

The Management of Disaster Relief Evaluations

**Lessons from a Sida evaluation of the
complex emergency in Cambodia**

Claes Lindahl

**Department for Evaluation
and Internal Audit**

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Bistandsforum, Sida
S-105 25 Stockholm
Phone: (+46) 8 698 57 22
Fax: (+46) 8 698 56 38

Author: Claes Lindahl.

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SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY
Address: S-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden. Office: Sveavägen 20, Stockholm
Telephone: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Telefax: +46 (8)-20 88 64
Telegram: sida stockholm. Postgiro: 1 56 34-90
Homepage: <http://www.sida.se>

Contents

1 INTRODUCTION	3
1.1 The art and the science of evaluation	3
2 THE CAMBODIAN CASE	3
2.1 Political rehabilitation and reconstruction	3
2.2 Missed evaluation opportunities	4
3 MANAGEMENT ISSUES IN EVALUATION	5
3.1 The focus of the terms of reference	5
3.2 The selection of the team	6
3.3 The lack of methodology	7
3.4 The narrow time frame	8
4 SOME LESSONS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE EVALUATIONS	8
4.1 Writing the terms of reference	9
4.2 Selecting the team	10
4.3 Insist on an evaluation methodology	11
4.4 Allow sufficient time for good evaluation	11
4.5 Treat evaluation as a continuous process	12
Appendix Terms of Reference (UPPDRAGSBESKRIVNING)	

1 Introduction

1.1 *The art and the science of evaluation*

Anyone who has participated in an evaluation of a complex aid programme such as emergency assistance, recognises the impressionistic elements of such endeavours. There are several reasons for this: the resources in terms of time and manpower spent on these evaluations are generally minuscule as compared to the complexity of the disasters and the response by the donor community. Lack of benchmark data, poor monitoring systems of implementing agencies and undeveloped or non-existent evaluation methodologies contribute to the impressionism. Furthermore, the crisis atmosphere in which the relief efforts often are carried out and the urgency of life and death during the emergency, make evaluations of impact and effectiveness almost hearsay. Yet donors feel obliged to periodically undertake assessments of such emergency assistance programmes, partly due to the need for accounting for aid money spent and partly to learn from past operations in order to make the next response more effective.

The impressionism of the evaluations makes the result as much dependent on the composition of the evaluation team as on the realities on the ground. Send in another team, and the results are likely to be different. As a result, learning is less than that which is desired and efforts to determine impact and effectiveness are mostly a guess work. In particular, the cost-effectiveness of the interventions is generally left unexamined. Evaluations tend to be an *art* rather than a *science*, and while good *art* can provide valuable and sometimes highly revealing impressions, it is still coloured by the temperament of the artist. However, there are means to reduce the impressionistic style of evaluations (including of disaster relief operations), making them more *scientific*, and the results based on a systematic approach rather than on subjective impressions of a group of visitors.

This paper is based on my experience of the evaluation of the Sida emergency aid to Cambodia, carried out at the end of 1994¹. Added to this experience was a review on behalf of Sida of the evaluation methodology applied in two other major evaluations of emergency assistance (Africa's Horn and Southern Africa). Having worked with evaluations for a number of organisations over the last twenty years, the lessons from the Cambodian case are difficult to separate from my overall experience of such work. It should in this context be stressed that the Cambodia evaluation was neither worse nor better than most 'complex evaluations' I have experienced.

2 The Cambodian case

2.1 *Political rehabilitation and reconstruction*

The Cambodian 'emergency' has several features of relevance for the discussion in this paper. First, the international disaster relief was limited to 1979-81 after the ousting of the Khmer Rouge regime at the end of 1978. One of the largest ever international rescue operations under the leadership of UNICEF and the Red Cross was mounted to assist the Khmer people from suffering a past regime with a revolutionary agenda that had manifested itself in genocide, and from mass starvation due to famine conditions at the time of the Vietnamese invasion in 1978. The international disaster relief operation, costing about USD

¹ Bernander et al: *Facing a complex emergency. An evaluation of Swedish support to emergency aid to Cambodia*, Sida, Evaluation report 1995/4, Stockholm 1995.

800 million, ended in 1981. By then a more stable food situation after good harvests had been established. However, the abrupt end of the (Western) donor support was more a result of the subjugation of humanitarian assistance to the broader framework of US inspired Cold War politics. As the Vietnamese backed People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) regime was not recognised by the Western world and an exile coalition of parties dominated by the Khmer Rouge held Cambodia's seat in the UN, aid to Cambodia was frozen.

