



DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION TIPS TOOLS INSIGHTS PRACTICES

In practice

IMPROVING CO-OPERATION THROUGH A REGULAR STAKEHOLDER SATISFACTION SURVEY

Key messages

Since 1998, the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) has conducted an annual Partner Countries' Satisfaction Survey. The survey gathers feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, including partner country governments and end users. Feedback has allowed KOICA to enhance the quality of its development co-operation and partners appreciate having their voices heard. A customer-oriented culture has been an important success factor.

Keywords

[Learning and knowledge management](#) | [Partner countries](#) | [Partnerships](#)

Key partner

[Korea](#)

Challenge

To learn and adapt, development co-operation partners need to understand both their strengths and areas where they can improve. Internal sources such as management, staff and monitoring systems provide important insights, but should be complemented with external sources to ensure findings are robust. Policy dialogue, independent evaluations and peer reviews are all valuable tools, but not necessarily suited for more regular monitoring of external views of a provider's development co-operation. The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) therefore pays particular attention to regularly seeking feedback from partners, stakeholders and end users, or, in KOICA's terminology, its "customers".

Approach

Each year since 1998, KOICA has undertaken a Partner Countries' Satisfaction Survey on Official Development Assistance (ODA) programmes to assess and analyse the overall service quality and satisfaction level of the programmes. Its key features are:

- **Comprehensive scope:** In 2020, the survey was sent to 5 654 recipients (with 1 710 respondents) in 44 partner countries at all levels (assistance co-ordinating authority, recipient institutions, project partner agencies, volunteer hosting agencies, invitational trainees, and service end users).
- **Feedback across different dimensions:** Respondents provide scores and comments on service quality, social responsibility, discrepancy with expectations, and overall satisfaction (see Figure 1).
- **Dedicated institutional resources:** A Public Communication Centre is responsible for overseeing the entire survey process and the “Customer’s Voice” system.
- **Translating findings into recommendations:** The Centre analyses responses and identifies compliments, complaints and suggestions for improvement. It assigns responsibility for follow up and monitors how well responses are processed and resolved via a Key Performance Index.
- **Efforts for high response rate:** Surveys are translated into English, French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic with follow up by KOICA country offices.
- **External expertise:** KOICA commissions a private research firm to conduct the survey and assess results.
- **Comparability over time:** Survey design is similar from year to year.

Figure 1 Elements of the KOICA’s Partner Countries’ Satisfaction Survey

Category	Evaluation items for calculating the overall satisfaction rate	
Service product quality (3 questions)	[Fundamental satisfaction]	1. KOICA's OOO program is in line with my purpose of using its services.
	[Service efficacy]	2. KOICA's OOO program will enable me to achieve my objective/goal.
	[Service completeness]	3. There are no problems in using KOICA's OOO program throughout its entire processes.
Service delivery quality (3 questions)	[Interaction]	1. KOICA's staff treats its customers in such a kind, friendly way that makes me satisfied.
	[Communication]	2. KOICA provides any necessary information, processing results, etc. in a clear manner.
	[Customer care]	3. KOICA's staff do their best for me to receive the service I need.
Service environment quality (3 questions)	[Environmental convenience]	1. (Has visited before) KOICA's facilities and environment are clean and pleasant. (Never visited before) It's easy and convenient to use KOICA's services.
	[Institution/process/system]	2. KOICA's staff handle customer requests promptly.
	[Work capacity]	3. KOICA's staff displays excellence in doing their jobs.
Social responsibility (3 questions)	[Policy feasibility]	1. KOICA is implementing policies that are in line with the purpose of its establishment.
	[Sustainability]	2. KOICA is carrying out tasks aimed at creating value for the country or society in the future.
	[Ethics]	3. KOICA's operations are carried out in a fair and transparent manner.
Discrepancy (3 questions)	[Expectations]	1. What did you think of KOICA's OOO program based on your expectations?
	[Ideal service]	2. What did you think of KOICA's OOO program in comparison with the most ideal service that you can imagine?
	[Other agencies]	3. What did you think of KOICA's OOO program in comparison with the services of other institutions or countries you have experienced in the past?
Overall satisfaction (2 questions)	[Cognitive satisfaction]	1. I am generally satisfied with KOICA's OOO program.
	[Emotional satisfaction]	2. I have developed a positive view of KOICA's OOO program.

Source: Korea International Cooperation Agency

Results

KOICA sees results at different levels:

- **Gaining new insights:** The survey enables KOICA to gather honest opinions from partner countries, providing previously unknown or assumed information. For example, one customer revealed that: “Two KOICA officers in the same department provide contradictory information”.
- **Deeper communication with partners:** The survey provides partner countries with an opportunity to share their views. Partners appreciate that their voice and feedback matter for KOICA, and consequently have a stronger sense of partnership if KOICA takes their suggestions into consideration.
- **Continuously improving customer orientation:** Survey findings help KOICA decision makers to make ODA policies customer friendly and to introduce concrete system improvements and innovations. For example, partner countries requested “sustainability of development co-operation programmes under COVID-19.” In response, KOICA established e-volunteering programmes for 93 institutions and more than 34 000 citizens in partner countries, providing remote support.

Lessons learnt

Having undertaken surveys over many years, Korea has drawn important lessons:

- **A customer-oriented culture is critical:** KOICA endeavours to reinforce its credibility and win the loyalty of its customers by its ongoing communication with them. Complaints, while disappointing, are valuable assets that help KOICA's business and service to grow and improve. KOICA trusts that solutions for developing its service stem from its customers' views and suggestions. The customers' perception is KOICA's reality.
- **Survey follow-up is important:** KOICA spends significant time and energy in designing and implementing the survey and gathering feedback. However, the most important aspect is to share the survey results with respondents. KOICA country offices therefore annually disseminate results to partners demonstrating their strong willingness to tackle complaints and increase satisfaction.
- **Complement surveys with dialogue to reveal further issues:** Some partners tend not to express their complaints in surveys and may just stop working with KOICA. KOICA therefore strives to proactively exchange with partners via other tools about what works and what could be improved.

Further information

KOICA, Customer relations (in Korean), https://www.koica.go.kr/koica_kr/1007/subview.do#intro.

OECD resources

OECD (2018), *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Korea 2018*, OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264288829-en>.

To learn more about Korea's development co-operation see:

OECD (2021), "Korea", in *Development Co-operation Profiles*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d919ff1a-en>.

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