

Monitoring-Evaluation-Statistics Service
Evaluation Unit
Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGDC)
BELGIUM

Update on the Evaluation Programme

May 2005

The Monitoring-Evaluation-Statistics Service was created within the DGDC in 2003. The previous evaluation unit had been dissolved in 1998.

The new evaluation unit first prepared a strategic note that was approved by the Directorate-General. The proposed evaluation strategy aims at (1) building capacities of the DGDC in evaluation and (2) conducting programme and thematic evaluations in collaboration with the relevant departments (bilateral, multilateral and indirect actors such as NGOs and universities).

(1) Building capacities in evaluation

Stimulating an evaluation culture (after 5 years without the support of an evaluation unit) is done in various ways. The evaluation unit acts as a **coach** in the preparation of evaluations initiated by the DGDC departments: technical support to the writing of terms of references and to tender processes. In these cases, the departments are leading the process with the evaluation's unit technical/quality support. The unit has acted as a coach on a dozen of evaluations.

The evaluation unit is as well (re)activating lists of experts and consultants firms by making its evaluation programme known and by favoring consortia of firms to enlarge the Belgian market to other European firms/independent experts.

The evaluation unit has also developed evaluation tools such as models for evaluation public tenders, models for terms of references. It is currently designing a more comprehensive interactive toolbox on the DGDC intranet. The site will include useful links on websides offering valuable evaluation tools. The toolbox will include a link to the OECD Network on Development Evaluation.

(2) Conducting evaluations

➤ **Of projects and programmes**

The evaluation unit is also requested by the Directorate-General to conduct project/programme evaluations. In such cases, the evaluation unit plays a more leading role than coaching. The unit is leading the preparation of the terms of reference, the tender process and the overall administrative and financial control, in collaboration with the relevant departments. The unit is as well co-presiding the steering group made up of the various evaluation stakeholders. On the other end, the departments themselves follow-up on the evaluation recommendations.

In 2004-2005, the evaluation unit has completed the evaluation of the following programmes :

- “Annoncer la Couleur/Kleur bekennen”, a development education awareness programme across the country.
- “Migration and Development”, a programme involving migrants in the development of their country of origin.
- Capacity-Building & Institutional Development Support to the Ministry of Planning » in Palestine, aiming at coordinating its aid programme.

- Programme support to local NGOs in eight countries in the context of civil society capacity development (currently on public tender).
- Two projects in food security supported by the Belgian Survival Fund.

➤ **On specific themes (thematic evaluations)**

The evaluation unit has as well its own programming, in consultation with the Directorate-General.

The current 2004-2005 evaluation programme

- **A meta-evaluation relating to the NGOs internal evaluations (“dispositif du 1%”)**

The French firm in charge of the evaluation based its findings on an inventory of 500 reports dealing with NGO programme evaluations between 1998 and 2003. It investigated on the pertinence of the legal and institutional aspects of the compulsory rule stipulating that NGOs supported by the DGDC allocate 1% of the governments’ contribution towards evaluation. The meta-evaluation looked into the practice of evaluation in the NGO community as well as its use in programming and the dialogue between the administration and NGOs around evaluation. The evaluation proposes a DGDC workplan of action to follow-up on the evaluation in the perspective of improving the “Dispositif du 1% “.

The meta-evaluation was piloted by the evaluation unit, with the collaboration of the relevant department of the DGDC. The NGO community has a representation on the steering committee. Three working sessions were organised with the department staff and with the NGO community representatives to look at the findings and validate the proposed workplan of action.

- **A thematic evaluation of the Belgian cooperation’s health sector**, more particularly primary health care.

The evaluation is currently on. It concerns six countries: Benin, Niger, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cambodia and Equator. The terms of reference were developed by the evaluation unit, in consultation with health experts and development councillors in the embassies. They were presented to a health plate-form whose members are from the NGO community, from universities and the Belgian health community. As well, the terms of reference were presented to all the bilateral field health staff at the occasion of a conference on health organised by the executing agency of the Belgian bilateral programme.

The evaluation aims at taking stock of lessons learned in order to be able to review the Belgian cooperation health strategy in the light of the past and on-going field experience. The evaluation is conducted by a consortium of firms. The exercise will be completed in December and will lead to the review of the Belgian cooperation health strategy.

- **A thematic evaluation on “Decentralisation and local governance”**

The terms of reference have been developed by the evaluation unit in collaboration with DGDC field representatives and relevant staff. The European Center for Development Policy Management (ECPDM), which has gained a large expertise on the theme of decentralization, is acting as an expert resource to the evaluation unit.