Second, while most Western donors boycotted Cambodia during the period 1982 - 1989, (except for channelling aid funds to refugee camps along the Thai border), Sweden and a few other countries were an exception to this. Sweden maintained a limited aid programme through UNICEF and some NGOs throughout the 1980s. All in all Western support to Cambodia during the 1980s - in the order of USD 10 million per annum - was a trickle compared to the 1979-81 period and also compared to what the socialist block provided during the 1980s. Thus, during the time when Cambodia went from disaster conditions to a stable development track, the Western donors were largely absent and had very little influence over the rehabilitation process after the Khmer Rouge period.

Third, by 1989, the end game of the Cold War changed Cambodia's political situation and also the flows of aid. The Soviet Union, which had provided support in the order of USD 100 million per annum during the 1980s for Cambodia's reconstruction, collapsed. Vietnam withdraw its troops from Cambodia and the PRK opened up to the West. International politics determined the orientation of the future: in an environment of almost non-existent democratic traditions, an agreement was reached with the Cambodian political parties that the UN would take over Cambodia's administration in 1991 and pave the way for democratic elections in 1993. While the operation under the acronym UNTAC is seen largely as a success by the UN, recent events indicate that the democratic era in Cambodia was a brief period and the regime of the 1980s has re-established power by use of force.

Fourth, during the UNTAC period a massive build up of reconstruction aid to Cambodia was initiated, not least through the UN's consolidated appeal in 1992 and subsequent aid consortia meetings. Pledges were made in the order of USD 1,000 million for reconstruction purposes over a period of a few years and for the repatriation of refugees from the camps in Thailand. Sweden followed the trend and scaled up its support from a level of SEK 15 - 20 million in the mid 1980s to the level of about SEK 80 - 100 million by the early 1990s. It could be argued that this period overall had more to do with aid for the transformation of Cambodia from a socialist model to a liberal-capitalist one than reconstruction after an emergency (unless perhaps socialism is considered a complex disaster).

While Cambodia was subject for Swedish emergency relief from 1979 until the time of the evaluation (1994), only the two first years were in reality an emergency. Thereafter it was reconstruction and rehabilitation². While it is difficult to draw a line at where reconstruction support ends and development aid begins, the definition applied for Cambodia had more to do with the political perception of the country by Western donors than the content and purpose of aid. By the mid 1980s Cambodia would probably have been defined as being in a stage of *development* in a Relief - Reconstruction - Development continuum (RDD), under different political circumstances.

2.2 Missed evaluation opportunities

From these peculiar circumstances, the conclusion can be drawn that the Cambodia emergency relief operation might be a better case for evaluating the *political economy* of aid, than for assessing the effectiveness of emergency relief as such. Nevertheless, these abnormal circumstances provided certain opportunities. First, at the time of the evaluation, fifteen years of 'emergency assistance' had been provided to Cambodia by Swedish aid, providing good opportunities to assess long-term impact and institutional performance.

²² Reconstruction and rehabilitation is in Sida's current definition also a part of emergency assistance.

Second, the politically inspired international reconstruction and rehabilitation period under review (1989 -1994) was an era of 'aid neurosis' as aid agencies of all sorts rapidly moved into a country poorly prepared for such an invasion. This led to a plethora of aid distortions: there were more assessment missions than could be kept track of; pledges of funds and disbursements of funds were grossly out of tune with the capacity to receive them; donor driven development agendas dominated the scene with expatriate staff at key line positions with limited local ownership; strong competition between donors with conflicting strategy advice; massive distortions of local salary levels between project and non-project staff; etc. In this respect, Cambodia might not be atypical for the end of conflicts with high international profiles, and should, from this perspective be of considerable interest in an evaluation.

Third, emergency aid, at least Swedish, is almost exclusively channelled through organisations such as the UN system, various Swedish and international NGOs and the international finance organisations (the latter in reconstruction efforts). Cambodia was a good opportunity to assess this complex institutional machinery as a very large number of implementing agencies participated in what emerged to be a virtual 'aid market' after 1989. Sweden used a dozen of these organisations which, amongst themselves, formed intricate systems of sub-contractual arrangements. The long duration of assistance and the use of many organisational channels for the Swedish 'emergency aid' would, in theory, allow good institutional assessments of this system of implementing agencies.

