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## DAC Network on Development Evaluation

### Summary Record of the Seventh Meeting of the DAC Evaluation Network

20 - 21 February 2008

Contact persons: Hans Lundgren; Em: [hans.lundgren@oecd.org](mailto:hans.lundgren@oecd.org); Tel: +33(0)1 45 24 90 59, Anna Hellstrom; [anna.hellstrom@oecd.org](mailto:anna.hellstrom@oecd.org); Tel: +33(0)1 45 24 96 68 or Nathalie Bienvenu; [nathalie.bienvenu@oecd.org](mailto:nathalie.bienvenu@oecd.org), Tel: +33(0)1 45 24 90 36

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## **SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SEVENTH MEETING OF THE DAC EVALUATION NETWORK**

### **Item I. Opening Session**

i) The Chair, Finbar O'Brien (Ireland) opened the meeting and welcomed participants. A tour de table provided first-time participants with an opportunity to present themselves.

ii) The draft agenda [DCD/DAC/EV/A (2008)1] was adopted.

iii) The summary record of the 6th meeting [DCD/DAC/EV/M (2007)1] was adopted.

iv) Nick York (UK) was elected Vice-Chair of the Network.

v) The Secretariat briefed members on the ongoing process for preparing the DAC programme of work and budget (PWB) for 2009-10, with two templates of work prepared by the Network for the voting on priorities. Results of the voting are to be presented to the DAC on 4<sup>th</sup> of March and a final PWB adopted later in the spring.

vi) Highlights of the in-depth evaluation of the DAC were presented by the Secretariat including the main results and recommendations. Later at the meeting, the DAC facilitator, Guy Beringsh (Belgium), presented the proposed process for revising the DAC's subsidiary body mandates. A revised mandate for each sub-group will be prepared in an inter-active process between the DAC, the facilitators and the respective Bureaus and members.

**Action:** The Bureau, the Facilitator and the Secretariat to co-ordinate work on a revised mandate. The results of the voting exercise on priorities to be reported back to members by the Secretariat.

### **Item II. Improving methods, quality and systems**

#### ***i) Application of the guidance on evaluation conflict prevention and peacebuilding – discussions on next steps***

1. Asbjørn Eidhammar (Norway) summarised the outcomes from the application planning meeting held in Bern on 21-22 January 2008. The following joint evaluations, which will use the guidance as a working draft, are being developed: TORs of the evaluation in Sri Lanka is near finalisation and co-led by the UK and Switzerland; Norway is consulting with and inviting others to work on an evaluation in Haiti; Belgium informed members of its interest to take a lead on an evaluation in the Democratic Republic of Congo and; the Netherlands is considering to take the lead in an evaluation in south Sudan.

2. Members expressed appreciation for the progress made since last meeting; the publication of the approach paper; the finalisation of the working draft guidance and; the interest in taking part in concrete applications. It was indicated that an extended application period might be necessary.

**Action:** Wide dissemination of the working draft guidance by the Secretariat and by members internally (copies can be requested from the Secretariat). Members to confirm, asap, interest in joining up in planned evaluations and firm up work plans and TORs. As the process develops, members should feedback experience from the use of the guidance to help inform the final product.

### *ii) Impact evaluation*

3. An update of the work of NONIE (Network of Networks on Impact Evaluation) was provided by the Chair of NONIE (Room Document No 3A, and a draft statement on impact evaluation was made available as Room Document No 3C). During the discussion, a number of Members underlined their strong interest in support for work going forward in NONIE, including completing a guidance document. Some members expressed caution in developing NONIE into an institutionalised network with wide-ranging work priorities as it has now expanded substantially. It was clarified that a lighter steering group would help NONIE to focus on work outputs. The Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) confirmed its willingness to act as the host of the secretariat of NONIE. IEG also presented highlights of the recent conference on impact evaluation and challenges for the future (Room Document No 3B). The need to move from a method and supply driven approach to a policy and demand led approach was echoed by several participants. A number of participants also underlined the need to address impact methods for more complex interventions and new aid modalities. It was also clear that the discussion now has moved from a mere focus on the pros and cons of experimental methods to largely an agreement on the need for methodological diversity and a theory based approach.

**Action:** NONIE Chair to keep members informed about progress of work and specifics, when available, for the next meeting of NONIE which is likely to take place back to back with the EES (European Evaluation Society) conference in the autumn 2008.

