

ROOM DOCUMENT

Agenda Item VI.

**The State of Development Evaluation:
Proposal for a study of Network member
evaluation systems and resources**

This note has been prepared by the Secretariat for discussion at the 9th meeting of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 15-16 June 2009.

9th meeting

15 – 16 June 2009

Proposal for a study of Network member evaluation systems and resources

Background

The scaling up of aid and new modalities and approaches have increased the demands on evaluation as a key component of the accountability, management and learning structures of development agencies. Today, the global economic downturn is putting pressure on member budgets, while at the same time increasing the need for quality evidence to inform development policy decisions. Accountability needs are also increasing as publics on both ends of the development co-operation relationship demand better results. There is a sense among Network members that evaluation units are being asked to do more with less and this claim needs to be investigated. In this context, there is widespread interest in the practices and policies of members¹ including questions on how evaluation is used and managed in development agencies, the institutional position of evaluation departments and the resourcing of the evaluation function.

The DAC Network on Development Evaluation works to strengthen member evaluation systems in order to contribute to improving development effectiveness and accountability for results. To support this effort, the Network develops internationally agreed evaluation norms and standards and has periodically taken stock of member policy and practice. The most recent study analysed findings from DAC Peer Reviews 1996 – 2004 (Lundgren & Liverani, 2007) building on a comprehensive stock-take of member evaluation systems in 1998 and surveys dating back to 1975 when the first compilation of DAC member experiences with aid evaluation was published. Regular DAC Peer Reviews monitor DAC members' efforts and performance, but cover individual DAC members only, and, as a comprehensive exercise, often touch no more than briefly on evaluation. A number of other individual studies and reviews examining DAC and non-DAC member evaluation functions have taken place in recent years. Still, there is currently no comprehensive, up-to-date information available that looks at the evaluation function across all Network members.

Additionally, over the past year, a number of specific requests have been made to the Secretariat and to individual Network members for information on evaluation spending. There are no current data available to respond to these queries; the most recent survey of Network member resources was carried out four years ago. Moreover, based on past experiences, and given the diversity of member organisations, it is clear that simply collecting funding data is not particularly useful. To draw meaningful conclusions resources must be understood in the context of evaluation policy and organisational structure.

The DAC Network on Development Evaluation is uniquely positioned within the international community to address these information gaps. The timing for such a stock-take of member systems is especially propitious given ongoing discussions on the role for evaluation in the context of debates about aid effectiveness and the reinforcement of commitments contained in the Accra Agenda for Action.

Proposal

With Network agreement and the support of the Bureau, the Secretariat would take the lead on conducting a study of Network member evaluation systems and resources. The study would provide a stock-take and analysis of the current state of member systems, taking into account the DAC normative framework for development evaluation. The overall purpose would be to inform ongoing efforts to develop evaluation systems that contribute to improving development results and accountability.

¹ Network members are all OECD DAC member countries and the AfDB, ADB, EBRD, IADB, IMF, UNDP, and World Bank.

The study would draw on existing data and a short survey of Evaluation Network members. It would cover core elements of the evaluation function including the: role of evaluation in the development agency; independence; quality and credibility; evaluation resources (funding and staff); evaluation coordination; contribution to partner country ownership and capacity development; and mechanisms and systems to ensure use of and follow-up on evaluation findings and recommendations. The primary focus would be on central evaluation units. (See draft outline in Annex 1.)

Process

To minimise the burden on members, the Secretariat would use information already available wherever possible and the member survey would be targeted and light. The study would draw on findings from OECD DAC Peer Reviews (in line with DAC peer review learning goals) and be informed by the “DAC Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance,” the Network’s “Evaluation Systems and Use Working Tool” and the professional peer reviews of multilateral organisations’ evaluation functions.

General trends in evaluation policy, management and resourcing would be described and an evaluation profile would be generated for each Network member, providing a snap-shot of the member’s evaluation system. (See illustrative example in Annex 2.) Findings would be presented in a draft report for review by the Evaluation Network in autumn 2009 and finalised for publication and presentation to the DAC, possibly at the December 2009 Senior Level Meeting.

Issues for member discussion

1. Do members agree with the overall purpose of the stock-take and core elements proposed?
2. Are there other topics or specific issues that members would like to see included?