Fourth, Sida followed a different ideology in the emergency relief to Cambodia to most of the Western donors by: a) staying with a programme after 1981 throughout the boycott years and b) focusing the relief efforts on Cambodia rather than on the refugees camps in Thailand. Thus, Cambodia provided an interesting case for the politics of Swedish emergency aid.

In my opinion, the Sida Cambodia evaluation missed the pursuit of these opportunities due to mistakes in the management of the evaluation. These mistakes, which are not rare in evaluations in general, are related to four factors:

- the focus of the terms of reference
- the selection of the team
- the methodology applied, or rather lack thereof
- the time frame

These management aspects are further discussed below.

3 *Management issues in evaluation*

3.1 *The focus of the terms of reference*

The terms of reference are the sole governing guidelines for an evaluation. As such they are, or should be, important documents. The ToR for the Cambodia evaluation had several weaknesses which are not uncommon for 'complex evaluations'. First, the ToR requested various assessments of impact of the assistance (not specifying whether these impacts should be related to the overall assistance or just the Swedish inputs) such as: the impact on different ethnic, gender and age groups; the impact on special target groups such as refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and demobilised soldiers; the impact on the economy and on various sectors, etc. In addition, the ToR requested an assessment of efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and so on. These types of assessment requests are legitimate. However, the demands were unrealistic given: a) the time allowed for such an exercise, and b) the quality of the implementing agencies' information systems. Such a discrepancy between what is requested in the ToR and what can be achieved given the resources available (time,

systems and others) is not unique for the Cambodia case. The problem is that such gaps lead to either a mutual disregard of the ToR by the agency commissioning the study and by the team carry out the evaluation, or to a false sense of accuracy and objectivity if an (over)ambitious evaluation team tries to answer all of the questions raised without data of some accuracy. In the Cambodian case it turned out to be a mixture. Owing to the lack of a methodology for the evaluation, the team members pursued what might be described as personal agendas in which relevant aspects of the terms of reference justified these agendas.

Second, in my opinion the terms of reference made a mistake in limiting the evaluation to a narrow time frame, the period 1989-94, rather than looking at the full operation since 1979 (no evaluation had been carried out previously). The latter approach would have allowed a more contextual analysis, an assessment of the process of reconstruction and long-term performance by implementing agencies, as well as the politics of Swedish emergency assistance. In fact, the evaluation mission went outside its specific terms of reference to look at the historical record and underlying factors, but this deviation from the ToR led to various controversies within the evaluation team.

Third, the Cambodian terms of reference reflected a mixture of agendas by Sida, not uncommon in evaluations. Sida wanted learning for Sida's emergency assistance as a part of a broader thematic series of evaluations. Sida also wanted an 'aid audit' focusing on impact assessment in the particular case, reflecting the fact that there is hardly any feed back of these major aid programmes on what is achieved and whether the aid money is spent efficiently and effectively. Finally, as Sida was in a process of making Cambodia a 'programme country', one part of the organisation wanted a forward looking assessment to assist in the programming of Swedish assistance, adding these concerns to the ToR. While all three objectives can be justified in themselves, marrying them in one (short) evaluation has serious drawbacks since they tend to compromise one another.

3.2 *The selection of the team*

The Cambodian evaluation was carried out by a five person team of international consultants. The team was comprised of three persons with extensive experience in development of which two had strong experience in emergency relief operations, and the other two, excellent knowledge of Cambodia and/or refugee issues. The knowledge of Cambodia was very well represented in the team, with three of the team members having been actively involved in Cambodia over an extended period of time, one from the time of the disaster relief operations in 1980, and one in a senior position during the UNTAC period. The team was selected by Sida on an individual basis, basically putting a group of persons together who did not know one another in advance, under a team leader with a long career in the UN and with considerable experience in emergency assistance operations in the stage of rehabilitation and reconstruction, including in Cambodia. Looking at the CVs of the team, it comprised a quite good mixture of competences.

Nevertheless, several issues emerged during the evaluation. First, no methodology was established for the evaluation, partly due to time pressure as the team started to work in Cambodia almost immediately with very little time in the field to undertake its very demanding task, and partly due to inexperience by the team leader in evaluations. As a result, the individual team members pursued substantially different approaches with no overall design. As a result, there was the team could not agree on the overall conclusions of the evaluation at the end. In hindsight, the outcome of the evaluation was probably better than what the (lack of) methodology would indicate.