### *iii) UNEG/DAC Network task team on peer reviews of evaluation systems and update on ECG peer review work*

4. The co-chairs of the task team reported on progress to date and the results of the meeting held the previous day. Experience has been gained through the exercises so far, and a note with lessons learned is under preparation. Sweden, as team leader for the recent review of WFP's evaluation system, provided highlights of the review. It was suggested that in the medium term, the professional peer review of UN evaluation systems would be best hosted with the UNEG group, but before this would mature and become operational, a continuation of work by the voluntary group would be necessary.

5. The chair of the ECG (Evaluation Cooperation Group) reported that the approach of peer reviews of evaluation functions in the multilateral banks is under development. The interest of the respective boards and right timing are key issues for considering a pilot review.

6. During the discussion the broader issue of various initiatives aimed at assessing the effectiveness of multilateral institutions as a channel for aid was raised, and the link between an effective evaluation system as an input to such assessments was noted.

**Action:** The co-chairs to circulate a note on the lessons from the WFP experience when completed. The voluntary task team to continue work, including a forthcoming review of UN OIOS (United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Service) and to liaise with UNEG on the future of the initiative.

*iv) Evaluation Quality Standards*

7. The Secretariat presented the findings from the questionnaire which indicated that the standards are widely used by the members are often referred to for quality control, in preparing guidelines and when drafting TORs. The suggestion to organise a workshop on the standards and experience with their use was generally welcomed and the offer by Australia and New Zealand to host it was appreciated. It was suggested that the workshop would take place in early 2009, when more experience with the use of the standards had been acquired, and to hold it in conjunction with the launch of the second phase of the evaluation of the Paris Declaration.

**Action:** Members to record experience with use of the standards. Australia and New Zealand, in collaboration with the Secretariat, to further develop and explore the content and best timing for the workshop.

**Item III. Discussion on evaluation harmonisation and alignment in a changing aid and development context**

8. This session saw a broad discussion on the issues concerning harmonisation and alignment in the changing aid and development context. The Secretariat pointed to the importance of sharing work plans and highlighted that there might be opportunities for collaboration and joint evaluations in the many evaluations planned (Room Document No 7).

9. Members generally agreed that there is potential for more collaboration, and that the use of already existing evaluations, as well as trust of each other's work, could be enhanced. It was suggested that a "higher authority" or a more formal co-ordinating mechanism would be helpful in promoting more joint work and evaluations. It was also highlighted that the connection to the field needs to be stronger as evaluations follow in the footsteps of programming - with joint programming joint evaluations become the natural response.

10. The discussion centred on the planning of evaluations and how strategic priorities for evaluation at the country level can be supported and combined with the needs for donor accountability. A presentation by DFID proposed a study on the current evaluation planning processes among donors to explore limitations and opportunities: *Constraints, opportunities and approaches for increasing joint donor programming of evaluation* (Room Document No 6). Members welcomed the proposal and indicated their willingness to take part.

11. Peter Ssentongo from the Ugandan Office of the Prime Minister presented an upcoming evaluation on Uganda's Poverty Eradication Action Plan and looked for interested partners to join.

12. The Chair made a presentation on the aid, development and evaluation context in Tanzania, noting comments received during the field mission that the current state was largely a donor driven and ad-hoc

process, but that interest both at government and donor level existed, and opportunities for supporting in-country work could be further explored.

13. It was suggested that the task team should also seek to address the issues of alignment and support to in-country processes at its next meeting. The Chair underlined that it would be important to move forward with concrete country cases in addition to further promote more general harmonisation of planning processes.

**Action:** Any further comments on the proposed study should be sent to Julia Compton, DFID, and the Secretariat who will co-ordinate on the implementation of the study and on the preparation of a task team meeting before the summer. The Secretariat will consider how the Network website can be further developed to serve as a platform for exchange on members' evaluation plans to increase information sharing and promote joint or collaborative work. Members to inform Peter Ssentongo on their willingness to participate in an international reference group for the Ugandan evaluation.

#### **Item IV. Joint evaluations of aid effectiveness**

##### ***i) Evaluation of the Paris Declaration – outcome of the Johannesburg reference group meeting and next steps***

14. Niels Dabelstein, the co-chair of the reference group for the evaluation of the implementation of the Paris Declaration, briefed the Network on the process and the timeline for completing the synthesis report. Although the process has experienced delays it was also stressed that the country level evaluations have gone beyond only delivering results for the synthesis and have become instruments for implementing the Paris Declaration – they have become processes in themselves creating ownership.

