

## **Response to comments received from members of the International Reference Group on the draft Approach Paper for Phase 2 of the Evaluation of the Paris Declaration**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> draft Approach Paper was circulated to the members of the International Reference Group on 14 March. Four partner countries and 15 donors/agencies provided written comments. All comments are "positive" in the sense that they recognise that discussions and comments received at the Auckland workshop have been incorporated reasonably well. We can assume that the other approximately 20 stakeholders are also content with the revised draft Approach Paper and the Workshop Report.

The constructive comments – some 30 pages in all – have been taken into account in the current revised 3<sup>rd</sup> draft. However, some suggestions could not be accommodated. The Management Group has reviewed the comments and is satisfied that the comments received from the members of the International Reference Group (IRG) have been adequately addressed in the revised draft, and that comments/suggestions that could not be accommodated are adequately responded to below.

All recognise the complexity of the task – but ask for simplification. However, this is a complex evaluation, and we should avoid oversimplification. The current text of the Approach Paper recognises that and attempts to clarify concepts and issues

Some ask for clear description of the evaluation framework and specification of evaluation questions while others want a broad scope initially, to be narrowed and tailored as the evaluation process moves forward. The revised Approach Paper presents one "conceptual framework" with clearer description. It has organised the evaluation questions in a more logical manner, but leaves room for adaptation and further development.

Several suggest "horizontal extension" of Phase 1 in the country-level evaluations. This has been accommodated by making clearer the "two foci" of the country-level evaluations:

- Country level evaluations will partly focus on implementation or "process" – a continuation of Phase 1 both in "old" and "new" countries. The "Core questions" regarding the implementation issues should be relatively few and precise concerning changes of behaviour of countries and donors, however the scope and depth of the country-level evaluations (and additional donor headquarters studies) may vary considerably to incorporate country-specific questions depending on the individual countries' needs and wishes.
- The other, and main, focus will be on results or outcomes: aid and development effectiveness. The "generic ToR" for the country-level evaluations needs to be comprehensive and precise, leaving little room for variations in scope and methodologies.

One commenter suggests not to include countries in situations of fragility. This is not a feasible option. The Accra Agenda for Action recognises the need to 'adapt aid policies for countries in fragile situations'. This includes a commitment to work towards realistic peace and state building objectives that address the root causes of conflict and fragility. Afghanistan and possibly DRC as recognised fragile states have expressed interest in participation in this evaluation. Also several other countries which have engaged in the evaluation have different situations of fragility where the application of the Paris Declaration and the DAC Principles

for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations can be assessed. This, of course has to be coordinated with the ongoing monitoring of the *DAC Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations*.

A clear dissemination strategy is requested by some. The current Approach Paper distinguishes between communication with stakeholders during the evaluation (and presents various means of doing so) and outlines the main elements of a dissemination strategy, but postpones the actual formulation of such a strategy until the messages from the evaluation are becoming clearer, i.e. towards the end of 2010.

Some concerns were raised regarding the budget; some considering the budget too large, others that it is insufficient. The budget for the Evaluation Core Team, supplementary studies, communication, dissemination and meetings is based on the experience from Phase 1. To the extent meetings can be held in conjunction with other events this item may be reduced. However it is prudent to budget realistic, and experience savings. It is quite possible that the standard budget (€ 80.000) for country-level evaluations is insufficient; the estimate is based on the average cost of country evaluations in Phase 1, variations are to be expected and will be accommodated.

One member argues that direct donor funding of country level evaluations – which could be labelled tied aid – is against the principles of the Paris Declaration. Experience from Phase 1 indicates that many donor agencies' evaluation departments have difficulties in providing funds for the core budget, but can fund country-level evaluations. Country evaluation teams should be contracted in accordance with national procedures regardless of the source of funding. National ownership should be ensured by strong country-based national evaluation coordination comprising strong Country-Level Reference Groups and Management.

Some suggest an early International Reference Group meeting (in September 2009). Such a timing is too late for approving the Approach Paper and the ToR for the Evaluation Core Team) and too early for substantive discussion of ToR for the country level evaluations. Others recommend fewer – mainly virtual meetings. In Auckland there was agreement that an April/May meeting would not be necessary for approving the Approach Paper and that the next meeting of the International reference Group should be December 2009 or later. The rationale being that the regional workshops (scheduled for October - November will provide opportunities for partner countries to engage in and contribute substantively to the design of the country-level evaluations. These the regional workshops would be based on the Approach Paper and draft generic ToR for the country-level evaluations, thus building the evaluation “bottom up”. The Generic ToR will then be submitted to the International Reference Group for confirmation at a meeting which is now suggested to be held in Paris on 3 and 4 December 2009 (Back-to-back with the WP-EFF meeting for reasons of efficiency).

Previous versions of this Approach Paper referred to “overall Terms of Reference for Phase 2”. The current Approach Paper is considered to be the overall framework for the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the Evaluation of the Paris Declaration. It will be supplemented with specific Terms of Reference for the Evaluation Core Team, that for the country-level evaluations, a ToR for the (additional) donor/agency headquarters evaluations and the ToR for any supplementary study.

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