

GUIDELINES EVALUATION & CONTROLLING

PROGRAMME CYCLE MANAGEMENT/PEMT, CONTROLLING AND INDEPENDENT EVALUATION

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide SDC personnel with a framework for Programme Cycle Management (PCM/PEMT), Controlling, and Evaluation, thus fostering a common understanding of these topics. The guidelines are also intended to facilitate communication and cooperation with bilateral and multilateral agencies, NGOs, and partner organisations.

SDC's principal tasks and core processes, in accordance with *Strategy 2010*, are:

- help for self-help: promoting autonomous development among partners
- knowledge: supporting learning processes
- international dialogue: supporting international development approaches
- solidarity: building firm support for international cooperation in Switzerland.

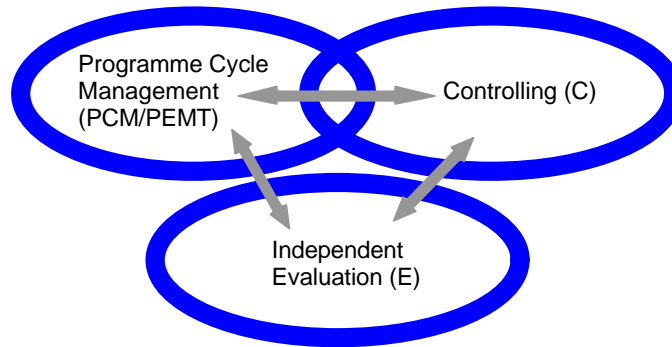
In order to fulfil these obligations, SDC must

- design focused activities that are effective and have an impact on development
- carry out its activities efficiently
- be accountable to policy-makers as well as the public, and
- stimulate external and internal learning processes.

This requires reliable and timely information on two key questions: “Are we doing the right things”, and “Are we doing things right”? In order to ensure and maintain the quality of its work in response to these questions, SDC distinguishes among the **three following functions**:

- **Programme Cycle Management (PCM)** is both result- and process-oriented. It represents a further development of SDC's PEMT approach. It allows stakeholders to improve the quality of their activities (including organisational development) through joint planning, implementation, monitoring and (self)-evaluation in the context of joint activities. The focus is on partnership, mutual learning, and cooperation management.
- **Controlling (C)** is primarily a management support tool. It provides appropriate information on a regular basis that can help line staff to make better management decisions. The main focus is on the areas of responsibility of decision-makers within SDC.
- **Independent Evaluation (E)** is mainly concerned with results and the nature of impacts. The work of SDC, including cooperation with its partners, is submitted to competent and critical external assessment. Evaluation promotes institutional learning while simultaneously aiming to provide an unbiased, independent accounting to policy-makers and the public.

These three functions are interrelated and partially overlap. The boundaries between PCM/PEMT and Controlling are fluid. Both are activated by line staff. Independent evaluation, on the other hand, depends partly on the other two functions, but it also has an influence on them. It is formally initiated by the Directorate of SDC, at a level outside the direct operational responsibility of line staff.



Three sets of five guiding principles

The following guiding principles, which include topical, methodological and organisational aspects, provide guidance at every level within SDC in implementing the three main functions of Programme Cycle Management/PEMT, Controlling, and Independent Evaluation.

Programme Cycle Management (PCM/PEMT)

P1. Making values and basic assumptions visible

Acting in partnership means creating consensus on common aims, strategies and expected performance, as well as sharing in risks and accomplishments. This requires mutual respect, the courage to undertake self-criticism, and sensitivity to intercultural concerns.

P2. Designing all phases together with stakeholders

PCM/PEMT is primarily a matter of programme management based on participatory planning, monitoring, implementation and evaluation. In the process, common visions are developed, goals are established, and agreement is reached on the criteria for success. Cooperation should not only be efficient but also effective and relevant, and ensure that benefits are sustainable.

P3. Defining roles and areas of responsibility

Knowledge of the context, the courage to be modest, and realistic expectations about potential accomplishments, expected consequences, and desired impacts are required in order to establish and achieve common aims. Clear agreement is needed on areas of responsibility involving partner organisations and SDC. Important issues are the forms of cooperation and management and the related roles of the parties involved.

P4. Supporting partners in developing their own capacities for PCM

PCM/PEMT allows partner organisations to document results achieved through joint effort, to learn from processes that have been set in motion, and to report on their achievements. This contributes to their organisational development and permits them to assume greater responsibility.

P5. Jointly processing what has been learned and fostering its implementation

PCM/PEMT focuses on mutual learning. Care must be taken to ensure that important findings and cross-sectoral themes are presented in a way that is understandable to all stakeholders so that they can use them as a basis for their own decisions and ensure that these decisions are implemented.

Controlling (C)

C1. Focusing on SDC's performance

Controlling is limited to analysis and assessment of the quality and effects of services and processes in SDC's areas of influence. The main emphasis is on developing the quality of SDC working methods and products.

C2. Establishing the responsibility of line staff

Controlling is the responsibility of line staff. Ensuring that this is known and understood by all SDC personnel is the responsibility of management and SDC's evaluation and controlling units. The latter also provide methodological support.

C3. Providing services for decision-makers

The primary function of controlling is to provide better support for decision-making. Coordinated monitoring systems enable line staff to process management-related information that is relevant to strategic questions. Evaluation and controlling units play a supportive role by making such information available as a service to decision-makers.

C4. Future-oriented action and innovative thinking

Controlling is especially important in processes of change. By establishing interconnections and raising future-oriented questions, controlling helps to preserve flexibility within the organisation and to maintain a culture of change within SDC. It also permits early recognition of new developments.

