



## ROOM DOCUMENT 6

**PROPOSAL FOR SHORT STUDY: CONSTRAINTS,  
OPPORTUNITIES AND APPROACHES FOR INCREASING  
JOINT DONOR PROGRAMMING OF EVALUATIONS**

This proposal for short study has been prepared by DFID in collaboration with the DAC Secretariat for consideration at the 7th meeting of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 20 – 21 February 2008.

**PROPOSAL FOR SHORT STUDY:  
CONSTRAINTS, OPPORTUNITIES AND APPROACHES FOR  
INCREASING JOINT DONOR PROGRAMMING OF  
EVALUATIONS**

<b>Joint donor study:</b>	<b>DAC Evaluation Network</b>
<b>Led by:</b>	<b>DFID in collaboration with the DAC Secretariat and other interested members.</b>
<b>Planned date</b>	<b>Apr-Jun 2008</b>

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**A. OBJECTIVE OF STUDY AND DECISIONS REQUIRED BY EVALNET**

1. This note sets down some ideas for a short study to identify the specific practical constraints that donors currently face in planning and managing joint and aligned evaluations, and to make recommendations for overcoming these.
  
2. **DAC Evaluation Network members are asked to:**
  - a) Provide comments or suggestions on the proposed study, either at the 7th meeting of the DAC Evaluation Network, or in writing (to Julia Compton at DFID [j-compton@dfid.gov.uk](mailto:j-compton@dfid.gov.uk) and Hans Lundgren at the Secretariat [hans.lundgren@oecd.org](mailto:hans.lundgren@oecd.org)), by 29 February 2008.
  - b) Indicate their willingness to collaborate on the study. It is estimated that this will require a maximum of 2 person-hours per agency for a phone interview (see paragraph 8b). It would also be very useful if agencies could take the time to make comments on the list of questions to be covered (see inception phase, paragraph 8a and example list in Annex 1).
  - c) Provide early indication if they wish to participate in the meeting of the task team on the New Context for Evaluation, provisionally planned for early June, which will discuss the draft results of the study and suggest ways forward.

## B. BACKGROUND

3. The OECD-DAC Evaluation Network (Evalnet) has long identified the need for donors to work more systematically together on evaluations. DAC Evalnet has established itself as a key forum for promoting joint evaluations and has elaborated guidelines for joint evaluations (Breier 2005, DAC 2006). The Network has systematically had an agenda item on joint evaluations to enable sharing of ideas and plans for joint evaluations. In order to examine the feasibility of joint work, evaluation programmes have also regularly been collected and made available in an overview format. This has led to a number of joint evaluations taking place, some of which have been high profile such as the joint evaluation on General Budget Support. It has been the experience, however, that once plans are officially made available it is difficult to change them and joint evaluations have had to be planned in a largely ad hoc manner.
4. In 2005, over 100 national governments and organisations, including most donor members of Evalnet, signed up to the Paris Declaration, supporting donor harmonisation and alignment with countries' own development plans. The five Paris Declaration Principles (Ownership, Alignment, Harmonisation, Managing for Results and Mutual Accountability) pose a significant challenge for evaluation for both donors and partner countries. The Paris declaration commits its signatories to supporting a joint, in-country approach to evaluation wherever possible<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, the Paris declaration sets targets and deadlines for reducing individual donor 'missions'<sup>2</sup>, including evaluation visits<sup>3</sup>, while partner countries are starting to declare 'mission-free periods'<sup>4</sup>. Recent DAC peer reviews (e.g. the 2006 review of the UK) have also urged donors to adopt a more joined-up approach to monitoring and evaluation.
5. Despite these increased pressures for more joint work, the vast majority of evaluations carried out by Evalnet member departments are still sole donor evaluations. There are also examples where donors undertake their own evaluations in areas that have already been covered by joint evaluations, and where different donors commission individual evaluations concerned with the same theme. At country level there are a very large number of project and programme evaluations carried out by individual donors, many of which may not even be recorded by donors' central evaluation departments or central programme departments. Although many countries are moving towards Joint Assistance Strategies and associated joint instruments such as budget support, M&E systems for these are often set up years later, and are often the weakest part of the arrangements.

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<sup>1</sup> Paris Declaration point 32: 'Implement, where feasible, common arrangements at country level for planning, funding, disbursement, monitoring, evaluating and reporting to government on donor activities and aid flows.'

<sup>2</sup> The relevant targets are that by 2010, '40% of donor missions will be joint' and '66% of country analytic work will be joint' <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/57/60/36080258.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> The number of individual donor evaluations is already being checked and counted against donor performance in some countries, for example Mozambique (Castel-Branco, C, 2007. Performance of Programme Aid Partners in Mozambique 2006.)

<sup>4</sup> For example, the Government of Ghana has declared a two month 'mission free' period per year.

6. The *general* constraints on carrying out more joint evaluations have been identified in earlier papers presented to this group (Brier 2005, Sweden/UK 2007). These include the tensions between donors' individual accountability requirements and the timeframes and transaction costs involved in joint working. However, a more specific study has been suggested by the task team on the New Context for Development Evaluation<sup>5</sup> to determine the *specific requirements and constraints faced by each donor* and identify opportunities and approaches for overcoming these.