Annex 1. Draft outline of proposed output

Working title: “The State of Development Evaluation: a Study of Member Systems and Resources”

- I. Introduction: Why take stock now?**
 - a. The ever-changing context for development evaluation: recent progress and challenges; the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Action Agenda.
 - b. Background and work of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation

- II. Findings on member evaluation systems**
 - a. Overview of key trends and progress in evaluation policy, management and resources
 - i. The role of evaluation: structure and mandate
 - ii. Independence
 - iii. Resources: overview and analysis of evaluation resources (funding and staff)
 - iv. Quality assurance
 - v. Systems to ensure use of evaluation findings and recommendations for learning and accountability
 - vi. Co-ordination with other donors and partners
 - vii. Capacity development
 - b. Profiles of individual member evaluation systems (see Annex 2 for illustrative example)

- III. Conclusions and recommendations**

Annex 2. Illustrative example of a member evaluation profile



NORWAY

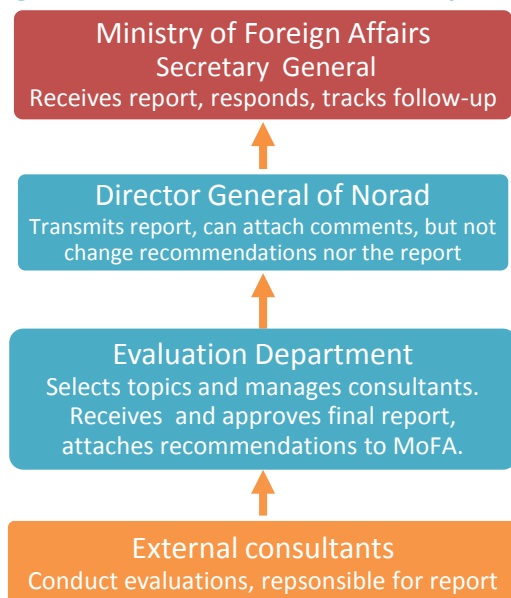
2009

"Evaluations are an important source of information about the results of development cooperation for the Norwegian public and for political decision-makers." – Evaluation Department of Norad

Mandate

The Evaluation Department's mandate is clear; it is responsible for the evaluation of all aspects of development cooperation funded by the Norwegian government. The department focuses on planning and managing major thematic or strategic evaluations, conducting eight to twelve per year, and provides some support on reviews carried out by line offices. The main goals of the Evaluation Department are to i) evaluate effectiveness and results; ii) evaluate whether resource application is reasonably commensurate with results achieved; iii) systematise experience, so as to assure quality and improve future activities by means of good learning processes; and, iv) provide information to aid policy makers and the general public.

Figure 1. Structure of the evaluation process



Independence

The Evaluation Department enjoys a high degree of independence, from selection of the evaluation objects and setting the agenda through designing evaluation mandates and reporting. Evaluation, although a department within Norad, reports directly to the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Competitively-selected outside consultants conduct all evaluations and are responsible for reports. All reports are made public.

Quality

The Evaluation Department consistently uses their own policies and the OECD DAC evaluation quality standards to ensure that findings are valid, robust and meaningful. There is some concern about the variable quality of external evaluation consultants, which results in the need for greater input of staff time to work with consultants to ensure reports meet standards. Nonetheless, evaluations produced by the unit are generally considered to be of high quality.

Coordination

The Evaluation Department is active in a number of international development evaluation forums, including the DAC. Four to eight joint evaluations are done per year (25-50% of all central evaluations) and the unit has a strong mandate to engage in joint work. The Department consistently publishes and shares multi-year evaluation plans.

Resources

Staff and financial resources are considered adequate, though with more resources more could be achieved. Skills for managing evaluation processes are also adequate, while technical skills, such as those needed for developing TORs, could be stronger. The Department draws on other Norad and Ministry staff for thematic and sector expertise, as needed.

Snap Shot of Evaluation Department Resources

 permanent staff +  director

Evaluation Department Budget = **0.14% of ODA**

\$ USD 3.5 million to hire evaluation consultants

\$ USD 130,000 for capacity development, travel, etc.

(Norad general budget covers overhead and salaries)

Use and Impact

There is a functioning management response and follow-up action system. Within six weeks of a report, an official response from the Secretary General of the MoFA is submitted to the relevant programme area, the Norad Director General and the Evaluation Department. One year later, the programme area concerned submits a report to the Secretary General (or Norad's Director General, as applicable) describing actions taken in response to the evaluation. Evaluation staff strives to ensure programme staff buy-in, while protecting the independence of the consultants.