15. The thematic study on untying aid was discussed as some members had comments on the TORs. It was noted that while full efforts will be made to accommodate various stakeholders' interests it would be necessary to exercise a spirit of compromise as not everything can be covered in the TORs.

**Action:** TORs for thematic study to be agreed on. 1<sup>st</sup> of March submission of country reports. 25<sup>th</sup> of March submission of first draft synthesis report to reference group. 31<sup>st</sup> of March reference group meeting in Paris.

##### ***ii) Outcome of the GBS evaluation – results of the questionnaire***

16. DFID presented a synthesis of responses to the questionnaire on the follow up to the General Budget Support evaluation. Members welcomed this follow up work as it documented the use of this major evaluation and its recommendations. Dissemination within agencies had varied but it was noted that many had made significant use of the evaluation in policy and operational work.

17. Several members were interested in a follow up, including on the issue of broader impact of budget support and welcomed the initiative by the European Commission to organise a meeting before the summer where internal reflections and possible further joint work would be discussed.

**Action:** The European Commission will host a meeting on the subject before the summer which could provide an opportunity to reflect on how to meet accountability needs, expressed at both political and operational levels, as well as to discuss how potential further joint or collaborative work could be organised, including decentralised options.

#### **Item V. Evaluation capacity development and updates**

##### *i) Secretariat briefing on a study of ECD experiences in Africa*

18. The ongoing study on experiences of evaluation capacity development (ECD) in West Africa was presented by the Secretariat (Room Document No 11). It was noted that this was a follow up on the ECD Fact Finding study and the previous meeting's exchange on concrete experiences in Vietnam. Several members noted the importance of the ECD agenda and the need for both capacity development training and political awareness. The IEG indicated the possibility of a scaled up effort potentially involving the development grant facility at the Bank.

**Action:** The results of the study on African experiences to be reported to members, when completed. Members to communicate to the Secretariat any important initiatives in the ECD area to promote information sharing and exchange. IEG to keep members informed about developments on a grant facility.

##### *ii) Results of the ODA evaluation workshop in Asia*

19. Japan provided highlights of the ODA evaluation workshop in Asia, held on 28-29 November 2007 and jointly co-sponsored by Malaysia. The co-chairs summary of the workshop was circulated as Room Document No 12.

**Action:** Japan invited comments and advice from members on how to make a future workshop as useful as possible, taking into account evaluation capacity development dimensions.

##### *iii) DEREc*

20. DEREc now contains nearly 1700 evaluation reports and in addition, evaluation guidelines and manuals, and is reaching a wide interested public via its website.

**Action:** Members to send completed evaluations to the Secretariat, as part of their regular dissemination of completed evaluations, and a link or copy of their most recent evaluation policy. The Secretariat will review how to best inform members of new evaluations published on the site, to further improve knowledge sharing.

#### **Item VI. Evaluation in the context of managing for development results**

21. Briefing on ongoing work by the DAC Joint Venture on Managing for Development Results

22. In order to inform the Network of the work of the Joint Venture on Managing for Development Results, the Secretariat presented an overview of its current work programme. It was emphasised that monitoring and evaluation were key dimensions on managing for results.

23. It was suggested that there may be synergies in strengthened exchange and collaboration on some of the work and, in particular, it was noted that the communities of practice in the various regions may constitute interesting entry points. It was noted that evaluation had played a prominent role in the Hanoi Round Table on managing for results.

**Action:** Members of the Network and the Joint Venture to consider potential for further exchange and collaboration between workstreams of mutual interest.

#### **Item VII. Informal session**

24. During the informal session, members shared experience with recent and ongoing evaluation work, and indicated opportunities for further collaborative and/or joint work.

25. Ireland provided an update on the work of the monitoring and evaluation reference group (MERG) on HIV/AIDS and a request for bilateral participation in an evaluation working group by MERG. Denmark, UK and Ireland expressed interest in following this work, subject to a review of the final TORs for the work involved. Denmark drew attention to a recent evaluation synthesis produced based on 68 evaluations in the area of HIV/AIDS.

26. The ALNAP representative presented ongoing work in the field of evaluation of humanitarian aid and experience with meta and joint evaluations. ALNAP is examining the feasibility of developing a mechanism for assessing and reporting on the overall performance of the humanitarian sector. ALNAP is also exploring the possibility of conducting a workshop focusing on joint humanitarian evaluations. It was suggested that the impact of the Tsunami evaluation should be investigated along the lines of the follow up to the GBS evaluation.

