



# **ROOM DOCUMENT 7**

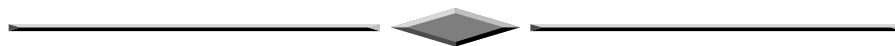
## **DAC Network on Development Evaluation**

### **EVALUATION SYSTEMS AND USE**

#### **DEVELOPING AN ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR DAC PEER REVIEWS**

##### **Item III: iv**

This document has been prepared by the Secretariat for discussion at the meeting of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation on 2 – 3 June 2005.



**3rd meeting  
2 – 3 June 2005**

## EVALUATION SYSTEMS AND USE

### DEVELOPING AN ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR DAC PEER REVIEWS

#### 1. Background

1. The DAC Evaluation Network and its members are committed to a continuous process of improvement of evaluation tools, processes and products. As part of its mandate, the Network is currently engaged in several work streams aimed at developing quality standards for evaluation, harmonising and improving the evaluation practices, and ensuring the reliability of multilateral agencies' evaluation systems. [DCD/DAC/EV/M(2004)2/PROV].

2. At its 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting (9-10 November 2004 ), members discussed options to strengthen the evaluation function and promote transparency and accountability for results within DAC agencies. Members decided to take a two step approach, starting by exploring ways to enhance the assessment framework used in DAC Peer Reviews and then, if necessary, moving to a broader study at a later stage [DCD/DAC/EV(2004)1]

#### 2. Objectives

3. This paper discusses ways to enhance Peer Reviews' assessment of development evaluation systems with the aim of:

1. Helping future Peer Reviews better address evaluation issues by enhancing the use of the DAC Principles on Aid Evaluation;
2. Enhancing the Peer Review focus on evaluation's use and support awareness of the need for evaluation within DAC agencies' more broadly

#### 3. Evaluation systems in Peer Reviews

4. DAC Peer Reviews (PR) represent the only internationally agreed mechanism to assess the overall performance of donor countries' development cooperation programmes. Carried out every 4/5 years for each member, PRs assess six broad areas: (1) strategic framework, (2) aid volumes, (3) sector approaches, (4) policy coherence issues, (5) management framework and (6) field operations.

5. Evaluation is addressed in Chapter 5 of the DAC Peer Reviews, under the rubric of performance management, together with monitoring, results based management and performance orientation. Data for peer reviews is collected through interviews and information gathering in capitals, as well as visits to one or two partner countries where the programme is implemented. Most information on evaluation systems is gathered during the visit to capital, but certain aspects are dealt with during field visits, including details on the relationship between HQs and field offices, particularly when the evaluation function is decentralised.

6. There are both benefits and drawbacks in Peer Reviews' assessment of evaluations systems. Peer Reviews are unique in adopting a systemic approach to the examination of DAC members' development cooperation programmes, and in situating these within a whole of government perspective. The evaluation function is usually assessed in its articulation between HQs and field offices and in its relationship with other actors (parliament, audit office, other government agencies, etc).

7. The limited space and attention that PRs can dedicate to evaluation is their main downside. Peer Reviews address the entire development cooperation programme of every DAC member country and its coherence with other policies. For a number of DAC countries this means assessing more than one agency and programme in a single review. Reviews are also subject to constant pressure to add to the scope of analysis, whilst their capacity to focus on any one topic, including evaluation, is limited.

### **3. Reinforcing the assessment of evaluation systems in peer reviews**

8. The DAC Principles on Aid Evaluation provide the main framework for assessing evaluation in Peer Reviews. So far Peer Review teams have utilised a one-page summary of the DAC Principles for the analysis. Yet, Peer Reviews' reliance on the DAC Principles has decreased over the years. During the 1996-2000 PR cycle recommendations concentrated mainly on members' compliance with the DAC Principles, but this was less so in the last cycle (2000-2004). [Room Document n.10, 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the DAC Evaluation Network, 9-10 2004].

9. This trend reflects at least three factors. First, several member agencies have, to different degrees, undergone reform processes to place their evaluation function in line with the DAC Principles - hence less need for PR emphasis on compliance. Secondly, and following from the above, issues not included in the Principles are now becoming increasingly important, for example the 'use of evaluation' within the agency, i.e. the ways and the extent to which evaluative information is actually utilised, follow up is guaranteed and recommendations are implemented. Lastly, the DAC Principles provide a normative framework which needs to be translated into specific questions during the Peer Review assessment. This might not always be easy, particularly when Peer Review teams do not include evaluators or individuals familiar with the workings and institutional setting of bilateral evaluation departments.

10. The DAC is currently revising the methodology for PRs [DCD/DAC(2005)17], through the introduction of a content guide offering a detailed structure of issues to be covered in Peer Reviews and one-page checklists, as suggested by the DAC Chair recently [RM(04)122]. In this context, the DAC Evaluation Network could consider developing a checklist to be used in the assessment of evaluation systems in Peer Reviews. This would help not only help Peer Reviews assess evaluation in a more consistent way, but could also help promote the development evaluation agenda across and within development agencies themselves, particularly in countries where the evaluation function is weakened by certain factors or institutional limitations.

### **4. A checklist for assessing evaluation systems in Peer Reviews**

11. The annex presents a draft checklist for discussion and consideration by Network members. In developing the checklist the following criteria have been considered:

- Maintaining the DAC Principles on Aid Evaluation as the main normative framework for the analysis.
- Paying more attention to the systems in place to support evaluation use. An assessment of the utility of evaluation necessarily goes through triangulating information on evaluation use gathered from non evaluation staff.
- Focusing on the priorities that can be addressed best by PRs, given the features of the review process and its comparative advantages, including the range of informants that a Peer Review process can draw upon, both in capitals and in the field.
- Providing a comprehensive but flexible and user friendly tool which can be easily updated.

