



ROOM DOCUMENT NO. 8

DAC WORKING PARTY ON AID EVALUATION

OUTLINE FOR A CLIENT SURVEY STUDY

Submitted by the Secretariat

**This Room Document is to be discussed by the WP-EV Informal Subgroup on Peer Reviews on 13 November.
A report on these discussions will be made during the plenary session.**

Agenda item 2 iii

**35th meeting
14-15 November 2001**

Draft

OUTLINE FOR A CLIENT SURVEY STUDY

Background

1. At the DAC Senior Level Meeting in December 2000, Members proposed closer collaboration between the Working Party on Aid Evaluation and the peer reviews. The need to support efforts to maintain high quality and to continuously seek improvements was noted.
2. In response to the DAC request and the SLM discussion, the WP-EV set up an Informal Sub-group on peer reviews composed of members interested in contributing to this work. Mr. Jan Dybfest, Deputy Director General at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway was elected Chair. Participants are WP-EV members from Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, U.K and the U.S. The Informal Sub-Group met twice in the spring of 2001 and will meet on 13 November on the occasion of the 35th meeting of the WP-EV. Following an initial phase of familiarisation with peer review processes and evaluation working methods, useful discussions on specific issues took place that also led to more intense interaction with evaluation departments in several of the peer reviews conducted in 2000. At the May meeting, it was agreed to pursue this effort with an analytical study that could provide the basis for more in-depth discussion and focused effort.
3. It is suggested that this analytical study would use a two-phase approach starting with a client survey of peer reviews, to be followed by more in-depth treatment of the key issues identified through the client survey.

Purpose of the client survey

4. The purpose is to identify strengths, weaknesses and challenges in the peer review processes in a more systematic and client-focused way. DAC Members are key stakeholders in the processes and their needs should lead efforts to further strengthen peer reviews. Such needs have to be confronted with the limited human and financial resources that are available within PRPM and the Secretariat.

Method and Process

5. The method proposed is to use a questionnaire and key informant interviews with all DAC Delegations and a representative cross-section of capitals. The process for elaborating the TOR will be participative and consultative, first involving the Informal sub-group and the WP-EV which will discuss this outline and further elaborate key elements that need to be included in the approach and the TORs. Subsequently the suggestion for a client study will be transmitted to the DAC at its SLM meeting in December, and provided the suggestion is welcomed, the TOR will be finalised drawing on SLM participants' inputs. The necessary VC would then need to be obtained, followed by recruitment of a consultant to assist with the questionnaire and the key informant interviews, under the direction of the Informal Sub-Group.

Issues for consideration in the questionnaire and key informant interviews

6. Four dimensions have been selected by the Secretariat as possible key areas for improvement.

Provide clearer standards to assess donor performance

7. Formulating clearer standards could involve the following options:
 - i. Focus on donors' stated policies. This is the basis of the present process, but tries to be comprehensive. Would the DAC agree to eliminate some issues to concentrate on the main story? How would the present processes be amended to achieve greater focus?
 - ii. Focus on DAC Guidelines. The DAC suggested this as a way of gaining greater comparability between donors. This option was tested in the recent Netherlands Peer Review. However, the guidelines are not written to comprise a standard against which to compare agency performance. Is there a different way of benchmarking donors in terms of best practice as shown in guidelines?
 - iii. Focus on Outcomes. The DAC SLM suggested this, in line with current thinking in development co-operation. However, is there enough data in examined countries about their contribution to outcomes? Will the Peer Review have the capacity to mobilise the resources necessary to undertake this option in anything more than a superficial manner? What about the context of the PRSP and SWAps that might make this even more difficult?

Enhance the learning and dissemination of lessons as well as follow up of DAC recommendations

8. The enhancement of lesson-learning for individual donors, as well as the donor community, and the follow up of DAC recommendations could involve:
 - iv. Focus on themes. This would facilitate collective learning, at the cost of being less comprehensive. How could such a process be managed, in particular through changing the sequence of country selection?
 - v. Enhance follow up of specific DAC recommendations from reviews. The DAC Chair makes a follow-up visit, and the Secretariat has increasingly been invited to follow up by some Members and their respective parliaments. How might the DAC help countries to take ownership of the review, internalise lessons learned and follow-up on DAC recommendations?
 - vi. Undertake more joint assessments at country level, in the context of two/three Peer Reviews. Such an approach would allow for comparison of different donor approaches to similar challenges in the field. It could also lead to savings to the examined countries overall. Nevertheless, there would be logistical difficulties to resolve, a much heavier burden when receiving the mission in-country, and a need to establish a common framework. How should the DAC tackle these difficulties?
 - vii. Undertake some demand-driven assessments of donor performance and practices at country level. As a recent request from Nepal demonstrates, the Secretariat could undertake -- at the specific request of the local donor community and the government -- a few reviews of donor performance and practices. The objective would be to help local donors reflect on their past assistance efforts, particularly the way they worked with the process of the country's own

development efforts, and to suggest how to improve their effectiveness in the future. Based on the results of the ongoing experience with Nepal, is this something to be pursued and strengthened in the near future?