27. The findings of a recent comparative study by ODI of evaluation policies and practises in development agencies were presented by France. The study noted that constant organisational change and reform processes had been experienced in the reviewed agencies causing some evaluation departments to “search for their identity”. This led to a good discussion on challenges for evaluation departments, although it was noted that the report covered only a few agencies and some factual data would need updating.

28. Norway provided a brief update on the joint evaluation of anti-corruption efforts. A pre-study is underway to look at options for the scope of the main study with a draft report expected in August 2008. Australia expressed interest to join the reference group and have also recently finished an assessment on anti-corruption which will be shared. The management group will report back on this evaluation at the next meeting.

29. The Secretariat drew members’ attention to the update on Evaluating Global and Regional Partnership Programmes (GRPPs) (Room Document 17). The major focus of the work by the IEG team is now on good practice guidelines and examples for evaluating GRPPs. A first draft is foreseen by late summer with workshops in the autumn to discuss and provide input into the final product.

30. The next official meeting of the Evaluation Network is scheduled for 18-19 November 2008, with informal task team meetings to be held on a needs basis, and open to interested members to join in work.

## **PARTICIPANTS LIST**

### **CHAIR: Mr. Finbar O'BRIEN (Ireland)**

#### **Australia/Australie**

Mr. Andrew EGAN  
Director (Evaluation)  
Office of Development Effectiveness  
Australian Agency for International Development  
(AusAID)

#### **Austria/Autriche**

Ms. Karin-Christine KOHLWEG  
Austrian Development Agency – ADA

#### **Belgium/Belgique**

Mr. Guy BERINGHS  
Conseiller de la Coopération Internationale  
Délégation Permanente

Mr. Dominique DE CROMBRUGGHE DE LOORINGHE  
Evalueur Spécial  
Evaluation Spéciale Coopération au Développement  
SPF Affaires Etrangères

Mr. Philippe JOTTARD  
Evaluation Spéciale Coopération au Développement  
- Service Public Fédéral Affaires Etrangères,  
Commerce Extérieur et Coopération au  
Développement

Ms. Jacqueline LIENARD  
Head of Monitoring and Evaluation Unit  
Directorate for International Cooperation  
Federal Public Service of Foreign Affairs, Belgium

Mr. Jaak LENVAIN  
BTC - Belgian Technical Co-operation

#### **Canada/Canada**

Mr. Goberdhan SINGH  
Director of Evaluation, Evaluation Division,  
Performance and Knowledge Management Branch  
Canadian International Development Agency  
(CIDA)

**Denmark/Danemark**

Mr. Ole WINCKLER ANDERSEN	Head of the Evaluation Department Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mr. Niels DABELSTEIN	Co-Chair, Evaluation of the Paris Declaration
Ms. Margrethe HOLM ANDERSEN	Deputy Head Evaluation Department Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Finland/Finlande**

Mrs Aira PÄIVÖKE	Director Unit for Evaluation and Internal Auditing Ministère des Affaires Étrangères
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**France/France**

Mrs Marie CASTILLO	Adjointe au Chef de l'Unité d'Evaluation Direction générale du Trésor et de la Politique économique (DGTPE) Ministère de l'Economie, des Finances et de l'Industrie
Mr. Benoit CHERVALIER	Chef de l'Unité d'Evaluation des activités de développement Direction générale du Trésor et de la Politique économique DGTPE Ministère de l'Economie, des Finances et de l'Emploi
Mr. Claude FANDRE	Head of Evaluation Unit Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et Européennes Bureau de l'évaluation
Mr. Jean-David NAUDET	Responsable de la Mission Evaluation & Capitalisation Département Evaluation Agence Française de Développement
Mr. Daniel VOIZOT	Attaché de coopération SCAC/Ambassade de France

**Germany/Allemagne**

Ms. Michaela ZINTL	Head of Evaluation and Audit Division Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ)
Dr. Frank SCHWARZBECK	Deputy Head of Evaluation and Audit Division Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

**Greece/Grèce**

Ms. Panagiota TSIRKA	Counsellor Permanent Delegation
Ms. Paraskevi KYRIAKOPOULOU	Expert Counsellor A Hellenic Aid Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Ireland/Irlande**

Mr. Donal MURRAY	Development Specialist Evaluation and Audit Unit, Development Cooperation Directorate Department of Foreign Affairs
Dr. Kathryn NWAJIAKU-DAHOU	Development Officer Permanent Delegation

