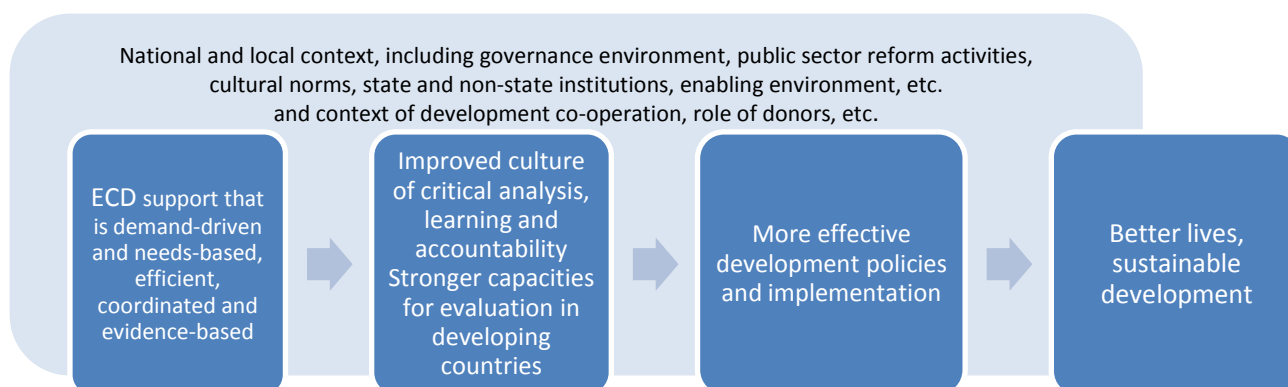


Working Consensus on Evaluation Capacity Development

The purpose of this note is to provide a clear, agreed basis for future work. It does not attempt to take stock of knowledge, but provides key points on the main concepts in order to position the task team work.

Our role as a task team working in the development co-operation context

The EVALNET task team is working to improve support to evaluation capacity in developing countries, in the context of a rapidly changing development co-operation picture where engaging various stakeholders is no longer an option and real change requires striking a balance between diverse and often diverging interests. While recognizing that capacity development processes are often complex and non-linear, and that the context for capacity development and evaluation will vary widely between (and even within) countries, our underlying aim is to work together to provide better support that will strengthen country-level capacity development processes, leading to stronger capacities to demand, produce and use high quality evaluations of public policies and development co-operation activities. By advocating for and strengthen capacities around evaluation, we hope to improve the evidence base for development and support the use of evaluation as a tool for evidence-based policy making, accountability for results and learning. The ultimate aim is to contribute to improving the effectiveness and implementation of development policies, by improving the evidence base for decision making and supporting accountability for results. As we work we aim to test the assumptions underlying our theory and find out if they hold true.



Our focus is on understanding what strategies and activities work best to support partner processes to improve evaluation systems (unpacking the first box). We aim to have our ECD activities guided by evidence, building on lessons about capacity development and the specific experiences of different countries. We focus on creating synergies and leveraging EVALNET resources to strengthen (not duplicate) ongoing work of individual members and other networks or organisations, including partner networks. To add value, we focus on emerging needs, innovative ECD approaches and gaps in ECD support - specifically the institutional and enabling environment dimensions of capacity and the demand side of evaluation.

What is evaluation capacity?

Capacity is the ability of people and organisations to define and achieve their objectives (OECD, 2006). Capacity involves three interdependent levels: individual, organisational and the enabling environment. These interrelated capacities function together and reinforce one another - all three are necessary for a functioning system.

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). An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process.

Development evaluation capacity is understood as the realisation of a set of interrelated capacities to demand, supply and use systematic and objective assessment as a tool for improving the effectiveness and accountability of development projects, programmes and policies.

How are evaluation capacities developed?

Capacity development is a long-term, complex, endogenous change process. It is dependent on the specific (national) context and closely linked to related systems of management, governance, accountability, knowledge management and learning in a country or institution. **Evaluation capacity development (ECD)** is understood as the process whereby people, organisations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain evaluation capacities over time. Strengthening evaluation capacities is not an end goal in itself, but, should be seen, rather, as a means to support more effective policies and programmes to achieve development results.

Some key lessons informing our work about what it takes to develop evaluation capacity include:

- Strengthening evaluation capacities involves more than just building individual technical skills; the enabling environment and institutional capacities require much greater attention.
- A “one-size-fits-all” approach does not suit evaluation capacity development; change is a political, as well as technical, process.
- Capacity development initiatives should be led by relevant partner stakeholders and should be demand (no supply) driven, based on identification of a real need for, and high potential to use, better evidence about effectiveness and results.
- Useful evaluation systems are not supply driven, but balance supply and demand for quality evaluation outputs.
- Capacity strengthening should begin by taking stock of the current situation and setting realistic targets and expectations.
- A high level of commitment to and understanding of the benefits of evaluation – especially among top levels in a government – helps ensure sustainability of the evaluation function and use of evaluation findings.
- Hands-on learning by doing is often an effective learning technique; joint evaluation can provide such opportunities, but this requires planning, prioritisation, time and resources.
- Regional and national evaluation associations can play a critical role in strengthening and sustaining M&E capacity.
- Evaluation needs, capacity gaps and resources should be identified and addressed early on when planning and implementing development activities. Programme design, baseline data and monitoring are often weak, making it difficult to evaluate programmes once they have begun.

How to effectively support evaluation capacity development?

The task team supports ECD donors to make the best possible contributions to stronger evaluation capacity in partner countries for transparent and evidence-based policies. The task team members will work to align evaluation activities, strengthen and use the evaluation systems of our partner countries and will encourage others to do so. We wish to apply the key lessons learned of capacity development in evaluation capacity development by:

Establishing a strategic framework for ECD including

- providing a clear strategic vision
- taking partner ownership and leadership seriously and avoiding supply-driven approaches
- making the context the starting point
- making better use of technical assistance
- accepting that these are long-term processes requiring long-term flexible engagement to capture opportunities and manage risks.
- understanding demand for evaluation evidence and taking stock of capacities on the demand side

Delivering effective support including

- translating policy aspirations into practice
- coordinating support to capacity development
- focusing and targeting international support for maximum development impact
- involving local, non-state actors and also state actors
- avoiding doing harm in fragile situations
- focusing on results and longer term impacts
- making our own work to be transparent open and concerned about value for money.