C5. Finding the courage to simplify

SDC engages in a dynamic and complex field of activities. The art of good controlling consists of focusing on only a few important indicators that are meaningfully connected within a clearly organised management information system.

Independent Evaluation (E) ¹

E1. Focusing on results and effectiveness

Evaluation is largely concerned with assessment of the following questions: (1) What has an action achieved and what direct and indirect effects and impacts has it had (with respect to relevance and sustainability, among other things), and (2) How is progress in development achieved, i.e. what success factors and what obstacles and risks are involved?

E2. Relevance to practice and credibility

There is a need for practice-oriented expertise rather than scientific studies. The involvement of independent experts and transparency in the evaluation process make evaluations more credible.

E3. Stating the purpose and the targets of evaluation

Evaluation is an instrument that can be used primarily for three different purposes: (1) To provide accountability and evidence of achievement vis à vis third parties; (2) To serve as a learning tool and a means of improving the object of evaluation; and (3) To increase knowledge and gain general understanding. Both the purposes and the targets of evaluation should be clarified at an early stage.

¹ These principles of *independent evaluation* are also broadly applicable to evaluation within PCM/PEMT.

E4. Optimising the benefits of evaluation

The choice of topics to be dealt with in independent evaluations needs to be correlated where possible with the needs of line staff and with programme cycles, in order to enhance the benefits of evaluation. In particular, attention must be given to timely presentation of results and transparent feedback from evaluators to stakeholders. Explicit incorporation of the viewpoints of partners helps to increase the potential effectiveness of an independent evaluation.

E5. Dealing with topics of primary interest

Independent evaluations focus less on individual operational programmes than on assessments that transcend projects and on analysis of major issues and development options. This illustrates inter-connections and complements the more operational PCM/PEMT.

Definitions

Programme Cycle Management (PCM): A management process that takes place at all levels for the entire duration of a programme or project (from identification to completion), consisting of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. PCM corresponds closely to SDC's **PEMT** process.

Controlling: An organisational function concerned with systematic collection, analysis and presentation of data relevant to management. Controlling makes such information available to decision-makers.

Evaluation: A systematic assessment of a programme, project or strategy that is as objective as possible and focuses on relevance, impact, effectiveness and efficiency by comparing expected results with actual results. An evaluation is considered to be **independent** when responsibility for initiating it and carrying it out lies outside the activities of line staff responsible for programme implementation.

Six basic principles for Evaluation and Controlling units

SDC management and SDC departments have small, specialised advisory units that provide support for the functions of Programme Cycle Management/PEMT, Controlling, and independent Evaluation. These E&C units provide assistance in the following areas:

- making SDC's strategic focus more relevant;
- improving the effectiveness of SDC and its partners; and
- enhancing SDC's efficiency.

These units operate in accordance with the following six basic principles (based on the smallest common denominator among the three functions)²:

1. Organisational learning and knowledge sharing

The E&C units support a culture of learning within SDC and among its partners. They are committed to participatory processes, clear assignment of responsibilities, appropriate dissemination of knowledge, and accountability to stakeholders.

2. Dissemination of knowledge and lessons learned

The E&C units promote dissemination of results and lessons from PCM/PEMT, Controlling, and Evaluation activities. They foster active communication and networking between internal and external SDC offices. In particular, they make the results of independent evaluations available to the public.

3. Systematic interventions and standards

E&C units monitor SDC quality control and management systems and take action wherever necessary – not only where action is desired. They define and disseminate formal standards (as well as norms) for PCM/PEMT, Controlling, and Evaluation. This allows them to promote a common basis of understanding.

4. Methodological support and development of instruments

E&C units develop and disseminate instruments for use in PCM/PEMT, Controlling, and Evaluation, and advise line staff on methodological questions. They also participate in the conceptualisation and design of education and training courses in these areas.

5. Complementarity and synergies

E&C units foster complementarity in and among the areas of PCM/PEMT, Controlling, and Evaluation, and provide motivation for management and the various SDC departments to exploit the resulting synergies.

6. Exchange and networks

E&C units ensure exchange with international development organisations and organisations concerned with the practices of controlling and evaluation, particularly in relation to methodology, instruments, indicators, standards and terminology.

² Further details about the activities of SDC's evaluation and controlling units can be found in "Mittelfrist-Konzept der E&C Einheiten der DEZA 2002-2005" (A medium-term Concept for SDC's E&C units, 2002-2005).

Areas of responsibility

In order to facilitate consistent implementation of the principles outlined here, responsibilities must be clearly divided between E&C units and operational line staff as follows:

In relation to **PCM/PEMT**

- SDC E&C units at the Directorate and departmental level are responsible for development of concepts and principles. At the departmental level, they are also responsible for good practices and methodological support of organisational units.
- Line staff are responsible for the following areas: planning and execution of programmes and projects, in close collaboration with partner organisations; programme and project monitoring; initiating evaluations in the context of a programme cycle and implementation of resulting recommendations.

In relation to **Controlling**

- E&C units are responsible for the following tasks at the Directorate and departmental levels: appropriate compilation of management information, dissemination of standards and good practices, and support for organisational units in the processing of information.
- Line staff are responsible for the following areas: gathering and interpretation of information, decision-making, setting standards and monitoring compliance with them, and project and programme cycle management.

In relation to **Independent Evaluation**

- The E&C unit at the Directorate level is responsible for planning, organisation and execution of evaluations. It systematises results and disseminates lessons learned. External evaluators are responsible for the content of these evaluations. (Evaluations done in the context of PCM/PEMT, which constitute the great majority of all evaluations, are initiated by line staff).
- Line staff play a supportive role in the preparation and execution of evaluations. They provide written management response to the recommendations and results of evaluations, and take subsequent related decisions.

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Note These guidelines are also available in French, German and Spanish.