**Italy/Italie**

Mr. Antimo CAMPANILE	Head of the Evaluation Unit Directorate General for Development Cooperation Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ms Chiara MARTURANO	Stagiaire Délégation Permanente de l'Italie auprès de l'OCDE

**Japan/Japon**

Ms. Masami FUJIMOTO	ODA Evaluation Division International Cooperation Bureau  Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan
Mr. Akihiko KOENUMA	Director General  JBIC Paris
Mr. Kazunori MIURA	Director  Office of Evaluation, Planning and Coordination Dept  Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)
Mr. Toru YOSHIDA	Permanent Delegation

**Mexico/Mexique**

Mr. Gerardo BRACHO	First Secretary  Permanent Delegation
--------------------	---

**Netherlands/Pays-Bas**

Mr. Bert VAN GEEL	Deputy Permanent Representative  Permanent Delegation
Dr. Henri e.j. JORRITSMA	Deputy Director  Policy and Operations Evaluation Department  Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mr. Ted KLIEST	Policy & Operations Evaluation Department  Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Mr. Bram VAN OJIK	Director Policy and Operations Evaluation Department  Policy and Operations Evaluation Department  Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Norway/Norvège**

Mr. Asbjorn EIDHAMMER

Director  
Evaluation Department  
Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation

Ms. Ann Kathrine ESSEN

Administrator  
Evaluation Department  
Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation

**Portugal/Portugal**

Mrs. Manuela AFONSO

Head of Evaluation and Internal Audit  
Internal Audit and Evaluation Unit  
Portuguese Development Co-operation Institute

**Spain/Espagne**

Ms. Cecilia ROCHA DE LA FUENTE

Responsable de la División de Evaluación  
Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et de la  
Coopération

Mr. Adán RUIZ

Conseiller  
Direction Générale de Planification et d'Evaluation  
des Politiques pour le Développement  
Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et de la  
Coopération

**Sweden/Suède**

Ms. Viktoria HILDENWALL

Research Fellow  
Swedish Agency for Development Evaluation

Mr. Lars JOHANSSON

Evaluator  
Department for Evaluation  
Sida

Dr. Stefan MOLUND

Deputy Director  
Department for Evaluation  
Swedish International Development Cooperation  
Agency (Sida)

Mr. Lennart WOHLGEMUTH

Acting Director General  
Swedish Agency for Development Evaluation  
(SADEV)

**Switzerland/Suisse**

Mr. Gerhard SIEGFRIED  
Head Evaluation and Controlling SDC  
Direction du Développement et de la Coopération,  
Département fédéral des affaires étrangères

**Turkey/Turquie**

Ms. Elif TURKISLAMOGLU  
Trainee  
Permanent Delegation of Turkey to the OECD

**United Kingdom/Royaume-Uni**

Mr. Nick YORK  
Deputy Director  
Head of Evaluation Department  
Department for International Development (DFID)

Dr. Julia COMPTON  
Deputy Head (Policy and Thematic)  
Evaluation Department  
Department for International Development, (DFID)

Mr. James BIANCO  
Evaluation Adviser  
Department for International Development (DFID)

**EC/CE**

M. Franco CONZATO  
Conseiller  
Délégation Permanente

Mr. Jean-Louis CHOMEL  
Head, Evaluation Unit (AIDCO/03)  
European Commission

Ms Laura GIAPPICHELLI



**World Bank/Banque mondiale**

Mrs. Barbara GENEVAZ	Senior Counselor External Affairs, Europe Permanent Delegation
Mrs. Cheryl GRAY	Director Independent Evaluation Group The World Bank
Mr. Vinod THOMAS	Director-General Evaluations Independent Evaluation Group World Bank Group

**OECD/OCDE**

Ms. Nathalie BIENVENU	Assistant to Division DCD/PEER OECD
Ms. Anna HELLSTROM	Junior Policy Analyst DCD/PEER OECD
Ms. Karen JORGENSEN	Head of Division DCD/PEER OECD
Mr. Hans LUNDGREN	Head of Section DCD/PEER OECD
Mr. Stefan SCHMITZ	Senior Policy Analyst DCD/EFF OECD

**Other/Autre**

Mr. Ben RAMALINGAM

Strategic Advisor

Active Learning Network for Accountability and  
Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP)

Mr. Rob VAN DEN BERG

Director, Evaluation Office, GEF

UN Evaluation Group