Secondly, some of the team members could be considered stakeholders in the process as they had been involved in the emergency relief operations in Cambodia in various capacities. While such involvement provided very valuable information on the historical background to the conflict and to the process of the emergency operation, including the intricate process of decision making in UNTAC, it also meant that the evaluation could not avoid vested

interests. Such interests played themselves out in two different directions in the Cambodia evaluation in my opinion: 1) an apologetic view of the behaviour of the aid system in Cambodia in general and of the UN specifically, and some preconceived ideas of the value of various Sida supported programmes, more based on personal affinities than facts; and 2) a tendency to look at programmes in which Sida might continue support in the future in an inherently positive way. In respect of the latter, the opportunities for future involvement by the team members concerned cannot be ruled out as a source of bias in the assessment. This was particularly so for the UN programme CAREERE which Sida also eventually took up for longer term financing.

This description is not intended to discredit any of the team members: we all took the task seriously, all had good professional credentials, all have vested interests of one kind or another, and all probably put in more work we were contracted for. The intention is to draw some lessons for an aid organisation in selecting teams for evaluations, possibly the most important aspect of evaluation management as long as the process is more *art* than *science*. The first issue from the Cambodian case is that Sida seemed to give priority to persons that had a prior extensive knowledge of the country and then of emergency operations, while paying limited attention to knowledge of evaluation methodology and techniques. In my opinion, this is a mistake in the balance of competence required. Evaluations and evaluation techniques are, or should be, more a science for professionals than an art that anyone is expected to be able to undertake. My broader experience from other evaluations is that those dominated by the subject-matter specialists risk being bogged down in technical aspects and often lost sight of the broader development issues and the contextual issues in which the aid projects took place. The subject-matter specialists are also notoriously weak in looking into the cost-effectiveness dimension.

The second issue is that evaluators with a personal history in what is being evaluated, or with an interest in a continuous process of support, cannot be expected to be unbiased. This does not mean that such persons should not be included in evaluation teams, but that they should not dominate and certainly should not lead such teams. Sida was, at the time of the Cambodian evaluation, concerned with the limited know-how of Cambodia in Sweden. However, country specialists tend also to develop their idiosyncrasies and become stakeholders in development aid. They are sometimes be apologetic of dysfunctional aspects of development in the particular country.

Thirdly, as noted above, the Cambodian case, with its multitude of implementing agencies and generally long term co-operation by Swedish aid, would have provided excellent opportunities for institutional assessment, a key aspect of emergency relief operations and a constant problem for a funding agency such as Sida. The evaluation team was not well prepared for this task since the members either represented the implementing systems (UN and NGOs) with long-term careers in these systems, or had quite marginal experience altogether of emergency operations and even less of the institutional set up for such aid. As a result, the institutional assessment became biased and impressionistic, using different criteria dependent on who happened to look at which organisation.

3.3 The lack of methodology

It is noted above that the Cambodian evaluation was carried out without an explicit methodology as a starting point. While the time factor (see below) was one reason, the inexperience of the team leader was more important. As the terms of reference had tried to include too many questions that realistically could be answered in the time given, the ToR provided limited guidance in choice of methodology or focus of the evaluation. Much time during the evaluation was taken up with discussing how to go about the evaluation without reaching much of a consensus. From one perspective, the lack of an explicit methodology created some creative tension as the team members' different perceptions, backgrounds and interests constantly engaged one another, but the outcome was too much of an *ad hoc* process. It is no coincidence that during the report writing, two conflicting views of the key results emerged, resulting in two different versions of a concluding chapter, one included in

the main report, one attached as an annex. I appreciate that complex cases such as the Cambodian one can easily give rise to different opinions, but a thorough discussion on a methodology of what to assess, how to do it and what criteria should be used *before* the team undertake the fieldwork can reduce such controversy.

3.4 The narrow time frame

The Cambodian evaluation was allowed a time input by the expatriate consultants of six person weeks per person, of which about four person weeks per person were spent in Cambodia. The work was carried out over a time period of three months. A thirty person week assignment is not a small undertaking and the budget for the evaluation was considerable. However, as an evaluation is one of the few available instruments for providing unbiased feed back of an aid programme, and in the context of disaster relief usually carried out very infrequently, the resources spent on evaluations should ideally be seen in the context of the size of the aid programme. As such, the Cambodian evaluation corresponds to about 0.2% of the total Swedish emergency assistance to this country. This is a very marginal effort for assessing impact and providing feedback. That said, the issue in this paper is not necessarily to argue for more resources, rather for better utilisation of resources.