12. The Checklist is meant to provide a flexible tool, not a straightjacket. Its purpose is to facilitate Peer Review analyses of evaluation systems, without claiming to be a compulsory blueprint. This means that its application will vary from case to case, according to the weight attributed by PR teams to evaluation systems and/or to certain parts thereof.

#### **5. Issues for discussion**

13. Members are invited to provide advice on the proposed approach, and specifically on the areas covered by the checklist.

## ANNEX – DRAFT PEER REVIEW CHECKLIST ON EVALUATION SYSTEMS AND USE<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Evaluation Policy: role, responsibility and objectives of the evaluation unit

- Does the ministry/aid agency have an evaluation policy?
  - Does the policy describe the role, responsibility and position of the evaluation unit within the institutional aid structure?
  - According to the policy, how does evaluation contribute to institutional learning and accountability?
  - What is the relationship between evaluation and audit conceptualised within the agency?
  - In countries with two or more aid agencies, how are the roles of the respective evaluation units defined and coordinated?
- Is the evaluation policy adequately known within the aid agency?

### 2. Impartiality, transparency and independence

- Is the evaluation unit and the evaluation process independent from line management?
  - What are the formal and actual drivers ensuring / constraining the evaluation unit's independence?
  - What is the evaluation unit's experience in exposing success *and* failures of aid programmes and their implementation?
  - Is the evaluation process transparent enough to ensure its credibility and legitimacy? Are evaluation findings consistently made public?
- Are the evaluation process and reports perceived as impartial by non evaluation actors within and outside the agency?

### 3. Resources and Staff

- Is evaluation supported by appropriate financial and staff resources?
- Does the evaluation unit have a dedicated budget? Is it annual or multiyear? Does the budget cover activities aimed at promoting feedback and use of evaluation and management of evaluation knowledge?
- Does staff have specific expertise in evaluation, and if not, are training programmes available?
- Is there a policy on recruiting consultants, in terms of qualification, impartiality and deontology?

### 4. Evaluation partnership and capacity building

- To what extent are beneficiaries involved in the evaluation process?
  - To what extent does the agency rely on local evaluators, or when not possible, on third party evaluators from partner countries?
  - Does the agency engage in partner-led evaluations?
  - Does the unit support training and capacity building programmes in partner countries?
- What are partners' perceptions of evaluation processes and products promoted by the agency/country examined (in terms of quality, independence, objectivity, usefulness and partnership orientation?)

### 5. Quality

- How does the evaluation unit ensure the quality of evaluation (including for both reports and process)?
- Does the agency have guidelines for the conduct of evaluation, and are these used by relevant stakeholders?

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<sup>1</sup> The arrows indicate questions to be addressed to non evaluation staff within the agency/ministry

- Has the agency developed/adopted standards/benchmarks to assess and improve the quality of its evaluation reports?
- How is the quality of evaluation products perceived throughout the agency?

## **6. Planning, coordination and harmonisation**

- Does the agency have a multi-year evaluation plan, describing future evaluations according to a defined timetable?
- How is the evaluation plan developed? Who, within the aid agency, identifies the priorities and how?
- In countries where ODA responsibility is shared among two or more departments, how is the evaluation function organised?
- Does the evaluation unit coordinate its evaluation activities with other donors?
- How are field level evaluation activities coordinated? Is authority for evaluation centralised or decentralised?
- Does the evaluation unit engage in joint/multi donor evaluations?
- Does the evaluation unit/aid agency make use of evaluative information coming from other donor organisations?
- How does the agency assess the effectiveness of its contributions to multilateral organisations?

## **7. Dissemination, feedback, knowledge management and learning**

- How are evaluation findings disseminated? In addition to reports, are other communication tools used? (press releases, press conferences, abstracts, annual reports providing a synthesis of findings)?
- What are the mechanisms in place to ensure feedback of evaluation results to policy makers, operational staff and the general public?
- What mechanisms are in place to ensure that knowledge from evaluation is accessible to staff and relevant stakeholders?
- Is evaluation considered a 'learning tool' by agency staff?

## **8. Evaluation Use**

- Who are the main users of evaluations within and outside the aid agency?(ex. parliament, audit office, government, the public)
- Are there systems in place to ensure the follow up and implementation of evaluation findings and recommendations?
- How does the aid agency/ministry promote follow up on findings from relevant stakeholders (through e.g. steering groups, advisory panel, sounding boards, etc.)?
- Are links with decision making processes ensured to promote the use of evaluation in policy formulation?
- Are there recent examples of major operation and policy changes sparked by evaluation findings?
- Are there examples of how evaluation serves as an accountability mechanism?
- What are the perceptions of non evaluation actors (operation and policy departments, field offices, etc) regarding the usefulness and influence of evaluation?

## **References**

- DAC Principles on Evaluation of Development Assistance [OCDE/GD(91)208]
- Review of the DAC Principles on Evaluation of Development Assistance OECD(1998)
- Strengthening Evaluation Systems in Member Agencies [DCD/DAC/EV(2004)1]
- Evaluation systems in DAC Member Agencies: a study based on DAC Peer Reviews' paper presented at the Second Meeting of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation , Paris 9-10 2004