

► France

Evaluation and Knowledge Development Unit (EVA) French Development Agency (AFD)

Evaluation Pole, Directorate General for Globalisation, Development and Partnerships (DGMDP), Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs

Development Activities Evaluation Unit, Treasury Directorate General (DG Treasury), Ministry of Economy, Industry and Employment

Mandate and roles

The French Development Agency (AFD), the primary implementing agency for French aid, houses the **Evaluation and Knowledge Development Unit (EVA)** which has two main objectives: to draw lessons from the past in order to improve future aid policies, programmes and projects, and to serve as the basis for accountability. The unit is responsible for conducting evaluations in line with these objectives, and in particular for: (i) defining evaluation methods and the quality assurance process; (ii) producing impact analyses of some of the programmes AFD supports; (iii) managing thematic or strategic evaluations; (iv) carrying out meta-evaluations and developing a knowledge base on specific topics. The unit also provides methodological support to end-of-project evaluations carried out in the field.

In the **Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs**, the **Evaluation Pole** of the Directorate General for Globalisation Development and Partnerships (DGMDP) works in three areas: conducting evaluations of assistance provided through DGMDP, methodological support to other departments and development of evaluation culture via partnerships.

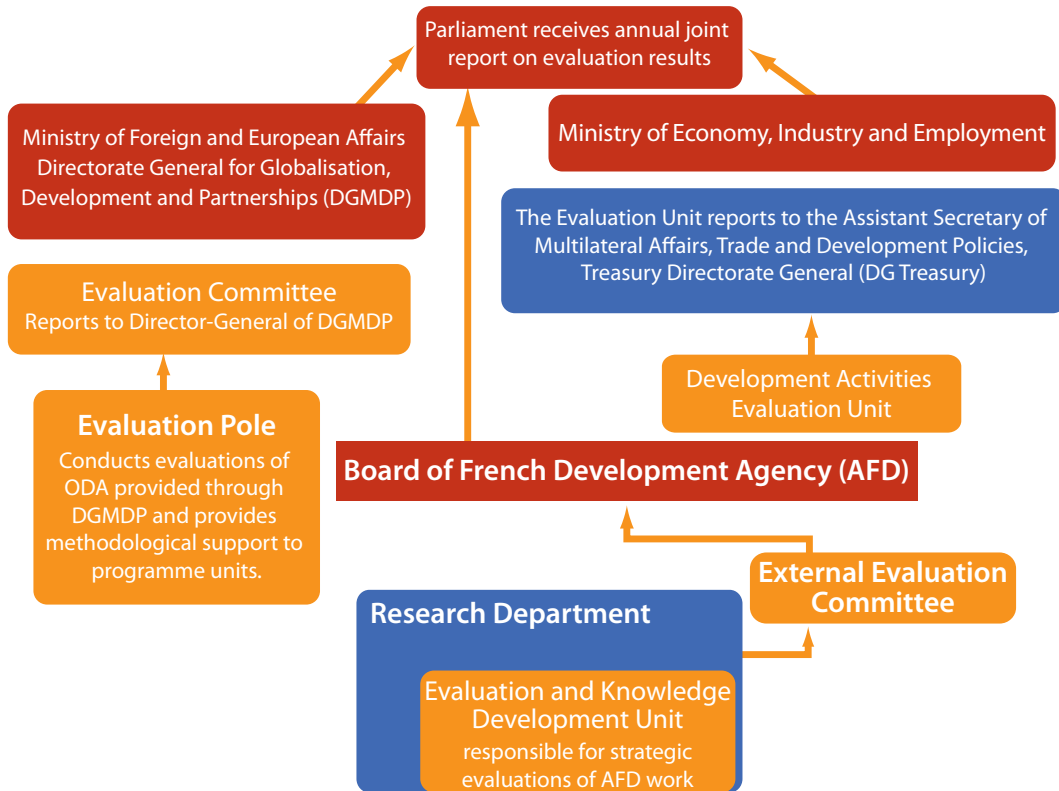
The **Development Activities Evaluation Unit** in the **Treasury Directorate General (DG Treasury) of the Ministry of Economy, Industry and Employment**, is responsible for conducting and managing evaluations of development activities undertaken by the Ministry. These include evaluations of France's contributions to multilateral banks and funds and bilateral development assistance initiatives, such as aid for trade programmes, global budget support, and initiatives financed by the Emerging Country Facility and FASEP-ETUDES projects (a private sector aid fund).

The three evaluation programmes are largely co-ordinated and many evaluations, notably evaluations of cross-cutting issues, are managed jointly by the three units. Since 2009, a joint report on evaluation results is sent annually from the three units to Parliament.

Evaluation and Knowledge Development Unit, French Development Agency (AFD)

The Evaluation and Knowledge Development Unit is part of the Research Department within the Strategy Directorate of AFD. The Unit is separate from the operations departments and management. Creation of an external Evaluation Committee was imminent at the time of writing and is intended to increase independence of the evaluation function. This Evaluation Committee will be composed of four members from the supervisory Ministries and four independent specialists and will be chaired by an independent expert. The Evaluation Unit will report to this Committee, which will in turn report directly to the AFD board.

Summary of institutional set-up and reporting



The Evaluation Committee will work to support quality evaluations, including by commenting on major evaluation reports. As a further quality-assurance mechanism, all project evaluations are followed by a reference committee. Moreover quality of individual evaluation report is rated by the Evaluation Unit using a quality grid, which is published along with the report. Large evaluations are managed by a steering committee, which includes external individuals. Similar quality requirements also apply to decentralised evaluations.