The Cambodia evaluation was carried out in a condensed time frame. Thus, it conformed to the quite common practice that once a contract is signed with an evaluation team, the time allowed to carry out the work is limited. As a result, the preparatory time prior to the mission was very short, at least for the majority of the team members, not allowing sufficient time for reviewing available documents and even less for agreeing on an approach. The expectation that evaluations should provide inputs for the agency's decision making on new programmes adds to such pressures. This played a role in the Cambodian case. While extended periods of time for evaluations meet various problems of a practical nature, allowing time for the sufficient preparation and establishment of a commonly agreed methodology seems almost a precondition for the reduction of impressionism.

In contrast to Sida's normal procedures, no local consultants participated and no time was allowed for local field work in the Cambodian evaluation. This might not have been a coincidence, but a combined result of the limited ownership of Cambodia of its development process at that time of the evaluation, the strong presence of expatriates at all levels, and the perception by donors of a very weak local capacity.³ While the latter might have been true, local studies can contribute considerably to a good evaluation by providing a more systematic collection of data from the field, creating better ownership of the evaluation process and also adding to local capacity building. My experience from other evaluations is that such field studies should be incorporated into an overall evaluation design rather than commissioned by the donor agency as a preparatory phase. The latter approach leads to results that are used to a very limited extent, if at all, in the final analysis.

4 Some lessons for the management of emergency assistance evaluations

While Cambodia is a special case of emergency assistance, the lessons from the evaluation combined with my overall experience of 'complex evaluations', leads to some general

³ An expression of this is that when the team met with a major, supposedly local NGO which was one of the channels for Swedish assistance, the NGO was represented by two expatriates and there was no participation even as a formality by a Cambodian. This was not a rare event, but rather a common feature.

recommendations concerning the organisation and management of evaluations of emergency assistance. These are arranged under the following headings:

- writing the terms of reference
- composing the evaluation team
- demanding an evaluation methodology
- defining the time for the evaluation
- treating evaluation as a continuous process and not as an *ad hoc* event

4.1 Writing the terms of reference

The aid organisation commissioning an evaluation of an emergency operation should consider the following in the terms of reference for the evaluation:

Be realistic in what the evaluation should achieve in terms of impact assessment. It is a mistake by a donor agency to load an evaluation with too many demands including comprehensive assessments of impact, and efficiency and effectiveness, unless there has been prior demand on the implementing agencies for impact monitoring, benchmark studies, etc. Impact assessment, as well as measuring efficiency and effectiveness is not an *ad hoc* activity that an evaluation can carry out **unless** the programme has paid considerable attention to this already from its inception.

Try to avoid conflicting demands. If possible, the commissioning agency should try to avoid too many agendas for an evaluation, and focus either on the *analysis for learning*; the impact assessment ('*aid audit*'), or the *future programming* after the emergency, but not combine the three. Ideally three different exercises should be carried out in the following order: 1) impact and effectiveness assessment based on well established feedback systems of implementing agencies and verified by an independent team; 2) analysis for learning, focusing on key issues and contextual issues in close co-operation with the funding agency; and 3) programming for transitions from disaster relief to reconstruction to development aid.

Stress the cost aspects and cost-effectiveness. Cost effectiveness considerations tend to be neglected in evaluations of bilateral programmes in general, and especially so in emergency relief operations. This is often a result of the *supply driven* nature of the aid with limited need for the agency to economise its resources. A result of this is that the real cost of a project is often not known.⁴ While it might be considered insensitive to look at costs in operations concerning life and death, efforts to assess cost-effectiveness are essential for an aid agency to achieve the maximum with the funds available in a longer term perspective. This would improve the ability of agencies to meet the increasing demand for such operations with overall stagnant aid funds. While evaluations routinely are asked to assess cost-effectiveness in the ToRs, they tend to gloss over this issue with statements such as "cost-effectiveness could not be assessed" with the same degree of routine. While cost-effectiveness assessments requires good impact analysis, much can be done even when this is not available. Calculating unit costs is a first step: what is the cost of delivering a ton of food? What is the cost per beneficiary and year for a refugee operation? Of repatriation? Of rehabilitating a kilometre of road? Building such data might lead to more efficient choices of interventions, disguise dramatic inequalities in support (for example in the support directed to refugees versus that directed to internally displaced persons), or highlight absurd relationships between what trickles down to beneficiaries and what is spent on overheads.