Improve stakeholder participation

9. There are several key stakeholders in the peer review process. These include: i) the reviewed country; ii) the examining countries; iii) other DAC Members; iv) DCD Secretariat; and v) others. To strengthen their participation in the peer review process, the study could consider the following options, which are *not* mutually exclusive:

- i. Enhance the role of the examined country's Evaluation Unit, where this is welcome and feasible. Much deeper understanding of issues of importance to the examined country might be achieved by early involvement of internal evaluation units in the process. How might this be achieved? What are the implications for evaluation programmes?
- ii. Strengthen the involvement of the examining countries at all stages in the process. The examining countries might wish to take a greater role in the review and developing the main issues. Would the examining countries be willing to take on the work and cost involved in such an approach?
- iii. Bring in the beneficiary country perspective more clearly. The present reviews do not allow for an assessment of donors by beneficiaries. What changes would need to be made to the field visits to allow beneficiary perspectives to play a greater role in the assessment?
- iv. Better integrate the peer review process with the work of other DCD divisions. This should be a two-way process. How could this be achieved in an effective and efficient way?

Improving efficiency and transparency of the peer review process

10. Consideration of the following options could help the DAC to improve further the internal processes of the peer review:

- i. Improve the process of producing documents for the Review. The process generates the examined country's Memorandum, a Secretariat main report along with one or two country reports, a DAC paper on findings and recommendations, the examining countries issues paper, and the DAC Chair's press release. The whole process involves increasing participation from different stakeholders. Can this number of papers be reduced? Can the transaction costs be reduced?
- ii. Enhance DAC participation in a more transparent way. The ownership of the different documents is not clearly differentiated in the process. Is there a way to differentiate clearly the authorship of the different documents?
- iii. Enhance other aspects of DAC work. Findings and lessons from the peer reviews could be used more strategically by other DAC bodies and by the DAC. How might such synergy between other DAC work and peer reviews be facilitated?
- iv. Improve the relevance, focus and organisation of the DAC peer review meeting in Paris. How could the relevance and focus of the DAC discussion, as well as the agreement on the main conclusions and recommendations and the Press Release, be improved?

- v. Improve financial arrangements. Can the sustainability of the Secretariat field missions be assured?

Use of the survey

11. The survey will be used to identify areas which may require further in-depth work by the Informal Sub-group, in collaboration with PRPM. This will lead in time to suggestions for further improvements of the peer review process and possible budget implications to be considered by the DAC.

Budget and time-schedule

12. It is obviously difficult to estimate the budget before the exact scope of work has been decided. However, in order to provide some preliminary estimates of the first phase, the following provisional budget for the work of the consultant involvement in the client survey is:

- 10 days for design and testing the questionnaire on the basis of the issues and questions communicated identified by the DAC WP-EV and its SLM meeting.
- 20 days for interviews with capitals and DAC delegates (including some travel)
- 10 days for processing, reminders and write up of questionnaire results
- 5 days for revising and finalising paper
- 2 days for presenting results to the WP-EV and the DAC

In total, about two months work (including travel to be specified and depending on location of the consultant).

It is estimated that voluntary funding for about 80 000 € will need to be sought for the first exercise. It would include a reserve for miscellaneous expenditure in order to have the necessary flexibility.

A possible time frame is:

- Discussion and elaboration of key elements in the Informal Sub-group and in the WP-EV, 13 - 14 November.
- Inform and obtain advice from the DAC SLM in its December 2001 meeting.
- Finalise TOR for the client survey early January, obtain the necessary voluntary funding for the study, followed by the recruitment of a consultant. Jan - Feb 2002.
- Implementation of the client survey Feb- April 2002 (with two months effective work over the period)
- Discussion of results at the WP-EV in May 2002 and in an ensuing DAC meeting.

A detailed work plan and budget will be included in the final TORs which will be elaborated on the basis of comments and discussion of this outline.