The evaluation aims at building knowledge of the DGDC on decentralization and local governance and developing a better strategy to position the Belgian cooperation in supporting developing countries in their efforts in decentralization processes. Part of the evaluation exercise consists in a two-day learning workshop. Ousmane Sy (Mali), who won the King Beaudoin 2004-2005 international development price for his support to governance in Africa, will be among a

panel of experts and practitioners. The workshop will lead to a conceptual framework that will support the evaluation in five countries. The evaluation will be completed in February 2006, with the preparation of a strategic note on the Belgian cooperation's future position in supporting decentralization processes. It is anticipated that a West African regional workshop will be organised in the spring.

- **A thematic evaluation of the education sector**

The evaluation unit has started preliminary talks and research on the theme. The evaluation will be conducted in the same manner as the one on primary health care. Belgian institutions involved in the education sector will be represented on the Steering group of the evaluation and will be active in finalizing the terms of reference. The evaluation will start in January 2006.

- **A mid-term evaluation of the Belgian Survival Fund (BSF) of the DGDC**

The BSF has developed a strategy for the period 2000-2010 to achieve the work that the Belgian Parliament mandated it for: to contribute improving food security and reduce poverty in least developed countries. The law that gave birth to the Fund in 2000 allocated 250 millions EUR to the programme (18,6 millions EUR per year).

The evaluation will review the strategy and the set up of the Fund, aiming at making potential adjustments to the programme after 5 years. It is anticipated that the evaluation will likely be participatory, involving the organisations (NGOs, the bilateral programme executing agency and multilateral organisations "clients" of the Fund. The terms of reference will be developed in the fall and the evaluation will take place in 2006.

- **Participation in joint evaluations**

The evaluation unit is currently participating in two joint evaluations: the **3C's evaluation** on the role of the Maastricht treaty relating to coordination and complementarity in the development cooperation policies and operations – **local development** – of the European Union. The evaluation is one of the six 3C's evaluations currently carried out by a group of European donors.

The evaluation unit participates as well in the steering group of the joint evaluation of General Budget Support in 8 countries currently on-going, led by DFID.

The 2006-2007 tentative evaluation programme

The DGDC direction has approved a tentative 2006-2007 evaluation programme. Several themes were selected, as priorities based on the fact that those themes relate to the Belgian cooperation's commitment to international donors agendas.

- **Harmonisation et alignment**

The Belgian cooperation politically supports the Paris Declaration. The DGDC is currently carrying a survey within the Belgian cooperation on the indicators of the Paris Declaration. The evaluation aims at verifying to what extent the Belgian cooperation is progressing towards concrete strategies and is putting them into practice. The evaluation will identify specific constraints that are slowing down eventual progress towards harmonization and alignment on the field for which the Belgian cooperation subscribes as a donor country.

- **New instruments of cooperation**

The Belgian cooperation has just defined a set of criteria for applying budget support. The 2005-2007 period is considered as a transitory phase during which it will be testing these criteria for implementing budget support. At the end of this testing phase, it will be necessary to evaluate this new budget aid instrument, and the relevancy of the criteria and their application in the Belgian context, in the light of the results of the current joint evaluation of General Budget Support.

Other proposed themes of interest for the DGDC

Note : Those themes remain preliminary, as the evaluation programming will be updated every year.

- **Meta-évaluation on the use of internal evaluations of the Belgian Technical Cooperation (executing body of the bilateral programme) to improve effectiveness and impact.**

This study would be a similar exercise to the meta-evaluation of the use of the « dispositif du 1% » of NGOs evaluations on their programming that has just been completed.

- **The evolution of capacity building in the Belgian cooperation.**

The theme relates to the current context dynamics of changing profiles and responsibilities between human resources in the North and in the South. Capacity building includes here aid instruments such as technical assistance, training through study grants or sending “coopérants”.

The evolution of capacity development as an instrument is one of the vulnerable aspects when considering the strategic changes proposed in the international cooperation agenda (the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness; the Rome declaration on harmonization). The roles, needs, profiles of assistance need adjusting to the context of the evolution of the paradigm of development cooperation.

The theme is of interest to several countries with small cooperation budgets. It would be interesting to investigate the possibility of a joint venture with one or two countries sharing the same concerns.

Prepared by Anne-Marie Lambert
Chief evaluator
Monitoring-Evaluation-Statistics Unit
Belgian cooperation

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