⁴ The concept of supply driven aid and its various consequences such as neglect of the cost-dimension is discussed in Catterson & Lindahl *The sustainability enigma*, forthcoming

Making the evaluation contextual. Relief operations generally take place in complex socio-political environments, often involving a large number of relief agencies over a concentrated period of time with heavy risks of distortion. The terms of reference must take this into account. They should also take the political dimension into account. Complex disasters are generally triggered by political factors, either directly or indirectly. The political framework and the political dimensions of relief need to form an integral part of the evaluation. The political dimension normally requires an historical perspective, making the selection of too narrow time slices of the support counterproductive.

Consider the unintended, potentially negative effects of emergency operations. The potentially harmful effects and distortions of development aid and emergency relief operations are increasingly being discussed, and should be an important element of the terms of reference for evaluations of aid in complex disasters. While the awareness is strong in the disaster relief phase, there are similar potential distortions in the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase due to a combination of factors such as the magnitude of support vs. the domestic resources of the country, the weakness of the host country administration, and the frequent lack of a country strategy due to the trauma of the disaster and vested interest groups in the wake of the disaster. The potential effects of such distortions are massive corruption and other forms of rent-seeking, donor-driven agendas and the creation of aid dependency. *Do no harm* is a slogan for disaster relief these days. It can be extended to the next phase in the RRD continuum.

Add the agency learning into the terms of reference. ToR tend to be devoid of the agency's own views of the key issues in a particular aid programme. While this is regarded as prudent so as not to 'bias' the evaluation, the learning process by the aid organisation, (which the evaluation is an important element of) would gain by adding more 'flesh and blood'. This could be in the form of hypotheses to be confirmed or revoked. The evaluation of a complex process such as response to emergency assistance would probably gain in quality if the commissioning agency expressed its own experience, conclusions and questions in the ToR either directly or as an attached issues paper. Such a process would also request the agency to formulate its own experience, hence adding to the learning.

4.2 Selecting the team

Many agencies use tenders to select teams for major evaluations. Such a procedure has many advantages as compared to the hand-picking of team members. First, it places the responsibility on the bidder to select a functional team; secondly, it forces the potential evaluators to provide a methodology and provides the commissioning agency with the opportunity to assess the approach selected. In assessing bids for evaluations of emergency assistance, the agency should:

Select professionals to manage evaluations. A team leader of a 'complex evaluation' must have sufficient know how of an evaluation process to be able to steer the work and with an initial notion of a methodology which is made explicit and in which all can participate. Enough experience has been collected and enough techniques established to justify the selection of professional competence in evaluation for such jobs.

Be aware of the stakeholder syndrome. Stakeholders such as country specialists or persons/institutions that have been involved in the emergency operation, or might have an interest in the future operation, should not be excluded from evaluations as they can provide much valuable information. However, the commissioning agency must be careful of the biases that might be introduced and certainly make it unacceptable that such persons lead the evaluation teams.

Promote integrity in evaluations. There is a common joke amongst consultants that an evaluation report that takes a hard, critical look at an aid programme often can cost the consultant a couple of years of future work. It must be recognised that the aid agency, or

staff in the agency, generally are interested parties to an aid programme. Critique, however justified, might not be welcome, and evaluators that avoid critical views can be favoured. This is a very critical element in aid as an evaluation is, or should be, a corrective instrument. There is no easy solution to this integrity issue, but an aid agency can do much to weed out such biases.

4.3 *Insist on an evaluation methodology*

This aspect has been repeated throughout this paper, and should need no further elaboration here. A competitive bidding procedure for major evaluations would provide the opportunity to foster the development of such methodologies prior to the work. Some steps in an evaluation are outlined below, which also could be considered part of the methodology.

