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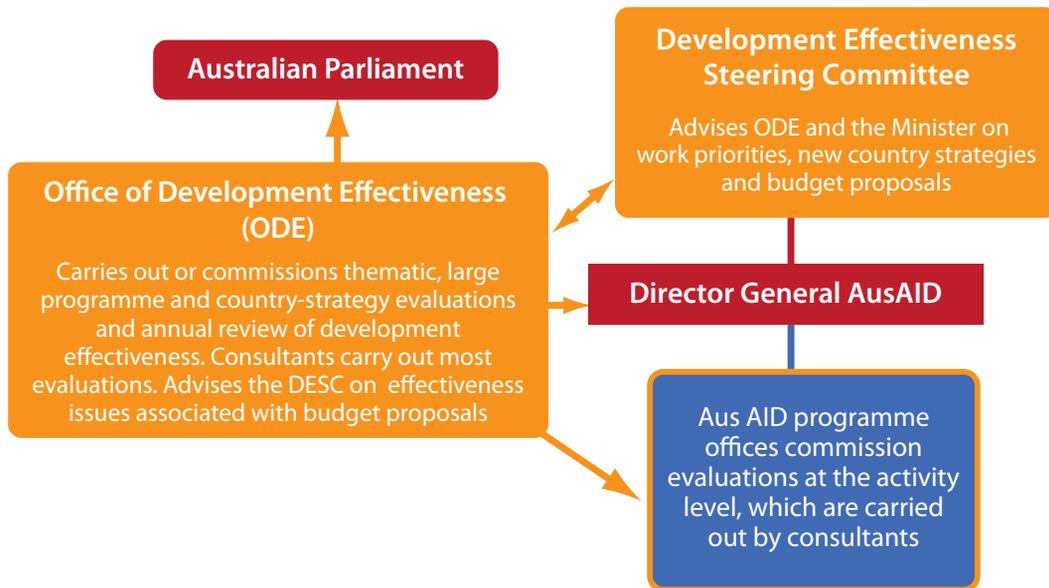
AusAID, Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE)

Mandate and role

The Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) monitors the quality and evaluates the impacts of the Australian aid programme. It reports on the effectiveness of development assistance and identifies how effectiveness could be improved. The Office carries out annual reviews of development effectiveness and conducts or commissions thematic and country strategy evaluations. ODE contributes to the development of whole-of-government country strategies and engages with international actors in the area of evaluation. ODE staff members do not work exclusively on evaluation but cover the entire performance and effectiveness agenda for the Agency.

ODE's budget is determined through the annual Agency budget process. In addition to ODE's budget of USD3.4 million, it is estimated that approximately USD4.7 million is spent on mandatory activity-level evaluations, which are funded within the budget for each programme area. These independent completion evaluations and progress reviews are managed by country programme staff but conducted by independent consultants.

Summary of evaluation set-up and reporting



Independence

ODE is an independent entity within AusAID, separate from programme management. The ODE reports directly to the Director-General of AusAID in his capacity as Chair of the Development Effectiveness Steering Committee, which is comprised of the AusAID Principal Economist and deputy secretaries from the Australian Government Departments of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Foreign Affairs and Trade, Finance and Deregulation, and the Treasury. The Committee advises on the ODE's work priorities, comments on the annual review of development effectiveness and advises the minister on the quality of major new country strategies and budget proposals.

The ODE staff manages evaluations, which are generally carried out by independent consultants with no prior involvement in the design and implementation of the programme. ODE staff may also be members of the evaluation team.

Quality

A meta-evaluation of AusAID evaluations was conducted in 2006. The study identified problems of quality and found that very few AusAID staff drew on the findings of evaluations and reviews in their work. In response, an external peer review process for evaluation quality was instituted and new guidance established. ODE has its own internal guidance for evaluation and all evaluations now go through mandated peer review processes and an external review panel, which focuses on technical quality. Guidelines for activity-level evaluation are used throughout AusAID.

Planning and stakeholder involvement

The evaluation programme covers several years and relates directly to planning for and findings of the annual review of development effectiveness. The timing of country strategy evaluations is determined by requirements to produce a new country strategy. Other evaluations, including ODE's thematic evaluations are largely determined by issues identified in the annual review. This process identifies strengths and weaknesses in the aid programme. The Review is tabled in parliament and published widely; compelling ODE to pursue the agenda and report back in subsequent Reviews.

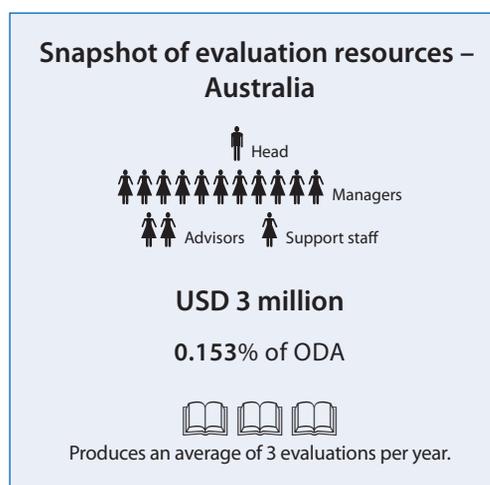
ODE evaluation plans are included in the DAC Evaluation Network plan inventory and ongoing evaluations are listed on the ODE's website. The Office has occasionally consulted with other donors and institutions on evaluation plans, though this has not yet resulted in any agreed joint evaluations. Of the three evaluations completed in 2008/2009, none were joint.

Partner country involvement and capacity development

Planning evaluations also includes consultation with the partner government via the relevant country office. Staff in-country engage in dialogue with partners. Once an evaluation is established, the country teams and local partners are invited to discuss terms of reference and evaluation questions. Partners are occasionally involved as consultants or members of a steering/reference group. For the past several years, ODE has funded small development evaluation training programmes in several countries in the region. Partner government personnel with a role in evaluation have been invited to attend these.

Reporting and use

The ODE publishes an annual review of development effectiveness drawing on the breadth of its work, including cross-cutting reviews and evaluations and the experiences of all Australian agencies delivering Official Development Assistance. The review



contributes to the transparency and accountability of the Australian aid programme and provides a link between increasing budget allocations and increased aid effectiveness.

The Office collects and analyses evaluation reports from other development assistance agencies to help inform the annual review and strengthen their own analysis of effectiveness issues. Findings on major issues around development effectiveness are also circulated to AusAID personnel. All ODE evaluations are taken to the AusAID executive group of senior managers and a management response is prepared. The head of ODE participates in senior management meetings. There is no formal system to follow-up on management responses.

ODE evaluations have resulted in tangible management action, for example, in response to the “Violence against Women in East Timor and Melanesia” report, AusAID created an advisor position to help programmes respond to the report’s recommendations. Summaries of evaluations and full evaluation reports are made available to facilitate sharing within AusAID and across government.