity (in terms of resources available for evaluating) a priority should be placed on utilizing existing capacity (human, financial, organisational) as efficiently as possible to serve the learning and accountability needs. This will require co-ordination among external partners as well as alignment with partner efforts.

Co-ordination with other donors and agencies in joint work improves the efficacy of capacity development intervention, especially when beneficiary and partner stakeholders actively shape the joint process.

Strengthen national and regional professional organisations

Evaluation associations play a critical role in strengthening and sustaining M&E capacity, providing opportunities for useful dialogue, interaction and learning. (Bah Tall, 2008) National evaluation organisations can serve as learning hubs, offer training and access to resources, and encourage support in communities of individuals committed to evaluation and accountable governance. Evaluation organisations can help donor agencies identify potential evaluation “champions” and evaluators to contribute to joint work. Professional associations also contribute to building an enabling environment for the growth of evaluation culture. (IOCE, 2006)
III. Points of departure for framing ongoing work

Defining our niche

In the vast field of capacity development it is important to stay focused on the value-added of the Network’s contribution. Future efforts should draw on the Network’s unique donor perspective and position within the international evaluation community, to stimulate thinking and support coordinated approaches to evaluation capacity development.

Training and technical co-operation per se are not the competitive advantage of the Network. Many other evaluation trainings, resources and specialists already exist, including those in other divisions of member agencies. Several of the multilaterals – particularly the UNDP and the World Bank – are actively engaged in ECD work and have large knowledge banks built up in this area.

The Network is made up of evaluation managers and specialists – a group with valuable evaluation experience and expertise to draw on. The Network itself is well positioned in development policy circles to serve as a learning hub. In defining the Network’s ongoing strategy it will be helpful to focus on the following key areas.

Strengthening the Network’s role in evaluation capacity development

Despite the efforts described in section one and the wealth of experience-based knowledge that has been accumulated, capacity outcomes have sometimes been disappointing. Dissatisfaction with slow progress has led to the realisation that efforts to develop capacity should focus not just on doing more but doing better ECD work. (Hauge, 2003) This means, in particular, co-ordinated approaches that are partner-led, beneficiary-owned and targeted to address all three levels of capacity (individual, institution and enabling environment). A package targeting the three capacity levels may best be achieved through partnerships between agencies to address various points within the evaluation system simultaneously.

With this in mind, it is recommended that the Network continue to serve as a hub for sharing and learning from ECD experiences and consider building on these experiences to development concrete advice to guide donor ECD work and make donor evaluation work itself more conducive to partner capacity development.

In addition to participating in joint and partner-led work and supporting improvement and co-ordination of specific ECD-targeted activities, members might further explore the capacity implications of their own evaluation policies and practices. A starting point could be to develop some basic tips on how donors themselves can evaluate in ways that maximize capacity spill-over effects, minimize the burden on partners, balance donor and partner evaluation needs and efficiently use evaluation resources (money, personnel, time), etc. A list of these and other “capacity-friendly” evaluation policies and practices could be further developed to share support member policy and practices that nurture and compliment partner country evaluation capacity (and avoid undermining ownership and capacity). (UNDP, 2007) If there is demand from members, this could be developed into a tip-sheet or policy brief.
Considerable efforts on capacity development are being made in other parts of the DAC particularly in the DAC MfDR and aid effectiveness work streams where synergies with ECD may be considerable. A special coordinator for capacity development has been created within the Secretariat and is now working with DAC members to further efforts for sustained and coordinated CD contribution. (Hradsky, 2008) This work was highlighted in the Accra Agenda for Action, which made a renewed call to using partner country systems and set priorities for capacity development.

There may also be room for further collaboration with other ECD efforts underway, notably by regional evaluation networks and groups like AFREA, IDEAS and the Communities of Practice on Managing for Development Results.

As the Network continues collective and individual ECD efforts, and build a strategy for moving forward, this larger context ought to be kept in mind and opportunities for co-ordination and lesson sharing explored.

IV. **Wrap-up and points for discussion**

There is a long standing consensus within the Network that supporting partner evaluation is of critical concern and a top priority for facilitating joint work and enabling country ownership. Many members of the Network have expressed a strong commitment to assisting partners in strengthening their evaluation systems, and this commitment is reinforced in the context of more joint approaches to development.

To continue building on these efforts, the Network should consider a more strategic approach to ECD, maximizing the Network members’ unique skill set and position. Such an approach might concentrate on continued learning and sharing of experiences among members, facilitation of deeper engagement with other groups and further development of emerging lessons.

The following questions in particular could be explored through joint work and further reflection.

**Consolidating good practices**

- What donor evaluation policies and practices are most effective in supporting capacity development (directly or indirectly)? Is there a need for developing further knowledge to guide donors in this area?
- What would a “capacity friendly” approach to donor development evaluation look like?
- In what ways can donors best support wider accountability systems (the enabling environment) in partner countries?

**Co-ordination**

- How could evaluation capacity development work be better coordinated? Does the Network have a useful role to play?

**The role of joint evaluations in developing capacity**

A number of questions are still unanswered in regards to the links between evaluation capacity and joint evaluations. Joint evaluations are thought to be one of the most direct routes for Network members to contribute to strengthening partner capacity. Several reviews of joint evaluations (Paris Declaration and GBS) and a recent study of “Experiences with conducting evaluation jointly with
partner countries” (Danida, forthcoming) have shed some further light on the issue, but questions remain. In order to maximize learning opportunities in joint work members should examine:

- Is the option of joint work with partners considered systematically during evaluation planning/programming? How do members determine that a joint evaluation or use of local evaluators is possible? To what extent are decisions on feasibility made based on evidence of partner capacity (or lack thereof)?
- How specifically do joint and partner-led evaluation exercises facilitate capacity development – is capacity development a goal of joint work, or simply a (potential) by-product?
- Can the Network build more information and share experiences of successful strategies for using joint evaluation processes to enhance partner capacity?

These issues could be considered through work on ECD to inform continued discussion and further work, including developing guidance for evaluation managers.
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