4.4 *Allow sufficient time for good evaluation*

As a rule of thumb, an agency should allow at least half a year for a 'complex evaluation' from the signing of a contract to delivery of a first draft report. Such a time period should, ideally, include the following elements:

1. A period for preparing a specific evaluation methodology for the assignment, team building around the methodology, and preparation for the work by reviewing available documents and consultations with the donor agency should be designated. In the ideal situation the evaluators should have, prior to any field work: 1) an extensive knowledge of the emergency, its root causes and history, the process of the disaster relief assistance, including a detailed review of progress reports by the active implementing agencies; and 2) have worked out and agreed on the methodology to be used, the key issues to focus on, and a clear division of labour amongst the evaluators.
2. Time for field studies by local consultants. As noted above, these field studies should be commissioned by the evaluators rather than by the agency, and should be based on the overall evaluation approach. The evaluation team should be involved in the design stage of such field studies and the results of such studies should be ready in advance of any field work by the international team.
3. Time for field work by the international team, jointly with local partners. The timing, (and the budgetary resources provided), should allow for good administration of such field work in advance, such as provision of transport, secretarial services for making appointments, booking of accommodations, etc. While such aspects might be seen as details, they determine efficiency in the field.⁵
4. Time for report writing. A common experience amongst evaluators is that this process is often much more time consuming than anticipated as it often requires extensive review of information collected during the field visit, discussions amongst the evaluators, and, not least, time for editing.
5. A workshop on a draft report amongst the evaluators, the commissioning agency and key agencies involved in the emergency operation. While such a workshop could be seen as an input into the completion of a report, it is also essential for the process of learning and the dissemination of findings.

⁵ In this context it might be noted that that Cambodian mission was efficient through good connections by the team leader in Cambodia. In spite of no Swedish representation in Cambodia, the Swedish support split up on a dozen implementing agencies and with no formal counterpart organisation in the government, the administration functioned quite well in term of provision of good support services in terms of travel, appointments etc.

4.5 Treat evaluation as a continuous process

It has been stressed during the last decades that evaluation should not be seen as an *ad hoc* event, but as a continual process, starting at the time when an aid intervention is planned. Most aid agencies would agree with this, especially in the context of applying LFA and similar methods. Most agencies would also claim that evaluation is treated this way, at least in development co-operation. While bold attempts often are made to develop ongoing impact monitoring systems, bench-mark studies, etc., evaluators usually find such systems to be blunt instruments, ambitious plans which have been abandoned, where the focus is on physical achievements rather than developmental effects and impact. Evaluators also find that the reporting by implementing agencies to the funding agencies often is more inclined towards *window-dressing* for continuous funding than towards reporting on real results.

It could be argued that in emergency relief efforts such systems for continuous impact assessment are much more difficult to introduce than in regular development co-operation due to the nature of the operations. However, as the history has shown, emergency aid tends to become semi-permanent, sometimes ongoing for decades. Thus, there are in most cases considerable opportunities to develop recording systems that both show the effects of the services provided and what they cost in terms of aid resources. Two lessons emerge from this:

- 1) While *ad hoc* evaluations can be very creative and analytical, and provide many lessons for future emergency operations, they can never provide a full picture of impact and cost-effectiveness unless such systems already are in place.
- 2) As aid to a large extent operates as a 'market' with agencies competing for funds, it is the funding agency which has the responsibility to insist on such reporting systems and to make sure that such requests are taken seriously.

**UPPDRAGSBESKRIVNING för Claes Lindahl:
Redogörelse och analys av organisation och
genomförande av utvärderingen av svenskt stöd till
katastrof- och rehabiliteringsinsatser i Kambodja**

Bakgrund.

På uppdrag av DAC's utvärderingsgrupp (DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation) arbetar sedan början av 1997 Overseas Development Institute (ODI) med en studie syftande till 'best practices' när det gäller utvärdering av katastrofbistånd ('Review of Good Practice in Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance'). Arbetet bedrivs i samråd med ansvariga inom såväl operativa som utvärderande enheter bland aktörer-givare inom katastrofbiståndet. Avsikten är att studien skall utmynna i gemensamma riktlinjer för utvärdering av katastrofbistånd.

En första rapport skall presenteras för DAC's Working Party on Aid Evaluation i maj 1998. Ett första utkast diskuterades vid ett möte med samtliga intressenter i Köpenhamn i januari i år. Utkastet omarbetas nu av ODI. Ett centralt avsnitt i studien skall handla om frågor rörande själva *planeringen, organisationen och ledningen* av utvärderingar av insatser i samband med komplexa katastrofer, samt om *uppföljning och återföring* av resultat och rekommendationer från sådana utvärderingar. Även här gäller det att med ledning av senare års erfarenheter (större utvärderingar) försöka ta fram 'good practices' och riktlinjer.