### C. SCOPE OF WORK AND METHODOLOGY

7. This short study will:
  - a) systematically review the current systems for bilateral donor planning and management of central evaluations, and also decentralised evaluations insofar as possible.
  - b) identify potential decision criteria for managing studies jointly or independently identifying specific practical constraints faced by individual donors
  - c) commenting on donors' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of existing approaches to harmonised and aligned evaluations
  - d) identify potential new opportunities and approaches for harmonisation and alignment in joint donor evaluation programming and management
  - e) make specific recommendations to individual donors and EvalNet as appropriate
8. The study will involve:
  - a) A short inception phase, involving (i) the preparation and agreement on a set of specific questions to answer the objectives above, (ii) pretesting the interview format with at least one donor and improving the final list of questions, and (iii) drafting an outline of the final report. A preliminary list of questions for discussion by Evalnet members is in Annex 1.
  - b) a set of semi-structured interviews to donors on the agreed questions.
  - c) tabulation, analysis and presentation of the results in a clearly written and well-structured report. Recommendations should be practically oriented and include suggested criteria that evaluation managers can use in deciding whether to work jointly or not (point 7b), possibly in the form of a decision tree.
  - d) Discussion of the draft findings and recommendations with members of the EvalNet Voluntary Task Team on the New Context for Evaluation, and incorporating this thinking. Requesting and incorporating written comments from other stakeholders on drafts of the paper.
  - e) Presenting final report to next Evalnet meeting if requested to do so.

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<sup>5</sup> The last meeting was held in Stockholm, 6 September 06 with participation from Sweden, Norway, Finland, Ireland, UK and the DAC Evalnet Secretariat. Minutes are available.

## D. EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

9. Deliverables include:

- a) **A brief inception report**, in English, describing the initial consultation process and listing those consulted to date and to be consulted, the proposed questions and a draft outline of the final report. Indicative length: 4 pages plus annexes (questions and outline)
- b) **A short report**, in English, covering the issues listed in paragraph 7, including any recommendations. The indicative length is no more than 10 pages, with a one page summary and annexes as needed. The final report should be given to [the study manager tbc] in both Microsoft Word and printer-ready PDF formats. [tbc]

## E. INDICATIVE TIMING AND CONDUCT OF THE WORK

10. The start date depends on approval and contracting, and working time depends on contractor's bid. (This work can also be done in house, see paragraph 11.)

### Indicative timing:

Start date	Beginning April	Estimated work for consultant or person undertaking study
Inception	Mid April	Up to 6 working days
Phone interviews	April-May	Up to 15 working days
First draft	End May	5 working days
Discussed with voluntary working group on new context	Beginning June 08	2 working days (1 day for group and 1 day to write up)
Final report	End June	5 working days
Circulated to EvalNet	Mid July 08	(By study manager)
Recommendations discussed by DAC Evalnet	18-19 November 2007	

## F. PERSONNEL

11. An independent consultant will be contracted to carry out this work. Or the work could be carried out by someone in a donor Evaluation Department, if they had the right experience who understands agencies' planning and management of evaluations. We would be grateful if members have suggestions on this point.

**Annex 1. EXAMPLE LIST OF QUESTIONS TO BE COLLECTED THROUGH SEMI-STRUCTURED PHONE INTERVIEWS** (please note: this is currently an illustrative list and members are invited to provide suggestions either at the meeting or later)

Questions will be finalised in the inception phase, and pre-tested with at least one volunteer donor. To minimise time burdens, phone interviews will only be used to supplement and check information already available from existing publications, e.g. recent AFD study. The list of phone questions will be sent before any interview to enable interviewees to prepare their thoughts and information.

CENTRAL EVALUATIONS

1. What main types of evaluations does your central evaluation department carry out, for example project evaluations, country evaluations, specific sector in a specific country, sector, thematic, policy, partnerships (e.g. with multilaterals or NGOs) etc? What proportion of each of these are done jointly with other partners?
2. What is your planning process? If needed, answer separately for different types of evaluations (country, policy etc). For example:
  - a) Do you plan annually, every 2, 3 years, or farther ahead? How fixed in stone are your plans for two or more years ahead, or are they somewhat flexible?
  - b) What specific months of the year do you make (i) initial proposals for evaluation topics for discussion (ii) final decisions on the forward workplan?
  - c) How are your budgets structured? What limitations do you have on human resources? What are the budgetary and human resource factors which favour, or work against, joint evaluations?
  - d) How are evaluation questions agreed? Do joint evaluation processes answer the right questions for your agency? If not, could they be managed to do so, and how?
  - e) How do you decide on work with partner countries, for example country case studies for thematic evaluations? What is the process you use to agree these with different stakeholders? What are the factors that would make it easier or more difficult to do joint country work?
  - f) Who are the main decision makers on your workplan, inside and outside your own department? What factors would make them favour (or not favour) joint evaluations?
3. Are there any challenges and constraints, apart from those already mentioned, that prevent your agency from undertaking more evaluations with other partners? What are your own recommendations for action, both to your own organisation and to EvalNet and other donors, for making it easier for you to increase the proportion of your evaluation work that is done according to the Paris principles? (for example, how to increase useful agency-specific recommendations from joint work)

## DECENTRALISED EVALUATIONS

1. What kinds of reviews and evaluations are decentralised in your organisation? (such as project, country or regional reviews)?
2. Who decides on topics and approach and on what timescale?
3. Who normally undertakes the evaluations? How are national partners involved in this?
4. What proportion of evaluations are (a) joint with other donors or development agencies (b) managed by national partners?
5. Are there any challenges and constraints, that prevent your agency from undertaking more decentralised reviews and evaluations with other partners? What recommendations do you have, both for your own agency and for Evalnet partners, to make it easier to increase the proportion of decentralised evaluations that are carried out according to Paris Declaration principles?