All standard evaluations are carried out by external evaluation consultants, while impact evaluations are conducted by academics and some knowledge products are completed in-house by unit staff. A priority is placed on the use of local consultants for project-level evaluations.

The Evaluation Unit has a three-year strategic plan covering all of their activities (decentralised evaluations, strategic evaluations, meta-evaluations, impact evaluation and evaluative research, capacity building, and dissemination). Specific topics for strategic evaluations are selected annually and these plans are shared with the DAC Secretariat. Depending on the type of evaluation and the partners, contact is usually made with local agencies and developing country partners to inform them that an evaluation is in progress.

The evaluation budget covers dissemination activities, including meetings or conference organisation and publication of knowledge products (synthesis, stocktaking etc.). Evaluation findings are systematically shared with the intended beneficiaries of French assistance and, since 2007, with the general public, media and civil society in France. There is currently no formal management response or follow-up system.

Evaluation Pole, DGMDP

The Evaluation Pole works in three areas: conducting evaluations of ODA provided through DGMDP, methodological support to other departments and building a culture of evaluation. Evaluations are conducted by competitively selected external consultants. End-of-project evaluations are initiated and conducted directly by programme directors, with methodological support from the Evaluation Pole. The unit reports to the Director-General through an Evaluation Committee.

The Evaluation Pole is institutionally located next two other units (audit, management control) charged with improving effectiveness and performance of development assistance policies, programmes and strategies managed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The unit participates in working groups on French assistance strategies, aid effectiveness, and the relationship between evaluation and the evolution of aid.

A yearly evaluation programme is formulated by the head of the Evaluation Pole in cooperation with the field and central departments and is validated by an evaluation committee presided over by the Director-General of DGMDP. AFD and the Ministry of Economy participate in this committee.

Each evaluation is guided by a steering committee comprised of people from all involved departments of the MFA (or other concerned institution or ministries); this group follows the evaluation process, approves the terms of reference and evaluation questions, and monitors the production of the evaluation reports.

Staff of the evaluation unit uses other donors' evaluation reports as a reference for their own work or to cross-check findings. However, language barriers prevent use of many reports more widely among MFA staff.

Work with partner countries is decentralised to the embassies. Field-level staff discuss with local partners to determine if and how they might be interested in taking part in a proposed evaluation. The evaluation steering committee is connected to a local steering committee which comprises French embassy staff and partner country stakeholders (for example, the Ministry of Finance). To support capacity development, the Evaluation Pole has organised numerous trainings for evaluation consultants in Guinea, Kenya and Togo.

A monitoring table is used to verify annually the status of the implementation of evaluation recommendations (or any difficulties encountered). The evaluation unit participates in the review of new projects to ensure that prior evaluation findings are taken into account at the planning stage. Evaluation conclusions and recommendations are made public, first through a meeting with involved stakeholders and then in electronic format on the *France Diplomatie* website. Since 2001, a review of evaluations is also produced and widely distributed, presenting a summary of the most significant evaluations completed.

Development Activities Evaluation Unit, Treasury Directorate General (DG Treasury)

The Development Activities Evaluation Unit reports to the Assistant Secretary of Multilateral Affairs, Trade and Development Policies within the *Direction générale du Trésor* (Treasury Directorate General). The Head of the unit participates in weekly senior management meetings.

The head of the Evaluation Unit has primary responsibility for the evaluation work plan. Three-year evaluation plans are decided based on interviews with the operational units at HQ and field units. The head of unit formulates initial plans which are then agreed with programme divisions. This proposal is presented to the Treasury and

Economic Policy General Director who approves the three year programme. Specific evaluation topics for the following year are confirmed annually (some programmes, including aid for trade, the Emerging Country Facility and the FASEP-ETUDES projects are subject to an obligatory evaluation as required by the law).

The processes of planning of the evaluation programme, formulating terms of reference and selecting evaluation teams are designed to ensure impartiality and independence of the evaluation function. All evaluations are conducted by external consultants, recruited competitively as stipulated by the applicable public procurement code.

Each evaluation is monitored by a Steering Committee which is responsible for initiating the evaluation and for validating the evaluators' work. The committee includes representatives from relevant administrations and agencies, and public figures from civil society, the research community or the private sector. Members are selected on the basis of their expertise in evaluation. During the evaluation process, the committee carries out a quality audit and a check list of evaluation quality is completed and included at the end of each report.

The steering committee decides how to involve partner countries in an evaluation. When partners are involved they make comments on terms of references and evaluation questions and participate in evaluation workshops. The DG Treasury encourages involvement of local consultants from partner countries.

For joint evaluations the Unit contacts other agencies on a case-by-case basis. The Unit regularly uses evaluations completed by other donors, according to relevance for current work. Implementation of evaluator recommendations is monitored by the Evaluation Unit. The Head of the Unit prepares two notes addressed to the Minister of Economy, Industry and Employment each year on evaluation outcomes and follow-up actions.

When an evaluation is completed, English summaries and French full-text reports are published on the unit's website along with the quality check-list reviews. A workshop to internalise findings and a workshop in the partner country may be organised. A summary on key findings is sent to the General Director of AFD. Other relevant officials in the administration receive a copy of this note. An annual report on evaluation outcomes and is sent to the Parliament.