På initiativ i höstas inom ALNAP (Active Learning Network for Accountanility and Performance, administrerat av ODI-HPP, och i vilket Sida medverkar) kommer en workshop att äga rum i Canberra 13-16 mars 1998 kring temat "Organization and Management of Evaluations of Responses to Complex Emergencies: Learning from Recent Studies". Deltagare är en mindre grupp företrädare för dels utvärderingsfunktioner bland givare som deltagit i större katastrofutvärderingar, dels utvärderingsexpertis ('team leaders'), samt personer ansvariga för framtagandet av ovan nämnda ODI-studie. Resultatet av workshopen förväntas kunna bidra till ODI-studien.

Underlag för workshopen blir erfarenheter från sannolikt ett tiotal utvärderingar, bl a fyra studier i vilka SIDA's (resp Sidas) utvärderingsfunktion spelat en aktiv roll vad gäller planering, organisation och genomförande:

- utvärderingen av svenskt stöd till katastrofinsatser i Afrikas Horn (1994);

- utvärderingen av svenskt stöd till katastrof- och rehabiliteringsinsatser i Kambodja (1994-95);
- den internationella utvärderingen 1995-96 av biståndssamfundets agerande och katastrofinsatser med anledning av krisen i Rwanda;
- studien och analysen av uppföljning och effekter inom biståndssamfundet av 'Rwanda-utvärderingen' (JEFF-rapporten, juni 1997); samt
- i något avseende möjligen också utvärderingen 1992 av katastrofinsatserna i samband med torkan i södra Afrika (DESA).

Uppdraget

Konsulten Claes Lindahl ingick i det team av konsulter som kontrakterades av SIDA för att genomföra en av de ovannämnda utvärderingarna, nämligen den om Kambodja-insatserna.

UTV uppdrar nu åt Claes Lindahl (konsultfirma Management Perspectives International AB, Stockholm) att med utgångspunkt i ovan beskrivna bakgrund *de/s* redogöra för planeringen, organisationen och genomförandet av Kambodja-utvärderingen, såväl SIDA:s som den anlitate Konsultens roller härvidlag, och *de/s* kritiskt kommentera och analysera dessa element och skeden av utvärderingsprocessen. Studien skall omfatta allt från Konsultens bedömning av uppdragsbeskrivningens konstruktion och valet av konsultteam, över erfarenheter kring ansvars- och rollfördelning samt genomförande, till presentation och återföring av utvärderingsresultaten. Särskilt viktigt är att kommentera uppdragsgivarens agerande och roll i processen.

De iakttagelser, erfarenheter och slutsatser Konsulten bedömer ha allmängiltigt värde (d v s ej specifika för just denna utvärdering), inte minst 'lessons learned' i ovannämnda avseenden inför framtida utvärderingar av katastrofanknutet bistånd, skall lyftas fram. I fall då slutsatser kan underbyggas med exempel eller erfarenheter från andra utvärderingar bör dessa anges.

Rapportering

Rapporten skall tjäna som ett underlag till diskussionerna vid ovannämnda workshop och vara skriven på engelska. Den bör omfatta 6-8 sidor av A4-format, med typstorlek och marginal ungefär som i denna uppdragsbeskrivning. Rapporten skall vara UTV tillhanda på diskett och en hardcopy *senast fredagen den 6 mars 1998*.

Sida Studies in Evaluation - 1995/96 - 1998

- 96/1 Evaluation and Participation - some lessons. Anders Rudqvist, Prudence Woodford-Berger
Department for Evaluations and Internal Audit
- 96/2 Granskning av resultatanalyserna i Sidas landstrategiarbete. Göran Schill
Department for Evaluations and Internal Audit
- 96/3 Developmental Relief? An Issues Paper and an Annotated Bibliography on Linking Relief and Development. Claes Lindahl
Department for Evaluations and Internal Audit
- 96/4 The Environment and Sida's Evaluations. Tom Alberts, Jessica Andersson
Department for Evaluations and Internal Audit
- 97/1 Using the Evaluation Tool. A survey of conventional wisdom and common practice at Sida. Jerker Carlsson, Kim Forss, Karin Metell, Lisa Segnestam, Tove Strömberg
Department for Evaluations and Internal Audit
- 97/2 Poverty Reduction and Gender Equality. An Assessment of Sida's Country Reports and Evaluations in 1995-96. Eva Tobisson, Stefan de Vylder
Secretariat for Policy and Corporate Development.



SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

S-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden

Tel: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Fax: +46 (0)8-20 88 64

Telegram: sida stockholm. Postgiro: 1 56 34-9

E-mail: info@sida.se. Homepage: <http://www.sida.se>